

## Sharing the Bridge Illustration

Because God is love, He wanted to share that love, so he created man. Man lived with God in perfect relationship; paradise. However, man sinned. He wanted to do his own thing. Although Adam was the first man to sin, if it wasn't him it would have been me.

We all recognize there is some type of disconnect between God and us, so we do good things. Maybe we go to church, or give to the poor, or try to follow the Ten Commandments. But even though we try all that we know to do, we still fall short. We're not connected to God the way we should be.

In addition to not reaching God, the news gets worse, because not reaching God means we end in death. In the Bible death does not mean end of life. It actually means "separation," meaning that we are separated from God. When we die, it is not the end; we're just separated from God for eternity.

The news up to this point is bad. God created us and loves us, but we screwed it up and now no matter what we do, we can't get back to Him. If we can't get back to Him, the result is death – separation from Him forever!

However, because you matter to God, and I matter to God, what we couldn't do, God did for us when He sent His Son to become a bridge between us – connecting us – when He died on the cross.

What we have to do is choose to cross the bridge that God provided so we can once again enter into relationship with Him.

***Now, as we look at this situation, I think it answers a couple basic questions we all have about God:***

**1. How could a good God, a loving God, send people to Hell?**

- When we look at the illustration, we see that God doesn't send people to hell. People choose to go to hell by refusing to cross the bridge. In fact, God has done everything He can so we don't have to go to hell! He chose to fix our problem.

**2. Why does God call us not to do wrong things? Why doesn't he just make it so we can't do wrong things?**

- God is a God of love. Actually, he is love. For love to be genuine, there has to be a choice. Think about it: If you have to love (name someone), if you have no choice, is that really love? No! Because you have no choice. That's robotic. God gets no fulfillment out of that. If God just wanted people to sing, "Glory, glory, hallelujah and praise the Lord," He could just put in a CD that would sound much better than us. The point is, love has to be a choice, or it's not love. So God had to give us choice, free will. If He didn't, we couldn't experience love.

***The question now is, "How do I cross the bridge and get back into relationship with God? It takes two things:***

**You need a Forgiver**

You have to acknowledge that you have sinned and that you need to be forgiven for all of your sin, all of your stuff. Acknowledge that you know there is no way for you to cross the bridge on your own. You need, must have, God's forgiveness. The Forgiver is Jesus. When He died on the cross he "paid for" our sin. If Jesus doesn't go to the cross, we have no forgiveness; we are hopeless. That is why the cross is the focal point of Christianity. Acknowledge your need for a Forgiver and ask for forgiveness. Ask Jesus to forgive you. Most people recognize their need for forgiveness. It's pretty easy. But it doesn't end there.

**You need a Leader**

You have to acknowledge that you need guidance. God needs to become the boss, supervisor, president, king over your life. The Bible actually says Jesus needs to be the Master. We all know what these words mean. If the boss says to do, you do it. So, if God says it, I do it. Whatever He says, goes! This leader thing isn't easy... it's pretty tough!

Who is the most precious person in your life? (Usually a spouse, child, relative). Ok. Let's say there's an inmate in prison on death row. He admits he's guilty of doing something and that he deserves the death penalty. He's been found guilty by a jury of his peers.

What if I came to you and said, "Bob, how about you taking Jane down to the prison and give her over to die for this guy? Give Jane so this guy, who is absolutely guilty, can go free. Now, you need to know that this guy may never thank you. In fact, he might curse you and tell you he didn't ask you for anything and spit in your face. But, you've already given Jane over for him, she's gone. Can you imagine turning Jane over like that?"

That's just what God did for you when He sent His Son to die on the cross for you. He sent Him to die for you on the

chance that you would choose to enter into right relationship with Him again. What you couldn't even consider doing, God did ... for you. Now, if you gave Jane over for someone's life, giving up who you cherish the most, would you withhold anything else from their life? Would you withhold provision? Would you withhold wisdom to have purpose and success for a good life? Of course not! God has already given His Son for you. Do you think He would withhold any good thing from you? Provision? Wisdom how to live? No! It's illogical to think He would withhold good things, or that He would ask you to do anything that is not in your best interest.

So, tell me, how hard would it be to follow a Leader like that? When we start to understand God's love, making Him the Leader of our life isn't so hard.

Does this make sense to you? Do you have any questions? Where are you on the bridge? Here? Or maybe here? Depending on the answer...Do you want to cross the bridge? You can do that right now.

## Sharing Your Story

Skeptics may debate the validity of Scripture or argue the existence of God, but no one can deny your personal experiences with God. If you tell someone how God worked a miracle in your life, how he blessed you, transformed you, lifted and encouraged you, or perhaps even broke and then healed you, no one can argue or debate it. When you share your Christian testimony, you go beyond the field of knowledge into the realm of relationship with God.

### Tips to Remember as You Write Your Testimony

- Stick to the point. Your conversion and new life in Christ should be the main points.
- Be specific. Include events, genuine feelings, and personal insights that clarify your main point. Make your testimony tangible and relevant so others can relate to it.
- Be current. Tell what's happening in your life with God right now, today.
- Be honest. Don't exaggerate or dramatize your story. The simple, straightforward truth of what God has done in your life is all the Holy Spirit needs to convict others and convince them of God's love and grace.

### Five Steps to Writing Your Testimony

These steps explain how to write your testimony. They apply to both long and short, written and spoken testimonies. Whether you're planning to write down your full, detailed testimony or prepare a quick 2-minute version for a short-term mission trip, these steps will help you tell others with sincerity, impact, and clarity, what God has done in your life.

#### 1. Realize Your Testimony Is Powerful

First and foremost, remember, there is power in your testimony. The Bible says we overcome our enemy by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony:

Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, "It has come at last— salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth— the one who accuses them before our God day and night. And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. Revelation 12:10–11 NLT

Many other Bible verses reveal the power of sharing your testimony. Spend a few minutes looking them up: Acts 4:33; Romans 10:17; John 4:39.

#### 2. Study an Example in the Bible

Read Acts 26. Here the Apostle Paul gives his personal testimony before King Agrippa. He tells about his life before his conversion on the road to Damascus when he persecuted the followers of the Way. Next, Paul describes in detail his miraculous encounter with Jesus and his calling to serve Christ as an apostle. Then he goes on to tell of his new life after turning to God.

#### 3. Spend Time in Preparation and Prayer

Here are a few things to consider before you start writing your testimony: Think about your life before you met the Lord. What was going on in your life leading up to your conversion? What problems or needs were you facing at the time? How did your life change after knowing Jesus Christ? Pray and ask God to help you share what he wants you to include.

#### 4. Use a Three-Point Outline

A three-point approach is very effective in communicating your personal testimony. This outline focuses on before you trusted Christ, how you surrendered to him, and the changes in your life since you began walking with him.

**Before:** Simply tell what your life was like before you surrendered to Christ. What were you searching for before coming to know Christ? What was the chief problem, emotion, situation, or attitude you were dealing with? What motivated you to seek a change? What were your actions and thoughts at the time? How did you try to satisfy your inner needs? (Examples of inner needs are loneliness, fear of death, insecurity, etc. Possible ways to fill those needs include work, money, drugs, relationships, sports, sex.) Remember to use concrete, relatable examples.

**How:** How did you come to salvation in Jesus? Simply tell the events and circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your searching. Take time to identify the steps that brought you to the point of trusting Christ. Where were you? What was happening at the time? What people or problems influenced your decision?

**Since:** How has your life in Christ made a difference? How has his forgiveness impacted you? How have your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions changed? Share how Christ is meeting your needs and what your relationship with him means to you now.

#### 5. Words to Avoid

Stay away from "Christianese" phrases. "Churchy" words can alienate listeners/readers and keep them from identifying with your life. People who are unfamiliar or even uncomfortable with church and Christianity might not understand what you are saying. They may mistake your meaning or even be turned off by your "foreign language." Here are some examples:

*Avoid using the term "born again."*

*Instead, use these words:*

- Spiritual birth
- Spiritual renewal
- Spiritual awakening
- Come alive spiritually
- Given a new life
- My eyes opened

*Avoid using "saved."*

*Instead, use terms like:*

- Rescued
- Delivered from despair
- Found hope for life

*Avoid using "lost."*

*Instead, say:*

- Heading in the wrong direction
- Separated from God
- Had no hope
- Had no purpose

*Avoid using "gospel."*

*Instead, consider saying:*

- God's message to man
- The good news about Christ's purpose on earth
- God's message of hope for the world

*Avoid using "sin."*

*Instead, try one of these expressions:*

- Rejecting God
- Missing the mark
- Falling away from the right path
- A crime against God's law
- Disobedience to God
- Going my own way with no thought of God

*Avoid using "repent." Instead, say things like:*

- Admit I was wrong
- Change one's mind, heart, or attitude
- Decide to turn away
- Turn around
- Make a 180 degree turn from what you were doing
- Obey God
- Follow God's Word

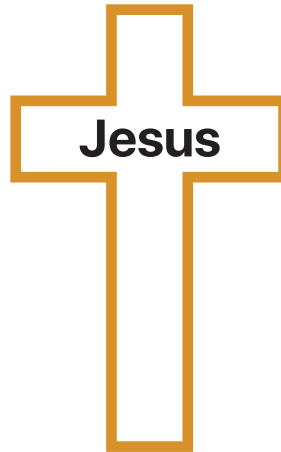
# Us

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## **We all sin**

For **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **Romans 3:23**

God loves all people, but we are separated from His love by sin.



# God

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## **God loves us**

But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. **Romans 5:8**

To **all** who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. **John 1:12**

## **Christ died once, for all**

Christ suffered for our sins once for **all** time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit. **1 Peter 3:18**

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If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you **will** be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. **Romans 10:9-10**