

The God of Stories Past

July was quite an awesome month. With multiple speaking engagements, I was able to speak at a men's group, a Wednesday church service, a college group, and a Sunday service. I was given the whole time for all of them except for the Sunday service. The first three groups simply wanted to hear my testimony. The original plan was for me to give my testimony at the men's group which was on a Tuesday; and then on Friday, I would share a little bit of my Zambia trip at the college group. What happened though; was really awesome. I gave my testimony at the Tuesday men's group and one of the men there was the leader for the Friday college group. After he heard my testimony, he said that I could take as long as I wanted, to speak on Friday. On Wednesday, my brother receives a text message from the leader of the Tuesday men's group. The pastor invited me to give my testimony again at his church's Wednesday evening service. I thought that sounded really awesome, so I agreed. (I have a recording of that service, but I think rather than embedding the audio recording into the website, I am going to make a link to the recording. The size is rather formidable. I also can't guarantee it will be added on here anytime soon.) I then gave my testimony at the Friday college group and shared some stories from Zambia. A few weeks later I spoke at another church. This leads me into what I want to share with all of you now. I was originally going to do this newsletter on something completely different, but God is taking it into this direction. I titled this newsletter "The God of Stories Past" because I want to talk about testimonies. Below I have attached a PDF of my testimony, so mine can be read.

When I think of a testimony, I think of it as a story that shows the work of God in someone's life. To me it is almost no different than reading or hearing a Bible story. We can read of David's life or Paul's life and it is basically their testimonies. We are just a different person and in a different time, but a testimony remains the same as being a story that shows God's work in our lives.

I encourage people to tell their testimonies and to realize that the good majority of people have the understanding that they can't refute your testimony. You know your own story best. No one can refute your own story because it is yours. You know what has happened in your life and practically no one who will try to refute your testimony because that would be like someone else trying to tell you your own memories. It is just weird and they are probably going to be wrong about you. This is true among the saved and unsaved world. People just don't argue with your story.

So whatever your is story, don't be ashamed of your testimony. Testimonies are awesome and tell how the Gospel story affected your life. Believe it or not, the Gospel can be preached from your testimony. You and I have the same beginning in that we were born into a sinful nature. You came to understand you were not good and needed help. You found Jesus and He rescued you out of a life of drugs, abuse, suicide, depression, alcoholism, hell, sin in general, you name it! You can tell the Gospel from that. Yours is a redemption story you are telling; just like Jesus has a redemption story for mankind, we are partaking of that redemption story. If you tell someone your testimony, they have to understand that your belief in Jesus has had a real practical effect on your life. That puts weight and reality to the Gospel for people. Don't be ashamed of what God has done in your life.

Something I have heard from people who don't like to give their testimony, is that they seem to think their testimony is not so unique or dramatic enough, or that no one will understand. Let me tell you, that is completely false. That is a lie from hell because the devil wants you to feel insecure about what God has done for you. I also thought my testimony was undramatic at one time. I heard so many people tell these stories of life and death, stories of how they were meth addicts then came out of that with Jesus. I would think to myself, "I have never done drugs, never been drunk, never tried killing a man, and never bounced from bed to bed." I felt like I couldn't relate to them at all because I had never been so stuck down a road like that to such an extreme as that. Since my story wasn't extreme, I thought it would carry less weight and thus wouldn't be that good of a testimony. How wrong I was! As I began to understand the weight and importance of testimonies, I became more confident of mine... because I now understand how awesome it is! It's true, I was never a meth-head or alcoholic. I didn't scream at my mother every other day. I was never homeless for years. My life was pretty good and pretty normal, and that's why I didn't think my story was very exciting. The moment you think no one can relate to your testimony, there will be someone who will relate to it. Why? Because there are other people who have also thought that no one would understand their testimony. Realize, just from that one thought alone someone can relate to your story. It is just like someone who thinks they are alone. The moment they think they are alone, they are no longer alone, because other people have also thought, "I am alone." There will always be someone who understands your story. They don't even have to have a

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similar story to yours because most people have an innate ability to empathize. If you have been a goodie-two-shoes your whole life who never fell away from the faith and has always had a strong desire for God, you have an awesome testimony! That is a wonderful story that shows one does not have to fall into sin first to have a relationship with God. Originally we all were fallen and in sin from birth, but having an example of continuity from childhood in how a relationship is able to grow and be sustained in God as one grows is powerful. There is so much that can be drawn from a testimony like that.

Testimonies are often comprised of life-defining moments throughout our lives and these shape who we are on a continual basis. I often think of them as anchor points in our life so that we can recall and remember why we are the way we are, or why we decided to do this or that. Many people forget why they stay with the faith, so that can make a way for deception to come into that person's life. Even with a life-defining moment that served as an anchor point originally as to why they continued to believe in Jesus, they really never thought about how important it was. They forgot it. They lost their anchor, they lost their foundation. Ultimately, our

foundation intellectually and spiritually should be on Jesus and our relationship with God. Not remembering is like a scientist who discovered electricity, but forgot the process of how he discovered electricity; so he stops believing that he ever discovered electricity. That just doesn't make sense. Remember your anchor points or life defining reasons that helped you to conclude that a relationship with Jesus is better than without.

Your testimony will be key in your life, for yourself and others. Revelation 12:11 says, "and they have defeated him [the accuser] by the blood of the Lamb, and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much they were afraid to die." Do you see? Your testimony is a key weapon in overcoming the attacks of the devil. We have weapons to use against him. We battle against the things of the spirit and not the things of this world, we have to utilize the weapons of our warfare. One of them is our testimony.

Be free when you tell your testimony, because it is good. I hope this has encouraged you. Do not be ashamed!