

The Christian in a Lost World: Your Personal Testimony

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

Under the influence of the Holy Ghost, Solomon wrote “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Proverbs 22:1). The subject he was dealing with is what we call our personal testimony. When you first got saved, your testimony was your story of what God had done for you to make of you a new creature. Beyond this, and more importantly, it is your statement before the world regarding who you are now and what things are important to you now. You make this statement with your words, your thoughts, and your deeds.

The greatest testimony we can achieve is that which Enoch had as recorded in Genesis 5:21–24. Enoch pleased God so much that he was spared the experience of death. He was the first man to enter eternity through a rapture experience.

When you were born again, you became a representative of God on Earth. This should be a very sobering thought because it is an awesome responsibility. Scriptures tell us that we are now ambassadors of the Kingdom of God to a lost world (2 Corinthians 5:20). We no longer have the right to do whatever we want to. We must always consider what is best for the Kingdom we represent. Our Lord bought us with His own precious blood and we owe Him our complete allegiance (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1).

If you have not noticed already, you no doubt soon will realize that once it becomes known that you are a child of God, people will forever be watching you and pointing out every deviation from the Word of God. You have become a target, a marked person. You no longer fit well in this world and have become only a pilgrim passing through; a stranger in a strange land (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). Therefore you might as well make up your mind to be the best ambassador for your King that you can be. There is great reward in this as we saw in Lesson 13.

I. Your Testimony Before the World

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”

(Matthew 5:13–16).

Our Savior has commanded us to be salt and light to the world. If we will obey this commandment, God will be glorified and others will be won to Him (1 Peter 3:1–2).

Philippians 2:14–16; Colossians 4:6

A. In word

The things you talk about and the language you use tell a lot about where your heart is. Because the world is watching, you need to choose your words wisely and carefully. You must try to avoid using foul or offensive language because when unsaved people hear this coming from your lips, they normally will react by reassuring themselves that you are no different than anybody else. They will then conclude that you have nothing to offer them.

Psalms 19:14; Colossians 3:8–10; Philippians 1:27

B. In thought

“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:18–19).

If you do not control your thought life, according to these verses, your mouth will betray you. You must learn to put ungodly thoughts out of your mind. If this becomes a problem for you, you must make it a matter of urgent prayer and spend more time in Christian fellowship with others and in reading the word of God.

Proverbs 12:5; 15:26; 21:5; Philippians 4:8

C. In deed

You must guard your testimony in every situation from the ordinary to the unusual.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

1. At work or school

This is the situation where peer pressure will be the greatest. It is the most important area to conquer. If you can live for Christ in this arena, you can do it anywhere

2. In the home

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8).

The ministry to family is the first responsibility of most Christians. If you do not minister properly to your family, you are not ready to minister anywhere else.

3. In social situations

“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:9–11).

If you will live what you preach, you will have many opportunities to share with others their need for a personal savior. But, you must not compromise your faith when involved in social situations. If this becomes a problem area, you would be better off to break off any relationships that cause you to stumble as a Christian.

a. With friends

Many times after a person has been saved, his (or her) friends will stop being as friendly. It may be time to make new friends. Really good friendships will last. However, these friends can be a problem if they are constantly urging you to do things you know you should not do. You need to be very careful in these relationships and commit the situation to the Lord in earnest prayer.

James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17

b. Shopping, driving, etc.

These are the type of situations where many tend to let down their guard and be more like the world. You never know when your actions will be observed and something you may do in anger or frustration may cause someone to turn away from the Lord.

c. On vacation

Sometimes when we are far from home, we may feel a special temptation to indulge in some of the worldly pleasures we had renounced when we were saved. The devil knows how to twist every situation to our disadvantage. It is important to remember then why we gave these things up. We did it to please our God, not to win the favor of our new peer group. We must be careful to make pleasing God our only motive for the way we behave.

Romans 6:12–14

d. At parties

Parties present a very special problem in maintaining a strong testimony. The whole idea of a party is to have fun. To many people this means “letting your hair down” and doing things you would not normally do. Even Christians sometimes get caught up in this spirit and behave poorly at parties where mostly Christians have come together. It is a good idea to leave the party early when you feel that behavior is becoming inappropriate. Normally, it is a good idea not to accept an invitation to a worldly party that doesn't have some kind of a theme or reason. For instance, Tupperware or birthday parties are often quite harmless whereas attending a party just for the sake of having fun will likely be a spiritual disaster.

Galatians 5:19–21; 1 Peter 4:1–4

D. Submit to authorities

“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Romans 13:7).

1. Government

A number of Christians have become quite militant against what they consider repressive government policies. In some cases, they may be making a legitimate stand for righteousness. However, in many cases the object may be to discuss resistance to such routine issues as paying taxes or owning guns. Be very careful if you are approached by a fellow Christian to become involved in some kind of activist group. Our Lord as well as the apostle Paul gave us some pretty clear guidelines regarding our response to government. We must live by those guidelines and not let mere men become our consciences or worse yet try to assume the role of our Teacher, the Holy Ghost, in our lives.

Matthew 22:15–21; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–15

2. Husband

This can be a difficult area for some women. The Bible takes a very strong position that the man is the head of the family unit. His wife must submit to his will in all family decisions that do not cause her to sin against God. The Word of God makes no allowance for the woman whose husband seems to make poor decisions. She must abide by his will and make the best of the situation. Sometimes the only way to bear up under such a situation is to remember that she is doing this to please her Lord and that she will be rewarded for her obedience at the Judgment Seat of Christ. On the other hand, a woman should always realize that some decisions have extenuating circumstances that she may not be aware of. It is important for a family to have strong leadership and leadership by committee does not work in many instances. If you have a problem in this area, our advice is to memorize, and determine to live by, Proverbs 3:5–6.

Ephesians 5:22–24; Colossians 3:18–19

3. Parents

This area of submission is much like the one just discussed. A child that is still being raised by his or her parents must submit to their rules whenever they do not conflict with the laws of God. After a child is on his own, he must make his own decisions, but he must always remember to honor his parents for the sacrifices they may have made for him.

Colossians 3:20–21

4. Pastor

Your pastor is the spiritual leader assigned to you by the Lord God. When he stands in the pulpit, he stands “in God’s stead.” His job is to present the Word of God in such a way that you will understand its message. As long as you stay in his church, you must be in subjection to him. If you believe he is not properly representing the Word of God, you should discuss it with him. If there is a difference of opinion that cannot be resolved, you may need to look for a different church. In no case should you undermine his position in the eyes of the rest of the congregation.

*1 Corinthians 16:15–16; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Hebrews
13:17*

5. Boss

One final area in which you must be careful to obey and respect authority is at work. This often gives a powerful opportunity to show the love of God in your life to your fellow workers. It is almost a national pastime in this country to criticize the boss. You will stand out just by not being critical. Your contented, noncritical demeanor will bring lots of questions which will give you the opportunity to explain that your relationship with your Savior gives you the grace to bear up under every circumstance of life. Your fellow workers just may see that they need what you’ve got.

E. Avoid the very appearance of evil

*“Abstain from all appearance of evil”
(1 Thessalonians 5:22).*

Sometimes, you will find that certain otherwise harmless things you may want to do are perceived as evil by the world. In these cases you must give up that thing to please God and man.

F. Let the world see Christ Jesus through your life

*“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil”
(1 Thessalonians 5:15–22).*

2 Corinthians 6:1–10; Galatians 6:10

II. Your Testimony Before the Church

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

A. Follow your Pastor

Your pastor is responsible for the well-being of your soul and for your growth as a Christian. He has this responsibility for every body in the congregation that God has given him. He can only carry out this responsibility if you will do your part in supporting him and living by his decisions in areas of ministry. You must never, under any circumstances, cause division or mutiny in the church. If you don't like what's going on, the Bible has given guidelines on how to handle the situation. Study these verses and remember that the final solution to a problem may be for you to leave.

*Ezekiel 3:17; 2 Corinthians 1:21; Philippians 2:29;
Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:13*

B. Set an example for others

As you mature in your Christian walk you may notice that new Christians are watching you. They are trying to learn what proper behavior for a Christian is. You must be careful not to lead them into bad habits. On the other hand, older Christians may become careless in their walk. Your careful walk with the Lord may be a reproach to them and cause them to straighten out their lives.

*Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:9;
1 Peter 5:6*

1. Don't boast over accomplishments

When you achieve a great or exciting victory for the Lord, be careful not to boast about your spirituality and your value to the Kingdom of God. You may lose your heavenly reward if you receive it here on Earth (Matthew 6:1–6). Furthermore, it is up to God whether you should receive the praise of men for what you have done (1 Peter 5:6). You must remember that you can do nothing of value without the help of God (John 15:5). You are only the instrument or the tool that He has chosen to work with (Romans 6:13). A. W. Tozer, an excellent and well known Christian author has written on pages 70–72 of his book, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*, the following on this subject:

Boasting is particularly offensive when it is heard among the children of God, the one place above all others where it should never be found. Yet it is quite common among Christians, though disguised somewhat by the use of the stock expression, "I say this to the glory of God. . . ."

God is very patient with His children and often tolerates them in carnal traits so gross as to shock their fellow Christians. But that is only for a while. As more light comes to our hearts, and especially as we go on to new and advanced spiritual experiences, God begins to impose disciplines upon us to purge us from the same faults He tolerated before. Then He permits us to say and do things that react unfavorably against us and expose our vanity for what it is. It may then happen in the providential will of God that the very gift we have boasted of may be lost to us or the project we are so proud of will fail. After we have learned our lesson the Lord may restore what He has taken away, for He is more concerned with our souls than with our service. But sometimes our boasting permanently hurts us and excludes us from blessings we might have enjoyed.

2. Avoid false humility

Tozer goes on to write:

Another habit not quite so odious is belittling ourselves. This might seem to be the exact opposite of boasting, but actually is the same old sin traveling under a nom de plume. It is simply egoism trying to act spiritual. It is impatient Saul hastily offering an unacceptable sacrifice to the Lord.

Self-derogation is bad for the reason that self must be there to derogate. Self, whether swaggering or groveling, can never be anything but hateful to God.

Boasting is an evidence that we are pleased with self; belittling, that we are disappointed in it. Either way we reveal that we have a high opinion of ourselves. The belittler is chagrined that one as obviously superior as he should not have done better, and he punishes himself by making uncomplimentary remarks about himself. That he does not really mean what he says can be proved quite easily. Let someone else say the same things. His eager defense of himself will reveal how he feels and has secretly felt all the time.

The victorious Christian neither exalts nor downgrades himself. His interests have shifted from self to Christ. What he is or is not no longer concerns him. He believes that he has been crucified with Christ and he is not willing either to praise or deprecate such a man.

3. Don't be a "respector of persons"

A Christian must not only be concerned with how he presents himself, he must also be concerned with how he approaches others. We are to give honor to whom honor is due, but we are not to go beyond and give honor to persons of high estate that is not due to them. When not in their position of honor they are to be considered as no better or no worse than any other person.

For instance, if a man is a judge in his secular life we should treat him with the respect due to a judge when he is in his courtroom. However, when he comes to church, the usher should not ask another man to move just so the judge can sit in his favorite pew. In the church he is just one out of the many children of God present.

Ephesians 5:21; 1 Timothy 5:21

C. Be willing to accept responsibilities your good testimony has earned for you

As you mature in the Lord, He will offer you positions of greater responsibility and service. These positions will demand a greater commitment of time and resources. Don't say no to these opportunities due to false humility or because you feel unable to carry them out. The Lord will supply all your need if you will only trust Him. Sometimes such opportunities may not be offered again. Take them in His time rather than in your time.

2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:19

D. Don't become a stumblingblock for others

We have dealt with this important area in regards to your testimony before the world. It is just as important that you not provide a stumblingblock for Christians as it is for the lost. Paul wrote:

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:13).

This should be our testimony before our brothers and sisters in Christ as well.

III. Your Testimony Before Heaven

Just as your testimony before the world and the Church are important, your testimony before heaven should be important to you too. The primary purpose for maintaining a good testimony should be the same as that of Enoch in the opening verse of this lesson. Enoch pleased God. If we will seek that testimony then all the other points in this lesson will naturally follow.

A. God knows every thought and intent of your heart

You cannot hide anything from God. He knows your heart and your thoughts. Furthermore, God will not bless you if your motives for what you do are wrong or if your thought life is improper. If you will bear this in mind, it will help you to grow morally as well as spiritually.

Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 9:4; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 4:2

B. The cloud of witnesses

In Hebrews chapter 11 we find a litany of saints that pleased God through their great faith. The point of the chapter is found in the last two verses which state:

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39–40).

Those Old Testament saints did not have the completed Bible or the knowledge of the New Covenant which we have today. Their faith is therefore a witness against we Christians who do not live in the faith as we ought to despite so much more knowledge. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves when we don't live up to their example. The story continues with these key verses:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

C. Give God the glory for your accomplishments

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:4–5).

As we discussed earlier, part of maintaining a good testimony is to be humble when you have accomplished something for God. As these verses indicate, we can do nothing on our own. It is only as we make ourselves available to God that He uses us as “vessels” to accomplish His purposes. Therefore we must be careful to give the glory to God who has truly earned it.

Acts 9:15; Romans 9:23; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 10:18; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6

IV. Learn Behavior from Good Examples

Having read all this, you may be wondering how you can possibly learn to live properly in the faith when the Bible is such a large book and often speaks in general terms rather than specifics. This can present a difficult problem to someone who is alone in their Christian faith. It is important to find good Christian fellowship to use as an example. There are several ways you can accomplish this no matter what your circumstances may be.

A. Read good, spiritually uplifting literature

In presenting these lessons we have quoted several good Christian authors. We feel safe in recommending any of their works. However a note of caution must be inserted here. Many Christian authors may have built their works around incorrect doctrines. You need to know the material in the previous lesson and then to ask the Holy Ghost to give you discernment when reading anything other than the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 5:14).

B. Apply Bible stories to your own life

Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, Paul wrote:

*“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:
and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the
ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).*

Almost everything that was included in the Bible has a lesson in it for us to learn. If you will read the Bible stories with this thought in mind, then everything, whether from the Old Testament or the New, will be more meaningful and more valuable for you personally. The Bible is our FINAL authority.

*John 13:15; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Galatians 4:22–31; James
5:10; 1 Peter 2:21*

C. Befriend godly people

This is a very important thing to do. The more time you spend with the people of God, the less you will be tempted to do worldly things. Also, you need not worry about being rejected by someone who is truly a godly person because that person will realize that we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are exhorted over and over in the Bible to love one another as brothers and sisters.

John 13:34; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 4:7

D. Follow your Pastor

It is important to attend church regularly and listen to the message that your Pastor brings to you. A wise pastor will give much godly advice and often show proper responses to very specific situations. He should be a primary source of information about your daily walk as a Christian.

1 Peter 5:1–3

