

How to Share Your Testimony

if you were Saved at a Young Age or if you feel like Your Testimony is “Boring”

- So...God didn't save you out of a life of drugs, sex, and gambling?
- You weren't an atheist who converted to faith in Jesus while reading ancient philosophy and thinking about the despair of the world?
- You didn't live a fake religious life for years and then later in life receive the gift of true salvation by grace through faith in Jesus?

All of those are amazing and inspiring stories! But they're not the only stories.

If you were saved at a young age (let's say before 16, just to throw out an arbitrary number), or the circumstances seemed very normal, it can be intimidating when asked to share your testimony.

“Um...I attended Sunday School, learned the Bible stories, experienced conviction, said I wanted to be saved, prayed to trust in Jesus, and was baptized. Thanks for coming to my TED talk.”

How can we speak about early-life conversion in a way that is accurate, biblical, and compelling?

3 Preliminary Questions

1. *Can a young child really respond to the Gospel?*
 - a. Yes. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not the level of knowledge or intellect a person has. Whether a child or an adult, we all come to know more about the Gospel in the years following salvation than we knew at the time of salvation.
 - b. Often, confusion that kids face about early-life conversion has more to do with a lack of discipleship after baptism than with an insincere commitment to Christ as a kid.
2. *As a young child, can you really understand sin and salvation?*
 - a. A certain number of sins does not need to accumulate before a person truly understands conviction and repentance.
 - b. Kids are able to recognize a need for salvation (including the realities of sin and the impact of death and brokenness in the world), even if they lack life experiences.
3. *Aren't children easily manipulated and susceptible to peer pressure?*
 - a. Yes, they can be manipulated and pressured...but so can adults.
 - b. When sharing the Gospel with kids, we should be particularly careful not to confuse or pressure them. However, children are certainly capable of understanding and responding to the Gospel.

*If you are interested in studying further about the theology of salvation for kids, former Emmaus staff member Adam Harwood has written extensively on this subject. You might not agree with all of his conclusions, but I definitely appreciate his approach in multiple articles and books.

3 Suggestions for Sharing Your Early-Life or “Boring” Conversion Story

1. *Don't Apologize or Exaggerate* - Tell your story...not the story you wish you had. Christianity is marked by the same Gospel message for every person, but our stories are unique.
2. *“This is what my life might've looked like without Jesus”* - As we age, we often catch glimpses (through temptation, doubts, life-experiences, etc) of what our life might've been without God's salvation through Christ. We are able to sense the weight of sin and savor the hope of the Gospel, even if we came to faith at a young age. Share some of your struggles and growth.
3. *Show how Faith in Christ empowered you to steer clear of “junk,” and how this faith allowed you to endure suffering and fully enjoy the good things of life.* - Don't be embarrassed by having a testimony mostly free of sin's destructive impact. You aren't saying your life has been perfect; you're simply showing how faith in Christ helped you deal with temptation and avoid a lot of the “junk” that other people wish they could've steered clear of. Plus, you will be able to talk about how faith in Christ sustained you through hard times (life in Christ isn't easy!) and how faith allowed you to enjoy the good gifts that God provides His people in His creation.

1 Major Caution about Sharing Your Early-Life Conversion Story

*Caution = *Having a “Long-Ago Story” but nothing to speak of since then**

You know the person. They tell stories from 25 years ago. Not that there's anything wrong with stories from 25 years ago. The problem is the person hasn't experienced anything new in the past 25 years. This scenario is funny and harmless when it's a “has-been” athlete telling stories from high school. It's dangerous, though, when this scenario describes how a person talks about faith in Jesus.

When *all we can say* is, “I prayed a prayer at VBS” (which is a great thing, by the way) -- or, “I was baptized as a 2nd grader” (again, a good thing) -- or, “My grandparents took us to church when we were little” (yes, also a good thing), this should be a serious caution flag.

In Scripture, key markers of saving faith are fruit and endurance. Not perfection; but enduring faith, wise obedience, connection to Christ's Church, and growth in spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts.

When sharing about an early-life conversion, it's good to show how faith in Jesus has shaped and guided your life. Those converted at an older age or out of difficult circumstances might be able to testify to God's **radical forgiveness**; but a long-time Christian is able to testify to God's **radical faithfulness**.

Don't be embarrassed to speak about your simple faith and conversion as a child. But, take a close look at your soul if the only thing you can talk about is what happened when you were younger. If your faith hasn't endured, grown, or produced fruit, you might be in a perfect position to have one of those “cool” testimonies as you realize your need for God's true salvation through faith in Christ!