

YOUTH BECOMING LEADERS

High School Christian Leadership and Global Transformation Institute

TESTIMONY SHARING

OVERVIEW

A testimony is a formal sharing of one's own account of a significant life experience in which they describe who they were before the event, the event itself, and how the event shaped who they are now. Testimony sharing is an opportunity to help young people practice the biblical discipline of sharing what God has done in their lives while building authentic community. This practice creates an environment where adolescents can be known, seen, and understood, while also giving members of the group opportunities to listen to, encourage, and celebrate one another.

During the first meeting, teach teenagers how to develop a short, audience-appropriate testimony about Jesus' impact on their lives. Provide resources and guidance to help them write, practice, and prepare their testimonies.

Throughout the remainder of the program, trips, semester meetings (weekly bible study or youth group), or whatever may best fit your context, provide opportunities for teenagers and leaders to share their testimonies with the entire community during the worship time or worship services. Create a supportive environment that encourages the group to listen attentively and respond with respect, prayer, and encouragement.

As testimonies are shared, invite the community to notice where God is at work in each person's story. Create space in a small group (a group of one leader and 5-8 teenagers) time after testimonies are shared for prayer, worship, or reflection, allowing participants to respond to the themes and issues they have heard and celebrate God's work together.

Over time, these shared stories can strengthen relationships, deepen faith, and encourage participants to recognize and share how Jesus is working in their own lives.

OBJECTIVES

1. Reflect on and recognize God's work.
2. Building authentic community where people are known, accepted and belong.
3. Recognize how testimony can hold power and encourage others and glorify God.

Set Up Time:

About an hour or less is needed to set up this activity. This time allows the facilitator to prepare the materials needed to teach the session and create a sign-up sheet for students to select when they will share their testimony.

Length of Activity Time:

While testimonies can vary in length depending on the details and stories shared, this resource recommends training the group to give a three-minute testimony. This time frame may be perfect for your context or you may wish to give participants a longer time limit based on the needs of your group. Establishing a time limit helps group members remain focused Christ's impact on their lives while also making the best use of the group program time.

For a group of approximately 35–40 young people and 8–10 adult leaders consider scheduling 4–5 testimonies each time. This typically takes about 15–20 minutes of each worship gathering. Set aside an additional 10-15 minutes just before each gathering for those sharing their testimony to receive prayer from the adult leaders.

Size Range of Group:

The entire group, including leaders, should participate in sharing and listening, but larger groups may need to spread testimony sharing across multiple sessions.

RESOURCES

Materials Needed:

- Handouts:
  - Worksheet for participant to use to guide development of testimony.
  - Testimony Sharing Resource Card. See attached.
- Pens
- Papers
- Sign-up sheet
- Timer
- Any items to teach the session, such as PowerPoint, whiteboard, etc.



Space Set Up:

A classroom or teaching space is best for the initial testimony training, providing an environment where everyone can learn the principles of testimony sharing, develop their testimonies, and practice with one another.

For testimony sharing, a worship setting is preferred. Testimonies can be incorporated into a worship service, allowing the entire community to listen, celebrate what God is doing, encourage one another, and worship together.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Initial Training:

During the first meeting, teach a session on how to give a three-minute testimony. Use the guidelines provided in the Testimony Sharing Resource Card to teach participants how to develop and share their testimonies. Depending on your teaching style, a PowerPoint presentation may be helpful for teaching and expanding on the points from the Testimony Sharing Resource Card.

Establish clear boundaries for testimony sharing, including guidelines for how those listening should respond. As the facilitator, be prepared to support participants who may choose to share about difficult or sensitive experiences. Before beginning the activity, identify appropriate resources that can be offered if a participant needs additional support, such as a trusted adult, support group, counselor, or therapist.

Pass out the accompanying handout and give participants time to begin writing and organizing their testimonies. If they do not finish during the allotted meeting time, encourage them to complete the handout on their own.

If time allows, invite two staff members or adult leaders to share their testimonies first. This provides participants with examples of the process and helps model what an appropriate testimony can look like. Consider choosing testimonies that are different from one another while still fitting the general culture and context of the group. For example, one leader might share a testimony of significant life transformation, while another might share a testimony of growing up with a consistent faith in Christ.

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Conclude the teaching session by allowing participants to sign up for a time to share their testimonies. Consider having adult leaders share first, followed by older or more mature participants.

Preparing to Share:

After the initial session, have participants complete their testimonies on their own. Before sharing with the larger group, encourage each participant to practice their completed testimony with a leader.

If you have a team of adult leaders, consider meeting with them as part of the preparation process to discuss how to help participants determine what is appropriate to share with the larger group. Remind leaders that a testimony does not require full disclosure of every detail of a person's experience. Participants can describe difficult or sensitive experiences in ways that protect their privacy while still communicating how God has worked in their lives. A testimony is meant to point to Jesus, not simply recount difficult experiences.

The leader should help the participant identify confusing points, remove portions that do not contribute to the overall testimony, and consider whether the content is appropriate for the intended audience and age group. This preparation should support both the participant sharing the testimony and those who will hear it.

Sharing Testimonies:

Throughout the remainder of the program, trip, or semester, provide opportunities for participants to share their testimonies during worship. Consider having approximately 4–6 participants share during each gathering, or adjust the number based on the available time and the needs of your context.

Have a staff member or adult leader stand with each participant while they share. The leader can help the participant keep track of time, provide encouragement, and help them feel calm and supported. A timer that is visible only to the person sharing can help them stay within the designated time. Avoid using an audible alarm when the time limit is reached, as this can be distracting or unsettling for the person sharing.

What if the activity is bombing?

To help the testimony-sharing experience go well, encourage participants to practice their testimonies with a leader before sharing with the larger group. Leaders can offer feedback by identifying confusing points, highlighting portions that may not contribute to the overall testimony, and helping participants clarify what they want to communicate. It may also be helpful to have participants submit a written copy of their testimony as they prepare, giving them an opportunity to organize and think through what they want to share.

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To help create an environment where participants feel safe sharing without fear of judgment, discuss expectations with the entire group before testimony sharing begins. Establish clear guidelines for how participants should respond when someone is sharing, such as listening attentively, refraining from jokes or distracting behavior, and respecting the privacy of what is shared.

Remind the group that a person's testimony should never become a reason to exclude, judge, or treat them differently.

Evaluation:

The effectiveness of testimony sharing can be evaluated through facilitator observation, participant reflection, and the testimonies themselves. Adult leaders can observe whether participants are able to recognize and articulate God's work in their lives, communicate their testimonies clearly and appropriately, and remain focused on Christ's impact within the designated time frame.

Facilitators can also observe how the group responds to one another's testimonies, looking for attentive listening, encouragement, celebration, and a growing sense of community.

After all testimonies have been shared, consider inviting the group to reflect on their experience. Questions might include:

• How did sharing your testimony affect your sense of being known by the group?
• What fears or concerns did you have before sharing, and how did those change afterward?
• What did you notice about the way our group listened and responded to one another?
• How has hearing one another's testimonies affected the way you understand or interact with the group?
• What did you learn about God through this experience?

Program and Creator:

This program is shared by Youth Becoming Leaders High School Christian Leadership and Global Transformation Institute.

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