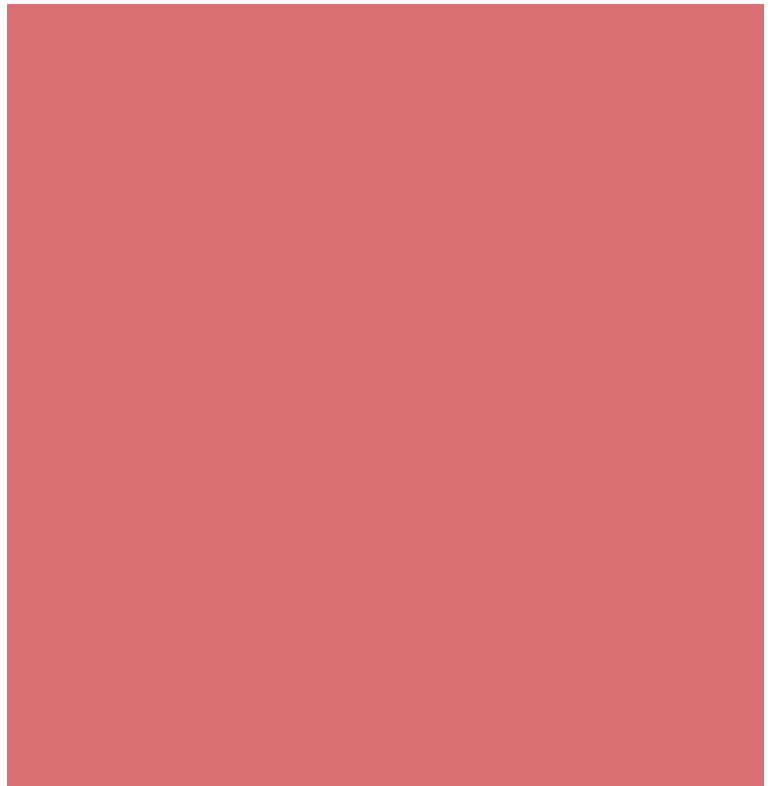


# GUIDING SOMEONE TO WRITE A TESTIMONY

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TOOL



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## WHAT IS A SALVATION TESTIMONY?

A salvation testimony is a particular kind of personal story. It's a story of the most important event and theme in your life as a Christian – how you came to understand and accept the gospel. Beyond being a personal story, it's also God's story. Your testimony is a proclamation of the gospel, and should be Christ-centered. However, it's not always easy knowing where to start, or what to include. Here is one framework to help:

### iTestify: Writing My Personal Salvation Story

We will take a close look at the Parable of the Prodigal Son as a framework for our own spiritual journey.

We will break down each point of the story and then write our own story as it pertains to that gospel theme.



#### Luke 15:11-24 (ESV)

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

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## Rejection of the Father and Asserting My Autonomy

*And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. (Luke 15:12)*

As shocking as it is, the son's cold rejection of the father while taking the father's property is spiritually equivalent to every person who ignores God and lives as his own master. This move--asserting personal autonomy--leaves no room for God in a person's life. It rejects God while taking for granted all that God has provided.

### **Prompts to Help You:**

*E.g. For most of my life I ignored God and this sense that He was there or had anything to do with my life ...*

**My Story:**

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## Desires and Goals Apart from God

*13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.  
(Luke 15:13)*

The younger son now goes to a "far country," to pursue a life apart from his father. We, too, find it easier to pursue whatever our hearts desire away from any notion of a cosmic authority figure. Without God on our radar, we can fulfill our desires for pleasure, fame or wealth purely based on self-interest. Rejecting God and living according to my desires: this is sin. And the Bible says everyone is guilty.

**Romans 3:23 (ESV)** - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

### Prompts to Help You:

*E.g. The ways in which I took my God-given life and used it for my own pleasures and desires ...*

### My Story:

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## Recognizing the Ugliness of Sin

**14** And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.  
(Luke 15:14-16)

Ending up in a pig sty (and even longing for the pigs' food) shows the horror and ugliness of sin. Although people may seem OK and even successful on the outside, man in rebellion against God is in a degraded and enslaved state.

### **Prompts to Help You:**

*E.g. I saw the ugliness of my sins ...*

**My Story:**

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## Turning Point

*17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’  
(Luke 15:17)*

His true condition becomes clear to the prodigal son, and he starts to think about home and father in a different way. The beginning of repentance is to realize that I am a sinner and that I need to return to God.

### **Prompts to Help You:**

What did it take for you to turn toward God, for your heart to be open toward your Heavenly Father, and for you to turn from your self-willed life toward a life ruled by His will? Was there a turning point? Was it gradual, through a series of realizations or incidents? Describe that process.

### **My Story:**

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## Repentance Toward God

*18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." ' (Luke 15:18-19)*

The young man sees that he has sinned against heaven (i.e., God) and against his father. All sin is personal and against God. Our sins matter to God just as much as the younger son's actions mattered personally to his father. Human sin violates God's good design for man, offends His holy character, and wounds His loving heart. Repentance is not just feeling remorse or a sense of shame that you've messed up. It's directed toward God, and involves a personal posture of sorrow and humility toward him.

We never see sin aright until we see it against God.... All sin is against God in this sense: that it is His law that is broken, His authority that is despised, His government that is set at naught... Pharaoh and Balaam, Saul and Judas each said, 'I have sinned'; but the returning prodigal said, 'I have sinned against heaven and before thee'...

- Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, p. 20

## My Story:

# GUIDING SOMEONE TO WRITE A TESTIMONY

## The Cross of Jesus

*20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (Luke 15:20)*

In this story the pain of the father is not directly stated, but all who read the story thoughtfully understand that the father suffers throughout this story. In every act of sin, the offended party suffers. Restoration of the relationship requires the wounded party to swallow the hurt, the offense, the wrong. This voluntary suffering of God is expressed in the cross of Jesus. In the cross, God's just response to human sin and his love for us come together as Jesus is judged and condemned for our sins, and we receive his righteousness as our own.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (ESV)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ... 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The cross is God's ultimate message of love and justice. If you want to know what God is like, behold, you only need to look at the cross... Because he loved us, he came after us in Christ. He pursued us even to the desolate anguish of the cross, where he bore our sin, guilt, judgment and death. It takes a hard and stony heart to remain unmoved by love like that. It is more than love. Its proper name is 'grace,' which is love to the undeserving.

- John Stott, The Cross of Christ, Chapter 3

The cross of Jesus says both that our sins are so bad that it took Jesus to die for us, and that we are so loved that he was willing to do so. The cross of Jesus is our only hope for salvation, and the greatest news for humanity.

### **Prompts to Help You: Personal Reflection On The Cross**

Express your understanding and response to the cross.

E.g. I came to personalize what Jesus did on the cross when.....

**My Story:**



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Grace	
<p>19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” (Luke 19:19)</p>	<p>The prodigal’s experience of feeling unworthy, and then joy at being so totally welcomed is something we can relate to. This is how all Christians feel once they realize the holiness of God, the extent of their sin, and the cost of their forgiveness--Jesus’ death on the cross. This is why the words of that most beloved hymn reads:</p> <p><i>Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.</i></p> <p><i>’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!</i></p> <p><b>Prompts to Help You:</b> Think about the words to the song Amazing Grace. Express your experience with feeling unworthy before God, and being amazed and grateful for the lavish promises of the gospel: that we are completely forgiven of all our sins, and unconditionally accepted as God's son/daughter because of Jesus.</p>
<p><b>My Story:</b></p>	

# GUIDING SOMEONE TO WRITE A TESTIMONY

Child of God	
<p><i>22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:22-24)</i></p>	<p>Now that the young man is back, the father declares his sonship once again. We, too, become adopted into God's family as his children. Salvation is personal, and it means we are restored to a relationship to God as a child to a father.</p> <p><b>John 1:12 (ESV)</b> <i>12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God</i></p> <p><b>Romans 8:1, 15–16 (ESV)</b> <i>1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ... 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.</i></p> <p>All relationships are forever. Once we become a child of God, this is forever, and it's guaranteed not by our continued good performance but by God's unchanging promise.</p> <p><b>Prompts to Help You:</b> Have you trusted that God considers you as he considers Jesus: as His beloved child? Describe how this truth--that you are a child of God--affects how you see yourself, and how you view your future and eternity.</p>
<p><b>My Story:</b></p>	

# GUIDING SOMEONE TO WRITE A TESTIMONY

## Lordship of Christ

**21** And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. **23** And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. **24** For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:21-24)

The younger son rejected home and father for the far country because he wanted to rule his life apart from the father. Returning home, he thought the best he could hope for was to be one of the hired servants. So we can imagine his surprise at being restored to sonship. The story does not go beyond the celebration to tell us what happened, but the attitude the returned prodigal would have had is clear. It would have been gratitude, total devotion to the father, and a glad willingness to do his will. This heart change is equivalent to the decision to dethrone the self and enthrone Jesus as the rightful master and Lord of our lives.

*Following Jesus is not letting Him come into your life to be an influence, even if it's a significant influence. Following Jesus means submitting to Him in all areas at all times regardless of whether you agree with what He says or not. Jesus comes into our lives as "Lord," or not at all. ...*

*Repentance Is Not the Absence of Struggle; It's the Absence of Settled Defiance. [It] is acknowledging that Jesus is Lord of everything as a matter of who He is. Whatever your disagreement with Jesus, He is right and you are wrong [...]. While you may not understand all of His ways yet, you recognize that He makes the rules. Period. [...]*

- J.D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*, p. 64

### **Romans 10:9 (ESV)**

*... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

At the root of all moral sins is the sin of self-assertion against God. In other words, we lived as if we were the master and lord of our lives. Thus, repentance involves a change of heart toward God's authority in our lives. In other words, you repent of trying to be the master of your own life, and you turn over the Lordship of your life to Jesus.

C.S. Lewis puts it this way:

*Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.*

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book 4, Chapter 9

## Personal prayer

**Write out a personal prayer of commitment pledging yourself to the Lordship of Jesus over every aspect of your life.**

# GUIDING SOMEONE TO WRITE A TESTIMONY

## GUIDELINES ON WRITING A SALVATION TESTIMONY

Based on what you wrote in the "YOUR STORY" sections, you are now ready to write your own salvation story. For the most part the main content will be what you already wrote above, but you may want to add some additional narrative details. Here are some guidelines to be mindful of.

- **Length:** around 2–4 pages
- **Style & tone:** Please use simple and plain language. Highly stylized, flowery or dramatic prose is not appropriate because it is a testimony—i.e., giving witness to what happened—for which a plain, straightforward style is best. The tone should not be self-promoting but should focus on honoring God's work in bringing you to Him.
- **Truthfulness:** Sometimes people can get carried away by their own writing and can overstate things. So please be sure that what you are writing is objective and true.
- **Personal background:** Descriptions of your background should be brief and should relate to the gospel; it should not be a lengthy detailing of every period of your life.
- **Understandable to non-Christians:** Don't use overly religious terminology or jargon