



# SHARING SCRIPTURE

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### **Winsome Witnesses: The Power of Personal Testimony**

**For use:** July 5 - July 11

**Texts:** Mark 5:15-20; Mark 16:1-11; Acts 4:1-20; 1 John 1:1-3; Galatians 2:20; Acts 26:1-32

When Benjamin Mack-Jackson was in 5th grade, there were only two pages about World War II in his history textbook. At 13 years old, Benjamin decided he needed more, so he began interviewing veterans himself. The veterans love speaking to a young person, and so Benjamin, at 15, began the World War II Veterans History Project, recording their stories to teach his peers about the importance of veterans and history.

Since 2017, he has interviewed hundreds of World War II veterans. He's created documentary videos for his website (<https://ww2veteranshistoryproject.com>), spoken at schools, civic organizations, veterans clubs, and libraries, and created the Traveling Museum of WWII. One of his goals is to preserve one of the last remaining Higgins Boat landing crafts that stormed the beaches of Normandy. As World War II veterans pass from the scene, Benjamin preserves their testimonies for future generations. [1]

There is power in personal testimonies. Eyewitness accounts and personal experiences impact our lives in ways that no other story can. This week's lesson begins by reflecting that people may debate our theology or our understanding of the Bible, but they cannot dispute our personal experience. They may even scoff at the existence of God, but they have to acknowledge the power of God when they see that power at work in our changed lives.

Personal experiences and testimonies are as unique and varied as there are individual people. No two people have the same conversion experience, though there may be some general similarities. Some have a "Damascus

Road” conversion like Saul. They can look back and identify the exact circumstances, the day and even the time of their change of heart. Like Martin Luther in the lightning storm, their dramatic experiences are indelibly etched in their memories and they can recount to others the details of their testimony of God’s active intervention in their lives.

Others, however, experience a more subtle decision to make a commitment to Christ. Many may think they are not truly converted without that dramatic “lightning bolt” moment. Speaking of the Holy Spirit’s work, Ellen White offers this word of counsel in those cases: “A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted.... Little by little, perhaps unconsciously to the receiver, impressions are made that tend to draw the soul to Christ.” (DA p.172)

Whether by “lightning bolt” moments or baby steps, each individual experience will make a powerful impression on someone who needs to hear our testimony about Jesus and the Holy Spirit’s work on our hearts and in our lives. Not every testimony will reach everybody, but the witness of God’s power in our lives will make an impact on *somebody*.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://ysa.org/everyday-young-hero-benjamin-mack-jackson/>

## For Reflection

**Connecting:** When was the last time someone’s personal experience really got your attention? What impact did it have on your life? Why do you think it affected you as it did?

**Sharing:** Why do you think the disciples didn’t initially believe the testimonies of the women who found the empty tomb, and Mary who spoke to the risen Jesus (Mark 16:1-11)?

1. In their cultural context, the testimony of a woman didn’t hold the same credibility as that of a man
2. It just seemed too incredible to be true; too much to absorb in a short time
3. They thought Jesus wouldn’t reveal Himself to the women rather than to one of the “chosen” disciples
4. Sometimes we have to mull over a testimony we hear before we can fully accept it
5. If Jesus has power over life and death then Jesus also has the authority to judge our lives, and the disciples were not proud of their recent cowardly actions
6. Other:

**Applying:** Take some time to individually fill in these blanks: Before I found Jesus my life was \_\_\_\_\_; When I accepted Jesus my life became \_\_\_\_\_; Now my life is \_\_\_\_\_. If able and willing, please share your thoughts with your group.

**Valuing:** How do you feel about sharing your experience with others? Are you able to live out your witness in ways that attract people's attention? Pray that God will help you feel comfortable in authentically sharing who you are in Christ.

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