

What Is a Testimony?

4- It is important to understand what a testimony is and what a testimony is not. First, it is not an exhortation, a call to repentance, a travelogue, a sermon, or an instruction. It is a simple, direct declaration of belief—a feeling, an assurance, a conviction. It is usually stated in the first person, *I*, followed by a strong verb expressing belief, such as “I know that ...,” “I testify that ...,” “I bear testimony that ...,” or “I have a strong assurance that ...” You probably have heard special witnesses of Jesus Christ use the words “I give you my witness that ...” or “I witness that ...” Testimonies are often most powerful when they are short, concise, and direct.

5- Consider the following examples from the scriptures. Note that these testimonies appear in the context of other messages—at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end.

6- *“This is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—that by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God”* (D&C 76:22–24; italics added).

7- *“I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth”* (Alma 5:48; italics added).

8- *“And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it”* (Alma 34:8; italics added).

9- *“For I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day”* (Alma 36:3; italics added).

10- Other examples are found in Jacob 7:12, Alma 7:8 and Alma 36:30, and Joseph Smith—History 1:25.

Making Testimony a Part of Your Teaching

11- To be able to teach by the convincing, converting power of the Holy Ghost, you must have a testimony of what you are teaching. President David O. McKay said: “It is your duty to teach that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world, that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and that to him in this last dispensation there appeared God the Father and his Son in person. Do you believe it? Do you feel it? Does that testimony radiate from your being? ... If so, that radiation will give life to the people whom you go to teach. If not, there will be a dearth, a drought, a lack of that spiritual environment in which the Saints grow. ... You can teach effectively only that which you yourselves feel” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 190).

12- You can obtain a testimony and continue to strengthen it by (1) studying the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, (2) praying, (3) fasting, and (4) obeying God’s commandments. You will also see that your testimony becomes stronger as you continue to share it.

13- As you prepare to teach each lesson, pray for the Spirit to help you know when to share your most sacred feelings. You may be prompted to bear testimony several times during a lesson, not just at the conclusion.

Testimony Inspires Testimony

14- In bearing testimony by what you say and do, you help motivate others to strengthen their own testimonies. A full-time missionary wrote the following

letter to a man who had been his teacher the year before he began his missionary service:

15- “I know you are a person who doesn’t seek any praise, honor, or recognition. But I hope you will allow me to express heartfelt thanks for our class in which we studied the Book of Mormon. I recall time and time again your testifying that although many discard the Book of Mormon because they suppose it to be poorly written or inferior in its ideas, the Book of Mormon has inherent beauty and unequaled depth. In the class and in my personal study I came to love this book. I remember sitting in your class, just waiting for you to bear testimony of some plain and simple truth. I remember when we studied Alma 32 and you bore your testimony of how the seed of truth can grow in all of us. When you bore your testimony, you allowed the Spirit to witness to me the truth of the principle.

16- “Now here I am, one month into my mission, and I have a burning testimony of the Book of Mormon. What I have received is not merely spiritual reserve which will waste away. You led me to the tree of life. Like Lehi, you wanted nothing more than to help others partake of it. That’s what touched me so much—I could see the blessings of the fruit in your life.”

Teaching with Testimony

Teaching, No Greater Call (1999), pp. 43-44

"Lesson 7: Teaching with Testimony," Part B: Basic Principles of Gospel Teaching—Teach by the Spirit, ()

1- “The crowning, convincing, converting power of gospel teaching is manifest,” said Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “when an inspired teacher says, ‘I know by the power of the Holy Ghost, by the revelations of the Holy Spirit to my soul, that the doctrines I have taught are true’” (*The Promised Messiah* [1978], 516–17).

2- President Brigham Young learned this truth before he was baptized a member of the Church. The testimony of a humble missionary helped him feel the converting power of the Holy Ghost. He later recalled, “When I saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, ‘I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord,’ the Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminated my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality were before me” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:88).

3- President Young was reminded of the power of testimony in his early days as a missionary. He observed: “I had only traveled a short time to testify to the people, before I learned this one fact, that you might prove doctrine from the Bible till doomsday, and it would merely convince a people, but would not convert them. You might read the Bible from Genesis to Revelations, and prove every iota that you advance, and that alone would have no converting influence upon the people. Nothing short of a testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost would bring light and knowledge to them—bring them in their hearts to repentance. Nothing short of that would ever do” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:327).

