

When you hear the word "testimony" what comes to your mind? I attended an Evangelical college, so testimony was used to describe the moment that you claimed Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior. The problem was that I didn't have one succinct moment. It seemed like everyone else, in sharing their testimony, had a singular moment where they turned away from who they once were. In most of these instances there was some sort of dramatic moment where Jesus appeared to them, they repented, and life has never been the same.

That is not my testimony. I grew up in a Christian home where I was in church from the very beginning of my life. The first pastor I ever remembered passed away recently, but before doing so, at my ordination, he gifted me with the stole that he wore when he baptized me, a few short weeks after I was born. I remember learning about Jesus's love for me in Sunday School and knowing, deeply knowing, that it was true.

When I was in high school, I was invited to a Bible Study, where I joined with so many other young people craving to learn the word of God, that we out grew our leader's living room and home, until the church eventually had a trailer we could all meet in once a week. It was there I learned more about the scripture that rooted me in the love of Christ.

In college, I felt a tug to set aside the plans that I had for my life and pursue ministry, something that I never imagined, but was truly a calling from God. My testimony, the story of Jesus speaking into my life, isn't one or two large moments, but an endless series of small moments of sinking more deeply into the love of Christ.

When the author of 1 John is writing to believers about their testimony, he is saying that it isn't rooted in human words or perceptions, but is telling the story ultimately of God. Of God who is greater. Of God who gave his very Son so that you and I can be set free. Our testimony ultimately isn't about you and I - it's about Christ. Who was and who is and who is to come. And that is the source of our lives.

The problem is that we can fall into one of three traps. The first is that we try to out testimony one another. We would sometime get stuck in this cycle at camps or in Bible studies, where one person would share their story only to have the next and the next try to make their story more intense - as if trying to prove that God had saved them more than someone else. This is not the case, dear brothers and sisters. Salvation is a gift from God, that yes, may find us in different places in our lives, but does not rank some as being more saved than others.

The second trap that we can fall into is thinking that we don't have a testimony at all. Friends, if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have a testimony. It may not sound like everyone else's but it is your story of God's grace in your life. Your story of knowing that God has given you eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Which brings us to the third potential trap, not actually taking time to consider what God has done and is doing in our lives. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the day that we don't take time to truly notice God's presence in it or how those moments throughout the day integrate into the ongoing story of God's love, grace, and truth into our lives.

Which is where I want to focus us today. On that third point. For the last three weeks, we have been focusing on John Wesley's Three General Rules, sometimes known as the Three Simple Rules, which he used to shape the people called Methodist. But as we heard last week, as we discussed what it means to "stay in love with God" that there are variety of different practices that we can glean to help us connect more deeply with God. One such practice is called the daily examen. These are short prompts or questions that help us examine our day with God in prayer.

Notice that I said “with”. This is truly a time of inviting God to walk through our day with us, where we ask God to show us how he was acting in our lives, look at our day and ask God to reveal to us where we fell short, and look forward to tomorrow to live again in the grace of God.

When we at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, I invited the congregations I served to engage in the examen together as an act of testimony and hope. Each day, I posted the questions from the daily examen on Facebook to help us reflect upon the day and discern the movement of God’s spirit that we maybe wouldn’t notice if we did not pause and think about it. Each day, we would ask each other -where did you notice the presence of God this week and what brings you hope?

We shared our responses on the internet, in phone conversations throughout the week, in texts. Wherever we could as we intentionally looked for God’s movement in and amongst us.

But the Examen isn’t just for that time. Or other times that are difficult. It is meant for us to focus on God every single day - to lead us to both praise and confession.

Today you should have received a small examen card as you entered into the sanctuary. I want us to take time together to practice seeing God in our daily lives and telling that story. Take a moment to think back over yesterday - where did you see God moving in your life? Where did you fall short? And what brings you hope for today? Then, if you feel comfortable doing so, turn to your neighbor and share.

Friends, this is your testimony. This is your story to tell. Of how God has given you eternal life and is with you every. Single. Day. Amen and amen.