

# Hungary Missions

## Writing Your Personal Story (Testimony)

Please keep the story under *400 WORDS*. Type (double-spaced). Please email your testimony to us: [Info@HungaryMissions.com](mailto:Info@HungaryMissions.com). Email your story as an attachment composed in ANY Word processing system (Microsoft Word is preferred). In the subject line of the email, please show the project you are going to participate in (country and year.) We will also need a digital color photograph of you to put with your testimony.

The first paragraph should be an introduction explaining where you live, some family information (names are not necessary) and what you do (butcher, baker, candlestick maker, etc.) You could also explain that you are glad to be in their country at the invitation of their countrymen.

Your story is best written in story form. The basis of any story is a problem or struggle. Maybe you have had an internal struggle, dealing with grief or pride or guilt. Perhaps you have had an external problem to deal with--a tragedy in your life, either as a result of a choice you've made or something that has happened to you. The end of the story will be how you have been changed by your relationship with God.

This story should be a recent part of your life. It will not necessarily be how you came to salvation, unless that was a recent experience. In general, do not give your exact age at the time of your conversion. You can say "when I was a child," or "as a teenager."

Don't feel that because you haven't had a dramatic struggle in your life, you have nothing to share. Everyone can identify with ordinary problems like living in a marriage, raising children, getting along with co-workers or neighbors, being hurt or betrayed, making a bad choice, or being tempted. Be honest about your struggle. Don't make it seem that since you became a Christian, your life has been problem-free.

Do not try to preach or teach, but rather write in the first person, as if you were talking to a friend who was anxious to hear of your experiences. Remember that **you** are the subject of this personal story. You are the one that was changed through your relationship with a loving God and the power of His Holy Spirit. You will not have the space here to tell all of God's story, but by showing the intersection of your story with God's story at a particular time, you will foster their curiosity and cause them to wonder about their own intersection with God.

Try to avoid expressions that would be unfamiliar to someone who is not involved in church. ("asking Jesus into my heart," "walked down to the front," "got saved," etc.) Do not use Bible references of chapter and verse, or say, "the Bible says." Instead, paraphrase the idea from the Bible text. Emphasize your personal relationship and experiences with God.

Do not assume that people know who Jesus is. You may need to say that Jesus was God living on earth. It is God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) who is with us today, guiding us, giving us comfort and peace, convicting us of our failures, and encouraging us. Most young adults are comfortable with talk of a spiritual dimension or the supernatural.

You might conclude your story by asking if they would like to begin a journey whose destination is not a place but a Person, or if they would like to know more about having a relationship with God. Invite them join you and others on the Journey. Tell them about the community of Believers, followers of Jesus, with whom you are working.

# Suggestions on How to Share Your Testimony

The ideas expressed here are taken from Brian McLaren's book, *More Ready than You Realize*. (Zondervan, 2002)

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Post-modern culture works from a different perspective than does a "modern" culture like America. Instead of a linear approach of steps, or laws, or facts for potential agreement, the post-modern approach is much more relational.

Since the Bible may not be an authority source for your new friend, using it to "prove" an argument is relatively fruitless. Relationships and conversations about deep feelings and thoughts do produce fruit!

It is not helpful to tell a post-modern they are wrong, since absolutes are generally rejected. Respectful listening without arguing will usually be well received.

The purpose of open-ended questions (i.e. cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no") is to establish rapport and discover the spiritual framework of the other person.

The goal of the encounter is not so much a "decision" but rather a connection. It will be wonderful if the conversation leads to connection and the connection leads to a discussion of how one can begin a journey of relationship with God, but if connection is established with the local faith community, that will be very, very good. Trust them to move toward a faith commitment.

Try not to use "churchy" words and don't force your testimony. You can close with an offer to pray for them and ask if there is something specific for which you can pray. Again, don't force prayer or any particular posture for prayer (bowed head, closed eyes, folded hands, holding hands, standing, sitting kneeling, etc.). Just do what seems right for the time and place, as the Holy Spirit guides you.

1. Listen to their story. Cultivate a simple and wholehearted fascination with people. Show respect for them by being interested in their lives, interests, backgrounds. Ask lots of questions. If you feel it is appropriate to talk about spiritual matters, ask a question like, "Do you have a religious background?" Or invite them to talk by saying, "Tell me about your spiritual background." God has been at work in their lives long before you came on the scene, so respect God's previous involvement in their story by learning about it.
2. Tell them your story. It is often best to be very gentle in this by asking permission or opening the door for further conversation, saying something like, "Sometime, if you're interested, I can tell you about my own spiritual journey." Or you can engage their curiosity by saying, "A few years ago, my life took a big turn for the better. I started paying more attention to the spiritual side of life." Or share with them what's going on in your life these days: "I heard a really good message at church yesterday."
3. Tell them God's story. There's nothing better than simply recounting some of the stories from the Bible, especially stories by and about Jesus. I often find myself saying, at various points in a spiritual conversation, "That reminds me of a story Jesus told," or "That reminds me of a story about Jesus."
4. Be an inviter, bringer, and includer. If your [new] friend is interested in learning more, invite him or her to church. Connect the as-of-yet-uncommitted friend to the local church so they can see faith lived out in the lives of Christ's disciples.

# Questions to Advance a Conversation

Conversations and dialog with an evangelistic objective is often most productive if we, the believer, ask questions, rather than giving answers or making statements. Consider the way Jesus carried on a dialog about faith.

Never argue. Respond to an odd or “wrong” answer to a question with a non-judgmental response like “That’s interesting” or “Help me know what you mean by that” or simply, “Thanks”.

Below are some questions that have proven to stimulate a healthy dialog.

1. What is the purpose of your life?
2. What are your thoughts about the spiritual world, the intangibles forces that cannot be seen?
3. Where are you spiritually?
4. If there were a God, what would you want that Being to be like?
5. Do you ever pray?
6. What religious concepts are most attractive to you? Which are least attractive?
7. If you decided to explore spiritual things, explore the possibility of God, how would you go about doing that?
8. What happens when we die? What do you wish would happen when we die?
9. How you evaluate the spiritual experiences of others? (not just traditional Christian, but any)