

HOW TO CREATE TESTIMONIALS THAT DEMONSTRATE YOUR IMPACT AND ATTRACT STUDENTS



**YOUTH
THEOLOGY
NETWORK**

THERE'S A REASON WHY AMAZON, GOOGLE AND YELP REVIEWS ARE SO POPULAR. IT'S THE SAME REASON WHY WORD-OF-MOUTH IS STILL THE MOST VALUABLE FORM OF ADVERTISING, DESPITE ALL OF TODAY'S SOPHISTICATED TARGETING OPTIONS.

Before we invest in a product or service, we all want to know what people like us think and how they feel about it. It may sound like the greatest thing since sliced bread in the description, but if your mom, best friend, or neighbor had a bad experience, you'll likely say no thanks.

This same principle applies to your program.



STUDENTS WILL HAVE PLENTY OF QUESTIONS BEFORE THEY HIT THAT APPLY OR REGISTER BUTTON:

- Is this program the right fit for me?
- Will I find the answers I'm looking for?
- Is this worth my time?
- Who else will be there?
- Will I fit in?

Promoting and marketing your program is incredibly important, but what will really make it stand out is having stellar testimonials from enthusiastic alumni.

If you want to persuade new students to join you, empower former students to speak on your behalf.

GREAT TESTIMONIALS START WITH GREAT QUESTIONS

Whether you choose to have written or video testimonials, always start with good questions. You want to help guide alumni to the type of information that you know will be most valuable for potential attendees.





HERE ARE THE QUESTIONS WE USED IN THE TESTIMONIALS ON THE YTN WEBSITE, WHICH YOU ARE WELCOME TO UTILIZE:

QUESTIONS

- Why did you attend the program?
- What kind of questions or decisions were you struggling with?
- How was your experience during the event?
- What did it feel like to be there?
- What were some of the changes you noticed after participating?
- What happened as a result? How are you different?
- What did you learn about yourself, the world, or ministry at this time?
- Do you feel better equipped for the future after attending? Why or why not?
- What was the best thing about attending?
- How have you engaged in ministry since the program, or how do you plan to be engaged in ministry in the future?
- What advice would you give to someone who wanted to attend?
- Is there anything else you'd like people to know?



QUESTIONS

NO MATTER THE QUESTIONS YOU CHOOSE TO ASK, YOU'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO GET TO THE HEART OF THREE TOPICS:

- Who they were before the program
- What their experience was like during the program
- How they are different after the program.

PRO TIPS

- Be sure to ask open-ended questions that require an explanation, rather than questions that could be answered with a simple yes or no.
- If you are trying to attract those who may be newer to their faith, be mindful of questions that may include language with which they are unfamiliar.
- While you have the student's undivided attention, ask more questions than needed. This gives you not only room for error when their answers may not be what you'd hoped, but gives you additional content to utilize elsewhere.



WRITTEN TESTIMONIALS

There are two formats you can consider for your written testimonials: Q&A and short stories. Neither is right or wrong, but each can serve different purposes.

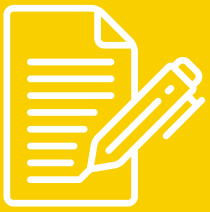


Q&A FORMAT

The Q&A format is exactly as you'd guess. They look more like an interview, and this is the same format we used on the **YTN testimonials**. For our purposes, we liked the interview-style appearance and it felt like we were candidly capturing what the students and alumni said. This method also often requires less editing on your part.

SHORT STORY FORMAT

The short story format is most useful when you want to weave together a narrative for readers. It can be a couple of paragraphs long or much longer, but it flows seamlessly as one account rather than the natural breaks that occur with the Q&A. You may also choose to write it from a first-person or third-person perspective. This format is very powerful, but may require more editing on your part to make sure everything fits together as a single story.



WRITTEN TESTIMONIALS

PRO TIPS

- Include a photo to make the testimonial feel more real, and show off those happy, smiling faces.
- Ask for testimonials for those over the age of 18 to avoid any permissions restrictions for those who are underage.
- Representation matters, so show the diversity you want to attract while also being truthful and careful to not represent a false narrative.
- Because people tend to skim content, use shorter paragraphs and subheads to ensure the text is easy to read, even in the short story format.



VIDEO

WATCH VIDEOS

TESTIMONIALS

If you want to catch a student's attention, use video. You won't be able to connect with every student who visits your website, so this is a terrific alternative to demonstrate the power of your program.

When creating your testimonial videos, you may think that you need to have them professionally produced. And, while that would be nice, it's also not always possible or even entirely necessary, especially as your first effort. Today's smartphones and computer cameras can produce beautiful videos.

Remember, your goal with a video testimonial isn't a sleek experience—it's an authentic one.





VIDEO TESTIMONIALS

PRO TIPS

If your video is being recorded as an interview, you and the alumnus will want to do everything you can on the front end to ensure a seamless experience since it's much harder to edit a video than a written testimonial.

- Make sure you are both well lit and have a strong Wifi signal.
- Keep backgrounds simple and free of clutter so that it's not distracting.
- Keep clothing simple without logos.
- Consider wearing earbuds with a built-in microphone for better quality audio.

The easier option is just to have the student submit a video of themselves talking.

However, if that's the case, you may only want to ask them a couple of questions so that they can speak more naturally.

And because email providers limit file sizes, you may want to [create a Google Form](#) that allows students to upload their video directly to Google Drive for you.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TESTIMONIALS

Once you've done the hard work of creating testimonials, you should use them everywhere possible as part of your marketing strategy.

Don't simply add them to your website and hope visitors will read or watch, or worse yet, forget about them completely. These little gems are rock-solid proof that your program changes lives, so share them every chance you get. (And maybe read or watch them on your hard days, to remind you of why what you do matters.)



HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TESTIMONIALS:

- First and foremost, add them to your website. They can be consolidated on one page or sprinkled throughout multiple pages. Even if you only start with one, it still represents a transformation in a student's life.
- Share them on social media. Here are examples from YTN's [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.
- Include them in emails.
- Paraphrase them in conversations.
- Play the videos or share quotes at events.
- Utilize them in your volunteer recruitment efforts or for fundraising!

There's no doubt that you are a terrific advocate for your program, but you don't need to do all the work yourself. Creating and sharing testimonials will amplify your efforts and your voice.