

Always Ready
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1 Peter 3:8-18 (Key Verse: 1 Peter 3:15)

“Why?” It’s probably the first question a toddler learns. It’s the key that unlocks answers about the world around them. Soon they begin to repeat it over and over again and that three-letter word starts driving Mom and Dad crazy! Toddlers quickly discover the power of the word, “why?”

Questions and answers are the tracks upon which learning runs. A curious mind and an inquiring spirit lead to the knowledge of what our world is all about. It all starts with asking questions and getting answers. According to this text, some questions and answers can have eternal consequences.

Big Idea: If we live like Jesus taught us to live it will make people wonder about us. They might ask how we seem to have hope in difficult circumstances. Explaining the source of our hope and joy could lead them to find eternal life. That’s why we need to be prepared to share what Jesus has done for us.

- In this section of 1 Peter 3 we’ll answer some questions. First some questions for those of us who are followers of Christ:
 - How should a follower of Christ live in a difficult world?
 - How can I live that way and not be afraid?
- Living like that will cause some of those around us to ask questions:
 - How can you face difficult situations and still have hope?
 - Where do you find the strength to practice what you believe?
 - How can I have that same kind of faith and hope?
- We need to be prepared to answer. The answers are not really about what, how, or even why. Living this kind of life is about WHOM?
- Let’s begin in verse eight of 1 Peter chapter three.
- These four verses answer the question, “How should a follower of Christ live in difficult circumstances?”

⁸ Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters.* Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. ⁹ Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. ¹⁰ For the Scriptures say,

"If you want to enjoy life
and see many happy days,
keep your tongue from speaking evil
and your lips from telling lies.

¹¹ Turn away from evil and do good.
Search for peace, and work to maintain it.

- If those verses seem familiar, it's because we read them at the end of last week's lesson. I wanted to review them because they really provide the context for verses 13 through 16.
- How should a follower of Christ live in difficult circumstances? Peter gives us ten "virtues of spiritual maturity."
- The first one is "unity of mind."
- Unity doesn't mean uniformity (everyone is the same), or unanimous thinking (everyone agrees on everything.) Followers of Christ can and should be different people who are in harmony on the most important things. Example: An orchestra playing different sounds in harmony is beautiful music. Each player contributes differently but they are all in agreement on the notes they are playing.
- How can followers of Christ be of "one mind?" 1 Corinthians 2:16 tells us, we "have the mind of Christ."
- If believers strive to think like Jesus thinks (as revealed in scripture) we will all be of one mind. **What about the many disagreements among people, even believers? How can we be human yet live in harmony?**
- Followers of Christ should be able to lovingly disagree on minor points but we need to all agree on how the word of God teaches us to live.
- Having the "mind of Christ" enables us to live out these other characteristics of a spiritually mature believer:¹
- **Sympathize** with each other – literally to "feel with" someone. Rejoicing when they rejoice and weeping when they weep.

- Love each other as **brothers and sisters** - as close as natural family.
- Be **tenderhearted** – “heartfelt compassion.” Ephesians 4:32 says, *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ has also forgiven you.”* This also means reaching out to the hurting.
- Keep a **humble attitude**. Not just faking humility but deep-down humility that nobody but Jesus can see. If you don’t have it, ask Him for it.
- **Don’t repay evil for evil**. A forgiving nature rather than seeking revenge.
- **Keep your tongue from evil**. Don’t retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing.
- **Turn from evil and do good**. Living a life of purity.
- **Seek peace and pursue it**. Actively work to have a peaceful disposition.
- If believers would live like that imagine the questions it would raise!
- That kind of living comes from having the Spirit of God living in us. When we’re saved His Spirit moves in. Here’s an important point: I have to ask God every day to enable me to live this way by the power of His Spirit.
- Verses ten through eleven quote Psalm 34 and give us the basic bottom line: “turn away from evil and do good.” How does that help me?

¹² The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil.”*

- How many would like God to watch over you and answer your prayers?
- Living like this will raise questions. It will also cause friction among those who are not followers of Christ.

¹³ Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don’t worry or be afraid of their threats. ¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. (ESV says, “in your hearts...”)

- Let's pause: Generally if you live the way we just described, people will be amazed but they'll think well of you and basically leave you alone (V.13.)
- But, verse 14 says you might suffer for doing what's right. Why would someone suffer for doing what's right? Because of verse 15.
- Verse 15 says sanctify/set apart, honor, or worship Christ as Lord.
- If you live like verses 8-12 you'll just be seen as a nice person. When you tell people you live that way because of Jesus, get ready for trouble!
- But verse 14 says don't worry or be afraid of those who threaten you for naming Jesus as Lord because God will reward you.
- I can't be a follower of Christ unless I worship Him as Lord of my life.
- If I AM a follower of Christ, I shouldn't go through life just being some mysteriously nice person without giving Jesus credit.

Matthew 10:32–33 (NLT) Jesus said,

³² "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

- Here's the key to this whole lesson. Picking back up at verse 15:

...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.

- If you live this way people will ask why and how; but if your life isn't different they won't ask you anything. People only ask questions when they notice a difference!
- Before I lost 40 pounds no one asked about my diet. After I lost 40 pounds not a day goes by without explaining my diet plan. It can be complicated but Susan has given me some simple things to say that explain the plan.
- If I'm willing to rehearse a simple way to communicate how I lost 40 pounds, shouldn't I be even more willing to rehearse a simple way to explain the hope I have in Christ?

- **Do most Christians look forward to someone asking about their faith or dread it? Why are Christians afraid to be asked about our faith?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Let's close by talking about why you don't need a degree in apologetics or theology in order to be prepared to give a reason for your hope in Christ.
- Explaining the hope we have as believers is not complicated, it's simple: Jesus is my Lord. *"How do you live this way?"* **Jesus.** *"Why do you have such hope?"* **Jesus.** *"That's it?"* **That's it. That's all you need.**
- Now, that's the simple answer, but we can't just say, *"It's because of Jesus, good luck."*
- Peter says once we tell them "who" (Jesus) we need to tell them why we've chosen to follow Him.
- Here's where we need to be prepared to give a short, personal response whenever someone asks us about the hope we have in Christ.
- Not a sermon, not a seminar, not a three-hour debate. Just YOUR story.
- Verse 18 covers the basics of what we need to share:

1 Peter 3:18 (NLT)

¹⁸ Christ suffered* for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.*

- That verse sums up the gospel. Jesus came and led a sinless life. He died for the sins of everyone, so we can get safely home to God. But he was raised from the dead, and He's alive right now!
- Likely question: *"But how do you know He's alive?"*
- Here's where it gets personal -- where it becomes YOUR story. Let me share an example of how I might respond when someone asks me about my hope in Christ:
 - o *"Why did I follow Jesus as Lord? How am I so sure He's alive?"*
 - o *"Because I know me deep in my heart, and when I began to follow Jesus as Lord (the boss of my life) He changed*

my heart. And I'm not the same person I used to be. Now, I'm nowhere near perfect, but I'm learning to be more like Him. I'm not as much like Him as I should be, but a lot more than I used to be."

- o *"You asked me how I can live with the hope I have; how I can suffer unfairness and not seek revenge; it's because Jesus died for my sins; rose from the dead; lives in my heart; and changed my life."*
- You don't need a seminary degree to give that answer because that is YOUR story. Someone might argue about whether they believe in God or whether they believe the Bible is true; but it's hard to argue with YOUR story about YOUR life. Especially if you give it in the right way.
- Verse 16 teaches us the right WAY to tell our story.

¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way.* Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

- Answer questions about your faith in a respectful way that is attractive to unbelievers. LIVE in a way that is attractive to unbelievers.
- When you give Jesus the credit for any good you do, whether they choose to respond to Him or not, they will at least know you belong to Him.
- So, what about you? Are you prepared to give an answer? If not, will you get prepared this week?

¹ Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary) by Charles R. Swindoll - Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (December 1, 2014) pp 196-197.