

1 Peter 3:15-18 Prepared to Share

I think there are two different kinds of sharing. One kind of sharing is going to cost you something. The other kind of sharing costs you nothing. I think you're familiar with the kind of sharing that costs you something. When you were a kid and you got a new Lego set the last thing you wanted to do is share it with your siblings. If you share that new Lego set your younger brothers might smash it or not use it the way they're "supposed to." Plus, the more you share that Lego set the less time *you* get to play with it. This is the kind of sharing that costs you something. There's a reason children need to be taught to do this; sharing can be costly. But I think you also know about the other kind of sharing that costs you *nothing*. This kind of sharing happens when you go to a restaurant and can't wait to share it with your friends. You tell them, "You gotta try this new BBQ place! The meat just falls off the bone. The cornbread's as good as grandma's. You can't beat the atmosphere. Oh and you get great bang for your buck!" Why are you so passionate about telling a friend about a restaurant? No one forced you to advertise for them, but you had a great experience there and want others to enjoy it too. This is the kind of sharing that doesn't cost you anything. And unlike sharing a Lego set with siblings you don't feel forced in sharing that information. Instead, you genuinely *want* to share it!

This second kind of sharing sounds a lot like the way we want to share the good news of Jesus doesn't it? The hope we have in Jesus isn't something we keep to ourselves. It's good news we want everyone to know! If we're passionate about sharing a restaurant experience with friends then how much more will we want to share the message of Jesus with people! Good food fills our bellies and puts a smile on our face but sharing Jesus with people fills their souls with the forgiveness and hope they need! That puts a smile on faces even in hard times.

So then, why do we sometimes talk more passionately about a good restaurant than we do about the good news of Jesus? Isn't the work of Jesus the best news of all time? Then why is it so hard to share it sometimes? Are we able to do what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15? Are you really able to "***always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have***"? Am I *always* prepared to share? Why do I often feel so UNprepared to share?

Back in 2012 I decided to spend a year living in China doing mission work. That summer before heading to China we went through 2 weeks of training. One training day we learned to share the gospel with random strangers. We were each given three \$1 bills. We got dropped off at a big park and were told. "Within the next hour find 3 strangers to give a dollar to. When you give them the dollar and they ask why, tell them, 'Jesus gave me forgiveness and salvation for free. He's given me so much that I want to share something good with you for free.'" This was a really cool idea! It doesn't sound too difficult. But for some reason it was *really* hard to do! I usually don't mind talking to strangers or knocking on someone's door I've never met. But this was really hard for some reason. I think it's because it was just so out of the ordinary. There was no beating around the bush, I just had to launch right into talking about my faith with a stranger. When I shared Jesus I was afraid I'd sound forced and phony, not genuine. I figured people would think I'm really weird. I even figured people would turn down the free money they'd be so weirded out by me.

But the truth is, sometimes our fear of being labeled weird or narrow-minded comes true. Peter says there will be those who **speak maliciously** against us and **slander** us. More and more people are becoming aggressive toward Christianity in our country. Many see it as a problem of our society rather than a solution for our problems. The world's fastest growing religion is "no religion." We start to realize that maybe sharing the gospel of Jesus isn't the kind of sharing that costs nothing after all. Sharing Jesus with people may end up costing us.

The apostle Peter knew from experience what the threat of slander, suffering, and even death could do to a Christian's resolve to share Christ. He knew testifying for Christ would cost him. And so he denied Christ. Three times he denied his friend and Savior Jesus. Of all the disciples you would have never guessed Peter would be the one to falter. Peter was the most headstrong of Jesus' disciples. Earlier that night before he denied Jesus he cut off one of the guard's

ears as they came to arrest Jesus. When Jesus earlier predicted he would be put to death Peter cried out, "Never Lord! This shall never happen to you!" This same Peter the night Jesus was on trial for death denied knowing Jesus three times. In order to save himself from the same fate as Jesus he denied being connected to Jesus in any way.

And if Peter faltered in his sharing of Jesus then of course we'll falter too. In order to avoid shame, we sometimes let the perfect opportunity to share Jesus slip through our fingers. We'll think, "this isn't the time or place for me to start talking about my faith." Even if a better time to share couldn't come and slap us in the face. We make excuses, thinking, "I can't share my faith because I wouldn't know what to say and I'd probably say something the wrong way. So I won't say anything." We *really* don't want to look foolish or lose face in front of people we know. So even though we know how great the message is that we share, we might sinfully hide that message away like Peter did.

This is when you need to look to verse 18 and let it sink in. There you find a perfect summary of what Jesus has done in order to give you hope. Our hope isn't in some guy who was just a great teacher or great example for us to follow. Our hope is in Jesus our Savior! "**He died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**" Even in those times we're ashamed to share Jesus that doesn't change the fact that Jesus saved us from our sin and shame anyway. This is something Peter came to realize. As he sat and wept after denying Jesus three times he held on to hope. He realized that the shameful death of Jesus he ran away from was exactly what was needed to save him from his sin of denial. The word sin really means, "to miss the mark." And so even when we miss our marks and let those gospel sharing moments pass by we know that our missed mark is wiped away by Jesus's suffering and death on the cross. Jesus doesn't require you to fill a quota of sharing his message a certain number of times before saving you. Your salvation is done! Jesus died once for all sins. Once and for all our sins have been destroyed. Jesus was righteous, having done nothing wrong. He was right with God. We were unrighteous, not right with God because of our sin. But Jesus couldn't bear to have us not be right with God. So he traded his right standing with the Father for our bad standing. He allowed himself to be cut off from God his Father in order to bring *you* to God. You didn't have to wander your way to God on your own. Jesus brought you to him. He did all this because he loves you.

You know exactly *what* you're sharing. Knowing Jesus prepares you to share him, because what he's done is just that good! The more familiar we are with *what* we share the more prepared we'll be to share it always! The more you come to be filled with the gospel the more you'll be motivated to share the hope you're filled with. The more you anchor your faith in God's Word the more prepared you'll be to **give an answer to those who ask you to give the reason for the hope that you have**. Fill up on the gospel. Anchor in the gospel. Then you'll be prepared to share the gospel.

These verses tell you *what* you share and also tell you *how* to share this hope you have. Peter tells us the first step in being prepared to share. He says, "**But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.**" The heart is seen as the seat of our physical, spiritual, and mental life. So what better place to set up Christ!? We make Christ our life's focal point by putting him in his rightful spot; in our hearts. And remember Jesus paid dearly to take up that spot in your heart. He gave up everything so that he could be with you, in your heart. When your own heart is full of gratitude for being rescued from death and hell, you'll be ready to share with conviction. If Jesus rules in your heart then when you share him it'll be genuine, not just an outward act of obedience you feel obligated doing. You won't sound forced or phony. You'll share Jesus just as genuinely as you share a good restaurant or movie recommendation with friends. Set apart Jesus in your hearts and you'll be prepared to share!

Peter tells us more about how we share the gospel. We give the reason for the hope we have but we **do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience**. Sharing with gentleness and respect means there's no place for ridicule as we defend our faith. Like your momma said, "Treat others the way you want to be treated." We're not going to win anyone over with a word battle but soft encouragement goes a long way and entrusts you to someone. This doesn't mean to be a pushover when sharing your faith but win people over with your non-confrontational spirit. The reason for our hope is to be given in love, never in degrading terms. And sometimes simply listening can be one of your

best ways to be a respectful witness without even saying a word. The only way we'll ever be able to win over those who oppose Christ is with love and respect. Don't look down on people for what *they* believe. Just invite them to hear the gospel message and let it do what it does best. Watch it turn hearts of stone into hearts that beat with new life.

And if someone attacks you for sharing your faith don't worry that they try to shame you. When you remain gentle and respectful that shame will be turned back around on your aggressors. Proverbs 15:1 says, "**A gentle answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger.**" I think you'll find that to be true. When you simply show that your heart goes out to someone and gently tell them Jesus loves them, watch their anger deflate. They may even feel ashamed for treating you disrespectfully when all you've done is treat them with kindness. When you share your hope with gentleness and respect you'll keep a clear conscience.

Your **good behavior in Christ** will speak for itself. If you can't win someone over with words, then by your good conduct you might be able to lead people to Christ. Outreach doesn't always have to be some formal part of your day. You don't have to be a door-to-door gospel salesman with the perfect sales pitch. Just be yourself. Be the child of God that you are and people will notice. They'll see there's something different about you. They'll see the way you keep hope even when tragedy strikes. Just maybe they'll come to you, asking you about the hope you have! Now there's an easy way to share even if you're not very outgoing or comfortable talking to strangers.

Maybe now you're beginning to see how you're always prepared to share. The work Jesus did to take away your sins and bring you to God has made you someone who knows exactly what message needs to be shared. You know what the message means to you! You know what it's like to have your sins freely forgiven. And you have the words to say! Let the words of verse 18 be the message you share with friends, family, strangers, and people that are hurting. **Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.** This message changes the way you live. You'll be a gospel witness simply by being the child of God you already are.

Here at Living Hope we're going to provide you with some very definite opportunities to share the hope you have. We want you to be equipped for lives of sharing Jesus. We'll send you out to hang flyers on people's doors. We'll be present at events where we can reach into our community with a smiling face and hopeful message. Of course, even though we'll hold outreach events, the best way to share will always just be you genuinely sharing the hope you have; *you* inviting people to be filled with the gospel here at worship. The most powerful witness is a friend's invitation. Show them your heart, share your hope.

Remember the point of sharing the gospel isn't just to fill seats here at Living Hope. That's pointless. We're sharing the message that brings people to God and to heaven itself – that's all important. I recently read that the city of Scottsdale, Arizona has a sign welcoming people into town. On that sign is their motto: "Most livable city." Twelve inches from that sign is the wall of a local cemetery. This puts the gospel front and center for us. Because no matter how "livable" the city we live in might be, it doesn't change the fact that each and every person must one day make that turn into the cemetery. This is why we share the hope we have. Not just to fill some requirement of our religion. We share because God cares deeply for every person and wants them to share the hope of heaven he has freely given. A hope we have and a hope we share.