

Prep Now
September 9, 2018

Have you ever been in a situation where someone asked you a question and you did not have an answer? But you thought to yourself, "I should know this. I should have an answer to that question." And because this is what you were thinking, you felt a bit awkward, a bit embarrassed. Ever been in that situation?

Several years ago another church was holding a basketball camp on our property during the summer. On the first day of the camp the electrical system of the church went haywire. The people outside told me they heard a big bang.

Inside, the fire alarm was going off in the west wing. The lights in the main room of the west wing would not work and the emergency lights were on. But none of the other lights in the building were affected. And the air conditioner was still running. I checked the circuit breakers and none of them had tripped.

I came into this wing of the building and it was similar. Some lights worked and some did not. The air conditioners over here would not work. None of the emergency lights in this wing were on. And again, none of the circuit breakers had tripped. Some things worked and some things did not. I was mystified.

I talked again to the people. Some said the sound definitely came from the road, and someone saw smoke up by one of the poles. Now that was helpful. I called BGE who did not register a problem on their end, but promised a repairman to check things out.

The people outside at the basketball camp kept asking me, "What happened? What's wrong?" I was mystified and had no answer. And I felt bad because I did not have an answer. I felt a bit embarrassed and frustrated too. I felt like I SHOULD have an answer. It turned out there was a good reason I did not have an answer, which I'll share with you in a few moments.

Many Christians, perhaps you, have had a similar experience when asked about their faith in Jesus. Someone asked them, "Why are you Christian," and they did not have a ready answer to that question. They mumbled something on the spur of the moment, something not well thought out. Later they wished they had given a better answer. That is the subject of our key verse this morning.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

That is kind of a long way of saying be ready to explain why you are a Christian. If you are a Christian, no matter how short a time you have been a Christian, you SHOULD have an answer to why you became a Christian.

I did not have an answer about the electrical problem because there was a key piece of information I did not know. The BGE repairman checked things out and determined that one of the three power lines running to the church had gone bad. This burned out several fuses in the transformer on the pole across the street. So the church was getting only part of the electricity it needed.

The piece of information I did not know was that we had three electric lines running to the church and any one of them could burn out. I never knew that. I had never experienced such a situation. I knew about circuit breakers and fuses. I knew about a complete power outage. I knew about equipment going bad. But I had never experienced a situation where the building was only getting part of its power.

But such is not the case for the Christian. You DO know why you are a Christian. You may have never formed an answer to tell someone why you are. But you know why you became a Christian.

This is what God wants us to do. We need to... **Be prepared to share your story.**

Just why ARE you a Christian? What were the circumstance that led to your belief in Jesus as your savior? What convinced you that you are a sinner? What convinced you that Jesus is the son of God, who died for your sins, and was raised from the dead? Why did you decide to entrust your life into His hands? I encourage you to take some time today and write out an answer.

Make it short. The explanation doesn't have to be long, though the process of your conversion might be a long story.

One woman I talked to some years back told me she had been hooked on crack cocaine for ten years. Then she became a Christian and had been clean for some time. She was very happy that she was a Christian. And she gave the credit to Jesus.

That's the short version. Her story was a long one. But she told me the short version. It was just a few sentences. You don't have to tell someone a long version of how and why you became a follower of Jesus. Give them a short summary and if they want to know more they can ask.

David Jeremiah tells the story of Frank who was a town drunk. He was lazy, an abuser, spent his time at the local bar and stayed stoned most of the time. He spent his paychecks, such as they were, on alcohol and gambling habits. His family lived very poorly as a result.

One day someone shared Jesus with him, and he became a believer. He stopped drinking and gambling and started providing the things his family needed. A skeptical friend tried to poke holes in his new faith. The skeptic asked, "How could Jesus have really turned water in to wine? You know nobody could do that." Frank shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I don't know how He did it, but at my house he turned beer into furniture."

That is a good short answer. And opens the dialogue to a longer answer if the person wants one.

Highlight one aspect of your experience.

The woman hooked on crack emphasized her healing. You might focus on your intimate prayer life with God. You might focus on how God has used you as a teacher in Sunday

School to make a difference for others. One lady in our church focused on God becoming her perfect father. Another focused on God's love of her. You might focus on God's forgiveness or the inner peace you've found in Christ. Pick some one aspect of your story that is the most significant for you and include that in your short answer.

Expect someone to ask.

Last Sunday I preached about the Holy Spirit and what the Spirit is doing in us who are Christians. In short, the Spirit is transforming us on the inside to have the character, holiness, and God-focus of Jesus. That means that you are going to become a different person, a better person, than you are now. You will become more patient with people, more compassionate, more kind, more merciful, more humble. And you should expect that the people in your life will notice. God can lead them to notice. God can lead them to ask you a question about your faith in Jesus.

Indeed, that is what led some of you to Jesus. You saw in someone else a quality that attracted you, and you asked that person about it. And that person was prepared with an answer.

So you should have an answer and expect that God to create opportunities to share your story. God can initiate those questions in the hearts and minds of others around you. You don't have to try to make opportunities. God will provide the opportunities. God calls us, instead, to be ready with an answer.

You don't have to know the Bible. You don't have to preach a sermon. You don't have to have years of Christian experience. All you need is the simplicity of YOUR story, in your words, your enthusiasm for what Jesus has done for you. Just tell your story to the question. That is all God asks of you.

Your story is a powerful tool in God's hands. I don't know your story like you do. And even if I did, I couldn't tell it like you can. No one is more passionate about your story that you are.

Nor do I have your opportunities to be asked the question. I don't spend time around your neighbors, coworkers, or school.

So be ready with your story. Expect that someone will ask.

Answer as Jesus would.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) "... in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

In the Bible we read how Jesus responded to people. He expected them to ask questions, and they did. Even when they interrupted his day, he stopped and listened to them. He treated them with respect and kindness. So must we.

If they ask a question you don't have an answer for it is okay to say, "I don't know, but I'll try to find out and get back to you." But you should have an answer as to why you became a Christian. So be ready with an answer for the reason for the hope that is in you.

Invitation

Most of you have never heard the fire alarm go off here. You can be thankful for that. It is a loud, aggravating sound. But it is like that intentionally. It is not supposed to be pleasant. It is supposed to get your attention and warn you of danger.

To some people, the message of Christians about sin and hell and forgiveness and Jesus, is an aggravating sound. It is message they don't want to hear.

We are not trying to aggravate people. We are not trying to offend anyone. We are simply trying to warn people of their need for Jesus.

You too need Jesus. You need Jesus to save you, to rescue you from the consequences of your sins.

You need Jesus to be your Lord, to take control of your life so that it can be pleasing to God.

Today, won't you put your trust in Jesus? He died on the cross for your sins too.