

Sharing Your Faith – Part 2

1 Peter 3:15 • by Panha M. Doeung

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at a simple strategy for evangelism...how to share our faith with our lost family and friends. Remember that simple strategy? Invest-and-invite.

Invest is earning the right to be heard by taking time to build relationship and friendship with people. It is doing little things like getting to know them, serving them and finding out where they are in life and helping them move a notch closer to the cross. It is being a Resource Provider and adding value and meaning to their life.

Invite is simply looking for opportunities to invite people to church so they can be exposed to God's Word, to worship and to being around other Christians. Then you look for opportunities to invite them to the person of Jesus.

I hope you are beginning to apply what you learned this past week. Today, I want to equip you on how to prepare to share your faith.

LESSON

Turn with me to 1 Peter 3:15, and let's read it together.

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.

This is Peter's seminar on how to share your faith. There are three things he said in this passage as you help someone cross the line of faith.

I. Being Prepared

The first thing is to always be prepared. Peter is talking about being prepared to give an answer. There are a couple of things you can do to be prepared.

1. Know What You Believe.

First, you need to know the basic of what you believe. I think one reason we're sometimes reluctant to witness is that we don't feel completely confident in our knowledge of the basics of our beliefs. You don't have to have a graduate degree in theology to be able to share your faith.

The Christian faith is powerful because it is simple. It doesn't rest on complicated theories and formulas that only a scholar can understand. It rests on simple truth. Most of you know John 3:16. If you know John 3:16, you know what you believe and can present the Gospel. What does John 3:16 say?

- a. God loves the world (every person; you)
- b. He gives you a gift in the form of His Son Jesus Christ who came to die for your sins. Three days later he was raised from the dead. He is alive today and is seated at the right hand of God in heaven.
- c. If you believe in Him and what He did for you, you will not die spiritually but will spend eternity with God in heaven. You have crossed over from death into life. (crossing over the line of faith from the negative into the positive)

That's the basic belief of our faith.

Many people are afraid that if they get into a witnessing situation they might be asked a question that they don't know how to answer. There are many questions we don't have the answer for. If they ask you a question you don't know and it is off subject, tell them nicely that you'll do some research and will get back with them and then gently lead them back to what you had been talking about. That's what Jesus did with the Samaritan woman.

So work on building a foundation of knowledge about what you believe. Does this mean that you should wait until you know it all before you talk to someone else? No. But it does mean that the more you know about what you believe, the more effective you will be in witnessing. So, make an effort to know what you believe. Secondly, being prepared means that you should...

2. Know Your Testimony.

One of the best ways to share your faith is to share your testimony. It is telling your story. People love stories. You should think about your story and maybe write it down so you'll know it. And you should be able to tell it in two to three minutes. Your testimony should consist of what caused you to seek God, how you came to know Christ, and what your life is like as a believer.

I came to know Christ in the summer of 1980 when I was in the 8th grade. Summer months were boring time for us. My parents went to work, and I was left in charge to taking care of my brother and sisters. We were just kids, and I hated having the responsibility at such a young age. When any of my siblings do something bad or misbehave, I would get mad and hit them. I would make my brother and sisters cry, and then I feel really bad about what I did. Things turned around when I attended our church's youth summer camp. I don't remember what the camp preacher preached on, but on the last night, I walked down the aisle to give my life to God. I wasn't changed overnight, but I started reading the Bible, learned to pray, learned to worship and learned to listen to sermons, and slowly God began to transform and change me. I still remember our camp theme song. It says, "Little by little, day by day, little by little in every way, Jesus is changing me. Since I've made a turn about face, I've been growing in his grace, Jesus is changing me."

I can't imagine what my life would be like now if I didn't have God in my life. Knowing him has made all the difference. It hasn't always been easy. I have failed him often over the

years, but he has never failed me. And he's made me a better person than I ever could have hoped to have been otherwise. I'm grateful for His grace and unending love for me.

That's my testimony. It took about 2-3 minutes to tell.

Your most powerful tool in sharing your faith with others is your personal testimony—what Christ has done in your life. Witnessing isn't about preaching to people. It's about telling your story. And your story, whether you realize it or not, is powerful. It's worth taking the time to learn how to share it with others.

In the gospel of John there's a story of Jesus healing a blind man. The Pharisees tried to discredit Jesus, and confronted the man saying, "This man (Jesus) is a sinner." I love the man's response...

"Whether he is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see." (John 9:25)

Isn't that a great testimony? The man couldn't cite chapter and verse to support the argument that Jesus was the promised Messiah. He didn't have the knowledge to explain the four spiritual laws or discuss the different eschatological interpretations in Revelations. He couldn't say any of that. He could only say, "I was blind, but now I see." You can't argue with that. You can't refute a changed life.

When you share your testimony with someone, even if it's as simple as "I was blind, but now I see," your words have tremendous impact. Because when you tell someone about the difference Christ has made in your life, you begin to give them hope that maybe He can make a difference in their life, too.

So be prepared by knowing what you believe, and by knowing your testimony.

A second thing we can learn from Peter's seminar on evangelism is...

II. ...give an answer to everyone who asks...

When we share our faith with others, we should make sure of a couple of things. First of all,

1. Make Sure There Is An Indication of Interest

I was getting my hair a few weeks ago. I usually go to the same lady since I'm kind of picky about who cut my hair. So I've been developing friendship with the lady who cut my hair. I learned that she's Catholic. One day she told me that she had to leave early to take her daughter to CCC. I asked, "What's CCC?" She said it was a Catholic catechism or confirmation class. Well, I began to see this as an indication of interest and we started talking about God. I was able to share my story and share with her the story of God's grace. I could tell that she had more questions, but there were more customers. I just told her that I would come again and we can talk some more. She said, "Ok."

So we need to make sure there is some interest. If there is no interest, it doesn't matter what you say, they're not going to listen to you, and you would only be wasting your time.

Have you ever heard someone say, "Just share the Gospel. Remember they're not rejecting you, they're rejecting the message." But that's not always the case. Sometimes it is not the message that offends a non Christian; it is the messenger.

When we talk to someone about Jesus, we need to make sure the timing is right. If I insist on trying to get my haircutter across the line of faith, but there are customers waiting for her, I might have ruined my next opportunity to witness to her.

Peter said, "**Give an answer to everyone who asks...**" In other words, give them the opportunity to indicate an interest. Sharing your faith doesn't mean cornering strangers and preaching at them while they're in the middle of doing something else. Our message is important. In fact, it's so important that we are obligated to take the extra effort to make sure the time is right and they are ready to hear us—or else they just might reject the messenger and refuse to hear the message altogether.

So when you share your faith, first make sure they have indicated an interest in what you're saying. Secondly...

2. Make sure it's a dialogue, not a monologue.

The phrase "give an answer to everyone who asks" implies that there is some give and take going on. Asking and answering, back and forth. It's a dialogue.

When we share our faith, this is something we need to watch out for—we need to continually ask ourselves "Am I doing all the talking? Am I including them in this conversation, or am I just preaching at them?" If they're not asking questions, if they're not making comments, if there's no give and take in the conversation, you're going to lose them.

When I'm witnessing to someone, I want them to ask questions. I pray that they will ask questions. Because I know the more they talk about the things of Christianity that they don't understand, the closer they're getting to accepting Christ as their Lord and Savior.

One of the biggest mistakes we make when we witness is to "take charge" of the conversation and keep it on track. People see through that, and they equate it with salesmanship, not friendship. When you talk to people about the Lord, make sure it's a dialogue, not a monologue. When Jesus talked to the woman at the well, he had a dialogue with her. He wasn't preachy or condemning about her lifestyle. They had a conversation.

The last part of 1 Peter 3:15...

III. "But do this with gentleness and respect."

As we invest and invite, we are to do so with gentleness and respect. This is a command from God's Word.

When you talk to someone about becoming a Christian, obviously you want them to make a decision right now. You don't want them to waste another minute of their life without Jesus Christ.

Even though we know this to be true, we can't pressure anyone to make a decision until they're absolutely ready. We have to give them time to think about it. If a person has been living without God for 20 or 30 years or have been living so far away from the cross, we can't expect them to make a monumental, life-altering decision just a few minutes after we start talking to them, anymore than they would decide to buy a house after taking a quick glance at the front yard. They need time. They need to think about it. They need to investigate the faith a little further, to make sure Christianity isn't based on a bunch of fairy tales. And we need to respect their right to consider the decision carefully.

When you share your faith, your job is not to try to persuade a reluctant prospect to make a decision he isn't ready to make. We leave that to the Holy Spirit to work in that person's life, drawing him to Jesus. You don't have to push any one along and try to "close the deal."

Our goal in sharing Christ with others is to let the Holy Spirit use us in drawing that person one step closer to knowing Christ. We are just being a part of the process. And there is no greater joy than to see someone come in to a personal relationship with Christ.

So when you share your faith, respect the person's right to think about their decision.

CONCLUSION

Sharing your faith is not a situation where you're constantly trying to force things to happen...where you're bulldozing your way into conversations and preaching to people who would rather be doing anything in the world except listening to you.

Sharing your faith is simply telling your story about the God who loves you and what he's done for you. So if you'll do your homework, have a testimony ready, God will open the door of opportunity for you to tell your story to people who are ready to hear it...but do it with gentleness and respect.

Pray with me...

The Gospel is good news. That good news is that Jesus loves you. He offers you the free gift of eternal life. All you have to do is simply by faith accept His gift. He will come into your life, forgive you and give you a brand new start. If you have never made that choice, would you do so today?