

TRANSFORMED: THE MANIFESTATION OF LIFE

March 12, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

Aren't you glad that someone pushed through the fear, pressure, risk and told you about Jesus? Although I'm sure we are all eternally thankful this issue of sharing the Gospel can cause tension in us for many reasons. Maybe we are fearful of people's response or not having an answer or we don't feel qualified. But God is asking us to just tell your story, more about that...

The following is a quote that is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: (founder of the Franciscan Order October 3, 1226---May 25, 1230)

"Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary"

Although this a thoughtful quote, it is incomplete. The Gospel is a message that needs to be told as well as lived. Romans 10:14 says:

"...And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent"?

We're going to learn today about this from Peter, who will be the first to speak, tell and preach this Good News. One of the signs that we are growing in Jesus and being transformed, is the ability to share this message.

As we look at Peter's letter today, we must remind ourselves it is written to a group of people who were experiencing persecution. As "Nero" came into power this persecution would increase dramatically in barbaric ways.

Nevertheless, Peter is encouraging them how to respond or not to respond. This was coming from a man who for most of his life was very impulsive. His instinct, (as with many of us) is to push back, but he's challenging them a different way.

This will most likely put us on a collision course with many in our culture. John 14:6 says:

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me".

This belief in one God and one way to him (Jesus) made their lives very difficult; it is the same for us in our cultural context. Believers today hear words like "narrow", "bigoted", "small minded", "intolerant", "elite", "exclusive", "haters", "ignorant", "hypocrites", etc.

But these are collision points between the followers of Jesus and the culture we live in. But if we don't understand the heart of what Jesus came to do, it's easy to polarize this to a "us versus them" mentality. This can't be our focus or mindset. When Jesus came he didn't start a passive group of spectators, he started a "movement". As he was leaving, he told them, I'm going to pour out my Holy Spirit on you and you will receive power. You'll be my witnesses and make disciples of all nations...everywhere and everyone, he was starting a powerful movement.

Actually Peter is making a great point. People hate the "church", "religion" and even take shots at believers, but generally don't dislike Jesus. So he's saying, why don't we "give the reason for our hope" ...Jesus. Peter is telling us, even if you feel unqualified, uncertain, fearful to share the gospel, just "be prepared to give an answer".

So let's read from Peter's first letter and three main points:

"Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere 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, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:13-17)

WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN THERE'S LITTLE TIME AND EVEN LESS INTEREST?

- **Be prepared to defend your hope.**

It doesn't say be prepared to defend God's people, the organized church, Christians behavior throughout history or anything else. But, be prepared to defend "your hope". Another translation says be prepared to "give an answer", to what;

Why do you follow Jesus?

What has Jesus done for you?

Who were you before you met Jesus?

Who are you now?

So Peter is saying focus on your life, why you follow Jesus. Who is he in your life, is the basis of your hope. Think what story Peter would tell; from a day of fishing, where he met a new Rabbi named Jesus, to three years later after the worst week of his life, met Jesus again on a beach cooking fish.

"Be prepared to defend your decision to follow Jesus Christ. Why do you follow Jesus"?

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

Peter's Hope: the Resurrection AND the Return of Jesus

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3)

"Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." (1 Peter 1:13)

"Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." (1 Peter 1:21)

- **Prepare a defense, but don't be defensive**

It's not about winning the argument, a stand-off, competition or winning debates. "But with gentleness and respect", not an attitude of "we have it and you don't" this will undermine your message.

"...But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." (1 Peter 3:15-16)

"Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:11-17)

- **Tie every answer back to Jesus**

Peter and the other eyewitnesses as well as the early Church all leveraged the resurrection of Jesus as their primary answer to everyone's questions.

"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." (1 Corinthians 15:14)

WE CAN ALL SHARE OUR FAITH. DO YOU SEE YOURSELF BELOW?

1. Tellers/Proclaimers: Declaring who God is and what He has done.
Peter: Acts 2:11-41
Stephen: Acts 7:1-53
2. Bringers/Connectors: Invite others to come and see
Andrew brings his brother Simon: John 1:42-42
Philip brings his friend Nathaniel: John 1:45
Woman at the Well brings her whole town: John 4:29
3. Pointers/Demonstrators: Directing attention towards Jesus (away from themselves).
John the Baptist: John 1:35-36
4. Testifiers/Story Tellers: Recounting what Jesus has done in your life.
Blind Beggar: John 9:10-11, 25
Demon possessed man: "Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed." (Mark 5:19-20)
5. Befriender/Sojourners: Initiating significant relationships
Philip: Acts 8: 26-40

Remember:

The Great Commandment (love God and People)
 Coupled with the **Great Commission** (go to everyone everywhere)
 Jesus initiated a **Great Movement**.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Please share the time in your life when someone shared Jesus with you.
2. Pastor Randy warned us that this study might cause some tension in us. We are told that about 80% of Christians don't share their faith. Why do you think this is true and if this applies (or in the past struggled with this area) to you, would you share what it was/is that makes it so difficult for you?
3. Starting on the top of page 2 of your notes, we discussed that the readers of this letter and you today, will experience "collision points" with the culture we live in. Please discuss several areas of this subject. What are the collision points, how can we be misled because of the us versus them result and what should be the focus of our message?
4. On page three, discuss what it means to defend your "hope" and your decision to follow Jesus. Also, what did Peter say was the basis for his hope?
5. As you think about the section on, "Prepare a defense, but don't be defensive", what does this mean to you and what does it mean to be defensive?
6. Lastly, on page 5 & 6 Randy gave us a list of examples of how people share their faith, do you see yourself on this list?

Remember, we don't have to be an expert in Biblical theology or biblical apologetics, we just have to tell the reason for our hope. We just need to tell people our story:

Why do you follow Jesus?
 What has Jesus done for you?
 Who were you before you met Jesus?
 Who are you now?