

Living Hope:
Sharing this Living Hope
1 Peter 3:15-16

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Text Introduction: We are returning to 1 Peter. “Living Hope” is a phrase that we find in 1 Peter 1:3. Jesus is our Living Hope. This is the Gospel. Our salvation rests in the resurrection of Jesus. Our hope in this life rests in the resurrection of Jesus.

As so often the case in the New Testament letters, theology prepares us for practices. Our beliefs should produce in us a certain behavior. We see that often with the word, “Therefore.” So, we understood that Living Hope calls us to certain behaviors. We have noted those behaviors: living holy, connected as living stones—that is the church. And then, last time, we learned that we are to live out these practices in community, in our different relationships, so that by our actions, we are witnesses. As is often quoted, “We must always preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words. Well, today, we note that **we must always use words**. I mean this is basic to preaching the Gospel. Look at the text with me.

Text:

15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. **16** Yet do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.

Introduction: Randy Kilgore is the vice president of Marketplace Network, an association of people interested in the integration of faith and work. He writes a weekly on-line devotional for people in the workplace called *Marketplace Moments*. Randy Kilgore surveyed non-believers, asking, “What are the five things you want from co-workers who claim to be Christians?” Among the most mentioned items were: They wished their Christian co-workers knew more about their own faith, were more compassionate, hopeful, honorable, and easy to talk to in hard times.

This little piece begs the question: What do our non-Christian friends wish about us? Our text points to how we ought to share the truth.

We must have a complete and convictional acceptance of the Gospel ourselves.

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” The word sanctify is synonymous with holy which means to set apart. Let it not be lost on any of us that the most effective witnesses are those who have settled in their hearts that the Lord is the Christ or Messiah. Is this settled in your heart? Have you taken time to write out what you believe about the Gospel?

- Lostness—All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Everyone needs to be forgiven.
- Eternity—Lost go to Hell and saved go to Heaven.
- Who can be saved?—Anyone can be saved. That Christ died for all and that if any believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he or she can be saved.

- Salvation in Christ alone? There is no other way to salvation except through Him
- Repentance—That a person must be willing to turn from sin and self and turn to the Savior
- Grace—That this work is God’s doing not our doing.

Along the way today, I want to give you some examples from history’s greatest evangelist, the Apostle Paul and then equate that example to some practical advice.

Paul’s Example:

- 1 Timothy 1:15—“This saying is trustworthy and deserving full acceptance: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I am the worst of them.”

Practical Advice:

If we really believe that those who believe in Jesus go to Heaven and those who do not believe in Jesus go to Hell, how could we not be more urgent in sharing this conviction?

All of this is what it means to Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. This must be our complete conviction, fully accepted by us.

We must be prepared to give a Clear Explanation of the Gospel.

“always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”

This is such a great verse. Every word is so impactful. Let’s just look at a few.

- Always—We are always on call to share the good news about Jesus.
- Be Ready—There is a note of getting prepared in this word.
- Defense—the word translated here “defense” is *apologia*. It is where we get the idea of apologetics. Now, don’t get confused. We are not apologizing for the Gospel, but we are getting ourselves ready to make a defense.
- To anyone—Always and everyone
- Reason—this Greek word sounds like our English word “logic.” Our explanation of the Gospel must be logical.
- Hope—Hope in all things—Hope in this life and the life to come. It is a good word to communicate our faith.

So, we must be able to articulate in a logical way our belief about Jesus. Consider Paul’s example.

Paul’s Example:

- Acts 17:17—“So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.”
- Acts 18:4—“He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks.”
- Acts 18:19—“But he himself entered the synagogue and engaged in discussion with the Jews.”

Practical Advice:

Don’t attempt to persuade with pat answers.

Often, I will hear people say, “I just wish I knew more.” Or, “I’m afraid I can’t answer all their questions.” There are questions we will never answer, but this text points out that we need to find some answers. We ought to be in God’s Word every day. Just by committing yourself to read God’s Word every day, you will be preparing yourself to answer questions. Then, of course, there is more that we must do to be prepared.

I like what we heard from Frank Courmier a moment ago as he quoted Ravi Zacharias. “Our assignment is not so much to answer the question as it is to answer the questioner.” Ask questions! This is the model of Jesus.

We must use Credible Methods in sharing the good news about Jesus.

“However, do this with gentleness and respect”

Paul’s Example:

- Ephesians 4:25—“Speak the truth in love”
- 1 Corinthians 9:20-23—“... I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”

Practical Advice:

Don’t cut someone’s nose off, and then give him a rose to smell.

The idea here is that we can’t be mean and degrading and then expect someone to hear us. I once knew a man who bragged to me about a witnessing encounter, “You will believe one second after you are burning in Hell.” He might have been theologically correct, but his approach was all wrong. Jude 22 tells us to “Have mercy on some who doubt.”

We must validate our witness with Consistent Actions.

“Keeping your conscience clear”

Paul’s Example:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27—“... but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

Practical Advice:

Your walk better match your talk.

If we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, we ought to live like we believe that.

There is somebody who is watching you in your office, at your school, or even in your home. You think that you are having no effect, but you are.

We live in a world that is going to keep asking questions. Thank God for every question and be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

So What?

Be Ready! If not ready, get ready!

The Gospel is truth that can be logically defended, and the disciple ought to be able to do that. This doesn't mean that everyone has to be an expert like Ravi Zacharias, but it does mean that every disciple should grasp the essential. If you have been saved, you know enough Gospel to tell someone else how to be saved. If you don't know enough Gospel to tell someone else how to be saved, how did you get saved? That is you understand that we are all sinners, that Christ came born of a virgin, living a sinless life, that Christ died for sin, that He rose again, and that if you believe these things in your heart and confess them with your mouth, you can be saved.

As in this verse, once you have set apart the Messiah as Lord in your heart, you should be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you.