

## DEVELOP A GENTLE TOUCH (vv. 15b-16)

Peter offers one final word of encouragement. He tells us that when we share the gospel we should share it in a way that is in keeping with the gospel. We need to remember that the gospel is not about winning an argument, but sharing the message of Christ in a manner that is consistent with the heart and character of Christ.

1. What does it mean to give an answer with gentleness and respect?
2. What happens when we are not gentle and respectful?

## PRACTICAL NEIGHBORING

### YOUR STORY HIS STORY

In our passage Peter tells his audience, *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...”*

If someone were to ask you tomorrow, “why you are a Christian?” what would be your answer? Part of answering this question well lies in preparation.

One way of thinking through your answer is to go through the ‘YOUR STORY, HIS STORY’ exercise. Practice answering the following 3 questions in 1-2 minutes.

1. What was your life like before Jesus (what kind of person were you, where were you falling short)?
2. When did Jesus become your savior (what events led to you becoming a Christian)?
3. How has your life changed since following Jesus (where has the gospel done the greatest work in your life)?

You can do this exercise as a Community Group, with your spouse, friend or roommate.



## WEEK FIVE :: DISCUSSION GUIDE BEYOND HOSPITALITY

St. Francis is often credited with saying, “Preach the gospel at all time, in all places, by all means, and if necessary use words.”

The truth is that St. Francis probably never said anything like that, (at least there are no historical references linking him to the quote), but even if he had, he would have been off base. Way off base!

The gospel is “a word.” Jesus’ actions in and of themselves are not the gospel. As powerful as his life, death and resurrection are, without “words” we are simply left guessing as to their significance.

The gospel is the announcement of the monumental good news that God has acted in the life death and resurrection of Jesus to reconcile us to himself. What we lost in the fall is being restored in Jesus.

In the last few weeks we have been talking about getting to know your neighbors, serving your neighbors, and even inviting your neighbors into your home. But to really love your neighbors is to eventually move beyond hospitality and to the gospel. Sooner or later you will want to talk to them about what God has done for them through Christ, and how knowing Christ makes all the difference in life and eternity.

If we are going to share the gospel we will need to use words.

Peter challenges his readers to live lives shaped by the gospel, respond graciously in suffering, and to be ready to share the gospel when the opportunity presents itself.

He offers some good guidelines for us as we lean into the gospel in our effort to love and serve our neighbors in the name of Christ.

## READ 1 PETER 3:8-16

### ALLOW THE GOSPEL TO SHAPE YOUR HEART AND LIFE (v. 8)

While our actions are not the gospel, our actions will either resonate with the truth of the gospel or distract from it. In verse 8 Peter describes the kind of character that gives believers credibility as they share the message of Christ.

1. What stands out about these character traits?
2. How does their absence distract from the heart of the gospel?
3. How do you cultivate this kind of character?
4. How should you respond when you publicly fail to demonstrate Christ-like character?

### TAKE RISKS FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL (vv. 9-14)

To represent Christ and his message always involves risk. As gracious as Jesus was, not everyone loved him, and he warned us that not everyone would love us either. Peter's readers actually risked bodily harm and physical abuse. While the stakes are not as high for us, we do risk ridicule and rejection.

1. How do we normally respond to ridicule and rejection?
2. How does Peter tell us to respond to rejection and ridicule?
3. What do you make of the fact that Peter tells his readers, "they were called" to suffer insult and injury?
4. What makes the risk of sharing the gospel "worth it" in the end?

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate evangelist. He and he alone persuades people of the truth. He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He opens blind eyes.. He melts hard hearts. His pace is always right. While you are silent, the Holy Spirit is at work and will accomplish God's purposes in a person's life.

-Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church*

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND LEARN THE GOSPEL (v. 15a)

Peter tells his readers if their hearts and lives are shaped by the gospel and they respond graciously to rejection and ridicule, that it will pique the interest of many. He challenges them to be ready to give an answer when people ask.

1. If someone were to ask you why you followed Jesus, how comfortable would you be in sharing the gospel?
2. Let's take a moment to look at the basics of the Biblical Story (the Gospel).
  - a. God lovingly created us to reflect his heart and character and to enjoy all the gifts of creation under his gracious rule and care.
  - b. We fell in love with God's good gifts, but we rejected his gracious rule and chose to forge our own path. Our sin and rebellion not only alienates us from God, it alienates us from each other, all of creation and even ourselves. We live in a world where everything is broken and everyone is dysfunctional because of sin.
  - c. God is both loving and just. In his justice, God is obligated to punish our sin in the severest terms. In his love, God has made a way for us to be reconciled to him in spite of our deliberate and willful rebellion against him.
  - d. God has moved decisively through Jesus Christ to reconcile wayward sons and daughters to himself. Jesus lived the life we could never live, took the punishment we deserved on himself, and rose from the dead in order to reconcile us to God and begin to restore in us everything that was lost to the ravages of sin.
  - e. We respond to what God has done for us in Christ by turning from our sin, idolatry and rebellion and embracing his gracious offer of eternal life through faith in Christ. We trust Christ to do in us and through us what we could never do for ourselves.
3. What are some steps you could take to learn to tell the gospel story and tell it well?