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1 Peter 3 - 4

"How To Live Until Jesus Comes" Part 3

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Sometimes it seems like the personal stories of a lot of people include the fact that God has done a miracle by saving them, but then they seem to forget what he's done for them. And when people ask, they have nothing to say. Peter writes to instruct Believers to *"[a]lways be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."* (1 Peter 3:15)

In this study we'll learn more about the fact that God wants Christians to be witnesses in the world, as well as demonstrating love for one another.

Witnesses In The World

1. Being a witness in the world requires three things:
 - a. Example
 - i. Being a true witness for Christ requires the right example.
 - ii. Notice that Peter writes that Christians should be prepared when people ask.
 - iii. When you think about it, no one is going to ask you about your relationship with the Lord unless you are living your life in such a way that it triggers his or her curiosity.
 - iv. **Matthew 5:14-16** - *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*
 - v. The Lord expects our lives to look noticeably different than the rest of the world, so that we can be an example to the rest of the world.

- vi. If you've been a Christian from a very young age, your character and conduct will communicate something exceptional before people so that they will ask.
 - vii. If you became a Christian later in life, you have a history with people that will now be noticeably different, and the contrast should cause people to ask what happened to you!
 - 1. If you stop sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend, you can be sure they will ask!
 - 2. If you stop partying with your friends, you can be sure they will ask!
 - 3. If you stop embellishing your sales reports, you can be sure your boss/supervisor will ask!
 - 4. If you stop driving people off onto the shoulder of the road, you can be sure the people in your carpool will ask!
 - 5. If you start living life Jesus, and you're more loving, patient, honest, faithful, self-controlled, God honoring, you can be sure that people will ask!
- b. Expression
- i. Peter says that the correct response from Believers includes *"gentleness, respect... keeping a clear conscience."*
 - ii. Peter wouldn't write this unless he anticipated that some people would not like the fact that the person was now a Christian.
 - iii. **1 Peter 4:3-4** - *"For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do - living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it not strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you."*
 - iv. If some people give you a hard time about being or becoming a Christian, watch your words and make sure your witness is a good reflection of the Lord and, even though they may push your buttons, stay true to God!
- c. Explanation
- i. Peter writes that there will be a time when Christians will need to explain why they believe and what they believe, so it's important for Christians to be equipped to share their faith.
 - ii. One of the things that worries Christians the most is that they think they have to know every answer to every theological or Bible question, which is the furthest thing from the truth.
 - 1. If you don't know the answer, then tell the person you'll find out and get back to them, it's that simple.
 - iii. **Mark 13:11** - *"Do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."*

Love One Another

2. **1 Peter 4:7-10** - *"The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."*
3. Christians are to *"love each other deeply."*
 - a. If Christians did this, all of the other directives will come naturally:
 - i. Vs. 9 - *"offer hospitality... without grumbling."*
 - ii. Vs. 10 - *"serve" one another, administering God's grace in it's various forms.*
4. Love is the principle thing and it's far more than a "syrupy emotion."
5. Love is an action!
 - a. **1 John 3:18** - *"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."*
 - b. Love *"covers over a multitude of sins."*
 - i. **Proverbs 10:12** - *"Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs."*
 - ii. Notice that it's not cover up, but cover over.
 1. The idea is that it's not letting people get away with sin, as if to suggest that Christians just sin and then they all cover it up for each other.
 2. The meaning is that true love makes us blind to the faults of others and eager to shield their sins from further humiliation.
 - iii. One of the most damaging things Christians can do is to expose people's faults and sins to other people, which is not only wrong, it's gossip!
 1. Gossip in the church makes it extremely difficult and sometimes next to impossible for people to recover and be restored.
 2. Avoid the temptation to "dress up" gossip as a prayer request!
 - iv. **Proverbs 17:9** - *"He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."*
 - v. **John 13:35** - *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [1 Peter 3:15-16](#) and [1 Peter 4:7-10](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss [1 Peter 3:15-16](#).
 - a. The Greek word for “*give an answer*” is *apologia*, which is where we get the English word, apologetics.
 - i. This is a theological term meaning to defend the faith, and it has nothing to do with making an apology for Christianity, which some have assumed in error.
4. Do other people see something intriguingly different about your life?
5. Read and discuss [Matthew 5:14-16](#).
 - a. Do you have the gift of evangelism?
 - b. Allow people to share their experiences with sharing their faith.
 - c. What causes anxiety for you when it comes to the subject of sharing your faith?
 - d. Have you taken a class at church or read books to help you better share your faith?
 - e. Spend time talking about experiences you’ve had when people have asked you about your faith in Christ.
 - i. Are these rare or commonplace?
 - f. If you haven’t had experiences like this, is it possible you’re simply blending in with the rest of the world?
6. Read and discuss [1 Peter 4:3-4](#).
 - a. Share examples of times when people have reacted negatively to the fact that you became a Christian.
 - b. Were you able to demonstrate a Christ-like attitude that modeled gentleness and respect?
7. Read and discuss [Mark 13:11](#).
 - a. Allow the people in your group to share experiences about times when the Holy Spirit helped them with exactly the right words and witness at the right time.
8. Read and discuss [1 Peter 4:7-10](#).

9. If you were to rate yourself on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the best, how would you say you're doing in the area of showing love to others?
 - a. What are some of the ways you show your love in action?

10. Have you had the experience of being in a church where gossip was allowed to spread to the point that the person/people weren't able to recover and be restored?
 - a. Read and discuss [Proverbs 10:12](#) and [Proverbs 17:9](#).
 - b. Discuss this oft-repeated saying: "Many Christians delight in shooting their wounded."
 - c. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's statement concerning covering up sin: "True love makes us blind to the faults of others and eager to shield their sins from further humiliation."

11. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: find themselves willing to be a witness for Christ; live a life that demonstrates a Christ-like example to others, remembering that they are a "*light to the world*" ([Matthew 5:14](#)); purpose in their heart to love others in a way that would honor the Lord ([1 John 3:18](#)); promise the Lord to intentionally choose not participate in gossip; be a part of helping people who've repented of their sin(s) recover and be restored, while at the same time being willing to be blind to the faults of others and eager to shield their sins from further humiliation.

Note: Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV).