

<http://www.exploregod.com/sharing-faith-with-others-video>

There is a popular series of commercials that has been out for several years now. In the commercials, a narrator with a bold and dramatic voice lists characteristics about a certain person who happens to be very unique. The narrator tells us things like:

- He can speak Russian... in French
- He has won the lifetime achievement award... twice
- On every continent in the world, there is a sandwich named after him.
- His cereal never gets soggy. It sits there, staying crispy, just for him.
- He is the life of parties that he has never attended
- If he was to pat you on the back, you would list it on your resume
- You can see his charisma from space.
- He lives vicariously through himself.

And after giving us some descriptors, the narrator announces that this person is, and some of you know, “the most interesting man in the world.” Now, the conclusion of the commercial is that we should drink the same beer as this guy. Don’t pay any attention to that! And besides, Total Wine is closed on Sundays, so you’d be out of luck anyway. What I do want you to see, though, is the basis of the commercial, that this guy is so unique, that he stands out from the crowd, he’s so INTERESTING, that we can’t help but be drawn to him and wonder what makes him tick. And I think there’s a spiritual application we can take from that.

I want you to think about the first person who introduced you to Christ. Now, for many of you, it was likely your parents. You grew up in a Christian home and it just was what you always knew. But what about the rest of you? For me, I was in first grade when I met John. We were in class together and hit it off right away. I found out that John was, by ancestry, Egyptian. He had dark olive skin and, if I remember correctly, already a little bit of a mustache. Later that week, John introduced me to his brother Jason, who was also in first grade. But Jason didn’t look like John. Jason was an African American kid. I was a little confused, but I didn’t bother asking about it. Later that week, the boys invited me over to their house after school. That’s when I had the opportunity to meet their two older sisters...their two white, blond haired, blue-eyed sisters, and their white parents. At seven, I had no idea what was going on, but I thought it was pretty cool. Over the next couple of months, I spent a lot of time at their house. And, while I wouldn’t have used these words at the time, I recognized a joy and peace in their family and was very attracted to it. They were so different and I wondered what made them tick. Ultimately I got the reason. It was Jesus. He was the cause of the joy and peace. He was their motivation to adopt two boys. He was the reason they were so warm and friendly and loving and inviting to me. By the time they said the name Jesus, I was already in.

So this morning let me ask you, what do people see when they look your life? Is it inviting? Would others describe it as peaceful or hopeful or joyful? Do people wonder what makes you tick? Do people want to drink the same beer as you?

This morning we're going to look at a passage in 1 Peter that will help us prepare for Explore God. It's going to show us that the greatest testimony we have is how we live our lives. We'll see that **a life lived for Jesus invites opportunities to talk about Jesus.**

So let's turn to 1 Peter 1. This letter was written to encourage the new and burgeoning church scattered throughout the Gentile world. They were possibly experiencing persecution, and definitely feeling out of place. So he writes this letter to remind them to trust in the Lord and live in a Christ-like way. But before he does he reminds them of their new reality in Christ. Look at 1 Peter 1:3-5:

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

What wonderful reassurance for everyone who has put their faith in Christ. They have new life by being born again. They can live each day with certain hope because Jesus has been raised from the dead. Their eternity is secure. And they are guarded by God's power.

There are some of us here who, as we consider engaging our world with Explore God, need to be reminded of these things. We might be getting stressed about who to invite and what we're going to say and how we're going to plan our meetings and really, we need to just take a moment, take a deep breath, and rest in the truth of this passage.

We also need to be reminded of this because, if this is our reality in Christ, we can live in a certain way regardless of circumstances and when we do, the world is going to notice. Flip over to chapter 3. Let's start in 3:8:

**Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.<sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.<sup>10</sup> For: "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and**

**pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

Peter gives us a prescription for righteous Christian living that includes both his own thoughts as well as a reference to Psalm 34. We may look at this 2,000 years later and think “Yeah, that looks about right.” But understand that these ideas were at least counter-cultural if not revolutionary. And guess what? They are still counter-cultural and certain to make waves today because: **A life lived for Jesus demands the world’s attention.** When we live out our faith, people notice.

The first they are going to notice is that **Christians stand out by living in a way the world doesn’t.**

Peter says we are to be characterized by unity of mind. Peter is not suggesting uniformity here but instead a likeness in thought, purpose, belief, believers sharing the mind of Christ and living in harmony with one another. We are to be sympathetic, to enter into each other’s pain and difficulty and rally around those who are suffering. We are to have brotherly love, tenderheartedness, and humility.

This is how the body of Christ is meant to live. Acts 11 says that the disciples in Antioch were the first to be called Christians. The “-ian” ending means “belonging to the party of.” It was behavior like what’s in this list that set them apart, and people began to notice.

Peter continues with some guidance from Psalm 34. V. 11 says we are to seek peace and pursue it. A couple of years ago I heard one of our members, Joel Housholder, teach that there are peacekeepers and there are peacemakers. Peacekeepers do whatever they can to make sure everyone is ok and there are no disagreements. I interact with a lot of these folks in marriage ministry. We lovingly call them avoiders! The peace they keep is an artificial one and can ultimately lead to relational strife.

The peacemakers are whom Peter is referring to here, those with an intense and determined and persistent pursuit of peace. Imagine the impression it makes on the world to see us actively pursuing peace in our families, in our neighborhoods, and in our workplaces, particularly if it involved our own confession of wrongdoing. And when we make peace between people it might lead to an opportunity to discuss how we have peace with God.

So that’s how we can act in a way the world doesn’t. The flipside is that **Christians also stand out by not living in a way the world does.**

Look at v. 9. **Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling...**and then jump down to the second half of v. 10. **...let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips**

**from speaking deceit...** I don't know of any place with more temptation to act this way than social media. Been in any good flame wars lately? Those are an argument between internet users who repeatedly provoke each other with personal attacks. I am astounded with the way some Christians act online. I get it. Look, I've been on social media and read some derogatory thing someone's written about Christians. And my initial response is "Oh no you didn't!" and I get ready to fire off an incendiary response. But God is good to slow me down in those moments and keep me from doing so, knowing that it will do no good.

And understand this goes beyond online stuff. The larger question is how we're going to respond when wronged, when evil is done to us. Let me tell you something you'll never hear in someone's testimony or faith story:

"Well, I knew this guy named Kurt. He said he was a Christian. I did a lot of wrong to him, betrayed him, I hurt him, I acted pretty evil towards him. And I gotta tell you, he was so good at exacting revenge on me that I just had to know his Jesus."

Folks, we have the opportunity to blow the world's mind by extending to it the same gift that was extended to us: Forgiveness. The world's default is retaliation and its expectation is retaliation. But we can respond differently. And when we do, the world takes notice. And just as we can be peacemakers through the confession of our wrongdoing, we can be peacemakers by forgiving others.

So when we live this way, what is the result? We just saw that a life lived for Jesus demands the world's attention, now we're going to see that **a life lived for Jesus demands the world's response**. If we live in a way that is so unique, so compelling, so peculiar, it's ultimately going to peak people's curiosity and they are going to respond. Take a look starting in verse 13:

**Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.**

So the world is going to notice and the world is going to respond. Now, there are some who may notice and react with great indifference. Peter doesn't really address them. But he does address two other possibilities.

Some may respond negatively, but that's likely an exception. Look again at v.13. **"Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?"** Under normal circumstances, if we are pursuing good godly living, we're likely not going to run into a lot of trouble. I hope that's an encouragement to you if you're a little anxious about how people may respond to you during Explore God. Peter's saying you're probably going to be ok.

However, it is possible that some will react negatively. Peter gives us what our attitude should be in those moments. V.14 says **"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy."** This is the heart of the whole passage. If we seek first to honor Christ with our lives, the behaviors in the previous section will be the result. And if we seek first to honor Christ with our lives, the rest of these concerns become secondary. This doesn't dismiss persecution and suffering as trivial things. They're not. In fact, they are so significant that God blesses us for it. But we need to recognize that there will come a temptation to keep our faith quiet if we perceive that persecution is on the way and Peter is telling us that we do not have to be afraid or troubled. And who knows that tension better than the one who denied Jesus three times but also was crucified upside down for Jesus?

Peter also says that the one doing the persecuting will be the one who looks bad. The second half of v16 says, **"...those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame."** Look, if someone wants to come after us for living lives of harmony, sympathy, love, and humility...OK!!! Thanks for noticing! That's on them. We need to keep living to honor Christ because of the last possible response, and that's one of interest and inquiry.

Some people are going to notice, they are going to be attracted, and they are going to ask about it. Because when we show the Gospel with our life, we get to share the Gospel with our mouth.

V. 15 says, **"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a clear conscience."**

The single greatest question anyone could ever ask us is "Why?" Why are you always in a good mood? Why do you so rarely get mad? Why do you have such a good marriage? Why do you seem to not get rattled when things go bad? Why are you always so quick to forgive? Why are you the way you are?

Do you have an answer for that? If not, it's time to put one together and get ready to share it with others. Because a life lived for Christ is a life characterized by hope. It's characterized by the hope we saw in chapter 1. It's a hope that transcends life's circumstances. It's a hope that eliminates worry and brings peace. It's a hope that

allows us to live for others and not for ourselves. It's a hope that inspires us to forgive. And it's a hope that stands in such contrast to the hopelessness of the world that someone's going to be compelled to ask us about it. Oh how I pray that so many of us will get the opportunity to answer that question during this series.

But we've got to respond in a certain way, and that's with gentleness and respect. We may be entering into some really heavy conversations with people during this series. Some will be asking questions they've had for a long time but were too afraid to ask. Some will show up with a chip on their shoulder and the preconceived notion that Christians are self-righteous or judgmental. Some will come from a place of pain caused by the church. Some will show up with other deeply held spiritual beliefs. If we hammer them, we lose them. But a gentle and respectful approach communicates that you care about them and that you are genuinely interested in having this conversation with them.

A friend of mine who attends Fellowship told me a story about a guy he's gone fly fishing with every year for the last twelve years. This other guy is a believer and the two of them have had many spiritual conversations during this time, conversations that included lots of disagreement. But my buddy made the point that this guy always engaged him respectfully. He didn't talk down to him. He didn't try to convince him. He didn't pretend he had all the answers. He simply showed a genuine willingness to talk about this stuff and was open about who Jesus was to him. This past November, due in large part to this guy's influence, my friend came to faith in Christ. And about four weeks ago, this other guy had the privilege of baptizing my friend in the river they've fished in the last twelve years.

The most compelling thing we have to tell people is the hope we have in Jesus! And the best way to get to that conversation is by living for Christ and standing out from a dark world.

So what do we do with this? There are three things I want you to wrestle with as you leave today and we get closer to kicking off Explore God.

*1. What does the world see when it pays attention to your life?*

Look, I don't ask this to make you beat yourself up or to have you leave here with your head hanging. But it is healthy for us to consider this question regularly, and particularly when we are talking about intentionally engaging those we know. Do you live your life with the hope Peter teaches about? Is your first priority to honor Christ the Lord as holy? Are you more likely to bless someone or to repay evil in kind? When you open your mouth, what's coming out? Who do you need to pursue peace with, either by confessing to or forgiving for wrongdoing? There is nothing in here that says it's ever too late to attract someone to a godly life and, in fact, a change in how you're currently living your life might be the very thing someone takes notice of and asks about. What an opportunity.

*2. Who has inquired about your life?*

I was talking to Martha, my wife, about this passage and she said, "I wonder if the questions people have asked me had more significance than it seemed." She works in an industry that often has large layoffs and has been asked, "How do you remain so calm when things could go so wrong?" A simple question like that may be asking about something much deeper. So consider who's already expressed curiosity about how and why you live life the way you do. They may be the very person God wants you to engage during this series.

*3. You are not responsible for saving anyone, nor do you have to have all the answers.*

Jesus said that no one comes to him unless the Father draws that person to him. God is responsible for salvation. Not you. You're also not being asked to be a Bible expert or theologian. You're being asked to be ready to tell your story, and THE story, and be willing to have a spiritual conversation with someone. Watch this video for a little more encouragement in that area. <https://vimeo.com/71592374>

There's a member in my family with whom I've had many spiritual conversations. She and I don't agree on a whole lot but she's willing to talk. That would seem like a good thing but I have to confess that, over the years, I've been less interested in winning her for Christ and more interested in just winning. When given opportunities to speak of the love and grace of Jesus, of hope in Christ, I would instead decimate her arguments with exceptional theology or proudly show her how her beliefs weren't logical. I'd win the argument but leave her no closer to the truth than when we started. In fact, I likely did more damage than good over time.

But an interesting thing happened a couple years ago. There was a death in the family (that's not the interesting part) and people came in from all over the country, including a few other believers. We visited with everyone but found ourselves in conversation multiple times over the two days we were all together. A few days later, I was speaking with the family member with whom I've had many spiritual conversations and she proceeded to tell me that she watched us interact with one another and that she saw something between us. She recognized that we had a care for and a connection to one another. She witnessed our unity, brotherly love, and tender heart towards each other, and she knew it was different. She was drawn to it and wanted to be part of it. And she knew enough to know that the answer was Jesus. It was a holy punch to my gut as I considered the power of that moment and compared it to the way I had acted towards her in the days past.

And so, I changed. Over the last couple years, we've continued to have spiritual conversations, but I've done so with gentleness and respect, and it's changed the tone of the entire conversation. And I'd love to tell you that this story ends with her putting her trust in Christ. It hasn't happened yet and I don't know where it's going to end up. That's God's business. But I will tell you that she went to a Fellowship Bible Church in a different part of the country a couple of weeks ago. That's exciting.

Godly Life, Curious World  
1 Peter 3:8-17

August 30, 2015  
Kurt Pressler

We are not the Christ. We are simply called to live in such a way that people notice a difference and ask “Why?” And then we need to be ready to answer with the glorious story of our magnificent Savior.

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