

Listening Guide

What is the best way, the best training, for effectively sharing our faith?

Introduction: The best training for sharing our faith is in the Bible. (Imagine that!) There is one passage that really sums up the whole process; but first, let's look at:

- A. **Hindrances to sharing our faith.** We're frightened, intimidated, confused and un-informed; we've received bad input & have seen some not very inspiring examples.
- B. **Dispelling myths about sharing our faith.** If we can dispel some myths and unlearn some erroneous techniques, sharing our faith will be natural. It shouldn't always be initiated by us, be verbal combat, or have to do with our personal powers of persuasion.
- C. **A Flourishing impact and witness are mostly about 3 things:**
 1. Living our faith authentically (with character) during the normal and hard times.
 2. Telling about **WHO** we love and what **HE'S** done.
 3. Answering questions—1 Peter 3:15-16. **Summary:** It's our ways and our words!

I. **The Preparation for a Witness**—1 Peter 3:8-15

- A. **We're to TREAT OTHERS LIKE GOD HAS TREATED US:** harmoniously, sympathetically, lovingly, compassionately, humbly, & one who blesses rather than retaliates—vv. 8-9. We get along with others. This creates interest in who we are/why we act like we do.
- B. **We're to THINK ABOUT WHAT WE SAY BEFORE WE SAY IT**—v. 10. Chosen, fewer and gracious words make a good impression—Prov. 18:21; 13:3; 12:18; 10:19.
- C. **We're also to THINK ABOUT WHAT GOOD WE CAN DO AND DO IT** (as we put off evil)—v. 11a. Good deeds done without fanfare create interest and questions.
- D. **We're to WORK HARD AT LIVING AT PEACE WITH OTHERS**—v. 11b. Even when offended, we're to seek peace with everyone. This makes a positive impression too. **Result:** God will take notice, be attentive to our prayers, and we'll see happiness, good days and a blessing—3:9,10,12. **In addition, some will notice and ask questions**—v. 15b.
- E. **We're NOT TO FEAR/BE FRIGHTENED IN SUFFERING**—vv. 13-14. (See v. 11a.)
 - Peter seems to ask, "*Who would hurt us or cause us harm when we're doing a good thing?*" But sometimes it happens. What are we to do when we're harmed?
 - We're to resist the natural tendency to be frightened by threats, actions/demeanor. This alerts those watching to ask questions about our interior, character resources.
- F. **We're to MAKE JESUS LORD OF OUR LIFE.** v. 15a—"*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.*" If we intend to see Jesus work, He must be Lord/in control of our life.
 - It may seem like an unlikely thing to do when we're suffering, but the effect is profound on our psyche and our witness. It means we speak with our actions.
 - Again, we choose not to fear or be intimidated by unjust suffering or hurt.
 - We choose Jesus as the center, and we trust in Him to give us the wisdom to work with His solutions and plan! Key question: **Is Jesus Lord of our life?**

G. **We're to BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.** v. 15b—*“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”* Why would we have to be prepared for questions? If we look at the context, the questions that are most poignant are those that come from someone watching our response to suffering/hard times/the mundane. Are we prepared for questions?

Here are three things we can do to prepare ourselves to witness/answer questions.

1. **Know what we believe.** Following Jesus is powerful because it's simple. It doesn't rest on complicated theories that only scholars understand. It rests on simple truth.
 - a. We should know where the summary passages of the gospel are found—1 Peter 3:18,21-22; 1 Tim. 1:12-17; Titus 3:3-8; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:9, Eph. 2:1-10, etc.
 - b. Another way to summarize what we believe is to learn the Apostles' Creed.
2. **Know our story; be prepared to share it creatively.** We should put it together in an organized fashion and practice presenting it. Testimonies consists of 3 things:
 - a. **Part One:** What events in our life caused us to seek a relationship with God?
 - b. **Part Two:** How did we come into a personal relationship with Jesus?
 - c. **Part Three:** What has happened since? What difference has knowing Christ made in our life?
3. **Know that God will give us the chance to witness.** Peter says in this verse, *“be prepared,”* or *“be ready always.”*

And the most important characteristic of all in this passage:

H. **We're to HAVE AN EVIDENT HOPE.** Implied as a prerequisite here is that we're... *“Always...prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks (us) to give the reason for the HOPE that (we) have”*—v. 15c. What hope? Hope means a confident expectation in our Lord! Does this hope spill over in our talk and our walk? (See 3:13-14.) Our confident expectation causes people to ask questions, too. This is **THE HEART OF AN EFFECTIVE WITNESS.** Our hope causes people to wonder about us & ask questions.

In conversation - tone, conscience, good behavior & hope are as important as our words.

- II. **Interior Qualities Needed** for an effective and authentic witness. 1 Peter 3:15-16—*“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.”*
- A. **Gentleness and Respect.** This is what our attitude and conversation is to be filled with in public and personal conversations. We respect people and don't pressure anyone into making a decision. We simply and gently let them see the implications of following Jesus. It should be a life long commitment to have these qualities.
 - B. **A Clear Conscience.** *“...keeping a clear conscience...”*—v. 16. Implied is we need to keep a clear conscience so we won't be phony, hypocritical, or manipulative—v. 16a.
 - C. **Be Prepared For Slander.** v. 16—*“...keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior...may be ashamed of their slander.”* We must be prepared for malicious attacks, which will include slander. We shouldn't be surprised or let it deter us. Why? Our behavior may lead them to Jesus—v. 15b.

Conclusion: We have an extraordinary opportunity to share the Good News, but I hope we've all discovered that preparation often has to do with our attitudes, character and even how we walk through suffering in our lives. More often than not, it's our **ways**, not our **words** that give us the best witness. It's our hope that inspires questions about faith.

Flourish

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