

# Using Your Life and Words as Purveyors of Hope

## 1 Peter 3:15

I recently ran across the following quote: “*The mental dangers related to the pandemic are now as real as the physical dangers of the virus.*” A recent study from the Well Being Trust, a nonprofit foundation, estimates that Covid-19 may lead to 75,000 additional U.S. deaths of despair as mass unemployment, social isolation and uncertainty about the future are increasing drug and alcohol misuse and suicides.”

In light of that the instructions of 1 Peter 3:15 become even more important.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

People desperately need hope - and we as followers of Christ have hope. So, this is a great opportunity to reach into lives of despair and give them hope. But how?

Last Sunday we took our first look at this passage and gave 7 reasons for our hope as Christians, even in the midst of difficult circumstances.

### 7 Foundation of a Christians' Hope:

1. God came into our world in the person of Jesus
2. Jesus died for our sins to bring us to God.
3. Jesus' resurrection gives us a living hope
4. Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated at God's right hand
5. Jesus is coming back to take us to be with Him forever. And the first command in 1 Peter centers upon this future event. Peter says, “*With your minds alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.*” (1 Peter 1:13) In other words, constantly be looking forward to and anticipating that day with great eagerness.
6. We have an inheritance awaiting our arrival in heaven (and this inheritance can't be destroyed)
7. We're being protected by God's power to receive this inheritance (through the Holy Spirit's work)

That's an amazing and powerful foundation for hope and ought to change how we live our lives. This morning I want to look more specifically at that “how”, because our text indicates that it's not just in what we believe, that make people ask us about our hope – but it's in how we live our lives.

Let's zero in on some key passages that provide additional detail on how to live such a life of hope. The first key passage follows the earlier passage I referred to about setting our hope on Christ's return (1 Peter 1:13). Very intentionally, Peter next mentions how that should change the way we live our lives. 1 Peter 1:14-16 (NIV) “*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*” You might wince a bit at the notion of being “holy”, because you've known people who claimed to be “holy” and they were obnoxious people or turned you off to church and thus a relationship with Jesus. The call to be holy is not a call to weirdness or being obnoxious. But it is a call to be different from the rest of the world. As followers of Christ we're called to not blend in but to stand out. We're different in that we've gone from living in the darkness to living in the light. We've gone from being sinners living under God's anger to saints living under God's grace. The call is to live that way. Live out your identity.

So, let me ask you: do you tend to blend into the world and its standards and values or stand out as different - because you're increasingly looking and behaving more and more like Jesus all the time?

**Video:** My daughter, Sara, had an opportunity to stand out in how she reacted to physical pain in her life. And I want to share a video of her recounting this opportunity right now.

So, let's get very practical here: What does it look like to live a "holy" life? (And as last week, my focus will be just on what Peter instructs us in 1 Peter).

1. **Love each other deeply** (1 Peter 1:22, 3:8, 4:8)

2. **Crave spiritual milk instead of sin**

**1 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)** *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."*

Did you know that God wants you to grow up? "*Grow up in your salvation*". And there's no time in your life that this goal ought to end. I don't care if you're 90 or 6 years old, God's goal is still for you to grow up. And quite frankly, some of you quit growing and didn't even notice it. And notice God's strategy for you to grow up and he compares it to a new born baby. One of the common practices among new born babies is to put a little bit of mom's milk on their lips and tongue. Why? To create this desire for more and hence they develop a craving for more and more of momma's nourishment. Similarly, Peter says God's created each of us that way in our spiritual life. There's something about Jesus that drew people in. Perhaps it was his kindness with others, or his unconditional love and the way he treated people who were struggling with life itself. Rather than rejecting them, Jesus engaged them and through his interactions with them he created this insatiable desire for more. Peter says, this ought to be a driving force in our lives. To want more and more of Jesus and that comes through craving pure spiritual milk. I take that to mean spending time in God's Word and in meaningful communication with God through prayer. It's in God's Word that we discover His character and we see how He treated people and as we read about these encounters, the Holy Spirit connects these interactions with our own lives and it ought to drive us to want more and more. And the beauty of this is that this is God's remedy for fighting the temptation of sin in our life.

There's an old saying from Antoine de Saint-Exupery, "*If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.*" That's what Peter is instructing to do in combatting sin. Crave God's revelation of Himself in His Word and as you spend time in it, allow it to transform you.

3. "*Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble, repay evil with blessing.*" (1 Peter 3:8-9). This verse could be a whole sermon on it's own. Let me try to briefly explain this.

- **Being "like-minded"** does not mean that you agree with everyone on everything. But it does mean that we are on the same page as far as what's most important. And that's those first 7 core beliefs I mentioned earlier. And we live our lives for the glory of God. To declare His praises in what we do and say. We can agree to disagree on all sorts of other things and still sing the praises of Christ. But it's often in our disagreement that we show the ugly side of our character. We see more and more demeaning of others and accusations that if you don't agree with me on this issue then you're not only wrong, but you're an idiot. We assassinate each other's character. And that's far from being like-minded. We let other issues take us down an ugly path which discredits our witness for Jesus. We should be able to have healthy discussion and disagreements over important issues. But if proving yourself right on any one issue becomes more important than showing the love and kindness of Christ to those you disagree with, then you're wrong and you've allowed your opinion to destroy your witness. I'm pretty confident that Jesus could have found a point of disagreement with everyone he reached out to and healed or interacted with – but rather than centering upon their issue of disagreement, he zeroed in on showing God's love and tenderness and often by asking them questions, he created within them a craving for more.

Through your interactions with others, in person or on social media – are you drawing people deeper into knowing God or are you chasing people away because you have to be “right” on a certain issue? **So how do you treat people you disagree with? NEXT!!**

- We’re called to be *sympathetic and compassionate*, which means you feel someone else’s pain (physical and emotional). You hurt when they hurt. To get to this level, you need to get to know other people deeper than just a “Hi, how are you?” level.
- *Be humble* = implies that you’re looking out for the welfare of others. Looking for how you can lift them up, how you can help or encourage them. It’s not so much about putting yourself down, but more about lifting others up.
- **Repay evil with blessing** - *“Don’t repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”* (1 Peter 3:9) This is certainly one of those responses which will cause nonbelievers to sit up and take notice. They want to hurt you, they want to humiliate you, they want to shame you and your faith – but rather than try to hurt them back, you bless them instead. Does it kind of remind you of someone else? Perhaps Jesus on the cross, *“Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.”* (There’s a great example of this in the Affirmation book.)

#### 4. Give your anxiety to God

**“Humble yourself under God’s mighty hand by casting all your anxiety on him, because He cares for you.”** (1 Peter 5:6-7). The context is talking about how difficult life can be and in the backdrop of every difficulty is the devil prowling around, like a hungry lion, looking for the opportune moment to pounce and take you down. Just like a lion, the devil scopes you out and waits until **you’re weak** and **separated from your support system**, and then jumps in and tries to take you down. So, our response is to **intentionally and humbly** place yourself under God’s mighty protective hand. Don’t try to solve all of your problems, but instead turn them over to God for resolution. Ask Him for guidance and strength. Ask Him to **answer the door when the devil comes knocking**. The devil knows He’s already lost the battle with God, the moment Jesus rose from the grave. So, he tries to take down God’s people. And anxiety is one of the chief ways he does that. And what makes anxiety even worse – is when you’re all alone. You can easily lose perspective on your problems. And then you go into a downward spiral that’s difficult to pull out of. Right now the world is spiraling out of control, but you don’t need to. Begin each morning by intentionally turning your day over to God’s control. Let Him be your counselor, and strength and comforter and protector. And then begin to thank Him for what He’s doing and will be doing.

The power and beauty of these principles of how to live a “hope-filled life” is that **anyone can do this**. You don’t have to have a **high IQ** or a **deep knowledge of Scripture** to live like this. But if you strive to live like this, God will present you with more and more opportunities to share the reason for your hope with others. And as that begins to happen, your life will become much more **purpose filled** and **exciting**. Because you’ll live every day excited to be different from everyone around you, filled with the hope Christ provides and eager to share the basis for your hope.

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What does it mean to "be holy"?

Name someone that you'd consider "holy"

#### Living a holy life

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2. Crave \_\_\_\_\_ instead of sin
3. 1 Peter 3:8-9
  - a. Be \_\_\_\_\_,
  - b. be sympathetic and \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. be \_\_\_\_\_,
  - d. repay evil with \_\_\_\_\_
4. Give your \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

How "hope-filled" is your life right now?

Is your "hope" evident to others? Why or why not?

Which of these characteristics is God prompting you to work on?

How are you going to work on them?

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