

## **Ready to Answer** *Marshall Reid*

*“...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1 Peter 3:15 - KJV)*

The context in which this verse is written is that of Christians suffering on account of righteousness. They were being ostracized and ridiculed because of their faith, because they were different. When that happened, Peter wanted them to be ready to give an answer for why they were Christians, why they believed what they believed, and why they behaved the way they behaved. There are times that we will be ostracized and ridiculed. Even in our country, Christians are starting to feel legal consequences for defending their faith.

Therefore, just like the Christians in Peter’s day, we need to be ready to give an answer. This implies a few things that we must do on our part in order to be ready.

First, we need to have it clear in our mind why we are Christians, why we believe what we believe, and why we behave the way we behave. If the answer is, “I don’t know”, or “It’s what I was always taught,” that’s not going to go over very well with the person to whom we are talking. Those aren’t good answers, either for us or for anyone else. Our faith must be our own faith, and we must be confident in our faith.

However, if you are confident in the reasons you are a Christian, then you need to prepare yourself to answer questions that may arise if you are having a religious discussion with someone. This does NOT mean that you have to have all the answers to all the questions that somebody may ask you. You just have to have AN answer.

Many times, that answer is “I don’t know.” That answer is not acceptable for the question of why you are a Christian, but it is perfectly acceptable with many other religious questions. If you don’t know the answer, just say you don’t. The other person will respect you for your honesty, and you won’t feel foolish trying to bumble your way through an explanation that you’re making up on the spot. And you know what? That’s a perfect opportunity to say, “I don’t quite know the answer to that - let me study that some more. Can we have another conversation about this in the near future?” And there you have the makings for a Bible class with someone. Don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know.”

One of the most common reasons Christians don’t try to share the gospel with others is they don’t know what to say. Part of that fear has to do with not knowing answers to questions that come up. Or maybe you know the answers but you don’t know the Scriptures to back up your answer. First, let me encourage you to not let that stop you from talking with others. You can always say, “I don’t know” and then go find the answers so you’ll be ready for your next discussion.

Maybe you don’t feel comfortable trying to teach someone else yourself. That’s OK! You can be an inviter, and I’ll do the teaching. This is what a young man at the church in San Antonio did a

couple of years ago with his girlfriend. In his email to me, he wrote, "I asked if she would like to have a more in-depth Bible study with someone far more experienced than myself, and almost instantly after I finished the sentence she said, 'Yes...yes, I'd like that', and boy did she have a smile on her face!" I studied with her and the young man for several weeks, and she eventually became a Christian. It never hurts to ask, and you'll be amazed at how many times somebody will say "Yes" to a Bible study.

While you may only feel comfortable being an inviter right now, I would like to encourage you to work towards being a teacher. None of us should stay satisfied with saying "I don't know" when asked questions. We need to always be working on gaining more Bible knowledge - not for the sake of saying we're Bible smart, but so that we can utilize that knowledge when talking to our friends and neighbors. What good does it do us to learn all these wonderful Bible facts and stories if we're not sharing them with someone?

Peter also tells us that knowledge alone is not enough when giving an answer. The manner in which we do it is equally important. He says to do it with "meekness and fear". The ESV renders it "gentleness and respect". I can tell somebody they're wrong and stupid for believing such and such, or we can have a civilized and respectful study where we let God do the talking by opening up the Bible to see what he says. I can tell somebody they're going to Hell because of the sins they are committing, or I can gently show them what God says on the matter. Remember the old saying: "You attract more flies with honey than with vinegar." It's not enough to speak the truth. We must do so with gentleness and respect.

Let's look for opportunities to share the gospel with others, and let's make sure we're ready to give an answer to those who ask us questions about our faith.