



UNPREPARED

Hope on the Ropes

1 Peter 3:13-15; 1:3, 13, 21; 3:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:14

Message from Pastor Martin Hawley
August 14, 2016

The Bottom Line: We need a short answer to the question of why we have chosen to follow Jesus.

Introduction: We are beginning a new series entitled *Prepared: Defending Your Faith without Losing Your Mind*.

One of the most frustrating things about being a Christian is those moments when people ask you a question about what you believe or question something you believe, and if you had 15 minutes of undivided attention, you could give them an answer. You may not convince them, but you could at least leave them with something to think about.

The problem is you don't get 15 minutes. You only get 15 seconds. In most cases they aren't really all that interested, they're just curious or taking a shot.

On the other extreme, every once in a while, you talk with someone who is sincere. They really do want to know about Christianity. You find yourself talking and talking ... around and around you go. You realize you are making it so complicated. If only you could make it simple, clear, and understandable.

The purpose of this series is to help you know what to say about your faith when there is little time or little interest, and my goal is to simplify the message down to the fundamental basics.

Our help for this series will come from the first post-resurrection evangelist, Peter. He was an ex-businessman turned Jesus follower, who bailed in the end. He lost his faith. He denied even knowing Jesus, and then jumped back into church leadership in Jerusalem. Do you want to know what re-energized him? An empty tomb and a resurrected Lord.

**We are to be prepared to defend our hope-
not the faith, not the Bible, not the church, and not miracles.**

We are to be prepared to defend our hope and confidence in Christ. It's not possible to defend the Bible or church theology against every attack. Instead, Peter instructs us to direct the conversation to why you are a follower of Christ. He instructs us to focus on two specifics concerning our hope:

1. Our hope in the resurrection, and
2. Our hope in the return of Christ.

Peter even instructs us about the tone we are to use in our conversation.

Prepare a defense, but do not be defensive. Selfless, generous, compassionate living is unassailable.

Here's the question you need to be prepared to answer:

Why have you chosen to follow Jesus?

People's questions and comments generally focus on lifestyle choices, the church, the Bible, miracles, etc., but the question you should focus on and answer, the decision you should defend regardless of the question, is *Why Jesus?*

The actual questions people ask are certainly important, but our answers to those questions are tied directly to the *Why Jesus* question.

The reason you take the Bible seriously, the reason you take miracles seriously, the reason you are committed to the local church, and the reason you are not put off by suffering is tied directly to why you have chosen to follow Jesus. The wisest thing to do, because you only get 15 seconds, is to tie your faith back to Jesus as quickly as possible.

Suggestions:

The easiest, most helpful, and most appropriate response is to leverage the very event Peter leveraged: **the resurrection**. This is what the early church leveraged. This is what the eyewitnesses leveraged.

If a man can predict his own death and resurrection and pull it off, I'm with him.

The reason you are a follower of Jesus is the **resurrection**. If there were no resurrection, there would be no Christian **faith**.

So here's the suggestion: *I believe Jesus **died** for my sin and **rose** from the dead, but I don't believe it because the Bible says so; it's better than that.*

Conclusion:

Next week we will cover the Bible, and the following week we will deal with suffering.

This week, I want you to think about *why you are a follower of Jesus*. I gave you the short answer, but what is your personal answer to that question?

Can you state it simply? Are you prepared?

NEXT STEPS:

- Memorize: 1 Peter 1:3**
- Memorize:** *I believe Jesus **died** for my sin and **rose** from the dead, but I don't believe it because the Bible says so; it's better than that.*
- Think About Why You Are a Follower of Jesus.**
- Attend All 3 Weeks of Prepared.**