



Reliable Witness

1 Peter 3:1-15; Matthew 5:17; 19:4-5

Message from Pastor Martin Hawley
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The Bottom Line: We take the Bible seriously because we take the Gospels seriously.

Introduction: 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. If you had 15 minutes of undivided attention, you could give an answer – not to convince them but to at least leave them with something to think about.

The trouble is – you don’t get 15 minutes; you get 15 seconds! It’s so frustrating because you’re confident in your faith, but they throw you off balance or bait you into an argument.

When you do talk to someone who’s really interested, you realize that you talk and talk, around and around. Suddenly, you realize how complicated you’re making everything.

This series is to prepare you to give an answer for the hope that you have when there’s little time and even less interest.

The apostle tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the **hope** that you have.” This is liberating because it narrows the focus. We do not have to give an answer for church gossip, the bad behavior of a Christian, the creation story, or some difficult verse in the Bible. We only have to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that we have.

Peter continues in his letter and gives us the reason for his hope. It was the hope of every first-century believer. It should be the reason for our hope as well. Our hope is in the **resurrection**.

So, our short answer to every question can begin with, “That’s a great question, but before I answer it, you need to know that 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 ...”

Let’s talk about *it’s better than that* ...

The Bible

Many conservative Christians grew up being taught that the Bible is infallible, but they were never taught a defensible foundation for their faith other than “the Bible says so.”

*We evangelicals, with our **infallible** view of Scripture ripped from our hands, were left gasping for air. If you crumble and toss out a literal reading of the Bible, then what does it mean to talk about Jesus literally dying for our sins?*
- Jessica Misener, “Why I Miss Being Born Again”

Here’s what we should of been taught:

Christians take the Old Testament seriously because Jesus did.

Whenever anything in the Old Testament is being debated or criticized, just say, “Yes, there are some crazy stories, but since Jesus took the Old Testament seriously, I do too.” Critics might say or think that you are using circular reasoning – that you are using the Bible to prove the Bible. That is not the case.

The term “Bible” comes from a *Latin* term that was derived from a Greek term that means “book” or “books.”

The most important books in the Bible are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Christians do not believe the **Gospels** are reliable because they are in the Bible. Christians believe the **Gospels** were included in the Bible because they are considered reliable.

The Gospels are considered reliable because of **who** wrote them (two eyewitnesses and two friends of eyewitnesses) and **when** they were written.

In addition, the Gospels are reliable because there is no mention of the war against the Jews or the destruction of the Jewish Temple in the New Testament. Therefore, the Gospels were written and circulated within 40 years of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Paul’s letters were written within 20 years of the resurrection.

Summary:

Putting it all together from last week, our summary statement becomes:

“That’s a good question. 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 ...
I believe it because Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul said so.”

What do *you* believe?

Conclusion:

1. Our faith does not rest on the integrity of the book.
2. We take the Old Testament seriously because Jesus did. We take Jesus seriously because of the resurrection, and we take the resurrection seriously because Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul did.
3. Life gives us cause to doubt. However, the firm foundation of your faith is not your personal experience. *It’s better than that.*
4. 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. I believe it because Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul said so.

What do *you* believe?

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. I believe because Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul said so.*
- ☐ **Attend Next Week of Prepared.**