

Friday– May 9

“But do this with gentleness and respect.”

Most Methodists that I know visualize ‘evangelism’ as going door-to-door with a bible, seeking to convert (force) non-believers into faithful followers of Christ. I’ll be honest. That sounds terrifying to me. Christians shouldn’t do that. Peter is clear that OUR JOB is to help SHARE– and he adds the final clarification and definition for what “evangelism” is... “gentleness and respect”. We should offer Christ to others, if they are seeking... and we should offer what we have, with gentleness and respect. None of this definition speaks of ‘forceful conscripting’ or ‘drafting the unwilling’. We aren’t working to CLONE Christians! We offer the HOPE that we have. As I said earlier, if we don’t have hope, then we need to find some. SO... where would we find Hope? Well... if you’re seeking, then you can easily find hope in Christ. How would you do that? By someone who has that HOPE, telling you about it, with gentleness and respect. Evangelization.

Pretty simple– eh?

Prayer– **Mighty God, help me to explain my faith!”**



Saturday– May 10

“...so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior ...”

What’s this about? Peter is (again) writing about the slander and bad rumors that people were spreading about the Christian faith. Many of these rumors or stereotypes were easily broken down through simple, logical explanations. For example, during this time, one rumor was that Christians were cannibals(!) because they openly said they believed they ‘CONSUMED THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THEIR SAVIOR’. While we obviously don’t eat human beings, someone on the ‘outside’ of the faith could misunderstand the wording of our ritual of communion. If someone were to explain what we actually do (with gentleness and respect) wouldn’t that clear everything up? And more than just dispelling the rumor, it also might provide an opportunity for the non-believer to understand our Hope! In today’s world, there are plenty of arguments that stand against our faith... not just silly misunderstandings and arguments from those who still look to slander and rumor against Christ, but also by those inside our faith who are equally confused and looking for some answers (maybe too afraid to ask). This series is about APOLOGETICS– which is how we find answers and explanations to the questions that other can ask about our faith– so that we can help them see the HOPE that we have in Christ. We don’t do this to shame anyone, but only to help in respect!

Prayer– **Mighty God, help me to explain my faith!”**



1 Peter 3 : 15-16

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ 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,** ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.



Monday– May 5

'But in your hearts...'

1 Peter, as you would imagine, was the 1st letter that the Apostle Peter was writing to a church community. The letter was sent to several *different church communities (which is why it wasn't named after a particular community like many of Paul's letters– Philippians, Romans, Colossians, etc).* By comparison, Paul was an academic and clearly liked writing, whereas Peter (if you recall) was a local fisherman in his earlier life and probably not a fan of writing. This letter has been dated to around 60AD, when Roman persecution was in full swing and Peter was writing to help the church communities to explain what Christians believe, during a time when those on the outside of the faith were making a LOT of incorrect presumptions about what Christians ACTUALLY believe.

Prayer- ***Mighty God, help me to explain my faith!"***



Tuesday– May 6

'Always be prepared to give an answer...'

Peter's suggestion on how to approach others is to (as Paul says) 'have Christ at the ready' (Ephesians 6). It's important that we understand that in offering Christ to other, and offering our Faith to others it isn't a forceful action. SO much of our Christian understanding about {I'm going to use the "E" word} EVANGELISM is based on FORCING others to believe what we believe... which simply isn't true! Evangelism is offering your own understanding and faith experiences to someone else. That's it. It isn't about convincing anyone to change... or MAKING them read the whole Bible... or creating expectations that they will immediately drop to their knees in prayerful, life-changing song. I mean, I guess that could happen... but that would be up to God. The point of evangelization is sharing... not forcing. That is ALL that God calls us to do. Jesus recognizes the HUGE complexities of human communication... so all that He asks us to do is to show up and share. Peter says that praying before hand and asking Christ to be a part of our communication (working through our words) can make ALL the difference! Peter is saying in this line, that we should always be ready to tell others about what Jesus has done in our lives. If you aren't sure what He has done, then that is a great place for you to hear from other people, so maybe they can share with to you!

Prayer- ***Mighty God, help me to explain my faith!"***

Wednesday– May 7

"...who asks you to give the reason..."

Here, we've got a clarification of how we should evangelize. Modern Evangelists (some of the folks who have made this natural process SO DASTARDLY DIFFICULT!) would tell you that you should ALWAYS be ready– in EVERY context. Not so. Should we be "telling everyone, in every place– at every moment?" Kenneth Copeland would say 'Absolutely' (I say that because the above quote is from his crazy preaching). Peter doesn't agree– and I'm going to lean on the Apostle Peter, rather than the crazy evangelist. Peter says we should be ready to share with those who ASK for the reason... Please see that the job Jesus is asking you to do, is to be ready to share your own faith, with those who ask you to tell the story. Your job as a Christian is to be ready to share, when they are asking. I don't know about you, but that is VERY different from what I thought evangelizing was!

Prayer- ***Mighty God, help me to explain my faith!"***



Thursday– May 8

"...for the hope you have."

Share the HOPE that you have. This is a big part of evangelism, but just like the last clear direction, people often ignore this one too. Why do we make everything so difficult? Is it possible to share something that you don't have? Kinda impossible, huh? Peter directs us to share our HOPE. HOPE is sharing our personal relationship and our own experience with God. Hope is sharing our confidence in what WILL be, because of what God has proven to us in (in our own lives) the past. Here's the cool part. Hope isn't just knowledge or experience... HOPE is where we have true, authentic trust for God's presence in our lives, because of the relationship with God we've had in the past! If you don't feel like you have that kind of experience or hope– that's OK! You definitely aren't alone! That just means that you might want to open yourself to asking someone for their experience. Evangelism is an ONGOING process of discovery and sharing. In the faith, we are all seeking and searching for more reasons to believe. We are ALL looking for the reasons other believers have hope. God writes His own story differently with each of us, and so, each of us have different experiences with God! Evangelism isn't just for 'making new believers'. In fact, true evangelism isn't about 'making' anything. Jesus is the One who is the Hope that we share together... and when someone is looking... we share what we have!

Prayer- ***Mighty God, help me to explain my faith!"***