



Study Guide

Sermon Recap

Evan discusses the importance of understanding both the "what" and the "why" of our faith, particularly during challenging times. He highlights how questioning our beliefs can lead to growth and transformation, using examples from personal experiences and biblical teachings. The apostle Peter's advice to Christians under persecution emphasizes the need to explain not just what we believe, but why we believe it, in order to inspire others and anchor ourselves. Ultimately, Evan encourages everyone to identify their personal "why" and be prepared to share it, as it has the potential to change lives.

Ice Breaker

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be? And why is it not pineapple pizza?

Discussion Questions

- ▼ Evan discusses the importance of understanding the 'what' and 'why' that define being a Christian.
 - What does it mean to know your 'what' and your 'why' as a Christian?
 - Can you identify a time when knowing your 'why' helped you through a tough situation? How did it impact your decisions?
- ▼ Evan shares examples of how curveballs in life, like health issues or financial struggles, can lead to personal growth and deeper understanding.
 - Have you experienced a challenge that ultimately helped you grow spiritually? What happened?
 - Through that experience, what did you learn?
- ▼ Evan emphasizes that everyone has a unique story that can connect with others.
 - How can understanding our personal stories aid in sharing our faith with others? How can our stories lead others to understand the 'why' behind their faith?
 - What parts of your own story do you feel comfortable sharing with others, and how do you think it could help someone else?

Read Scripture

1 Peter 3:8-9, 14-18 NIV

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not 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.

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." 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. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Discussion Questions

▼ Evan's key passage is 1 Peter 3:15, which encourages believers to always be ready to provide a reason for their hope in Christ.

- Why is it important to be prepared to explain the reason for the hope we have?
- In what ways can you practice being ready to discuss your beliefs and give reasons for your hope?

▼ Evan discusses how actions (the 'what') alone are not enough and that understanding the reasons (the 'why') behind those actions is crucial.

- Reflect on a time when you did something just because it was expected. How might knowing the 'why' have changed your approach?
- What are some of the reasons ('why') you have your faith?

Activity

Take a few minutes and briefly share your story.

We all have a story. We all have a unique sequence of events that has led us to where we are today. Story is one of the most effective tools that we use to relate to and connect with one another. We shouldn't be surprised that God uses story again and again all throughout scripture to reveal Himself to us.

If you know your story, click the link in the Church Center app.

Prayer

- Ask God to help apply the sermon to your life throughout the coming week.
- Pray for courage to share your "why" with others.
- Ask for understanding and clarity in any struggles you face regarding your faith.
- Remember to lift up any specific prayer requests shared in your group.

Rewatch the sermon

Visit victorycc.life/watch for on-demand access to all of our sermons.



5 Day Devotional

Day 1

1 Peter 3:8-22

Peter encourages believers to live with gentleness, humility, and love, even in the face of suffering. He specifically calls us to always be ready to give an answer for the hope we have in Christ, but to do so with gentleness and respect. Sharing our story is not about having all the answers or winning arguments—it's about testifying to the transforming power of God in our lives. Our testimony is powerful because it is personal; no one can deny what Christ has done in us. Even when we face opposition, we can trust that God is at work, using our faithfulness to draw others to Him. Have you considered how your story can encourage someone who is struggling? The way we live—responding to trials with hope and grace—can be just as impactful as the words we speak. Jesus suffered for our sake, bringing us to God, and our willingness to share our faith can help bring others to Him as well. As you reflect on your journey, ask God for opportunities to share His work in your life with boldness and love. Your story is a testimony of His grace—be ready to share it.

- How can you prepare yourself to share the hope of Christ in a way that is both bold and gentle?
- In what ways has God worked in your life that could encourage someone else who is struggling?
- Are there opportunities in your daily life where you can share your testimony, even through your actions and attitude?
- Ask God to give you the wisdom and courage to share your story with others, to help you speak with gentleness and love, and to use your testimony to draw people closer to Him.

Day 2

Psalm 107

This psalm is a powerful reminder that those who have experienced God's redemption should share their story. In verse 2, the writer says, *"Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe."* Throughout the psalm, we see different groups of people in distress—wanderers, prisoners, the sick, and those caught in storms—all crying out to God for help. In each case, God responds with deliverance, showing His steadfast love and faithfulness. Just as God rescued His people in the past, He continues to redeem and restore today. Our stories of His faithfulness are meant to be shared as a testimony of His goodness. Have you experienced God's rescue in your own life—whether from sin, fear, or hardship? Your testimony can encourage others to trust in Him. By telling others what God has done, you bring Him glory and point people toward His saving grace. Let your story be a light that leads others to the hope and love of God.

- How has God redeemed or rescued you in a way that could encourage someone else?
- What holds you back from sharing your story of God's faithfulness, and how can you overcome that fear?
- Who in your life needs to hear about God's goodness, and how can you share your testimony with them?
- Ask God to help you recognize the ways He has worked in your life and give you the boldness to share your story, so that others may come to know His love and faithfulness.

Day 3

Mark 5:1-20

In this passage, Jesus heals a man possessed by a legion of demons, completely transforming his life. After his deliverance, the man desires to follow Jesus, but Jesus tells him instead to go home and share what God has done for him. This shows that our testimony has purpose—God calls us to share our story so others can witness His power and grace. The man obeys, spreading the news of his transformation, and people marvel at what God has done. Like him, we don't need a perfect background or theological training to share our testimony; we simply need to tell how Jesus has changed us. Your story is powerful because it reveals God's mercy in a personal way. Have you experienced God's healing, provision, or redemption? There are people in your life who need to hear

about it. When we share our story, we point others to the life-changing power of Christ. Don't keep silent—let your testimony be a light that draws others to Jesus.

- What has Jesus done in your life that you can share with others to point them to His power and mercy?
- Like the man in Mark 5, is there a place or group of people where God is calling you to share your story?
- How can you overcome fear or hesitation when it comes to sharing your testimony with those around you?
- Ask God to give you the courage and wisdom to share your story boldly, that He would use your testimony to bring hope and transformation to others who need to experience His love and power.

Day 4

Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:1-11

Matthew records Jesus giving His followers a clear mission—to go and make disciples, sharing the good news of His salvation. Then Luke records that before ascending to heaven, Jesus promises that they will receive power from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. This command isn't just for the disciples; it's for all believers, including us today. Sharing your story is a key part of fulfilling the Great Commission because personal testimony reveals God's power in a relatable way. Jesus doesn't call us to share from our own strength but equips us through the Holy Spirit. Have you considered how your story can be a tool for leading others to Christ? Whether in your home, workplace, or community, your testimony can plant seeds of faith in those around you. The disciples obeyed Jesus, and the gospel spread across the world—now it's our turn to carry the message forward. Be bold, trust in the Spirit's guidance, and share how Jesus has changed your life.

- In what ways has God equipped you through the Holy Spirit to share your story and be a witness for Christ?
- Where is God calling you to share your testimony, and how can you take a step of obedience in doing so?
- How does knowing that Jesus is with you always (Matthew 28:20) give you confidence to share your faith with others?
- Ask God to fill you with boldness and wisdom, and give you opportunities to share your story so that others may come to know His love and salvation.

Day 5

Revelation 12

Revelation 12 offers a powerful image of the ongoing spiritual battle between good and evil, but it also highlights the victory that believers have in Christ. In verse 11, it says, *"They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."* Our testimony, alongside the blood of Christ, is a weapon in this battle.

Sharing our story of how Jesus has redeemed and transformed us is not only an act of obedience but also a declaration of God's power over sin and death. The enemy wants to silence our voices, but when we speak about God's work in our lives, we claim victory over him. Each testimony is a testament to God's victory and a beacon of hope for others. What has God done in your life that could help someone else overcome fear, doubt, or hopelessness? Your story carries the light of Christ, which can defeat darkness. As you share it, you participate in the great victory of the Kingdom of God. Don't hold back—your testimony is part of God's redemptive plan for the world.

- How does knowing that your testimony is part of the spiritual victory in Christ empower you to share it boldly?
- What specific experiences in your life have shown God's faithfulness that you could share with someone who might need hope?
- How can you use your testimony as a tool to encourage others in their own battles against fear, doubt, or despair?
- Ask God to give you the courage and strength to share your testimony, knowing that it is a powerful witness of His victory, and to use your story to bring hope and encouragement to those who need it most.



Want To Go Deeper?

Historical Context

Understanding the historical context of 1 Peter 3, our main text this week, is crucial for grasping the message and significance of the passage. Here are some key points:

1. **Authorship and Audience:** The Apostle Peter is traditionally recognized as the author of this epistle. He wrote to Christians scattered throughout the Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These believers were primarily Gentiles who had converted to Christianity.
2. **Persecution:** The letter was written during a time of increasing persecution against Christians. Emperor Nero, known for his brutal treatment of Christians, was in power. The Christians in Rome and other parts of the empire faced hostility, social ostracism, and even violent persecution. This context of suffering and persecution is a backdrop for Peter's exhortations.
3. **Purpose of the Letter:** Peter wrote to encourage and strengthen the believers in their faith amidst trials. He aimed to remind them of their identity in Christ and to instruct them on how to live righteously in a hostile world. The letter emphasizes hope, holiness, and perseverance.
4. **Social and Cultural Context:** The early Christians were living in a predominantly pagan society. Their beliefs and practices often set them apart, leading to misunderstandings and suspicion.

Peter addresses how Christians should conduct themselves in various social relationships, including marriage and interactions with authorities, to maintain a good witness.

5. **Themes of Suffering and Hope:** A significant theme in 1 Peter is the idea of suffering for doing good and the hope that believers have in Christ. Peter encourages the believers to endure suffering with patience and to see it as a participation in Christ's own sufferings, which ultimately leads to glory.
6. **Call to Holiness and Witness:** Peter emphasizes the importance of living a holy life and being prepared to give a reason for the hope that believers have. This involves both knowing what they believe and understanding why they believe it, as highlighted in the sermon.

Understanding these historical and cultural contexts helps illuminate the practical advice Peter gives in 1 Peter 3, particularly regarding how to respond to persecution and how to live out one's faith authentically and effectively.

Greek Word Study

apologia

Original Word: **ἀπολογία**

Pronunciation: ah-po-lo-GEE-ah

Phonetic Spelling: (ap-ol-og-ee'-ah)

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: apologia

Definition: Defense, Answer, Apology

Meaning: a verbal defense (particularly in a law court).

Word Origin: Derived from ἀπολογέομαι (apologeomai), meaning "to defend oneself" or "to make a defense."

Usage: In the New Testament, "apologia" refers to a formal defense or justification of one's beliefs, actions, or position. It is often used in the context of defending the Christian faith against accusations or misunderstandings. The term implies a reasoned argument or explanation, rather than a mere excuse.

Cultural and Historical Background: In the Greco-Roman world, "apologia" was a legal term used in courtrooms to describe a defendant's speech in defense of themselves. This concept was familiar to early Christians, who often faced legal and social challenges due to their faith. The ability to articulate a reasoned defense of one's beliefs was crucial in a society that valued rhetoric and public discourse.

Deeper Application

1. **Personal Reflection on Faith:** Take time to reflect on both the "what" and the "why" of your faith. The "what" includes the core beliefs and practices of Christianity—such as belief in Jesus Christ, the resurrection, and living a life of love and compassion. The "why" involves understanding the personal reasons and experiences that anchor these beliefs in your life. Reflect on how your personal story and experiences have shaped your faith journey.
2. **Strengthening Your Foundation:** Use this reflection to strengthen your spiritual foundation. Knowing the "why" behind your faith can provide resilience during trials. When life throws curveballs, having a strong "why" helps you remain steadfast and prevents you from being easily swayed by doubts or external pressures.
3. **Sharing Your Story:** Be prepared to share your "why" with others. As Peter advises, always be ready to give an answer for the hope you have. Your personal testimony can be a powerful tool for evangelism, offering others a glimpse into the transformative power of faith. Sharing your story with gentleness and respect can inspire others and potentially lead them to explore their own faith journey.
4. **Living Out Your Faith:** Let the "why" of your faith motivate your actions. When you understand why you believe and why you practice certain aspects of your faith, it becomes easier to live out those beliefs authentically. This can manifest in acts of service, community involvement, and daily interactions that reflect Christ's love and teachings.
5. **Community and Support:** Engage with your faith community to explore these concepts together. Discussing the "what" and "why" with others can provide new insights and strengthen communal bonds. It also offers support and encouragement, especially when facing personal or collective challenges.