

QUESTION & ANSWER SERMON - PART 3

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. August 23, 2026.

Dismiss the Middle School

STUDY GUIDE

As you came in this morning, you should have received a bulletin. Inside, you'll find a simple study guide you can use in a few different ways: to follow along with today's teaching, to reflect on during your personal devotions this week, or to spark conversation in your small group.

More resources are available online. [The link is in your study guide.](#)

Let's get started on today's teaching ...

QUESTION & ANSWER SERMON - PART 3

I know that I said we were done with our Question and Answer sermon series, but I need to take that back.

One question was so relevant that it kept coming to mind, so I finally wrote an answer that we'll look at today.

So let's get started.

QUESTION

Question: How should we relate to a culture that is hostile toward us? Should we have non-Christian friends, even if they are not open to the faith?

Answer: Great questions.

Forty years ago, this wouldn't have been a question for Midwestern Americans. We got along with our neighbors even if we didn't agree about religion or politics.

That's no longer the case. What changed? My guess is that cable news and social media have poisoned American culture. How so? Hyped up reporting and commentary with little regard for the truth have created silos of religious and political opinions. Everything is now us against them.

Many people have lost the ability to be friendly, respectful, polite, humble, and gentle. We're no longer neighborly. We just get mad. We live by slogans. We ride on bandwagons.

And none of it helps the cause of Christ.

There has to be a better way, and there is. The answer to today's question is found in 1 Peter 3. Let's read it now:

1 PETER 3:13-18

1 Peter 3:13-18 (CSB) Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear them or be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. 16 Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God.

THE CONTEXT OF 1 PETER 3:13-18

1 Peter is a letter written to scattered Christian communities in the ancient Roman Empire in an area known as Asia Minor.

These Christians were being “canceled” by their families, neighbors, and city officials. They endured slander, rejection, and social pressure because they didn’t go to the pagan temples and join in pagan festivals.

So Peter writes to encourage them in Christ and teach them how to live in a hostile community. He described how to relate to neighbors and family members with different religious or political worldviews.

I’d like us to look at four ways for a faithful Jesus-follower to relate to people who disagree with us:

1. RELATE BY LIVING WELL - VERSE 13.

... devoted to what is good ...

The word “**devoted**” is the Greek word “zealotés.” Be “zealous” about doing good.

When people disagree with our faith in Jesus, we have a choice to make. We can get mad, retaliate, go nuclear. Or we can double down on living well, so no one can justifiably condemn us.

1 Peter 3:17 (CSB) For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Don't give people a reason to criticize your lifestyle or your faith. Instead ...

16 ... keep (ing) a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame (because they are obviously mistaken).

What's your reputation like at work or in the subdivision?

2. RELATE BY LOOKING TO THE GOAL - VERSE 13

Who then will harm you ...?

When we go through hard times, it can feel like God has turned his back on us. But the apostle Peter reminds us that God will never abandon his people - even in the final judgment. The word “***harm***” in verse 13 is in the future tense, so it isn’t referring to what our opponents do to us now; it’s about what God will do at the final judgment.

The Bible teaches us that God will judge everyone in the end (Hebrews 9:27). While we may have hard days here and now, in the end, if we are in Christ by faith, we will not suffer ***harm*** when God judges us; he will not condemn us. If we’re faithful now, he’ll reward us then.

So, we can put up with a lot while we build bridges of friendship to difficult people. Keep your eyes on the prize; look to the goal. The way our life in Christ works is this: first the cross, then the crown.

3. RELATE BY LOVING CHRIST ABOVE ALL - VERSES 14-15

Do not fear them or be intimidated, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy ...

What should be our attitude when people disparage our faith and pressure us to turn from Jesus? Don't be intimidated. Don't give up.

Remember that we answer to a higher authority: Jesus the holy *Lord*. Fear him and no one else. We're not going to betray Jesus for the sake of being liked and accepted or even safe.

We must be like the apostles who were told by the Jerusalem Council to stop preaching Jesus:

Acts 4:19-20 (CSB) Peter and John answered them, "Whether it's right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; 20 for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 5:29 (CSB) Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than people."

Being committed to Jesus as Lord is not an excuse to cut off our friendships with unbelievers. Rather, it's a reason to maintain those friendships. Jesus was a friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19).

4. RELATE BY SHARING OUR HOPE IN CHRIST - VERSE 15

... ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Hope is the rarest thing in the world. People feel hopeless, but Christians have been ***born again into a living hope*** (1 Peter 1:3-4). We're certain that we will be raised with Christ into an eternal inheritance.

Christ lived. Christ died. Christ rose. Christ lives. He is the Savior who forgives our sins and restores us to God so that we will live with him in the new creation. That's our message of hope.

Sharing that hope is our mission. We are called by our Lord Jesus Christ to imitate him. He came ***to seek and to save the lost*** (Luke 19:10).

He was a messenger of hope, and so are we. We share our hope in Christ, as Peter states, with ***“gentleness*** (towards people) ***and “reverence”*** towards God (verse 16).

And we can't do that if we burn our bridges and reject all our not-believing friends.

IN CONCLUSION

1 Peter 3 assumes that we will do everything we can to be friendly, approachable, good people.

That's our evangelism strategy.

- It's how I came to faith.
- It's how Rosario Butterfield came to faith. She was a lesbian and radical feminist professor who was befriended by the pastor of a church near her campus. Over time, through many meals and conversations, her heart opened to hearing the gospel about Jesus, and she believed.
- It's how C. S. Lewis came to Christ. Two Christian friends had a long late-night conversation with him, and he became convinced not only that God exists but also that Christianity is true. Guess who one of those friends was? J. R. R. Tolkien!

Be friendly, hospitable, generous, and helpful in every way you can. And be ready to explain your hope in Christ.

Recommended Resource

I've placed a book on the Book Table that can help you explain your hope. It's **Unshakable by David Shapiro**.

This book would also be helpful to study with your teenagers as they prepare for some of the pushback they may get in school or college.