

QUESTION & ANSWER SERMON - PT. 3

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. August 23, 2026.

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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: 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 and created silos of religious and political opinions.

Many people have lost the ability to be friendly. We live by slogans.

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 was 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 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.

HOW 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.

Double down on living well, so no one can justifiably condemn you.

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).

2. Relate by Looking to the Goal - verse 13

Who then will harm you ...?

The Bible 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.

In the end, if we are in Christ by faith, we will not suffer harm. When God judges us, he will not condemn us.

So, we can put up with a lot while we build bridges of friendship to difficult people.

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.

We answer to a higher authority: Jesus the holy Lord. Fear him and no one else. Be like the apostles:

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 Your 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.

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.
- It’s how C. S. Lewis came to Christ!

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

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Unshakable by David Shapiro.