

## Hope in Uncertain Times by Nigel Coles A Reason For Hope: Part 3

Welcome most especially to our third part of **A Reason For Hope**: looking at 1 Peter 3:15:

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,

Today we'll spend a few minutes together thinking about what Peter asks when he says: **'give an answer'**.

You may want to re-visit these when you' have a little more time, because I want to share four things quickly, which help me in these situations:

### 1. Give an answer to the question, not the one you wished they'd asked

When I was at school, I remember the last thing my mum said when I was leaving for school whenever we had exams was 'remember to read the question'.

There was a reason for that – I'd made some big mistakes.

I remember hearing about one student who spent an exam writing about gnomes – when the question really asked about genomes. I hope that's not a true story, but I've done it in conversation too, not just exams.

If someone asks you a question like which church do you go to? ... if you simply take it as licence to launch into your story of how you became a Christian, what a difference Jesus has made in your life and why they need to confess their sins and repent, right there, immediately, they'll probably wish they'd never asked.

I always try to treat people with respect, which in the first instance means listening to what they actually ask. Interestingly one of Stephen Covey's 'Seven habits of highly effective people' is 'Seek First to Understand; Then be Understood'.

### 2. Give an answer which allows God enough space to speak

Psalms 81:10 'open wide your mouth and I will fill it' and Luke 21:12-15 always gives me confidence:

*They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. <sup>13</sup> And so you will bear testimony to me. <sup>14</sup> But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. <sup>15</sup> For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.*

If you get in a situation where you have no idea what to say, pray and ask God to help you. I've been amazed many, many times by people thanking me for words I've said I have no memory of saying. Of course, that may say more about me, but I think it says more about the grace of God.

### 3. Give an answer which sheds light on 'Christ in you the hope of glory'

Remember **it's your hope they're interested in**, not your articulate English.

If they simply wanted information, they'd use Google. People ask people because they're looking for hope and it's the hope they see at work in you, which has provoked their question.

So, I believe there are two people who need to be in my answer: me and Jesus.

It's your story they want to hear, and your story is powerful. Whenever you share a piece of your story with someone else, you're giving the gift of yourself, who you really are. Think about the films, certainly for me, which resonate with me most, are when I can relate to the characters, when they seem close enough, but further ahead than me, to inspire.

When we share our story, we flesh out a little, or 'incarnate' the message about Jesus in a tangible way.

### 4. If you're not asked to give an answer, ask a question of your own

One of the most common questions I'm asked when talking about this subject is: 'what if someone never asks me a question'? Does that mean my Christian life doesn't reflect anything about Jesus?

My answer is always the same – **if another person isn't asking you any questions, ask them.**

OK I agree, some people simply don't appear to be interested in anybody else and they probably won't ask you anything, about anything. But most people are intrigued, even though many don't know how, or don't have the confidence to ask what seem to be personal questions. So, present them with an opportunity by asking them a question.

A good friend of mine asks everyone who serves them in a coffee shop, or a cashier in a petrol station, or wherever, or anyone they randomly meet, 'How is your day going?' It's so simple, but I've witnessed his integrity in asking – he's genuinely interested in the answer and I'm wanting to make it a good habit of my own.

Or if someone is telling you about a struggle or particular challenge, ask them 'do you mind me asking, do you have a faith, which is able to help you with this?'

Invariably people like to talk about themselves, but then they'll ask, 'what about you?'

By the time anyone is asking questions, it's a sure sign God is at work in that person's life already. They've seen something called hope and hope is lived, not just explained.

To watch the video, go to: <https://www.thefuelcast.com/>

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