

Hope in Uncertain Times by Nigel Coles A Reason For Hope: Part 6

Welcome to The Fuelcast on Friday. Today we conclude our series 'A Reason for Hope' with what may be the most significant issue we need to pay attention to, in terms of what you and I can contribute, when sharing our reason for the hope within us, that is Jesus Christ, with other people. That is, 'how' we share, as a result of 'who' we are:

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,

'do this with gentleness and respect' – that's today's focus, but there's more because verse 16 is a continuation of the same sentence:

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

I mentioned, last week, the Talking Jesus course, available on talkingjesus.org which is proving a great help for people like you and me, who want to share their faith with others. As part of the research, which preceded the course, people were asked what they thought about Christians.

They were given a long list of words which describe all people and character types, both positive and negative.

Very interestingly, they described Christians predominantly, as friendly, caring and good humoured – isn't that good news? Now you may wish to distance yourself from being friendly, caring, or good humoured, I'll take those. What that means is, the majority of people who don't yet share your faith in Jesus, already have a positive perception of the kind of person you are.

You've already got a head start, before you even open your mouth!

Now pause for a moment and think what's important to you before making a significant purchase – how do you decide?

Well, I tend to do my research. search around the internet, look for advice, check comparisons, read reviews, but the last thing I've bought to help improve my wifi signal me because I'm doing so much zooming these days – I've acted on the advice of a friend and gone for what they recommended. Why?

Because they're using what I need, they're pleased with the results, but most importantly, I trust their view.

My hunch is you're the same – you're more likely to buy something on the back of a personal recommendation from someone you know and who's opinion you trust.

If they seem to know what they're talking about I pay attention, but the biggest factor is who they are.

It's the same when we're talking to anyone about the big stuff – faith, hope and love.

One of my favourite regular prayers is 'how can I be the answer to the prayers of the people around me?'

That prayer alone has changed the way I try and approach everyone, but what does it mean?

Well, I believe everyone has a God shaped hole within them that only the One, true, living God can fill.

And because everyone is made in the image of God, even whilst many of them would not consciously recognise they are seeking for God, in the person of Jesus Christ, they still warm towards the fruit of God's spirit whoever it's displayed in. Consequently, people are drawn to other people who treat them well.

Who treat them with ... as Peter puts it here 'with gentleness and respect'.

Throughout this one letter Peter uses a whole variety of words, which describe how he anticipates marking our engagement with others:

'sincere love', 'deep love', 'doing good', 'respect', 'showing respect', 'purity and reverent behaviour', 'considerate', 'sympathetic', 'humility', 'being examples', and, of course, gentleness and respect.

You might look at your life and think it's not got the makings of a blockbuster film – but 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 it – they're the films, certainly for me, which resonate with me most – 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.

It's your story they want to hear. There may be people around who are seeking out an individual who'll explain hope as a philosophical idea etc but I've yet to meet them!

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

「 T H E 」
F U E L
「 C A S T 」