

**D-Up: A Series on Discipleship**  
**A Disciple Knows Why and How to Believe What is Believed**  
**1 Peter 3:15-16**

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**Text Introduction:** This morning I am continuing a preaching series on discipleship. We are calling this series of messages “D-Up!” The “D” stands for discipleship.

We have focused on our initial decision to follow Christ, on baptism and the importance of the church to help us grow as disciples. In more recent weeks, we have focused on daily reading of the Word, prayer, and stewardship. Last week we talked about what might be termed personal evangelism or witnessing. I was blessed by your coming forward and turning in approximately 800 names of people for whom you are praying. I am praying with you.

Today, we want to advance that same conversation a little bit more. Today, we want to talk about the why of what we believe and even explore how (as in with what kind of spirit).

**Text:** but honor the Messiah as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. <sup>16</sup> However, do this with gentleness and respect, keeping your conscience clear, so that when you are accused, those who denounce your Christian life will be put to shame.

**Introduction:** We have a group of adults studying this book titled, *Why Do You Believe That?* I want to commend this group for giving the time to seriously consider not only what we believe, but why we believe what we believe. In the opening paragraphs of this book the author, Mary Jo Sharp, writes:

Imagine you are sitting around a family dinner table having some great conversation. You are discussing politics, the economy, the church, and other generally broad issues. One of your family members asks you about your church and how things are going there. You begin to discuss the latest activities, including last week’s sermon on faith, when all of a sudden one of your family members says, “Faith is a lack of critical thinking.” (Mary Jo Sharp, *Why Do You Believe That?*, p. 12.)

What do you say? Do you know how to respond both in content and tone? That is what we want to talk about today.

The background to Peter’s letter is one of suffering. Basically, Peter addresses this group of believers living in a world that is hostile to their beliefs. Sound familiar? In case you haven’t been paying attention, we live in a world that is hostile to our positions and beliefs.

Let me give you the sermon in one sentence this morning and then unpack that sentence a little bit.

**A Disciple of Jesus must be able to clearly articulate the Gospel with Christ-like attitudes and consistent actions.**

### **Clear Articulation of the Gospel**

**“And always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”**

This is such a great verse. Every word is so impactful. Let’s just look at a few.

- Always—We are always on call to share the good news about Jesus.
- Be Ready—There is a note of getting prepared in this word.
- Defense—the word translated here “defense” is *apologia*. It is where we get the idea of apologetics. Now, don’t get confused. We are not apologizing for the Gospel, but we are getting ourselves ready to make a defense.
- To anyone—Always and everyone
- Reason—this Greek word sounds like our English word “logic.” Our explanation of the Gospel must be logical.
- Hope—Hope in all things—Hope in this life and the life to come. It is a good word to communicate our faith.

So, we must be able to articulate in a logical way our belief about Jesus. Consider Paul’s example. This is what he did.

#### **Paul’s Example:**

- Acts 17:17—“So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.”
- Acts 18:4—“He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks.”
- Acts 18:19—“But he himself entered the synagogue and engaged in discussion with the Jews.”

Often, I will hear people say, “I just wish I knew more.” Or, “I’m afraid I can’t answer all their questions.” There are questions we will never answer, but this text points out that we need to find some answers. We ought to be in God’s Word every day. Just by committing yourself to read God’s Word every day, you will be preparing yourself to answer questions. Then, of course, there is more that we must do to be prepared.

The Gospel is truth that can be logically defended, and the disciple ought to be able to do that. This doesn’t mean that everyone has to be an expert like Ravi Zacharias, but it does mean that every disciple should grasp the essential. If you have been saved, you know enough Gospel to tell someone else how to be saved. If you don’t know enough Gospel to tell someone else how to be saved, how did you get saved? That is you understand that we are all sinners, that Christ came born of a virgin, living a sinless life, that Christ died for sin, that He rose again, and that if you believe these things in your heart and confess them with your mouth, you can be saved.

As in this verse, once you have set apart the Messiah as Lord in your heart, you should be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you.

#### **Christ-like Attitudes**

**“However, do this with gentleness and respect”**

Paul's Example:

- Ephesians 4:25—"Speak the truth in love"
- 1 Corinthians 9:20-23—"... I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some."

The idea here is that we can't be mean and degrading and then expect someone to hear us. I once knew a man who bragged to me about a witnessing encounter when he said, "You will believe one second after you are burning in Hell." He might have been theologically correct, but his approach was all wrong. Jude 22 tells us to "Have mercy on some who doubt."

**Consistent Actions**

**"Keeping your conscience clear"**

We will validate or invalidate our witness with Consistent Actions.

Your lifestyle ought to make it easy for people to believe in God.

Paul's Example:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27—"... but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."

Your walk better match your talk.

There is somebody who is watching you in your office, at your school, or even in your home. You think that you are having no effect, but you are.

We live in a world that is going to keep asking questions. Thank God for every question and be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Does your life raise questions? What kind of questions?