

You're Invited, Part 2: Prepared!

Andy Stanley · 1 Peter 3:13-18

AT A GLANCE

Personal credibility is the engine of personal invitation, and credibility depends partly on Christlike conduct but equally on having a short, honest answer to why you follow Jesus as an adult. Andy Stanley argues, drawing from 1 Peter 3, that this prepared answer is not merely an evangelistic tool but a personal anchor — something to hold when doubt, pressure, or cultural drift tempts you to walk away.

- Your invitation to others carries weight only when backed by a life and a reason that hold up under honest scrutiny.
- Peter does not ask you to defend all of Christianity — only to articulate the hope that is personally, actually yours.
- Your elevator pitch about faith matters first for your own resilience when following Jesus becomes costly or inconvenient.

“If someone predicts their own death and resurrection and pulls it off, I go with whatever that person says.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

[1 Peter 3:13-18](#) — If you are always trying to do good, no one can really harm you. But you may suffer for doing right. If that happens, you have God’s blessing. “Don’t be afraid of the people who make you suffer; don’t be worried.” But keep the Lord Christ holy in your hearts. Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have. But answer them in a gentle way with respect. Keep your conscience clear. Then people will see the good way you live as followers of Christ, and those who say bad things about you will be ashamed of what they said. It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong. Yes, it is better if that is what God wants. Christ himself suffered when he died for you, and with that one death he paid for your sins. He was not guilty, but he died for people who are guilty. He did this to bring all of you to God. In his physical form he was killed, but he was made alive by the Spirit. (ERV)

The argument

Invitations Derive Their Power from the Inviter's Credibility — Conduct and reactions, not merely beliefs, establish that credibility

Andy Stanley opens by observing that the appeal of any invitation tracks closely with the credibility of the person extending it. For Christians, that credibility rests on whether they actually walk their talk — and he sharpens this with a distinction worth keeping: actions speak louder than words, but reactions speak louder than actions. How a person behaves under pressure, when surprised or wronged, reveals what is actually inside them. He notes that many people who know very little about the Bible know enough about Jesus to measure whether Christians are genuine followers or merely adherents to a belief list. The vision he articulates is a church where people may be critical of what we believe but find it genuinely hard to be critical of how we love — making Christlike character the credible foundation for every invitation extended.

Insight — A life that surprises people with its consistency under pressure is more persuasive than any argument, because reactions cannot easily be performed.

Every Adult Believer Owes the World — and Themselves — a Reason for the Hope They Carry — Peter narrows the ask from defending Christianity to explaining personal hope

Andy Stanley anchors the sermon's central demand in 1 Peter 3:15: always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. He is careful to honor Peter's precision: the command is not to defend the Bible, not to account for every church scandal, not to answer every hard theological question. Peter wrote before there was an assembled Bible, Stanley notes, and his audience was under imperial pressure, not academic debate. The scope is deliberately personal: why, as an adult, have you chosen to follow Jesus? That narrow, honest answer is asked of us not primarily to convert others but to demonstrate that our way of life is anchored to something solid — and to give ourselves something to hold onto when faith grows costly.

Insight — Narrowing the ask from defending Christianity to explaining your own hope makes the response both more honest and more durable under pressure.

The Posture of the Answer Matters as Much as Its Content — Gentleness and respect are not diplomatic polish — they are the strategy

Peter's instructions in 1 Peter 3:15-16 specify tone alongside content: give the reason with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience. Andy Stanley translates this plainly — don't be defensive and don't be offensive. He offers a practical note worth memorizing: whenever someone asks a question that feels like a challenge, respond as though it were sincere. Treat every hard question as if the person genuinely wants to know. The aim, Peter says, is that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may ultimately be ashamed of their

slander. Stanley does not promise that outcome — no guarantee, he says — but he holds out the vision of selfless, compassionate, generous living as ultimately unassailable: people may quarrel with what Christians believe, but a Christlike life is very hard to sustain an attack against.

Insight — Answering with unhurried, uncharged gentleness disarms hostility more reliably than any argument, because it removes the adversarial dynamic the questioner expected.

Your Elevator Pitch Needs to Be Yours — but You Can Borrow One Until It Is — Two go-to answers modeled in different registers: theological and experiential

Andy Stanley turns practical and vulnerable, offering his own two answers as a scaffold for people who have not yet formed their own. The first is theological: if someone predicts their own death and resurrection and pulls it off, he goes with whatever that person says. He is careful to note that his confidence rests not on the Bible telling him so, but on the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul — eyewitness and near-eyewitness writers — which he regards as a stronger evidentiary claim than institutional authority. The second is experiential: following Jesus has made him better at life, and in seasons when he was not following Jesus, he was, by his own account, a mess. He invites listeners to borrow either answer until they can form their own story in their own words.

Insight — A reason you can actually say in two sentences — drawn from your own history with Jesus — will hold you through doubt and open doors with others more reliably than a theological position you cannot personally inhabit.

The Failure of Imperfect Followers Is Not a Reason to Miss Jesus — Peter's own story reframes the hypocrisy objection with unusual moral authority

Andy Stanley closes the argument with a pastoral turn toward those who have stepped back from faith because of Christian behavior — or who are considering it. He does not minimize the offense. Instead, he lets Peter speak: the apostle who denied Jesus to a servant girl during his arrest has unusually high moral authority to say, please don't allow imperfect Jesus followers to cause you to miss Jesus. Peter's testimony, Stanley notes, was not secondhand. He was present for three and a half years. He watched Jesus suffer righteously and watched himself collapse under the pressure of a bystander's question. If Peter — the quintessential hypocrite — can say, don't miss my rabbi, that witness lands differently than any apologetic argument. The righteous one suffered for the unrighteous, Stanley summarizes, and that remains the irreducible offer.

Insight — The strongest witness against the hypocrisy objection is not a morally perfect church but a formerly faithless disciple who still points people back to Jesus.

Cross-references

- [Matthew 10:28](#) — Stanley alludes to Jesus' teaching — do not fear those who can only kill the body — as the background for Peter's instruction not to be frightened of persecutors, since ultimate allegiance belongs to Christ, not to human threats.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a moment most of us have been handed and mishandled — the question that arrives sideways over dinner, or from a skeptical sibling, or from our own interior in the 3 a.m. silence: why, exactly, are you still doing this? Following Jesus, I mean. In the daylight, surrounded by community and music and belonging, the question feels answerable. In the harder seasons, it feels like an accusation we cannot quite rebut. Peter knew both kinds of pressure. He had stood in firelight with a crowd he did not choose, and when a girl asked if he knew the man on trial, every careful certainty he'd assembled over three and a half years dissolved into a flat denial. And yet it is this Peter — not some uncomplicated saint — who writes to people under imperial threat and says: always be prepared. There is something quietly merciful in that instruction coming from him. He is not demanding that you have mastered the arguments or resolved the hard passages or explained every century of church history. He is asking you to know why you have chosen the hope you carry. To have turned it over enough times in private that you can say it plainly when it matters. Not to win the room. Not to silence the skeptic. But because an anchor only holds if you know where it is set. Andy Stanley's invitation here is unhurried and honest: form your reason. Make it yours. Let it be true enough that you could say it to a friend who genuinely wanted to know, and also to yourself on the morning when following Jesus costs something real. The resurrection is either the hinge on which everything turns or it is nothing. If it is the hinge — and Peter staked his life on the claim that he had seen it — then there is a reason for the hope. You simply need to know what yours is.

Reflection

- If a friend who is not a Christian asked you tonight why you still follow Jesus as an adult, what would you actually say — and how confident are you that your answer reflects your own experience rather than inherited language?
- In what season of your life was your faith most personally anchored, and what was it anchored to — and does that anchor still hold the same weight for you now?
- When someone's behavior, in the church or outside it, has made faith harder for you, what kept you from letting their failure become the decisive word about Jesus?

Closing prayer

Father, thank you for preserving Peter's words across all these centuries — and for the fact that the man who wrote them knew what it was to fail miserably at the moment it mattered most. That gives the rest

of us room to breathe. For those here who are considering faith, or who have stepped back from it: I pray that nothing we say or do would get in the way of their willingness to lean into the person of Jesus of Nazareth. For those of us who follow you: make us prepared. Give us a reason that is truly ours, true enough to hold us when doubt comes and honest enough to open a door for someone else. And for anyone on the edge of walking away today — remind them of why they chose you in the first place, and let that anchor hold. In Jesus' name, amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

You need a short, honest reason — in your own words — for why you follow Jesus as an adult, and you need it before you need it.

This week

This week, open 1 Peter 3:15 and sit with it for ten minutes. Then write two or three sentences — not polished, not borrowed — that answer the question: why do I still follow Jesus? Keep them somewhere you will find them. Let them be yours.

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