

Later in his life, Peter would write, *“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.”* **(I Peter 3:15)** Acts 3 is an example of what always being prepared to proclaim the resurrection looks like. God teed this up for Peter and he cracked a line drive outta the park!

Moments earlier, a man asking for people’s charity because he’d been unable to walk for his whole life was told that he wouldn’t be receiving money from Peter or John. Instead, taking his hand they said, *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* **(Acts 3:6)** He did! He sprang up, jumping around praising God. The man who used to be looked over became the center of attention and was clinging to Peter and John. People were packing in to gawk at him and when they saw him standing with Peter and John, they put two and two together and stood in awe of Peter and John. When Peter noticed this, he said, *“Hey everyone, you know what they say: When the going gets tough, the tough get going! Look how this man pulled himself up by his own boot straps. Life had given him lemons, but my goodness, he’s made lemonade hasn’t he??”*

No. Peter didn’t throw a bunch of clichés at them. He capitalized on the moment God provided and preached sin and grace. He preached Christ! He redirected the glory he and John were about to erroneously receive to the one God glorified – Jesus! He said, *“Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”* **(Acts 3:12)** Peter explained Jesus to them in a way that would reach their hearts and be impactful. Establishing common ground, he said their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had chosen Jesus to be his glorified servant. Peter didn’t shy away from saying exactly how they reacted to Jesus, *“You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.”* **(Acts 3:13b)** When the choice was between Jesus, the Holy and Righteous One, they chose a murderous insurrectionist! Putting an even finer point on it, he said, *“You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.”* **(Acts 3:14)** But he didn’t go deeply into every detail, like how they placed Jesus’ blood on their heads or how they mocked Jesus on the cross. No doubt, many knew exactly what happened and the role they played, so Peter jumped to the resurrection of Jesus, which he witnessed! He explained they acted in ignorance and killed the author of life! But this was exactly how God said it had to happen through the prophets because only Jesus’ can die to for the world’s sin and rise for its life! So repent, Peter said, to God who gives real spiritual refreshment by faithfully forgiving for Jesus’ sake.

Peter glorified God by making it clear that the living Jesus had healed this man. He proclaimed the resurrection, worthy of far more astonishment than the healing they just saw, and urged them to repent to God who forgives, who wipes away sin completely. When sin's gone through belief in Jesus, life in heaven awaits. What gives greater relief of soul than that? Nothing does, so that's what Peter said.

What Peter told them in the temple that day, we also need to hear. Jesus is God's chosen servant to bring God glory by saving the world. Every day, we're given opportunities to choose between Jesus, the Holy and Righteous One, or not. Obvious choice, but we don't always make it! Jesus...or me, or this sin...or that sin...or this person or ideology which aligns more closely with my current mood or impetuous urge than with what is clearly always the best option. We fail to choose Jesus and his ways on the regular in ignorance of the full effects of that choice to our own soul's harm or the hurt it brings to others. More rarely do we stop to think that choosing sin instead of Jesus results in causing God's glory to be diminished, not maximized, before others.

We didn't swing the hammer to drive in the nails or lift up the cross, but our sin is why Jesus died! That powerful and always uncomfortable truth is aimed directly at us! We're the cause of Jesus' death, but even more, God's love for us is. In being killed for our sins, Jesus gave us life! God died so you could be free of sin and fear of death and live as light as a feather. This was very intentional on God's part! Not reactionary ignorance, but the plan all along because only Jesus can accomplish the task of paying for the world's sin and conquering death by rising. Isaiah wrote, *"After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* (**Isaiah 53:11, 12b**) By suffering, dying, and rising, Jesus fulfilled God's promises of salvation and has saved you from your sins. Repent! Be forgiven. That's what Jesus is for! John said so later in his life, **I John 2:1-2**, *"But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."* God reconciled sinners to himself, Jesus' resurrection is the proof.

We need to hear this, it's why we're here, but I'm guessing you know someone who needs to hear this too. Who is that person? Are they hurting, jaded, bitter, or ignorant of their need for God and the great things Jesus did to save them? How can you be as direct as Peter and explain they've sinned in real and major ways so they are, like you, part of the reason Jesus' died? By being an intentional listener, someone

who listens to understand someone else so that once you know their story, where they're coming from, what they're dealing with you'll be able to, without changing the best news, announce it in a way that'll be impactful and reach their heart.

Don't give them clichés or toss out trite, kinda Christian-ish, but not really, sayings that don't really apply or help. Preach power! Proclaim the resurrection! Tell em about Jesus' love for them and what that love led him to do! Establish common ground by explaining in a heartfelt way how much you need Jesus, what Jesus' love means for you, and why you're so happy about his resurrection.

I don't expect you to go for a handshake and, upon making contact, heal a person of their physical maladies causing the jaws to drop of all who witness. Can't totally rule it out, but it's not likely. What I can expect, both of myself and of you because we're Christians called by the Lord Jesus himself to do this, is reach out and just be with someone who's hurting, spend time with them, listen to them, mourn with them, and extend to them the saving love of the gospel of Jesus who's rejected so routinely by people but chosen by God to glorify God by taking away the world's sin. Be this way and astonish people with the otherworldly, extraordinary love of Christ which saves you, fills you, and works so powerfully in you. This love, not an ability to be right in every discussion but love, is how people will know you're Christ's child and really does help to make them more inclined to listen when you say, "Jesus died for you to save you! Jesus rose for you! Don't you see how much God loves you?" You could say this like a grump and it would still be true, but who wants to listen to a grump?? The gospel is too packed full of love and joy for that! So, in love, urge people to recognize sin, repent, and be forgiven as God promises he'll do every time. Jesus lives and rules for this exact purpose, so proclaim his resurrection. Amen.