

Title: REASONS FOR HOPE, LUKE 9:28-36.
(Chatham, NJ; 02/14/10, AM) [Pc – Topical with Two-Point Outlines in Each Section]

Theme: The reasons why we believe and hope in the Gospel begin with the witness of the Apostles and branch out to our personal experiences with it.

Purpose: To list some of the reasons that we believe through the Apostles and to get us to think about our personal reasons.

Introduction:

1. What are the reasons for your hope in the Gospel? Or what are the reasons you believe?
2. At the last Life Group we opened this up for thought based on 1 Peter 3:15.
3. It can be as simple as the Bible tells you so or as complex as your experience with other religions has highlighted the truth of the human condition in such a way that the Gospel is the only legitimate way to address it.
4. Today we explore some reasons for belief and ask that you think about why you believe.
5. Incorporate these reasons into the Life Group lesson today that is a discussion about the benefits and costs of evangelism.

I. The Witness of the Apostles.

- A. We believe their testimony.
 1. The church's faith begins here.
 2. Their testimony forms the basis for the faith of the church.
 3. The early disciples were converted because of their witness (Acts 1:8 & 10:39).
 4. They devoted themselves to their teaching as well, Acts 2:42.
 5. Although many had heard reports about him and some (as on Pentecost) saw the direct activity of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles' witness to all that he did still formed the backbone of the church's witness.
 6. The Transfiguration provides one dramatic eyewitness account of Jesus.
 7. You believe because they did.
- B. Ours is a second-hand testimony to a certain degree.
 1. Thomas got to put his hands into Christ's wounds, John 20:27-28.
 2. Jesus blesses those who will believe without the benefit of a first-hand experience, 29.
 3. First and foremost we accept their witness by faith. We believe them.
 4. Perhaps we have decided that they had no good reason to lie.
 5. Perhaps we can see that their testimony has stood the test of time and criticism.
 6. Perhaps we believe the teachings of Jesus because they ring true.
 7. At some point we make the witness of the Apostles our own.

II. What Our Faith Does for Us – Another Testimony.

- A. Peter, John, and Paul change their lives.
 1. The Resurrection meant a lot to Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:8-11. It changed his life.
 2. Last week we saw that Jesus gave Peter and John a new way of looking at their lives: from then on they were fishers of men.
 3. Peter changed from the person who picked up a sword in the garden of Gethsemane to the person willing to suffer in 1 Peter.

4. John changed from being one of the “sons of thunder” to being the apostle of love.

B. Can you see a change in your life?

1. Can you see a difference between what you are and what you could have been without Christ?
2. Those of us who have been raised by Christianity’s way of life might not know the differences in a dramatic way, but we are different than we would have been.
3. The radiant face of Moses is a great image. We may not radiate literally with a glow, but when we spend time with the Lord, people see a difference.
4. I can make a bold statement and say that the cumulative effect of eroding Christianity’s way of life has been and will continue to be a detriment to society.
5. Weakening the family and sexual mores has had an obvious negative effect and we’ll continue to pay the price for a long time to come of the single-parent-raised generation.
6. The effect of Christ’s teachings is a witness to its believability.

III. The Presence of the Church Is a Witness.

A. The wisdom of God.

1. God uses the church to make his wisdom known, Eph. 3:10.
2. It reflects his wisdom to make saints out of sinners.
3. It also reflects his wisdom to transcend racial, ethnic, and national boundaries.
4. This is one of the theological points made in Eph. 2:18 where he speaks of Jew and Gentile together.
5. Listen to how he describes it in Col. 3:11.
6. Although some have used the Bible to defend other results, the church has always had within itself the teachings to tear down these barriers.
7. God’s wisdom is seen in numerous other ways.

B. What does the church mean to you?

1. You are a part of a new family, a bigger family, a spiritual family, Mark 3:35.
2. Peter insists that we use our gifts for the good of all, 1 Peter 4:7-11.
3. Hopefully you have moved just enough to make you aware of the need for a community of caring, like-minded people.
4. The church, wherever you live, is your home.

Conclusion:

1. Neither we nor the church must be absolutely perfect for the message of our witness to be heard.
2. We ask you to think about the reasons why you believe.
3. Your witness will be most effective when it comes from those reasons.
4. Evangelism is you! It isn’t a program.
5. When you witness to your family, friends, and neighbors, evangelism is at its most effective.
6. Have your reasons ready to share, 1 Peter 3:15.