***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers  
“…always being ready to make a defense…” I Peter 3:15***

**State of the Union Address: Loving, Serving, Thinking, and Living in 2011**

**Background to I Peter:** Peter wrote to a church under persecution. Despite the difficulties, this church really loved Jesus and they longed to see Him face to face. However, they had to live in the here and now, dealing with the reality of their current situation. As such, Peter reminds them (and us) that Christians are not permanent residents in this world, but we are aliens and strangers. Our home is with Christ because we were bought with His precious life so that we could be with Him forever. Since we are aliens and strangers how then shall we live in this corrupt world?

**Exposition of I Peter 3:8-17**

I. An Apologetic of Loving: Working Diligently with Our Hearts to Love Others, I Peter 3:8-9

* Harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, humble, not returning evil, blessing instead of cursing

II. An Apologetic of Serving: Working Diligently with Our Resources to Minister to Others, I Peter 3:10-13

* God sees, knows, and honors those who serve Him, and the world sees our good works and will glorify our Father in heaven

III. An Apologetic of Thinking: Working Diligently with Our Minds to Think Biblically, I Peter 3:14-15

* Rather than allowing fear to dominate our thinking, we should use our minds to prepare ourselves for a good defense of our faith

IV. An Apologetic of Living: Working Diligently to Live in Purity, I Peter 3:16-17

* Doing the right thing to bring honor rather than shame to the name of Christ

I Peter 2:9-12

**9**But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;  **10**for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. **11**Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.  **12**Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

(How to live as aliens in a world where unbelieving governments can be a source of great power and evil. How to live as aliens in a home where unbelieving spouses can be a source of great disappointment.)

I Peter 3:8-17

**8**To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; **9**not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

**10**For,  
         "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS,  
         MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.   
    **11**"HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD;  
         HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.   
    **12**"FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS,  
         AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER,  
         BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

**13**Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?  **14**But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

**15**but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;  **16**and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.  **17**For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

**I. Scripture Reading**

* **Read I Peter 3:8-17 (Slides)**

**II. Background of I Peter (Title Slide – Slide 1)**

* Not my preference to preach from a different text each week, but I want 2011 to be a year of systematic theological material
* What prompted this, the pastors’ conference in Valle Harmoso back in September
* Ten studies – “What every Christian should know about…”
* Genesis, the History of Israel, the life of Christ, the church, end times, etc.
* I mentioned that to a couple of people, including a few that were helping me proof the material for the conference
* They commented that it might be helpful to teach that to the church
* For the first 12 weeks I wanted to do an apologetic series, dealing with some of the most basic questions that people have about Christianity
* My goal is to equip us to be able to answer some of the questions coming from a secular culture, a secular media, and a secular educational environment
* However, want us to be realistic about this, if someone is not humble toward God and is not open to discussing these issues with an open heart and mind, there is not enough intellectual ammo to break through a hard heart
* Instead, if you are a believer and these questions at times give you trouble, I want to arm your own heart to protect you from wavering in your faith
* I also want to provide you with some information that may help you encounter legitimate questions from humble, honest questioners
* The theme verse for this study is I Peter 3:15
* **Read I Peter 3:15 (Slide 2)**
* The phrase, make a defense – we get the word apologize or apologetics from this Greek word
* The make an argument, to give a defense as in a legal court case, but is also used in a less formal way as to simply make an appeal
* Peter may have in mind here responding to an accusation or question from an unbeliever
* My concern is that we would become the wrong type of apologists
* There are two extremes we must guard against
* One, we must guard against a silent Christianity
* Two, we must guard against a word only Christianity
* When we are done with 2011, my hope is that we will be better able to articulate to unbelievers and young believers alike, the basics of what we believe and why

**III. Background of I Peter**

* **Background to I Peter:** Peter wrote to a church under persecution.
* Despite the difficulties, this church really loved Jesus and they longed to see Him face to face.
* However, they had to live in the here and now, dealing with the reality of their current situation.
* As such, Peter reminds them (and us) that Christians are not permanent residents in this world, but we are aliens and strangers. Our home is with Christ because we were bought with His precious life so that we could be with Him forever.
* Since we are aliens and strangers how then shall we live in this corrupt world?
* Commentary had this to say about the issue of the persecution described in I Peter and our present reality
* Read section from commentary
* The reality of the world and the issue of persecution

**IV. Exposition of I Peter 3:8-17**

* I. An Apologetic of Loving: Working Diligently with Our Hearts to Love Others, I Peter 3:8-9
* **Read I Peter 3:8-9 (Slide 3)**
* Harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, humble, not returning evil, blessing instead of cursing
* II. An Apologetic of Serving: Working Diligently with Our Resources to Minister to Others, I Peter 3:10-13
* **Read I Peter 3:10-13 (Slide 4-5)**
* God sees, knows, and honors those who serve Him, and the world sees our good works and will glorify our Father in heaven
* **I Peter 2:12 (Slide 6)**
* Reminds me of the Sermon on the Mount
* Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
* **Kevin, Shalene, and Baby Abigail Massie (Slide 6)**
* Story of Romano – last page of notes
* We cannot end with the good works, there must also be a message
* The thinking here seems to be from Peter, love each other, do good works in the name of Christ and this will prompt a response
* It may even cease the persecution like in the case of Romano
* However, we are not guaranteed this end
* Many times, good works have still resulted in persecution
* Now we must be ready to give a defense of our faith whether we are granted grace or more anger
* III. An Apologetic of Thinking: Working Diligently with Our Minds to Think Biblically, I Peter 3:14-15
* **Read I Peter 3:14-15 (Slide 7)**
* Rather than allowing fear to dominate our thinking, we should use our minds to prepare ourselves for a good defense of our faith
* If we are going to fear, we should fear or reverence Christ and not others
* Fear Christ and speak with carefully thought through ideas about our faith
* Prepare – always ready, always prepared for a defense for our faith
* “The hope that is in you” is Peter’s way of saying “our faith”
* He uses this throughout this work to describe our faith in Christ
* Hope, especially to a persecuted church, was vital to their life
* IV. An Apologetic of Living: Working Diligently to Live in Purity, I Peter 3:16-17
* **Read I Peter 3:16-17 (Slide 8)**
* Doing the right thing to bring honor rather than shame to the name of Christ
* Has anything been more damaging than the scandals that have rocked the Christian ministry over the last few decades?
* The whole world has mocked and laughed at our supposed leaders and their failings, all the while associating their behavior to their Christ
* This is inevitable, it is inevitable that Christ will be associated with His followers and our behavior

**V. Conclusion (Blank slide – Slide 9)**

* In 2011, we must form this fourfold apologetic, loving each other, serving each other and the world, giving good intellectual arguments for our faith, walking in purity

**A couple of weeks ago, Eugenio loaded up a truck full of building supplies in Nairobi, and set it loose for another round of construction at Hope for Sudan. As is often the case, at the border of Sudan, the corrupt government seized our truck. Of course, they demanded a high “tax” to release it. Our only hope was for Romano to make the dangerous journey to the border himself and argue our case.**   
 **When Romano arrived, the border patrol recognized him as “The man who really saves orphans.” They are so used to men who claim to be “pastors” collecting large sums of money, buying tons of supplies, and establishing their personal fortresses in Sudan, or even Nairobi, that they assume everyone is corrupt. But when they saw it was Romano, their spirit changed immediately. Instead of debating with Romano over false taxation, they told him of a small boy that had come their way.**   
  
***“In the dark of night this small boy came running to us. He was crying and so thin we didn’t know how he stood upon his feet. No matter how we tried to calm him, he cried for his mother. Finally, we were able to get a bit of milk into him so that he settled and slept for the night. When he woke very early the next morning, he immediately began trying to find food. We made him sit still while we gave him some of our food.***   
  
***It took a long while, but after some time he began speaking to us. We learned his name is Emanuel; and then we knew why God had spared him for his name means, ‘God is with us.’ Emanuel’s father killed his mother, and then forced young Emanuel to beg for food and money to provide for the rest of the family. Emanuel feared his father would kill him, too. He had become nothing more than a slave.***   
  
***Finally, Emanuel ran away. We received him in the night but cannot properly care for him. Perhaps, Pastor, you should take him as we release your truck to you.” In a wink, Emanuel was in Romano’s Land Cruiser headed for Hope for Sudan, with our truck in tow. Once again, without paying taxation.***