Leith Anderson is the president of the National Association of Evangelicals and spoke to a group of about 100 pastors and church leaders last week in Davenport. He opened with some commentary about our culture:

Government estimates of abortions and sexually transmitted diseases are the highest of any generation. The *American Mercury Magazine* reports, “The drinking bouts in which high-school and college students indulge results in promiscuous relations.” 80% of young men and 60% of young women report having premarital sex. Marriages are four times as likely to end in divorce as 50 years ago. The President of Columbia University (Nicholas Butler) said: “Day by day newspapers report one grave crime after another, one more delinquency after another, and one more dereliction of duty after another.” Prominent journalist Maxine Johnson traveled 10,000 miles across America studying the younger generation and concluded that teenagers are “confused, disillusioned, and disenchanted.” A newspaper story on the widespread use of marijuana reported that, “Organized gangs are distributing drugs to every school in the city.”

What a bleak picture of American culture. You may find it fascinating to know that all of these quotes are from…1936 and 1937!

We get caught up in the challenges of our own time but forget that every generation has issues. Having said all that, our present culture does seems to be in a moral freefall. Liberties that Christians have taken for granted are being removed. Marriage has been reframed and redefined. The sanctity of human life is under attack. And it seems to get worse every day.

And yet, Christianity has always advanced when under attack. It’s becoming increasingly difficult to stand for Christ today but it was far worse during the Roman Empire when persecution and problems were pulverizing believers. Many lost their lives and those who lived lost their livelihoods. Friends, we can become
alarmed, angry, argumentative and abrasive. Or better yet, we can live attractive and appealing lives.

Our focus today is on “Living a Questionable Life.” Please turn to 1 Peter 3:13-16. We’ll see three marks of Missional living.

We need to **Demonstrate** (3:13-15a)

We need to **Defend** (3:15b)

We need to **Disarm** (3:15c-16)

Let’s read this together: “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”

**1 – Demonstrate** (3:13-15a)

Peter is instructing different groups of believers by giving them specific guidelines on how to live in a world that is hostile to their presence. In chapter 3, he gives several principles for enduring difficulty.

In verse 13, we’re told that doing good will make persecution less likely. The phrase “followers of what is good” actually means to be “zealous” or to burn with a desire to do what is good. In verse 14 we read that we still might suffer, but even if we do, we will be blessed. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:10: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The last part of verse 14 contains a quote from Isaiah 8:12-14: “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” The word “afraid” is the word phobos, which means “to be so terrified that you want to flee.” The context in Isaiah 8 describes how Ahaz, who was king of Judah, faced a crisis when the Assyrian army was preparing to attack. The kings of Israel and Syria invited Ahaz to join them in an alliance so they could oppose Assyria, but he stubbornly refused. When he turned them down, Israel and Syria begin to make plans to attack Judah. Now, there are three powerful countries poised to pounce on Ahaz!
Unbelievably, Ahaz decides to align himself with the wicked king of Assyria because he is so afraid. The prophet Isaiah warned him against this ungodly partnership and urged him to trust God for deliverance. Peter quotes this passage from Isaiah to remind us that when we are faced with a crisis we may be tempted to give in to our fears or cave to the culture around us. The bottom line is that the fear of the Lord conquers every other kind of fear. If our relationship with God is strong, we can handle opposition and even persecution.

As we learned last week from the disciples when they locked themselves into a room, fear can paralyze us. The same word for “fear” is used here in verse 14 and means “to be so frightened that you want to flee.” Peter would know all about that, wouldn’t he? Have you ever felt that way? I have. It’s especially scary when it comes to witnessing, isn’t it? Some of us would rather bolt than be bold.

These Christians were in danger of being killed or thrown in jail while I worry about someone ridiculing or rejecting me. Friends, the first step in living a questionable life is to demonstrate authenticity. Verse 15 begins with a contrast to verse 14: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” The word “but” shows that we don’t have to be filled with fear. The word “hearts” is from the Greek, “kardia” and refers to the control center of our lives.

To “sanctify” means to “set apart” or “make holy.” Peter is now drawing from Isaiah 8:13: “The Lord of Hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.” Peter is arguing that Jesus must be Lord of our lives. The word “Lord” is a title of honor that demands respect and reverence. It’s the New Testament equivalent of the title “Jehovah.” To say that Jesus is my Lord is to say that He has sovereign power and authority over me and I submit to Him with reverent obedience, because I am His possession. When Jesus is set apart as Lord, He will deliver us from fear. When He is at the center, we will fear displeasing Him more than fearing what people might say about us. Is He set apart in your heart?

Is Jesus Lord of your life right now? Have you ever made a decision of your will to live under His leadership in every area of your life? Is Jesus in complete control, or are you deliberately keeping things from Him?

Here’s a question to consider. Is Jesus prominent in your life or is He preeminent? Let’s face it. One of the reasons some don’t engage in evangelism is because
they’re not 100% committed to Christ. Christ won’t be on your lips if He’s not Lord of your life! It’s hard to witness when we’re gutted by guilt or far away from God. While we don’t have to be perfect, we do need to have something to share with people. To say it another way, if we’re not in communion with Christ, we won’t want to communicate Christ to others.

Sadly, according to researcher George Barna, almost half of born-again believers questioned in a nationwide poll admitted they are “searching for meaning and purpose.” This is the same percentage as what non-Christians say! If Christ followers are floundering in life, than what do we have to give to lost people? If people don’t see us living with love, joy, and hope then do they really want what we have?

I love how we saturated the QCA with our Epic Easter advertising. From an electronic billboard to spots on WDLM and on the number one secular radio station, to Facebook ads, to coverage in the papers. By the way, when the Quad City Times called to see if they could take pictures of our service I asked how they heard about it. The editor told me that “Epic Easter” was all over the Quad Cities! And I loved seeing “Epic Easter” yard signs everywhere! [hold up sign]

By the way, we should probably remove these signs from our yards now. If you’re looking for a place to put them, Pastor Ed and Sheila are collecting them in their yard. See me after the service for their address. [show PPT]

Even though we’ll take these signs down, there are even more signs strategically located in neighborhoods all over this community.

Let me show you what I mean… [show PPT slides]

Let’s go back to “Epic Easter” for a minute. We did a survey on the connection cards and asked our guests how they heard about our services. Almost 75% came because of a personal invitation. God brought 1,749 people to Edgewood last weekend, which is about 1,000 more than on a regular weekend. We could extrapolate and say that of the 1,000 additional people, 75% or 750 of them came as a result of a personal invitation and 250 attended through the influence of advertising or other programs. While it’s important to promote publicly and we’ll continue to do so, you can’t beat the power of personal invites.
Listen. You are a living sign, strategically positioned across two states and several counties to point people to Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:14 that while we live in a crooked and twisted generation, we “shine as lights in the world.”

I’ve been praying that God would develop a culture of evangelism at Edgewood. I share the longing of J. Mark Stiles from his book called, Evangelism in which he says: “In a culture of evangelism, we call believers to walk in faith and be open to God’s work in people around them.”

Here’s what this means. Our primary mission is to make disciples. This begins in our own homes and then moves to our neighborhoods and then to our workplaces and to other relationships. That means when you go to Aldi your priority is to talk to people, not to purchase potato chips. If you pick up some meat that’s great, but while you’re there look for someone to meet. One of our guests last weekend was a Muslim woman who came with her two children. I had a chance to ask how she heard about Edgewood. She told me that she was shopping at the Aldi just down the street and someone invited her. Now, there’s someone living on mission!

The first thing we’re called to do is to demonstrate an authentic Christian life by setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts. Evangelism is primarily who we are, not what we do; we are witnesses. I’ve always liked Joe Aldrich’s definition, “Evangelism is what spills over when we bump into someone.” When we’re living under the leadership of Christ, we have something that appeals to others when it spills over to them.

2 – Defend (15b)

Demonstrate what you say that you have and secondly, be prepared to defend what you have. We see this in the middle part of verse 15: “…and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.” We’re called to visualize Christianity by living it. We’re also urged to verbalize our faith by expressing it.

Here’s how it works. When we are living under the lordship of Christ, our lives will be characterized by hope that springs from the resurrection. Non-Christians will see what we have and be curious about it and some will ask us about our faith. When they do, we need to be ready. Unfortunately, according to another Barna survey, 9 out of 10 Christians who attempt to explain their faith come away from
those experiences feeling like they’ve failed. And for most of us, we tend to avoid
those things that make us feel like failures. If you want some help in this area, I
courage you to attend Class 401 Sunday evening.

In short, we should live questionable lives. Not questionable in the sense of
behaving immorally or unethically but questionable in regards to creating curiosity
for Christ. This approach literally transformed the Roman Empire. One book I
read recently said that the early Christians devoted themselves to sacrificial acts of
kindness. They loved their enemies and forgave their persecutors. They cared for
the poor and fed the hungry.

In fact, the fourth-century Emperor Julian was concerned that Christians were
going to take over the empire. Here’s what he said: “For it is disgraceful that
when the impious Galileans [Christians] support not only their own poor but ours
as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us.”

The word “always” means that we are to be ready at all times, to be on a state of
alert. The tone is an urgent imperative. We should have an attitude of
anticipation. If we are walking with Christ, people will notice, and they will ask.
To be “ready” comes from the word that we translate as “fitness.” It carries with
it the idea of “being in readiness” like a Marine on a mission. It was also used of a
bride getting prepared for a wedding. That’s happening in our house as our
daughter Lydia is getting married on July 12th. She’s actually marrying a Marine
so they’ll both be on mission. By the way, I’ve asked Pastor Brown to preach that
weekend so I can focus on being the father of the bride. Yes, I’m already starting
to cry.

We’re challenged to give “a defense.” This is the Greek word, “apologia,” from
which we get the word “apology.” That doesn’t mean we should apologize for our
faith by saying, “I’m sorry for what I believe,” (which some of us do) but instead it
means a “verbal defense.” It was used in a courtroom to give evidence or
testimony about a situation.

When Beth and I were at the Together for the Gospel conference a couple weeks
ago, we heard John MacArthur address the common phrase, “Preach the gospel
always and if necessary use words.” I could tell he disagreed with this and was
ready for him to go into a well thought-out critique of it. With all the theological
precision he could muster, he leaned forward and said, “That’s just stupid. The
gospel must always be communicated with words.”
We are to be prepared to give a logical, step-by-step explanation for what we believe and why we believe it. Not every Christian has to be a theologian, but every believer is called to be an apologist – we’re all charged with the responsibility of giving a reason for our faith. **Proverbs 15:28** says, “The heart of the righteous weighs its answers…”

Did you notice what causes people to ask about our faith? It’s the fact that we have “hope.” This literally reads, “The in-you hope…” Colossians 1:27 defines the source of our hope: “…Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Biblically defined, hope is a desire for some future good with the expectation of obtaining it. According to **Hebrews 6:11**, hope gives “full assurance.” When you think about it, this world offers no hope. When a pre-Christian sees someone living with hope, they want to know how to get it for themselves because **Ephesians 2:12** says that unbelievers are “without hope and without God in this world.”

Notice that it says, “to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.” The word “ask” means to “crave or desire” and is in the present tense which means we need to be ready “every time someone asks.” People are craving answers. They know they don’t have hope – and they want it. While there are no hopeless situations, there are tons of people who have grown hopeless about them. Remember the context here is how Christians are living in the midst of a cultural crisis. Are you ready to give them the answer? By the way, if people don’t ask you questions it may because they don’t see the Lord in your life.

**3 – Disarm (15c-16)**

When we *demonstrate* the leadership of Christ in our lives, people will be curious and will want some answers. When they ask, we need to be ready to *defend* our faith. Lastly, the end of verse 15 tells us how to witness in a way that *disarms* people: “*with meekness and fear.*” I prefer the ESV here because I think it’s clearer “…yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

We must remember that our role is not to win arguments or debates, but to make disciples. We’re called to be witnesses, not prosecuting attorneys. While we should be ready to defend what we believe, we should avoid being argumentative and abrasive. I’m sure I turned a lot of people off by my self-righteous attitude and contentious spirit when I was brand new believer. We have to make sure we’re not coming off as spiritually arrogant, like our sins smell better than theirs.
Kevin DeYoung, in his book called, “The Good News We Almost Forgot,” says that there are way too many “Crusty Christians” in our churches today who have armor-like attitudes and unapproachable spirits: “They are bright and opinionated…and incessantly critical. Crusty Christians are hard to be around. They are intimidating instead of engaging and growling instead of gracious.”

**Be gentle.** This is translated as “meekness” in some versions. It’s an inner attitude that affects the way we interact with others and literally means, “strength under control.” The word is also used of a genuine consideration for others and denotes the humble and gracious attitude which expresses itself in a “patient submissiveness to offense…and free from the desire for revenge.” 2 Corinthians 10:1 tells us how Paul treated others: “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you…” And in Matthew 11:29, Jesus says this about Himself, “I am gentle and humble in heart…”

**Be respectful.** Interestingly, this is the same word that is translated “fear” in verse 14. We’re to have a sense of holy awe at the opportunity to speak words of life to people who are lost in their sins. It’s a holy moment when eternity hangs in the balance. As such, we should approach our time with reverence toward God and respect toward others.

Most of our witnessing is likely to happen in the passing moments of conversation. As we mix it up with people, we will have opportunities. The issue is not that we should necessarily become more aggressive about sharing our faith. It’s that we should be more sensitive to the needs of the people around us, and more aware of the subtle promptings of the Holy Spirit. To be respectful will mean that we will be more gentle to people and their pain. As someone has said, “We must be winsome if we would win some.”

When our attitude is gracious and gentle, verse 16 tells us that those who oppose Christianity will be disarmed: “…those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.” That won’t happen if we argue or put people down.

On a practical level, that means slowing down, listening to people, introducing ourselves, not judging them, looking at them while they’re talking, being attentive to details and needs, remembering names and following up. It also means that we don’t try to cram everything into one conversation.
As we demonstrate Christ to people by making sure He is Lord of our lives, as we defend the reason for the hope that we have, and as we disarm people by our attitude of gentleness and respect, God will use us to clear the way for people to see the central message of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Check out how one guy fleshed this out with a friend.

→ **Play Video**: “A Prisoner Set Free”

### Summary

I came across a simple prayer that I’ve started to pray: “*Break into my day, Lord, and help me to break into somebody else’s.*

We need to be constantly and intentionally alert to people around us. That’s what living on mission is all about. To live on mission demands a mindset change. Chris Rogers, the EMS coordinator with the Rock Island Fire Department, spoke at Second Winders on Thursday. He shared his testimony and then he said, “*The firehouse is my mission field.*” Right on. He is a missionary cleverly disguised as an EMT. You are a missionary cleverly disguised as an engineer. You are a missionary cleverly disguised as a waitress. You are a missionary cleverly disguised as a truck driver. You are a missionary cleverly disguised as a student. You are a missionary cleverly disguised as a neighbor.

In order to help us live on mission this summer, we’re going to unleash you to serve your neighbors on Sunday nights. For the months of June, July and August, we will not have Sunday night services so that you’ll be freed up to hang out with your neighbors. We’re calling them “Sunday Nights for Sowing.” One other change related to this is that we’re going to highlight several of our missionaries during our weekend services and then have them speak to ABF classes. This way we can hear from people living on mission at our main services. Our Sunday night attendance is averaging around 75. We can expose 10 times that number to our missionaries living on mission! By the way, Katie Lundell will be sharing about her ministry to International Students next Sunday night.

As we wrap up, let’s see if we can flesh out some practical ways to live on mission. We’ll take our main points in reverse order:
1. **Disarm.** Ask God to turn your fear of witnessing into an inner attitude of grace and gentleness toward people.

   **Meet someone new every day.** When you see someone you don’t know, walk across the street or office or church and introduce yourself.  
   **Bless someone every day.** Think of one person you already know and determine to communicate gentleness and respect by something you say to him or her this week. Some of us just need to be nicer to non-Christians and not get so upset with those who sin differently than we do.

2. **Defend.** Albert Mohler says that “*at the end of the day, the biggest obstacle to evangelism is Christians who don’t share the gospel.*” Here are some ways to get ready.

   **Practice telling your story.** For an outline, think about what your life was like “before” you became a Christian. Then describe “how” you became a Christian. Finally, write down how your life has changed “after” your conversion. BTW, that’s exactly what Sam Anderson did when he shared his salvation story last weekend.  
   **Connect your family members to Christ.** Begin by living out your faith in front of your family. Your first priority is to evangelize and disciple them.  
   **Use technology to share Christ.** Post verses on Facebook. Pass along Christ-centered websites.  
   **See yourself as a link in the chain of someone becoming a Christian.** Your job might be to sow the seed and someone else may get to rejoice in the harvest.  
   **Use tools to share Christ.** We have additional copies of *Anchor for the Soul* and *Soul Satisfaction* on the table in the lobby.  
   **Leverage current events, movies and news stories.** While I don’t recommend the movie, *Heaven is for Real* for reasons I can share another time, it is a contact point with people because some of your friends and neighbors will have questions about heaven and you can talk to them about how to get there!  
   **Expect to feel awkward and for things to get messy.**

3. **Demonstrate.** The key to getting ready is not so much reading books to get answers to common questions, though that is helpful. The main thing is to settle
the question of hopelessness in your own heart. To say it another way, the best preparation is to make sure your own heart is holy, happy and filled with hope.

There is a close connection between reverencing Christ as Lord in my heart and always being ready to make a case for my hope. We must “be” good news before we can share good news. People will ask questions if you’re living a questionable life. If they see Jesus in you, they’ll ask questions. If they don’t see Christ in you, they’ll question your Christianity. And when you’re filled with hope you’ll share it with others. I like how one translation renders Philemon 6: “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.” And so when we’re filled, it will spill over. And the more we share, the more we’ll be grateful for what Christ has done in our life which will make our hope deepen and then more will ask questions and then we’ll share more. It’s like a circle!

If you have never submitted yourself to the Lordship of Christ, I want to give you an opportunity to do so right now. Turn everything over to Him. Live only to please Him. Be satisfied with nothing less than God’s purposes and the pleasure of serving Him. I came across a Facebook post this week from an Edgewood that says it well: “You cannot seek Him with all your heart in your spare time.”

To “sanctify” or “set apart” is in the aorist imperative, which can be translated, “Do it now!” It’s the only command in verse 15. Jesus gave His blood for us; let’s give our all to him right now. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. This is all my hope and peace.

**Invitation** – “Nothing But the Blood”

A group of 35 people are living on mission by going to serve at Camp Forest Springs this next week.

**Commissioning of Camp Forest Spring Team**