

Series: Beyond Awkward

Scripture and Background Information for July 12-18.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

This week we'll be looking at **1 Peter 3:15**. Simon Peter, one of Jesus' close friends writes the letter to Christians who were persecuted and harassed by their non-believing neighbors. Peter wrote the letter to encourage believers in their suffering.

Background for 1Peter 3:15.

The encouragement of Peter is built upon three main arguments. First, Peter encourages believers that through Jesus, they are part of a new family in Christ (1:13-2:10). The membership in the family of Christ makes them His representatives here on earth. Peter connects their suffering to their new identity in Christ.

His second argument deals with the suffering that helps believers witness their new identity (2:11-4:11). Suffering can serve as a tool, helping them to stand out as people of love and witnesses for Christ. Although Christ suffered unjustly, his suffering offered salvation even to his enemies. In the same way, believers' unjust suffering can serve as a tool to bring those who persecute them to salvation.

Peter's third argument focuses on future restoration, which awaits those who believe in Christ (4:12-5:9). The present suffering shows the affiliation to Christ, who also suffered on earth. Like Christ was exalted after his resurrection, so do believers have hope for a future exaltation (5:11).

Our text for today is placed in Peter's second argument. Here, Peter shows that a lifestyle of love will give power to the gospel (3:13). A life committed to love serves as a motivator for others to believe in Christ. Peter wants the believers to place Christ as the priority in their lives, being willing to defend and testify of Him.

Side Note: Peter is not talking about "giftedness for evangelism." The context, he has in mind, is the believer's everyday life, where all believers are called to stir up interest in Christ through their lifestyle. The loving relationship of believers to Christ and others should work as a tool to begin gospel conversations. That's something all of us are called to do!

Scriptures for upcoming weeks:

July 19	Mark 2:1-12
July 26	John 13:1-17