***Rock Solid Faith In a Rocky World
A Legacy of Faith***

**May 14, 2023**

**Overarching Theme:** 2023 – Living the Dream

**Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasis in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

**Core Point: 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a next step forward in following Jesus Christ.**

**Reflect on this Scripture: 1 Peter 3:13-16 (NIV) *13****Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?****14****But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.”****15****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. But do this with gentleness and respect,****16****keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander*.

**Commentary:**
But while we share at least some of the common fears that have plagued humanity from the 1st Century to the present, Christians don’t have to let those fears control us.  Fear doesn’t have to intimidate those who are blessed, who belong to God in body and in soul, in life and in death. So the apostle invites his readers “set apart *Christ* as Lord” (15), to put Christ in charge of our lives.

In verse 15 Peter suggests that part of letting Christ be Lord is being ready to talk to our neighbors about why we live the way we live.  Always be prepared, he says, to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

That’s stirring invitation’s beating heart is the concept of “hope.”  Human hope generally deals in the realm of possibilities and probabilities.  By contrast, Christian hope is guaranteed. So when we talk about Christian hope, we talk about God’s promises in Christ on which we can completely rely.

1 Peter calls readers to be prepared to talk about that hope to the people who ask.  While to some of us the answer comes easily, to others it comes less naturally.  After all, Peter’s talking about making the kind of well-prepared case an attorney might make in a courtroom. In other words, those who want to explain the hope God gives us must reflect on what God in Christ has done and is doing in our lives ahead of time, so that we’re ready when people ask us about our hope. Yet we don’t have to do so in an offensive way. We are called to simply share what God has done for us with gentleness and respect.

-Adapted from online commentary by Doug Bratt

**Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. The earliest recipients of the letter of 1 Peter were a small, politically powerless, persecuted minority. That said, the remarkable growth of the Jesus movement in northern Asia Minor (cf. the letter of Governor Pliny to Emperor Trajan in 111 A.D.) is evidence that they were “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asked the reason for their hope…” What do you think motivated their witness? How did they have such courage in the face of pushback and persecution?
2. According to recent surveys, Christians in the U.S. today are less ‘prepared’ and/or motivated than past generations to “give the reason for the hope that [we] have.” What do you think is behind this trend?
3. 1 Peter reminds his audience to share their hope with ‘gentleness and respect.’ How might a gentle and respectful tone increase the likelihood of a positive response?
4. Of the women highlighted in Sunday’s Sermon – Ann Jarvis, Mary McLeod Bethune, Pandita Ramabai and Fanny Crosby, which story exemplifies the message of 1 Peter 3:15 (sharing Christian hope with gentleness/respect) the most to you?

**Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

* 1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
	2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: ***15****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. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3: 15).*