

TEXT: 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

But in your hearts set apart 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.

Theme:

ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERYONE FOR THE HOPE YOU HAVE!

I. In order to do so, set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts!

II. In order to do so effectively, answer with gentleness and respect!

- What is the purpose of religion – 1) Create a system of control over people—Karl Marx called religion the “opiate of the people,” and he was right in many cases—consider Sharia laws of Islam, or the support of the caste system within Hinduism, or the sacramental system within Roman Catholicism. 2) To provide individuals, especially children, a system of morality—consider the desire of many people to send their children to Sunday School, even though these same people see no apparent need to nourish their own faith in worship services. 3) To provide a solution for the problem of sin through reconciliation with God, which yields the hope which is proclaimed by biblical Christianity!
- The goal of YC was apologetics—help our young people do what Peter encourages us to do—“*give an answer*” to all who ask for “*the reason for the hope*” that they have. What is that hope—1 Peter 1:3-6, 8-9, 17-21.
- In order to prepare ourselves, we focused on Scripture and considered God’s truth about...truth, God, mankind, salvation, science, sexuality, relationships, and morality. In 1 Peter 2:1-3 we are told to desire that Word—to continue in it so that we might grow in our confidence of God’s grace and mercy.
- All this in order to fulfill God’s command...a command directed towards each of us—**ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERYONE FOR THE HOPE YOU HAVE!**

I.

- This is not always easy to do. Numerous members of our staff as well as our students have questioned how we will maintain the enthusiasm that has been generated this last week. Most, if not all of us, have to confess that all too often we are not prepared to provide appropriate answers to the questions people ask us about our hope and faith. While we must continue to study God’s Word, so that we know the factual information, it is also important to recognize that **in order to do so**—to be prepared and to provide those answers—we need to, **set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts!**
- Faith is a gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit within us, but a living faith is active. A living faith not only knows the facts of the Bible, but trusts the promises of God and acts upon His commands. Our text addresses us with just such a command—to “*set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts!*” A “lord” is someone who is in control. According to Peter we are voluntarily to place ourselves under the control and guidance of Christ. This is not something that Christ will force upon us, but which He moves us to do in view of His forgiving love. Joshua encouraged the people of his day in the same way when he challenged them to “*choose you this day whom you will serve!*” (Joshua 24) Your heart cannot be divided, for as Jesus says we cannot serve two masters.
- How do we do that? **Recognize** the Lord Jesus’ presence—Matthew 28:20; **Pray** for a clean heart—Psalm 51, a transformed mind—Romans 12, wisdom—James 1; **Abide** in Jesus’ Word—truth and freedom—John 8; **Walk** in the light and whenever possible walk together with your friends in Christ—Hebrews 10!

II.

- **In order to do so effectively, answer with gentleness and respect!**
 - Why the reminder? We are not told specifically, but its presence reveals we need it. Paul—Galatians 6:1 offers a similar necessary encouragement.
 - Why? Guard against the natural responses of our sinful flesh—pride leading to arrogance, impatience leading to harshness, insecurity leading to a “chip on the shoulder” attitude, or fear leading to a failure to speak at all!
 - Why? To remember the purpose of all such answers—we represent our Savior as His ambassadors (cf. 2 Corinthians 5); we strive to provide a winsome testimony that the Spirit of God can use to touch a heart—our goal is always to win a soul for Christ!
 - We know we only sow seeds, but we also know those seeds are the powerful means by which the Spirit of God creates and sustains faith.
 - Anger, intimidation, sarcasm flow from individuals focused on themselves, whereas we are to focus on the lost soul...remembering the infinite worth of every human soul, the precious purchase price of those souls, and God’s desire to save each and every soul!
 - Gentleness and respect suggests a real concern and care for individual souls. The shout-out last night revealed how important that is for each of us. How many times did we not hear how important love, patience, genuine concern, and kindness were cited as proof that Jesus was working in and through individuals during the conference. Such comments reveal also how important these things will prove to be for others.
 - Consider the example of Jesus—Nicodemus, the woman at Jacob’s well, the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus, Jesus’ conversation with Peter—always gentleness and respect for those seeking and asking.
- We have been given both a hope and a calling—let us strive to fulfill the latter while rejoicing in the former! THEME!

COMMENTARY: