

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.

INTRO

Invite everyone to introduce themselves and then read the Bible verses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message and Scripture was most encouraging, and which part is most challenging?
2. What did You notice about God, and what did you notice about yourself as well as other people?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPTIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us, giving us His peace (His completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? "Lord Jesus, I give you my..."

What's His gift? "Lord Jesus, I receive your..."

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you've discovered today? *(NOTE – Consider prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence, writing what you heard. If nothing comes clear, keep praying this week.)*
2. During the coming week, who can you share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*

**Sermon Study - Conversation Guide**

January 14, 2024

“You Are Not Your Thoughts”

Ephesians 5:1-11

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

NOTES: You Are Not Your Thoughts (Eph. 5:1-11) Pastor Andy Rock

Everything we will read today has the previous verse, **Ephesians 4:32** as the anchor point. God treats us with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, which is how He loves us and pays so that we benefit. Let's keep that in mind as we begin reading Ephesians chapter 5.

5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Walk in the way of love. As Jesus has loved you, do the same for others. Be kind and compassionate and forgiving. Paul isn't saying you must live with abuse. He's saying, instead of carrying anger around all the time, operate with kindness and compassion.

Paul is also saying, be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to yourself. When you're not at the weight you want, be kind and compassionate to yourself. When you mess up, forgive yourself. If you use the tools of anger and condemnation and criticism on yourself, you'll use the exact same tools on others.

So, what do we do when we don't have what we need? We pray, "*Jesus, I need kindness and compassion and forgiveness for myself, for this person. I don't have it in me. Please give me all that I need right now.*"

5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Paul isn't writing to non-Christians. He's writing to the church. Which means people in the church are struggling here. Why? If you're not receiving kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and love from Jesus, you'll seek it somewhere else. Paul is saying, if you don't put the good Jesus has for in your heart, you will put the bad in every time.

5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Jokes are fine. Just don't tear people and yourself down with your talk and your jokes. Pastor and author Tony Campolo once said, "If you mix manure and ice cream, the manure isn't really all that affected. But it sure does ruin the ice cream." Kindness and cruelty don't mix.

5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

This verse has nothing to do with our salvation or God's love. Jesus is always kind, compassionate, and forgiving toward us. Idolatry is asking a thing or a person to do God's job for you. What will be the result? You won't get what you're hoping for. There won't be the inheritance of God's love you're looking for in those things. Make God your treasure and then give away what you're receiving. That's the inheritance which produces beautiful things like intimacy, connection, and safety for everyone.

5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

Let no one deceive you by saying, "Get this thing. Smoke or drink this. Get angry. Hold onto your bitterness. Date this many people, then you'll be happy." Those are empty and deceitful words. What happens when we believe those lies? God's wrath comes, which is literally God allowing us to have exactly what we think we want.

We all know what it's like to pursue money, that house, that dream, but that thing we wanted so bad eventually becomes ash in our mouths. God gives me all the misery, all the temporary joys, all the illusions of safety or security I want, though they eventually break my heart. And when that happens, God is there with His kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Every time. He will never leave us because we belong to Him.

5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

We were all once in darkness. That's why we can have compassion on each other. We do this by vulnerably confessing our own darkness and bringing it into the light. We allow God to help us notice our own thoughts and take them captive with the help of others, and then we do the same for them. The Kingdom of God is this family where we each bring our darkness into the light so Jesus and each of us can be kind, compassionate, and forgiving towards every wound and failure.