

ICE BREAKER

When have you or someone you know placed God's will above their own? What happened?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?
2. What questions does this message raise for you?
3. How do you sense God speaking to you?

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 and give us His peace (wholeness and 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 learned today? *(NOTE – You might consider stopping and prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence for an answer, then write it down.)*
2. During the coming week, who is someone with whom you can share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

July 30, 2023

"Draw Near to God"

James 4:1-10

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

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

Last week we talked about the humility that comes from wisdom. Humility is being willing to allow God to direct and guide every step of our lives. Or we try to manipulate and control others, using our anger, self-righteousness, or whatever old messed up tool we use to make things happen for our benefit. It's a constant temptation for us. This is why James is once again talking about humility in today's Scripture passage.

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

God places a desire for good things in our hearts. Yet how often do we take a good desire and poison it, turning to everything but Jesus to get what we want? We desire, and when someone gets in the way of that desire, we kill them. How? We kill their reputation with our gossip. We kill their joy and self-worth with our anger. Thus, we kill our relationships. Or we covet, which is wanting what another has, and can't get it, so then we fight.

The more we fight, the more we don't ask God for what we want and have the faith to wait for His direction. It leads us to using terrible tools like anger, manipulation, or power and control, which ultimately kill what's precious to us. So, what's the solution? Ask Jesus for direction and humbly choose to trust His answer. James digs in even deeper in the next verse.

4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

What if what you want will ruin everything good in your life? What if what you want will kill your faith and relationships? Are you okay with Jesus saying 'no'?

4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

James is writing to impoverished Christians who lost everything. Of course, those Christians wanted their comforts, stability, and resources back. Does wanting stuff make us God's enemy? No. God wants to bless you, just like every good parent or guardian wants to bless their children. But the moment a child wants what the parent has more than a relationship with the parent, that's a problem.

4:5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

God is jealous for you and me. His holy jealousy is different from the earthly jealousy of man. How? It's selfless in its motivation. In His jealousy for us, Jesus gave up everything, just so that He could be with us now and for all eternity. God constantly gives Himself away to us, surrounding us in His presence - His hope, His love, His kindness, etc. He lavishly invites us to be a part of the ridiculously beautiful miracles He's working out here on earth. That's grace. So, what do we do in response? We humble ourselves before Him. How?

4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Jesus is asking us to submit ourselves to God. He is asking us to put Him first over ourselves, to seek His Kingdom not our own, to follow His will and His way, not ours. Jesus is inviting us into HIS life. To submit to God then is the humility to follow what Jesus has for you and resist the devil's awful whisper to have it all your way. This is a moment-by-moment practice. The devil never stops whispering lies, so we must also continually grow in resisting him by humbly submitting ourselves to God in every moment.

4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Seek God in prayer and in worship. Read His Word. Wash your hands of placing your stuff before your relationship with Him. Grieve where you've put your will above His. This is how we humble ourselves before God. That's how we experience what God is always doing. He is always lifting us up, constantly pouring out His love, blessings and healing power on us. Let's choose to experience it by humbly submitting ourselves to Him!

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES: Tips for great conversation

- Extroverts: Please allow space and time for introverts to speak.
- Introverts: Please speak up when you have something to contribute.
- Everyone: Show respect by listening to one another, knowing that we all can learn from those who have a different perspective.