

ICE BREAKER

When have you scheduled Jesus right out of your life? When have you taken time to consistently be with Him? What was the difference between the two experiences for you?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?
2. What did You notice about God in the passage? What did you notice about yourself and other people in it?

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

August 6, 2023

“Staying Present”

James 4:11-17

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

Today, James is going to talk to us about slander, or gossip, but today's passage is much deeper than just about not being another's judge and sharing with the world the sentence you've pronounced. It's about living a life of humility where we stay in the present with Jesus in every situation, so that His will, love, mercy, and Kingdom can be seen.

4:11 Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

Slander is spreading lies and rumors. It's talking about another person's shortcomings, only for the purpose of tearing them down. It's okay to talk to another person about how someone has hurt you. That's not gossip or slander...IF...you're preparing to go to the person who hurt you and talk to them about it.

Processing with a trusted friend so you can figure out what to say is good. Processing with all your friends because you're mad and you don't want to say anything to the person who you're angry with, that's gossip. And it can move quickly to slander before you realize it.

When we slander, we speak against the 'law' and we 'judge the law'. In other words, we set ourselves up to be the law maker, judge, jury, and executioner, and therefore put ourselves above the law.

The law James is talking about here is not the moral law of the Old Testament or the laws in our court system. It's the law Jesus gave us. "Love one another." "Forgive one another." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

4:12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

The only way out of the cycle of slander, resentment, and repeating the mistakes others have done to us is to allow Jesus to be the judge, which is the very definition of forgiveness. How do we forgive others like Jesus forgives us? You literally pray this, out loud...

"Jesus, what they did and said was wrong. I don't want to be their judge anymore. I hand them over to You. I forgive them now [for the specific thing they did/said] in Jesus' name. God, forgive me for trying to do Your job. Thank You for Your mercy and forgiveness towards me. I now hand over my anger and resentment towards them to you, Jesus. I don't want to carry that anymore."

Even when we are courageous to forgive like this, we will always get hurt again. What do we do? Jesus tells me the same thing over and over. "Stay in the present with Me. Forgive, with Me. Let Me minister to you, right now. Trust Me with the future by staying with Me right now."

I must surrender the people who hurt me to Jesus, moment by moment. That's hard to start, but it gets easier as you actually say the prayer. As I pray, I can feel God's presence. And so, my faith increases as I sense my hurts being recognized by the only One who can heal my heart.

4:13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Is James saying to never make plans again? Not quite. So, what is James saying? The next verses help clarify what he's talking about.

4:15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

James is asking us to make room for Jesus in the present. We can schedule Jesus right out of our lives, can't we? Your plans are great! God's plans for you are even better! So set aside time to pray throughout the day. Set an alarm on your phone if you need to do that. The prayers can be very short: "Jesus, I'm yours. Show me what's next. Jesus, I'm yours. Open my eyes to see who I can love well."

4:17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

How is what James saying here related to slander? Whether with our slander or our scheduling, we are attempting to live in the future. We think we can predict what others will be like, now and forever, based on their worst day. God doesn't plan your future based on your worst day. Jesus forgives you based on His worst day. On the cross He took your sin and transformed His worst day into your best day. So, receive His love for you and then share it with others in real ways. That's doing good.

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.