

ICE BREAKER

What's something bad you got rid of and replaced with something better (*possessions, relationships, jobs, etc.*)?

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

November 26, 2023

"A Heart No Longer Hardened"

Ephesians 4:17-24

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

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

NOTES: A Heart No Longer Hardened (Eph. 4:17-24) Andy Rock

Ephesians is a letter Paul writes to the Christians living in Ephesus. He spends three chapters declaring the truth that our Heavenly Father has chosen, adopted, and forgiven us. He's given life to all of us, dead people who He now makes alive. But our thinking needs to change.

We want God to change everything all at once, so we ask for a miracle, or provision, or help. God hears us. But we don't see God's process and so we think God isn't working. So, we choose to live apart from God.

Patterns of thinking which keep us believing lies about God and ourselves are called strongholds. They are fortified places in our minds where we allow the enemy to occupy space.

These choices hurt us, and that pain creates scars. Those scars cause our hearts to form callouses, and therefore they become hardened. Paul is going to help us break the strongholds in our thinking so that God can heal our hardened hearts and bring them back to life.

4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Futility literally means pointlessness, incapable of producing any useful result. A stronghold, a pattern of thinking which is based on a lie about God or about us, is futile. If we insist on living by our futile thinking, we create a stronghold of lies in our minds, which hardens our hearts.

For years I would be so afraid of things, I would work hard to make sure they didn't happen. But the choices I made from fear would always make my fears come true. My futile thinking always keeps me stumbling and falling into more pain. In my pain, I blame God and close the door on what He can do in that area of my life. That's when things get worse.

4:19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

When we close the door on God in any area of our lives, we always turn elsewhere to medicate our pain... sex, shopping, drinking, eating,

entertainment... hoping it will take away our pain. It does for a moment, until it doesn't. So, we consume more. That's greed. Suddenly, we find ourselves stuck with an addiction, damaging our health, relationships, and our connection to God. It's my choice to harden my heart. Therefore, I can also choose to offer my heart back to Jesus to heal it.

4:20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

When we heard about our Savior—the Christ—we heard about Jesus, who is never far off when we suffer. He is with us every step of the way! The first step in warring against a stronghold is to take back our Savior.

Jesus, I take You back as my Savior. I reject the lie that You're not interested in every detail of my life, capable of intervening. I reject the lie that You're mad at me, and I have to make up for what I did. I take back my reliance on You. I take back my love for You. I take back my joy in being in Your presence. Jesus, please make my hard heart alive.

4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

You get to choose. Put off your old self. If you've been living with fear, shame, cynicism, doubt, and lust, cast it off! Also, our life with Christ is not just putting off bad patterns. It's about putting on something better.

4:23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Speak to yourself like Jesus speaks to you. Take back your gentleness towards yourself. Take back your purpose. Your purpose isn't having God doing what you want. It's about joining God in His work. So, take back your mercy and your love. Make every effort to love those near to you. Therefore, let go of resentments and move forward with kindness.

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.