

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Sept 9, 2018



Pastor Johnson 8:15, Pastor Conway 9:30 & 10:55

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15-20 min)

- Anything to share about the past week? Follow-ups from last Sunday's message (when your work is killing you)?
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

- Opener: Have you been baptized before? Would you like to share about your baptism experience?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture below, James 4:1-10. Know that it is ok to skip questions in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You 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.³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴You 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.

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

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- Why do you believe the first question in the baptism ritual question is “Do you renounce evil?” What does our response to that question reveal about our commitment as a Christian?
- Verse 1 refers to “desires that rage within you” that lead to fights and quarrels. As followers of Christ, what are we to do with such inner desires?
- Which of Rev. Edmund Chan’s list of reasons why “transformation from the inside out is difficult” do you most agree with and why?
 - It’s counter-intuitive, inward and not outward activities that set us apart
 - We have to face our inner demons
 - Growth takes time and we are impatient
 - We don’t know how or where to begin
 - We are ill-disciplined by nature and question our abilities to pursue “discipleship” as we perceive it
- According to the book of James and the example of Jesus in the wilderness, what are the key qualities or activities of the Christian in resisting evil and growing in discipleship?

Another Related Scripture (10 min)

- Would a volunteer please read aloud Psalm 34:11-18. In this Psalm of David, how does the advice offered here for those seeking life in the Lord compare to the advice given above by James?
- How is “evil” presented here as a problem in a person’s relationship with God and having a fulfilling life?
- How is God’s mercy described in verse 18? How does this compare with James 4:6 and 4:10 above?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (15 min)

- What were points of encouragement or challenge for you personally in the sermon and in the reflections upon the additional scripture above?
- What ideas or experiences make you the most hopeful about your potential for growth in discipleship from the inside out?
- How has lifting up the baptismal vow of renouncing evil affected your outlook so far this week?
- What new practical implications do you foresee in the week ahead of being faithful to your baptismal vow to renounce evil?

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- Is there someone you know who would benefit from being included in this small group or sermon series that may lead toward them being baptized on Sunday October 14th?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer.