

“Time to Engage”
James 1:22-25
Pastor Jason Huffman
January 1st, 2023

Teaching Notes

Several weeks ago the Lord gave me a specific **word** for the year.

This morning I want to share with you

1. the word God gave me
2. the context of that word
3. how the word fits with where we are in James

The word that I want to share with you is ENGAGE.

And the **title** of the message this morning is...

...Time to Engage.

Let's start with a little backstory context...

Last year, we clarified our mission: To glorify God together in the pursuit of real and right relationships with God and others in life.

The dual pursuit of real and right relationship with God and others was represented by the dual peaks of Saddleback Mountain.

INSERT THE LOGO HERE IN THE SLIDES

The wave represented the opportunities we have in LIFE to glorify God in the context of these relationships.

Like waves on the horizon, opportunities appear before us.

We see them and choose to take them, to ride them.

The LIFE acronym is really our goal for discipleship.

Lead humbly with love and truth...We hear a call, see a need, or have an opportunity, and by faith we step up to serve the Lord and bring the love of Christ and the truth of God's word in the power of the Spirit.

Invest eternally with hope and purpose...We cheerfully and strategically give our time, talent, and treasure believing God will use it to make an impact in the lives around us, locally, globally, and eternally.

Follow faithfully with grit and grace...We trust and obey God daily with determination that doesn't quit and a heart that is quick to repent.

Enjoy abundantly with joy and thanksgiving...We take pleasure in and give thanks for Jesus, our own life, what God has given and how God is working.

I really believe this is the life God is calling us to as a body...

... the pursuit of these dual peaks...

...and riding these waves of opportunity.

This is the place where God desires and calls us to live.

In the Old Testament...

...The place God called His people to live was called...

...the Promised Land.

This was the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This was the land Moses led them to but didn't enter

This was the land Joshua led them to conquer but not completely

This was the land David ruled and expanded but not perfectly

This was a place where they would live in real and right relationship with God and one another in life.

In the New Testament...

...The Promised Land is not a picture of heaven.

...It is a picture of the victorious Christian life.

The Promised Land is where God's people...

...are living by faith in God's will thru God's promises.

We have the better Lawgiver, the real Joshua, the new king:

...Jesus, the Son of David..

There are battles to fight and strongholds to conquer...

...but we fight them with prayer and obedience, love and truth.

The Jews were slaves in Egypt without freedom or the knowledge of God.

We were slaves to sin in the world without freedom or knowledge of God.

...The Jews wandered the desert struggling with...

...their old desires,

...fear and unbelief...

...selfishness and sin,
...apathy and immaturity...

We spend time in the desert too. Wandering and struggling.

God would eventually bring them to the Promised Land...

...But before they got to the Promised Land...

...there were lessons to learn and promises to practice.

This is where I want to pick up the word...ENGAGE.

Last new year I shared a message about HOPE for 2022...

...The Rope of Hope...

...God had a plan, a future and a hope...

...and we found strength and security in hope in Him.

"Biblical hope is an unwavering assurance tied to the promises and unchanging character of God."

If you have strengthened yourself in hope: it is time to engage.

Engage means: To participate, become involved in, move into position so as to come into operation, enter in conflict or combat.

We are living in a different world than 30 years or 3 years ago.

If you remember coming into 2020...everyone had vision.

Vision for a great future.

Vision for a prosperous economy.

Vision for all they thought God wanted.

In 2000, 45% of Americans were "practicing Christians."

"calling oneself a Christian, strongly prioritizing faith and regular church attendance"

In 2020, 25% were "practicing Christians"

Atheists/agnostics went from 11% to 21%.

Those with no religious affiliation:

5% in 1972

29% in 2022

It is time to engage the mission.

The world is hungry for hope.

People are looking for love.

Communities are seeking connection.

This isn't the time to be passive or distracted.

We need to engage the mission.

As disciples we are called to follow not just believe.

>>>So then I looked for the word “engage” in the Bible.

It only appears once in the NKJV:

Deut 2:24 ‘Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess *it*, and **engage** him in battle.

Before bringing them into the Promised Land God had them practice their faith in a real fight.

This was on the east side of the Jordan river.

It was the victory that would set up all other victories.

And with one battle at a time, one victory at a time...

...they would engage the mission...

...God would work and their reputation would build.

This is the victory Rahab mentions...

...that gave her hope and changed her life!

God was telling them it was time to engage the mission...

...so they rose up, took the journey, crossed over and **engaged**.

And the rest is history or rather His Story!

The Promised Land was a land flowing with milk and honey.

...It was fruitful, sweet and good.

There were giants to fight and challenges to overcome...

...But God promised victory as they engaged.

The Promised Land had opportunities and responsibilities.

You had to plant your own food...

...but you did it on your own land.

You had to fight the battles...

...but you did it with God’s direction and strength.

You had to live your own life...

...but you did it knowing you were free and you were family.

So now I want to go to the third and final section...

We looked at the word ENGAGE.
We saw the context of the word.
And now how does it fit where we are in James?

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. **23** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; **24** for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. **25** But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
Be doers of the word...engage, take action...and be blessed.

We can't just come and listen to the Word.
We can't just show up, say hello, and leave...
...We need to engage.

James tells us if you are just a hearer...
You are someone who looks in the mirror, but takes no action

- You see the food in your teeth and do nothing.
- You see the hair sticking up in the back and do nothing.
- You see the make up running down your face and do nothing.
- You notice your fly is unzipped and do nothing.

- You would think how embarrassing.
- You would think they were fools.
- You would think it was pointless to even look in the mirror.

A mirror is good for information...but you must take action if you want it to be good for your life.

The Bible is good for more than just information...
...but we often treat it like it isn't.

We look into it, we hear it, we even feel it...BUT...
...we walk away, maybe get distracted and forget the action.

What do you need to stop being engaged in and distracted by so that you can be better engaged with God's mission?

I found 3 other places where "engage" is used in a positive way in other bible versions... they all had to do with action.

NIV Exodus 31:5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to **engage** in all kinds of crafts.
As craftsmen we must know how to work and do the work.

NIV Titus 3:14 Our people must also learn to **engage** in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.
As Christians we must see needs and meet needs.

ESV Luke 19:13 Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘**Engage** in business until I come.’
As servants we must know the business and get busy.

As **disciples** we must know about the truth and live out the truth.
As **athletes** in a race we must be ready **and** running.
As **soldiers** in the Lord’s army we must be armed **and** active.

I don’t know what this means for you **personally**.
I don’t know what you will do with this information **specifically**.
I don’t know what God is calling you to **individually**.

But I know what I hope for us corporately...

I hope we are a church engaged on mission.
I hope we are doers not just hearers.
I hope we will pursue real and right relationship with God and others.

I hope we will lead humbly with love and truth, invest eternally with hope and purpose, follow faithfully with grit and grace and enjoy abundantly with joy and thanksgiving.

Sometimes we are not able to engage even if we want to because we don’t have the fitness or the skill or the knowledge.

For you and I to be ready and able to engage...
...sometimes we need to crawl before we can walk or run.

The CRAWL Pursuit

Confess your sin and needs.
Read God’s word and write down your thoughts.
Attend gatherings large and small.
Worship God spiritually.
Look for LIFE opportunities and take them.

Let’s go to the cross and see how Christ engaged the mission.
Let’s take some time to respond:
...Let’s reflect, let’s invest, let’s pray, let’s worship.

Joshua 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. **8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your

mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you see the LIFE acronym as a goal for your life? (Lead humbly, Invest eternally, follow faithfully, enjoy abundantly)
2. Why is it hard to help others when we don't have a secure hope? Can the CRAWL Pursuit help you secure your hope?
3. What are things that distract us or keep us from being engaged on mission as Christians?
4. Who do you know that is a good example of engaging the mission?
5. What excites you or scares you about engaging God's mission?