

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday June 16, 2019. "James: A Practical Guide for Life. Life"

I. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II. Theme and recap.

Sunday was our third in the James series, and our returning guest preacher, Kristen did a fantastic job talking about the words we use. And over and above the typical way we think of words, profanity and gossip, (which are harmful), Kristen showed us there are ways we use words that do even more damage we have become so accustomed to we don't realize how much harm they do. And, because we weren't aware of how they do harm, we may have bought into using these types of words ourselves, or not calling into accountability others who use these kind of words.

Our first Sunday in James we talked about suffering and struggle. And how suffering can grow completeness and maturity within us, if we intentionally work the process that suffering can work out in our lives. It's not easy, but it's a powerful way to grow.

Our second Sunday was a tough one, where we grappled with the truth that we all show preferential treatment towards others based on what society values and respects. And the kingdom that Jesus came to establish was one not based on the world's definition of worthiness or merit, but one that flips the hierarchy the world creates upside down. And we were commanded specifically to show preferential treatment towards the poor and marginalized. Because that's where Jesus was, and that's where we'll always find God.

III Sunday.

Again, Sunday we talked about the words we use in our daily conversations about others, and what do those words imply, define about the people we use them about. This Sunday we were in James chapter 3. So read that chapter thru, and then we'll unpack it some.

What jumped out to you about that passage?

Did anything hit you in particular or in a specific way?

This may be a different approach than you've heard before. For the most part, the church has taken the language commands, (what we say and how we use our words), and interpreted them as solely personal behavior. For example, commandment #4 of the Ten Commandments, "*don't take the Lord's name in vain*" has traditionally been interpreted as a teaching about cursing. Don't use any sacred name of God as a curse word. Even though this is a great truth, most scholars will tell you this is not

what this passage means. Most Hebrew scholars will tell you this command means; “don’t make promises that you’re not going to keep, by using the name of God”.

This belief comes from Jesus’ words in The Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus talks about this specifically in making oaths, and not to use the name of God in making those oaths. Jesus was saying this commandment is actually about being honest and upfront with people...period. So when we take passages about how we use our words, and just turn them into teachings only about our behavior, then we disconnect the actual truth about how those words can affect other people. And, this was the primary point in Kristen’s message Sunday.

So, let’s talk about this a bit.

Why would there be a drift towards making how we use words only about our behavior and not how we relate to and treat others?

And this question has a huge assumption in it, (yes I know...I know), but why do we waterdown, reinterpret passages away from being more honest, forthright, kind and compassionate in how we relate to others?

The specific words we use can either bring life, hope, build up. Or they can bring hurt, condemnation, and tear down.

What are some words that can tear down, or judge and condemn?

What are some words that can build up, and bring hope and compassion?

What happens inside of us, to us, that causes us to slip from words that bring life to using words that bring death?

Bottom line, and all thru the ministry of Jesus, we see **words are to reflect people’s God given humanity, and are to restore and rebuild the dignity of others**. And unfortunately in this day and age, we’re seeing so many people use words that label, pigeon-hole, demean others, or to promote their own agenda. And at the risk of getting overly political, our leaders are setting such a poor example of how to talk about and to others. No matter where you land politically, it’s across the board, and many are so consumed with their own personal political agenda, (I mean us), that we’re justifying the mistreatment of others, because it’s for the greater good of our personal agenda. And we don’t call out hateful speech. And we forget the larger message, that it’s not just the words we use. It’s what it does to other people when we use words to demean, dehumanize others.

No matter what our stance is on any issue, we **have to fully embrace the humanity and dignity of ALL people**. We can have stances on particular issues, and even disagree on those positions. But we must NEVER allow our language to do harm. Or to turn people, children of God, into “its”.

So, the end of chapter 3 states that our language should be; *“peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow peace”*.

So, what would that look like to practice speech like that, specifically lived out in our daily lives?