

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, October 16, 2011

Passage: James 4:11-12

Memory Passage: Matt. 7:3-5 (or just v. 5 if you need a shorter verse to memorize)

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 4:11-12.** Let's begin this week by answering some questions about our text. Then throughout the week we will dig deeper into the Scriptures and you will see how your answers change, or do not change, by the end of the week.
- (b) Context: How are vs. 11-12 connected with 1:1-4:10 (you will benefit from re-reading 1:1-4:10)? How are these verses connected to what follows (4:13-5:20)? What themes are continued in vs. 11-12?
- (c) Meaning: Explain the meaning of vs. 11-12. Is James adding more content to his letter, or is he reiterating what he has already said? Make a list of other passages of Scripture that teach the same concepts. Make a list of other passages of Scripture that seem like they might be teaching the opposite of what James is saying in vs. 11-12.
- (d) *Family:* Test the retention your family has of last week's lesson by asking them what they learned last week. To prompt them, remind them of the object lessons you used: "What did we learn with the balloon? What was the point of our tug-of-war? Why did we talk about the puppy (or whatever cute, cuddly animal you used)?" Remind them that James' teaching on humility and repentance is the central passage in his letter, the point on which all of his other teaching depends.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 4:11-12.** The Greek word translated "speak against" (the word "evil" is added by the ESV translators) is also used in 1 Pet. 2:12 ("speak against"), 1 Pet. 2:1 (the verb "slandered"), 2 Cor. 12:20, 1 Pet. 2:1 (the noun "slander"), and Rom. 1:30 (the adjective "slanders"). What does it mean to "speak evil" against another believer? What types of words would constitute "evil" or "slandorous" speech?
- (b) Can speaking the truth about someone ever constitute "speaking evil" about that person? Give an example. What dangers or consequences could there be for the person against whom another brother/sister speaks evil?
- (c) What are the results of speaking evil against/slandering another believer (v. 11)? How is speaking evil against them judging them? How might judging one's motives fall into the category of "speaking evil against" them? Can you think of a time when it is ever acceptable to judge another person's motives?
- (d) *Family: Read James 4:11.* Ask your family: "What different ways can you think of that a person could speak evil against another person?" Help them to think of things like gossip, slander, bullying, making fun of someone, telling lies about someone, etc. Write each of these on your white board. Then **Read Prov. 10:18-19** and teach these verses to your family, focusing on the slanderer being called a fool but the one who restrains his tongue being recognized as prudent (one who shows by their actions that they care about the future). Also remind them of the wisdom of speaking less words rather than more, and how this can keep them from trouble, especially trouble of ending up speaking evil of another person. After all, you can't "speak" evil if you are not "speaking!"

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 4:11-12, 1 Cor. 5:9-13, & John 7:24.** How is speaking against & judging a fellow believer speaking evil against and judging the law? To what law is James referring?
- (b) What are we commanded to do in the 1 Cor. & John passages? Since we know that Scripture does not contradict itself, how do we explain Jesus & Paul commanding us to judge while James commands us not to judge?
- (c) Why does judging the law (which one does if one judges his/her brother) reveal that a person is not "a doer of the law" (a rather important topic in James!)? How do you, when you don't obey the law, actually set yourself up as a judge?
- (d) *Family: Read James 4:11-12.* Explain that when someone speaks evil against another person they are speaking evil of and judging the law of God (all of His commandments, but especially the commands to not slander other people and to love their neighbor as themselves). Think of an example from within the life of your own family where one person spoke against another, or use an example from your own life when you did this. Explain that when you spoke evil (focus in on the type of evil speaking: gossip, slander, motive judging, etc.) you were disobeying God's command and in essence saying, "This is not a command that I should have to obey so I will disobey it!" This means that you were not governed by God's law, but by your own law, so you became the judge of what was right and wrong and what pleases God. God is the only lawgiver & judge, not us, so we must be doers of the word (law) and not hearers only (James 1:22-27, 2:13-26).

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**READ THE PASSAGE**

- (a) **Read Matt. 7:1-5.** If we only had v. 1, when would it be appropriate for us to judge? Only looking at v. 1 is why it is easy for some people to misuse this verse to say, “We are never, ever, to judge another person about anything!” However, observing the rest of these verses, what did Jesus intend to teach us about judging?
- (b) According to v. 2, what is the relationship between us judging others and God judging us? Why should this be important to us and how should it affect how we interact with others? According to vs. 3-5, what is the problem Jesus wants us to correct and how does He tell us to correct it?
- (c) After we stop being a hypocrite (by recognizing our own sin and our need for repentance), what are we still told to do? How are we to do it (i.e. how do we address the sin of others, which requires us to make judgments, as repentant believers, ourselves in need of and trusting in Jesus as the One who forgives sin?)?
- (d) What implications do acting upon these verses have for us as we live life in community here at the Bible Church of Cabot? What are the dangers if we do not obey these verses? How does James 4:11-12 help us understand how to obey them?
- (e) *Family:* Think of a time when someone in your family has had something in their eye, whether a piece of dirt/dust, or smoke, or any kind of debris. Tell the story (hopefully it will be recent enough that everyone remembers it) and be very descriptive with the details of the pain & confusion it caused. Explain that pursuing sin in our life has the same kind of painful & confusing result because everything we *should* be doing gets blurry and harder to see in light of the repetitive sin. **Read Matt. 7:1-5** and teach your family the importance of: (1) Believers helping other believers see sin in their lives and understand the need for repentance (the speck in their eye), (2) Making sure we are leading lives of repentance (taking the log out of our own eye) so we can fully point others to the power of the gospel and how to apply it in their lives.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**READ THE PASSAGE**

- (a) **Read James 4:11-12, 2:8-13, & Lev. 19:9-18.** How do the James 2 & Lev. 19 passages inform our understanding of James 4:11-12? In the context of James 4:11-12, who especially is our neighbor?
- (b) Why is it important to understand that God is the only lawgiver & judge? How does believing this fact help us live out the commands in 4:7-10? Why does James remind his hearers that God is the one “who is able to save & to destroy?”
- (c) Using one sentence, summarize what you have learned from your study this week. Now write down 3 specific applications that you will seek to implement as a result of your study. Write them on a sticky note or a note card and place it somewhere you will see all week to remind yourself of your desire to be a doer of the word and not a hearer only.
- (d) *Family:* Review what you have learned as a family this week. On the left side of your whiteboard under the heading “Hearers of the Word” write bullets summarizing each truth as your family remembers them. Then help your family come up with age appropriate applications of the truths you have learned. Write these applications on the right side of the white board under the heading, “Doers of the Word.” If possible, keep this white board visible to your family for the next week, returning to it often to remind them of these specific applications.

DATE: October 16, 2011**PASSAGE: James 4:10-11***Speak No Evil*

In James 4:11-12 James presents 4 statements that challenge us to speak no evil.