
Reflection

1. What are some personal laws (rules, expectations, etc.) you feel like others hold over you, whether in your family, among friends or at work? How do people treat you when you don't live up to their expectations? How do you tend to feel about yourself in these situations?
2. What are some personal "laws" (expectations, rules, etc.) you tend to require people to live up to and follow? How do you communicate them? How do you treat people when they fall short of your expectations and desires?
3. If our chief command is to love (show mercy, forgive, etc.), what are we then required to trust into God's hands as we love the broken, sinful, messy, disagreeable, selfish, frustrating and/or mean people around us?
4. What can a Christian do to grow the ability to lovingly confront sin without condemning the person in the process? When have you seen this work well?
5. What can you, your small group and your church do to make love of neighbor the defining way you treat others individually and collectively?

Action –

1. Set time aside to reflect on the ways and degrees to which you judge others and rewrite the law of loving neighbor. Ask God to reveal to you when and how you tend to assume HIS role rather than embracing the role he's set for you.
2. For two straight weeks be very conscious of seeing others through the love God has for them and through the grace God has shown you. Notice if this change in "vision" results in changes in behavior too.

Pray – If studying in a group, pray for one another and for each other's spiritual growth throughout the coming week.

Living Faith [a study of James] – James the Just, a central leader in early church and the half-brother of Jesus, cares deeply for his Christian *brothers and sisters* and writes to them to encourage wise and faithful living. Bringing both a deep connection to Christianity’s Hebrew roots and a solid recognition of the lordship of Jesus, James provides wise, practical, godly instruction on *living faith*—faith which is necessarily, consistently and broadly manifested in action. His teaching provides everyday ways we can apply our faith and thereby expect to grow.

Begin with Prayer – *Father, with an expectation that you will use this study to grow me/us more into the image of your Son, I/we open our hearts and minds to your Spirit. Amen.*

Follow Up on *Be Loyal to God* – What thoughts, questions, actions, etc. resulted in your life this past week as a result of last week’s sermon study?

The Sermon’s Main Point – *Let God Be the Judge*
God is uniquely the one Judge and Lawmaker. When we speak against others, we’re essentially rewriting God’s command to love our neighbors. Letting God be the judge and lawmaker necessarily entails choosing not to judge others or to establish our own personal laws/demands for others to live up to.

Begin – Choose from the following questions to begin thinking about the study’s topic.

1. In your opinion, what is the best: ice cream? style of music? grocery store? era of history? fall meal?
2. Which traffic laws do you treat more like suggestions and which ones do you religiously obey?
3. If you had to judge one competition at the State Fair, which would you want it to be? What qualifications do you bring to this hypothetical opportunity?
4. What expressed or unexpressed rules were a core part of your growing up? How were you treated if you broke these rules?

Living Faith [a study of James]

Let God Be the Judge

James 4:11-12

Grasping, Sharing, Learning and Appreciating

1. Read James 4:11-12 and then restate it in your own words.
2. James instructs his readers “not to speak against one another.” How would speaking against someone, or slandering, be an outflow of the behaviors James addresses in 3:13-4:3?
3. James identifies that when Christians slander one another that they are really breaking God’s law, or as he puts it the person “speaks evil against the law and judges the law.” Using Leviticus 19:16-18, describe what James means.
4. Note what the following passages say about things we ARE to judge, or be discerning about: Galatians 1:9; 1 John 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:1-2.
5. What do the following passages reveal about God as THE law giver: Genesis 2:16-17; Exodus 24:12; Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 13:34-35; Psalm 19:7; Mark 12:29-31?
6. James sides with Jesus in stating that our role is not to judge others, or in other words to condemn them. God alone has this authority and responsibility. Examine Jesus’ teaching on the subject in Matthew 7:1-5. How would following this teaching help build community? How would ignoring this teaching become toxic to community?