



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

May 29, 2005
James 4:11-17

OVERVIEW

In the next few weeks of our study of James, we are going to touch on a subject that is a "big issue" for many: our "stuff!" Given James' concern that we live out our faith in genuine and practical ways, that isn't all that surprising. He's walked us through the issues of trials, prejudices, temptation and sin, anger and the way we talk to one another, so it should come as no surprise that he also turns his attention to stuff!

In preparation for your group meeting, you might review what James has already said about wealth and how we handle it in 1:9-11, 2:1-6; and 2:14-17. This is a theme he intends for us to explore.

DISCUSSION

The two sections you will be reading and discussing have a common theme: an inappropriate attitude about and evaluation of about one's self. As James was writing about how we are to carry on relationships with others rooted in a genuine faith, he spoke about humility (3:16; 4:6, 10). As you read James 4:11-17, keep that idea of humility in the back of your mind; it is what connects this section with what preceded.

Don't feel you have to make too big an issue out of the opening question about "tooting your own horn." You don't want to make your people uncomfortable; just get the thinking going along the lines of "boasting." What is the connection between boasting and what you will read? Well, the one who judges another tends to do that because he or she thinks they've got life figured out; they have the right to judge someone. Clearly, that's an attitude that lacks humility! And when you get to the portion about looking to the future, James is even more explicit. If you think your future is in your hands, you are betraying an arrogance and lack of humility that undercuts your faith.

Keep before your group the big ideas that James is writing about living out what is in your heart (your faith) in a way that makes a difference in this life. He is not raising the question of whether someone who is judgmental or boastful is saved or not. (Given his stated "audience" in the opening of the letter and the way he addresses his readers as "brothers" in 4:11, we can assume he has believers in mind.) What is uppermost in James' concern is the inconsistency between what we say we believe and the way we live.

The Christian affirms that Jesus is Lord and coming King; He is the one who saved us and who makes us right with God. If you believe that, James would want to know why you take it upon yourself to act like the Lord and King of another brother or sister? The Christian affirms that their life is in God's hands; He is the one who cares for us and sustains us in all areas of life. If you believe that, James would want to know why you look at your future as if it were all up to you?

BIG IDEA

Walking in faith changes our attitude about our friends and our futures!

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

May 29, 2005
James 4:11-17

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

At one time or another, everyone has an urge to "boast." We have that longing to "toot our own horn." When do you feel that urge the most? What do you typically do?

As we have been working through James, it is very clear that his primary concerns are: (1) what is in our hearts, our genuine faith in God; and (2) how we live out that faith in this day-to-day life we live. With those two thoughts in mind, read James 4:11-17.

How do those two thoughts form the foundation of what he says here?

How does the idea of boasting or thinking too much of yourself play into what James says here?

What is the connection between boasting or being haughty and genuine faith?

Do you typically make a connection between a judgmental attitude or boasting about what you will do with a "faith problem"? Why or why not?

James isn't looking for us to tag "if the Lord wills" on to every decision we consider or statement we make. He is encouraging something much deeper. What is he after?

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