



JAMES: LIVING THE KINGDOM

JAMES 5:12

OCTOBER 10, 2021 | PASTOR TRAVIS EDGERTON



FOLLOW UP FROM LAST WEEK'S LIVE IT OUT QUESTIONS

If your group met last week, was there anything you committed to doing after reflecting on Scripture during your group? Did you follow through with that commitment, what steps did you take (or not take), and is there any way we can help?

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

- 1 When did you most regret saying “yes” to something/someone in your life? When were you the most thankful you said “yes” to someone/something in your life?
- 2 When is it the hardest for you to say “no” – whether it means saying “no” to yourself or others?

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Some context: James, in 5:12, is remembering the words of his brother Jesus in Matthew 5:33-37. Jesus is rebuking religious people for using oaths and guarantees of truth as a means of deception. And so James, with the message of King Jesus reverberating in his head, condenses it to this powerful statement in 5:12 below.

- 1 Someone read James 5:12 and Matthew 5:33-37 for the group.

¹²But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by Heaven or by Earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

³³“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by Heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the Earth, for it is His footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

Why doesn't Jesus want us to “swear by” things?

What does God's ownership over everything have to do with our promises?

What does saying “yes” or “no” have to do with our patience?

On Sunday, Travis walked through how our character is revealed when our words turn into our actions. This focus on our actions and how we live can be confused as legalism – that our actions are what saves us. One of the statements he made was “legalism is about EARNING your salvation. Love is about RESPONDING to your salvation.” In the same way, if we claim that we trust Jesus, that we believe that He is enough to save us, His saving us makes Him our King. We don’t get to opt in for Jesus being our Savior, but opt out of Jesus being our King.

If we truly say “Yes” to Jesus, how should obedience to Jesus be properly viewed? Is obedience to Jesus what saves us, or is it something more?

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

- 1** How does growing in intimacy with Jesus on a regular basis and being faithful to His commands connect with what James says in verse 12 (“Let your yes be yes, and your no be no”)?
- 2** What are some practical things that help us keep honesty as a priority in our lives?
- 3** If what we looked at tonight in God’s Word is true, what needs to change in how you are honest in your commitments and promises? How can we pray for you to see that change happen in the coming week?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

NEXT WEEK: JAMES 5:13-18

Take some time before Sunday to pray that God would use this message and the truth in His Word to transform the minds and lives of those who hear it. Pray that God would move you and others in our church to live out what is revealed in His Word. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it’s covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pr

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it’s hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

COMMENTARY

JAMES 5:12

5:12. Here the appeal is for us to avoid using God's name disrespectfully. "Above all" does not suggest that this sin is more serious than other sins such as murder, immorality, or robbery. It is simply a common way of bringing a letter to a close, perhaps indicating that what follows in some way summarizes what has gone before.

Although these words prohibit profanity, they are not chiefly concerned about "taking the Lord's name in vain." They warn against the use of a hasty, irreverent oath involving God's name during a time of suffering or hardship. This logically follows the discussion of suffering in verses 10-11. Above all during our stress we should not resort to flippant oaths that communicate something about God to the world that we do not intend.

This prohibition bans the careless use of God's name to guarantee the truthfulness of a statement. Christians who face suffering can be easily tempted to make a frivolous appeal to God's name to bargain their way out of trouble or difficulty.

In the New Testament period, some Jews used oaths for frivolous swearing. They would make a statement such as "by my life" or "by my head" to bolster the truth of a promise or statement. They also used evasive swearing. If a person swore by the name of God, his oath was binding. If he swore by another object such as Heaven or Earth, his oath was not binding. Jesus condemned such false actions. He wanted the words of His followers to be so patently honest that they needed no additional confirmation. James affirmed what Jesus had already said. He wanted an individual's yes to mean yes, and the no to mean no. God would judge the words of an evasive or frivolous swearer (see Matt. 12:36).

MATTHEW 5:34-37

Jesus' quotes regarding oaths in 5:33 are derived from such passages as Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; and Deuteronomy 5:11; 6:13; 23:21-23. A biblical vow or oath in the Old Testament was an optional, above-and-beyond promise of an offering to God. Vows were never required, as were the basic tithes (Deut. 23:22). But once made, a vow was to be kept. A promise must not be complicated, legalized, or reduced to technicalities. A broken vow was subject to God's punishment. The Pharisees, in contrast to Jesus' insistence upon straightforward truthfulness, had expanded oaths to matters of technicalities. Legal technicalities can devolve to the point of destroying the justice they are supposed to serve. Truth loses itself in wordiness. The pharisaical system of oaths was expanded to cover all kinds of promises made to one another. "Levels of truth" emerged from the varieties of oaths. Oaths ... by Heaven were considered more binding than oaths on the Earth. Like children crossing their fingers behind their backs, the Pharisees camouflaged reality in elaborate technicalities.

Beginning in 5:34, Jesus again used hyperbole when He instructed the people not to make any oaths. Oaths, properly understood and respectfully used, are a good thing. Jesus was saying that it is better just to make a promise and keep it (and prove by your track record that you are a promise keeper worth trusting) than to thoughtlessly use the powerful name of Yahweh to back up a promise that may or may not be kept. Simply put, Jesus insisted that His followers tell the truth always—not simply when "under oath." Citizens of His Kingdom are to be truth tellers, in contrast to those who play with words and twist their meaning to their own selfish ends.