



Helping people encounter God in His Word



For use on Sunday, November 16, 2003

Introduction

30

*Core Competencies
of a follower
of Christ*

10 Core Beliefs

TRINITY
SALVATION BY GRACE
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE
PERSONAL GOD
IDENTITY IN CHRIST
CHURCH
HUMANITY
COMPASSION
ETERNITY
STEWARDSHIP

10 Core Practices

WORSHIP
PRAYER
BIBLE STUDY
SINGLE-MINDEDNESS
BIBLICAL COMMUNITY
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
GIVING AWAY MY TIME
GIVING AWAY MY MONEY
GIVING AWAY MY FAITH
GIVING AWAY MY LIFE

10 Core Virtues

LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS/GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL
HOPE
HUMILITY

This week's Core Competency:

Peace

**I am free from anxiety
because things are right
between God, myself,
and others.**

Reality Check: When Life Requires a Balance *Remote Control . . . When You Abuse Power*

"What am I supposed to do?" asked Wilson. "Can I help it if someone stole my disability check from the mail?"

"That is not my concern, Mr. Plete," said the collection agent on the phone, "You have been in arrears on your account for six months. I'm afraid we will be taking you to court for garnishment from your disability check."

"This really stinks! You have no allowances for circumstances that are beyond my control. My disability payment is to be reissued, but it takes 6 weeks for the replacement check. How am I supposed to survive?" asked Wilson.

"Our process to garnish your check will take two weeks, sir," said the agent. "You will have that time before you see money taken from your check. Hopefully that will give you enough time to find additional resources. I'm sorry, sir. Have a nice day."

"Have a nice day! Who are you kidding?" said Wilson as he hung up the phone.

"Man, what a hassle," said Wilson Plete disgustedly. "I'm stretched as it is from month to month and then someone steals my check. How am I going to make it when people are after money I don't have and can't afford to pay?"

Just then a knock came at the door. "Coming!" yelled Wilson as he hobbled to the door with his knee in a brace and a cane.

Wilson opened the door and there stood Jack Stratman, Wilson's construction crew boss. Wilson smiled and said, "Jack, good to see you. Come on in."

Jack smiled and said, "Wilson, I'd like to but I'm off to another site and wanted to see how you were doing and drop you your mail from the corporate office. I don't know why it keeps coming to the site and not forwarded here. How's the leg?"

"Coming along. I'm expected to get out of the brace in 2 weeks. Then at least 2 months of rehab. I'll tell you this disability thing is a hassle. Especially since someone stole my check," said Wilson.

"Man, that's a pain. Anything we can do?" asked Jack.

"Unless you can keep creditors off my back, no. But thanks for asking," said Wilson.

"Keep me informed," said Jack, "Hey, I gotta go. We miss you, buddy, keep recovering."

"Hey, I will. And thanks, Jack. It means a lot that you came by," said Wilson.

"No problem. Take care, Wilson," said Jack as he headed away.

As Wilson shut the door he looked through the papers and saw a letter from the company's legal department. Wilson opened the envelope and began reading. He couldn't believe what he was reading.

"They can't do this! I didn't cause the scaffold to fall over!" Wilson blurted as he read that the company was denying responsibility for Wilson's injury and were going to cut off his disability pay. From their investigation they believed that Wilson's injury was caused because of his error and not the company's. Plus, because of their findings they were going to ask Wilson to return the payments he had received.

"Great. Now what am I going to do?" said Wilson confounded. "I guess I'll call Jack and see if the union representative will help. This is getting to be too much. I need help." Wilson grabbed his phone and began to dial Jack's phone number.

Observation

What do you see?

James 5:1-6 *Warning to Rich Oppressors*

¹Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

Proverbs 24:19, 20

¹⁹ Do not fret because of evil men
or be envious of the wicked,
²⁰ for the evil man has no future hope,
and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.

Record your first impressions from what you read.

 **Interact with the passages**

- Circle the words “wealth” in the James passage.
- Put a square around “cry,” “cries,” “workmen,” “harvesters,” “innocent,” and “not opposing.”
- Highlight the terms of judgment that James says to the rich.
- Underline the actions of the rich that James condemns: “hoarded,” “wages you failed to pay,” “lived . . . in luxury and self-indulgence,” “fattened,” “condemned,” “murdered.”
- In Proverbs highlight “do not fret” or “be envious.” Draw arrows from these phrases to “evil men” and “wicked.”
- Circle in Proverbs the judgments that befall “evil men” and the “wicked.” Draw an arrow from these judgments to James 5:4 to “reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”
- Draw a picture depicting God hearing the cries of the oppressed and how he responds to both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Interpretation

What does it mean?

The pursuit of opulence can corrupt a person’s character so they seek riches over peace, justice, and mercy. God does not disregard the cries of the oppressed. When a person disregards the plight of others to seek temporal wealth they gain not worldly wealth, but God’s judgment.

Insights

- The “now listen” is a command and is an insistent brusque address like “see here.”
- The term “wail” is used in the Old Testament as an expression to express violent grief.

- “Has rotted” and “have eaten” are perfect verbs and state the conditions that have occurred and will certainly continue into the future. In other words, their wealth has no long-term value or spiritual merit.
- “Corroded,” is “to rust through down to the bottom,” and it is also a perfect verb.
- “Hoarded,” is a term that reflects “storing up,” and in this case may have the object “fire,” or another word needing to be added like “wrath.” This could also mean, “laying up treasure.” Which means that hoarding wealth is condemned when the poor needed help during what James’ church considered as the end times.
- “Failed to pay,” means a complete default of what was owed. The “cries out,” is a present verb and refers to a continual crying out. Rabbis commonly taught that withholding wages at the end of the day was a sin that caused cries to reach to heaven.
- “Have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty,” this is a perfect verb and emphasizes that the cries that reach God are always present and are neither in vain nor forgotten.
- “Luxury and self-indulgence,” means a “soft luxury,” not wanton vice, and the indulgence is “giving to one’s self pleasure,” but not to squandering.
- The acts of “condemning” and “murder” are aorist, or past action verbs, while the “were not opposed,” is a present verb. The present verb is the emphasis in that the workers did not act upon or could not act upon previous actions against them.

Answering Questions of Interpretation

James, in 4:13-17, is probably addressing non-believers. He only gives a condemnation and not appeal. How do we make sense of who the audience is for this section? How does the terms of judgment against the rich lead us to choose a certain audience? If believers were included in the judgments that James speaks about what implications would that have on faith, grace and mercy?

How do we understand the rich “condemned” and “murdered” innocent men? Is this legal term “condemned” mean they took land from the poor in court? Does “murdered” mean that they starved the workers because they did not pay them their subsistence wages? Or does it mean that they actually physically oppressed the people into submission where some died? What is the application in today’s world that reflects these horrible circumstances of oppression? How do we as believers oppose and speak out about these conditions? Or do we?

Application

What do I do?

Have I defrauded or not paid someone who deserves compensation for their work? What do my payments do to allow workers to have food and clothing? How can I do the right thing to keep peace with those around me?

Have I enslaved myself by being indebted to some rich entity? Have I extended myself on credit to live a life of luxury that I cannot maintain and that will fall like a house of cards? If I were to go bankrupt, how would my lack of payments effect the people I owe? What effect would it have on me? How can I be at peace with others and myself when I have outstanding debts? What do I sense I must do? What is God’s direction regarding debt?

National Geographic (Sept. 2003) did a piece *21st Century Slaves* that declared 27 million people worldwide are enslaved—or physically confined or restrained and forced to work, or controlled through violence, or in some way treated as property. These are usually poor people who begin looking for a better life, but find exploitation, some even here in Arizona. What role should I play as a believer in the betterment and quality of life for people who are desperately poor? Do I turn a blind eye to the way certain companies exploit people to create goods? Does my lifestyle keep someone else oppressed because of what and where I buy things? What does God ask me to do to seek peace and justice on behalf of others? How can I be an advocate or a prayer warrior to combat this oppression?

Correlation

How do we work this into our Home Group, Family, youth group, ministry, class, small group?

Core Competency: Peace

Creed: I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Commentary:

Being at peace with God, yourself, and others begins with humility and putting God and others before yourself. When we willingly subject ourselves to God's Spirit we can deny our own interests and allow the Spirit to heal broken relationships and bring peace. The spiritual fruit of peace allows believers to be ambassadors and address misdeeds we may have caused. Not only are we given the Spirit's power to seek peace with those we wronged, but we can also be a voice of peace for the countless oppressed.

The Spirit gives us inner peace, when we realize that God gives us everything we need. If we lose perspective and believe that God has short changed us in some capacity, then we will look elsewhere for satisfaction. We may look enviously and compare ourselves to others who seem to have more. Our peace is eroded when we lose sight of how much God loves us and takes care of us daily even through tough times. We must walk with the Spirit to be at peace.

When facing evil that takes advantage of the oppressed, believers can be advocates for those who are unheard. The peace of Christ allows believers to be ambassadors of peace, to have compassion and take action to address the wrongs in society. Whether these actions take the form of prayer or political activism depends upon the Spirit's moving and must be in submission to the Spirit's leading. Believers are called to be advocates for peace for those who have none.

Question: How can the Holy Spirit help us seek peace in broken relationships? What would it look like?

Kid's Corner – Zacchaeus, the Untold Story

Ask: Who knows the song, *Zacchaeus was a Wee Little Man*? Let's sing it.

Say: Today we will talk about peace. Jesus wants us to seek peace with people we have hurt or wronged. Last week we had a tax collector in our story. What does a tax collector do? He takes money to keep the schools open, pay policemen to keep people safe, and pay the leaders of the country.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, Some tax collectors would send to the government the amount they were supposed to but they would keep the rest for themselves. Tax collectors were rich because of this, and very disliked.

As the song says, Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house when he met Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was pleased to have Jesus come to his house. The people were very upset because they knew that Zacchaeus had stolen money from people, and Jesus was going to have dinner with him. But after Jesus met with Zacchaeus and talked to him about becoming a friend with God, Zacchaeus had a changed heart. Let me read Luke 19:8 to you about what Zacchaeus said after he realized he had hurt others by taking money from them. "Zacchaeus stood up and said to Jesus, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount!'"

Ask: How did Zacchaeus seek peace with the people he took money from? How much did he give them back?

Say: Zacchaeus could not have paid people back if he had not become a friend of Jesus. When we are friends of Jesus, He helps us want to be at peace with people around us. That means if we hurt someone else or do something wrong to them we must apologize and be willing to make things right with them. When we seek to be at peace with others we act like Jesus.



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