
TALK IT OVER

A Faith That Plants Seeds of Peace

A Faith That Works When Life Doesn't - Part 13

Book of James: Principles for Living Through A Pandemic

Rick Warren

June 6-7, 2020

Open your group in prayer and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions in the message notes, or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions towards the end of the document.

Message Notes

Those of us who have accepted God's forgiveness and salvation by faith in his grace are many things: Christians; followers of Jesus; his disciples; saved; believers; born again into God's family; children of God. But Jesus said that we are also to be known as peacemakers – a synonym for Christian. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are the ones that God will call his children*" (Matthew 5:9). During this pandemic, this world desperately needs us to be peacemakers. James teaches us six seeds of peace to be a peacemaker in the world. Let's Talk it Over.

If you are truly a wise and understanding person, it will be seen in your life by the good deeds you do out of the humility that always comes from wisdom but if in your heart, you are selfish, jealous, or bitter toward others, don't think you're wise, because it's a lie! That's never wisdom from God; instead it's from the world, and your unspiritual nature, and from the Devil himself! James 3:13-15

For whenever there is envy or selfish ambition, you'll always find confusion, unrest, disharmony, rebellion, and every kind of evil. James 3:16 (AMP)

Real wisdom is pure, then peaceful, then considerate. It is submissive, full of mercy and helpful, impartial and sincere. James 3:17

When peacemakers plant seeds of peace, they will harvest justice. James 3:18 (CEV)

What Kinds of Seeds Am I Planting? How Can I Plant Seeds of Peace?

Seed #1: If I'm wise, I won't compromise the truth

Talk It Over

Real wisdom is first of all pure. James 3:17

The Lord delights in pure words. Proverbs 15:26 (NLT)

God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and to tell it in love. Ephesians 4:15 (MSG)

1. What could happen if one tells the whole truth but forgets about doing it in love? What keeps you from telling the truth in love in your relationships?
2. What do you think James means in verse 3:17 when he says real wisdom is pure?

Seed #2: If I'm wise, I won't antagonize your anger

Talk It Over

Real wisdom is ... peaceful. James 3:17

Any fool can start arguments: the wise thing is to stay out of them. Proverbs 20:3 (TEV)

A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes. Proverbs 14:29 (LB)

Three Causes of Arguments to Avoid

- Comparing
- Condemning
- Contradicting

3. Which of these causes has the potential to trigger an angry reaction in you?
4. How can you recognize a potential argument brewing in time to change course and avoid further escalation?

Seed #3: If I'm wise, I won't minimize your feelings

Talk It Over

Real wisdom is ... considerate; [“courteous” (LB); or “gentle with people” (TEV)]. James 3:17

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it's written, “The insults of those who insulted you fell on me.” Romans 15:1-3 (NIV)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

Note: Rick's words, “Yes, but what about...?” can be found at the end of this lesson.

5. When have you carried another's burdens? How did this action bless you or the other person?
6. How do we carry each other's burdens when our perspectives differ?

Seed #4: If I'm wise, I won't criticize your suggestions

Talk It Over

Real wisdom is ... not defensive (LB); [“open to reason” (RSV); or “easily entreated” (KJV)]. James 3:17

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email Maturity@saddleback.com

A fool thinks he needs no advice but a wise man listens to others. Proverbs 12:15 (LB)

7. In what area of your life do you need to be more open and willing to learn?
8. How does unknown bias or undetected pride prevent us from listening openly to others?

Seed #5: If I'm wise, I won't emphasize your mistakes

Talk It Over

Real wisdom is ... full of mercy and helpful. James 3:17

Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends. Proverbs 17:9 (LB)

Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit. Proverbs 15:4

9. Considering Proverbs 17:9, what do you need to stop bringing up or let go of?
10. Are you quick to judge another's actions - or even your own? What can you do to silence both the inner and the outer critic?

Seed #6: If I'm wise, I won't despise our differences

Talk It Over

Real wisdom is ... free from prejudice and hypocrisy. James 3:17 (TEV)

The secret is Christ himself; in him lie hidden all God's treasures of wisdom..." Colossians 2:3

11. From James 3:17 and Colossians 2:3, how does Jesus set us free from prejudice and hypocrisy?
12. What are some biases that you may need to confront and change? Plan to spend time with someone who can show you a different point of view.

Diving Deeper

- Which of these six seeds of peace do you find to be most challenging?
- James 3:15 describes earthly wisdom and James 3:17 describes wisdom from heaven. What determines the type of wisdom you have?
- How does the way God wants us to respond to conflict and anger differ from our society's normal response? Why is it easier to condemn others rather than forgive?
- How can we respond to others in ways that build people up despite the temptation to tear down their beliefs?
- How will you plant seeds of peace this week?

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email Maturity@saddleback.com

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message!

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*

Actions Steps

1. Receive free New Believer material:
Text NEWSTART (1 word) to 99000 or email newstart@saddleback.com
2. Support this broadcast & feed tens of thousands of out-of-work families!
Give online at <https://saddleback.com/give>
3. To be baptized:
Text SBBAPTISM (1 word) to 99000 or email sbbaptism@saddleback.com
4. To take your next Purpose Drive Spiritual Growth class:
Text SBCLASS to 99000 or email sbclass@saddleback.com to sign up.
5. To Join an online small group for fellowship during COVID-19
Text SMALLGROUP to 99000

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email Maturity@saddleback.com

Yes, but what about...? *by Rick Warren*

One reason so many marriages end in disaster, so many kids are estranged from parents, and so many citizens are fractured in angry divisions, is because most people have never been taught how to sit with someone's pain without getting defensive about it.

When someone tries to express how fearful, or heartbroken, or angry they are about a deep, painful wound, the most unloving (and unhelpful) phrase you can reply with is "Yes, but what about...?"

You invalidate people's feelings and pain by immediately mentioning some other problem or pain or unfairness. Is that really your best response?

Could you not just sit for a minute and validate their pain? Must you immediately excuse it away or compare it to someone else's problem or pain? Can you not just be empathetic for a few seconds? Ask yourself: why am I so quick to change the subject when someone expresses hurt or a negative emotion?

They aren't saying their pain is the only pain, or that their problem is the only problem in the world, or that injustice done to others doesn't matter. They just want someone to understand and sympathize.

Anytime you respond to a hurt or fear or pain with "Yes, but what about..." you communicate "Someone else's pain is more important than yours" or "I can ignore your problem because others have problems."

This phrase is particularly misused on social media by many. One person will express a concern about something hurting them, and 50 others will immediately minimize that hurt by posting "But what about...?" Everybody talks. Nobody listens.

When considering alternatives, or solutions, or unintended consequences, the phrase "But what about...?" is a valuable tool. But as a response to someone expressing grief, it sucks. It reveals an inability to empathize.

Why not try this: when someone expresses a negative emotion, instead of getting offended, or defensive, or minimizing it, or changing the subject, just absorb their pain for the moment. That's called love. It's also called maturity. It's what Jesus does.

Don't compare or equate, and don't rush to a solution. Just listen! To be a pro at loving people, realize that your ear is a far better tool for showing kindness and love than your mouth. Just show up and shut up when others are in pain, and maybe they'll do the same for you. It could save your marriage. It could save your family. It could save our nation.