

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Stop Quarreling
James 4:1-12

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

On a white board or large piece of paper have participants write a teaching they remember their parents, grandparents or other caregiver giving them regularly. (These could be things like "share your toys", "brush your teeth before you go to bed", "don't talk back to your mom").

Worship Time Leader:

Make copies of the passage from Romans 11:33-36 found at the end of this session and enlist two readers ahead of time. Use youth if you have youth in your group.

Music Sources:

Bow the Knee, *The Worship Hymnal* # 505; CCLI # Lyrics are not available

Change My Heart, O God, *The Worship Hymnal* # 529; CCLI # 1565

Refiner's Fire, *The Worship Hymnal* # 592; CCLI # 426298

Lord, Be Glorified, *The Worship Hymnal* # 542; CCLI # 26368

We Are an Offering, *The Worship Hymnal* #547; CCLI # 16220

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Stop Quarreling*****Focal Text**

James 4:1-12

Background

James 4:1-12

Main Idea

To live in harmony with others, including in the church, seek God's way of life wholeheartedly rather than seeking to fulfill your selfish desires.

Questions to Explore

Where do conflicts come from? How can they be prevented?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide on actions to take to live in greater harmony with other people.

Gathering together:

Sing one or both of the following:

Bow the Knee, *The Worship Hymnal* # 505; CCLI # Lyrics are not available

Change My Heart, O God, *The Worship Hymnal* # 529; CCLI # 1565

First thoughts:

The worship song which you may have sung ends with the words "In the presence of the King, Bow the Knee". It is with that attitude of reverence that we examine the passage in James today which deals with relationships within the body of Christ. In an earlier worship time which focused on James 3: 17-18, we discussed these words:

True wisdom is that which produces right-relationships. It is peaceable; at all times it brings men closer to one another and closer to God. Desiring peace is important; causing peace to be possible is more difficult. It begins with our own relationships in

our families, with our co-workers and friends. It involves our understanding that other people are made in the image of God. To consider people as unimportant or unworthy is to dishonor God Himself.

The topic for today's study is **Stop Quarrelling**. It is sad that so early in the life of the Christian church a leader had to admonish believers about quarrelling with one another. It is sad that bickering still happens within the Christian community today. In fact, it is sometimes so noticeable within a community of believers that the effectiveness of their Christian witness is negated.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. We long for peace between nations. Yet within our own sphere of influence we may not be people of peace. Today we want to bow our knees in the presence of the Prince of Peace. We want to commit ourselves to loving relationships with others and certainly with those who we call our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Stop Quarreling

Focal Text

James 4:1-12

Background

James 4:1-12

Main Idea

To live in harmony with others, including in the church, seek God's way of life wholeheartedly rather than seeking to fulfill your selfish desires.

Questions to Explore

Where do conflicts come from? How can they be prevented?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide on actions to take to live in greater harmony with other people.

Introduction to your personal study:

It would be good for you as the leader of this study to examine your own self. What selfish desires contribute to disharmony in your family, church group or community.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

James 4: 1-2

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

It is so sad when a family quarrels about the estate of their deceased parents. The parents may not have left a will assuming that their children will evenly divide the property. Unfortunately the heirs want something but don't get it. It may be a larger sum of money, but it could also be something of sentimental value rather than monetary value – the mother's wedding band or grandmother's old-fashioned vase.

Churches also quarrel about the music to be sung; the literature to be used; the discipline to be given to those who transgress and whether or not children stay in the worship service or have their own worship service. Every member may feel that his or her point of view is legitimate -they want something but don't get it.

We have ***desires that battle within us***. Paul refers to his own struggle in Romans 7:15-20; 24-25.

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!

There is a struggle within us. We are sinners saved by grace. But we still desire many things we desired before our salvation. We must look to Jesus Christ our Lord to empower us to overcome these desires.

James uses very strong language when he says ***You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want***. James most likely means that we kill relationships with our wrong attitudes. Our covetousness kills the spirit of the church; it kills the positive testimony to young people and to people outside of the church. Certainly, the joy of ministry has been killed for some pastors who have dealt with ongoing conflict in their congregations.

Home churches are not exempt. Even though the group is small, there will still be a variety of opinions. Like a family, intimate groups can hurt one another when someone or various people want something but don't get it.

In 1988 **All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten** by Robert Fulghum was published. It was read by many people and in 2004 the 15th anniversary edition was published. People responded to the everyday ways in which we learn to get along which should be learned by all of us at very young age. These include sharing, being kind to one another, cleaning up after ourselves, saying "sorry" when we hurt somebody, and enjoying play and work.

People responded to the book because the simple truths learned or not learned at an early age are so important for all of life. If these are truths which four and five year olds can and do learn, why is it so hard for us as adults to practice them?

Sharing leadership is one of the core values of home church. No one is the most important person; no one makes all of the decisions. If someone presumes to do so, the whole church will suffer.

Adults have a very difficult time saying "I'm sorry". But when we say unkind things or have hurt someone in our family or church, we need to say "I'm sorry". When we have insisted on our own point of view and put someone down, we need to say "I'm sorry". We also may need to do something positive to restore the relationship with or the reputation of the person or persons we have damaged. Sometimes, even saying "I'm sorry" may not be enough. Sometimes the guilt that we feel from our conscience is a gift from God to urge us on—through acceptance and repentance—and toward restoration.

You do not have, because you do not ask God. James says that our problem is basically a spiritual problem. We insist on our own way because we do not have faith to allow God to work. We feel responsible for making thing go the way we think is best because we cannot see how God could overcome the obstacles which are so obvious to us. We cannot believe that God can change circumstances or hearts. We do not ask God to help us resolve difficulties; we do not ask that His will be done.

James 4: 3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your own pleasures.

James continues to speak to the spiritual problem of failing to ask God to resolve our problems. Here he indicates that our prayers may be that we get our own way rather than asking that His will be done. We fail to ask that He bless those with whom we have disagreements. We are still focused on getting what we want. Our motives are not Godly; we simply want our own way.

James addresses two problems in the prayer life of selfish people. The first is prayerlessness and the second is selfish praying. Many people simply do not pray. They have no real relationship with God so they see no need for regular communication with Him. If they pray, it is in emergency situations or formal worship services. Those prayers are basically selfish prayers aimed at getting God to give them what they want.

It is good us to remember at this point that James was addressing the church; these are people who should have a meaningful prayer life.

James 4: 4

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

James uses a common picture of spiritual unfaithfulness when he speaks to **adulterous people**. "The Bible uses marriage to describe the relation of God to His people (Isa. 54:1-6; Jer. 2:2; Eph. 5:22-32). Unfaithfulness to God is spiritual adultery (Jer. 3:20; Hos. 2: 5,7)" **Broadman Comments 1995-96**, Nashville, Broadman & Holman Publishers, page 331).

The world here does not describe nature or the world of people for whom Christ died. James was writing of the world of selfishness, strife, and sinful behaviour. The world refers to institutions, cultures, governments, and past times which organize themselves with no reference to God.

We must be careful here not to equate the world with everything with which we are not in agreement. Governments may not be related to organized religion, but government servants may actively seek God's will in their lives and act as best they understand that will. Even so, they may make decisions which we do not feel are best. We must not automatically assume they are "enemies of God".

We live in a world where cultural values are changing and shifting. Honest believers on both sides of some ethical issues struggle to understand God's will. It would be easy for strife and quarreling to erupt. Here is where and when we must ask God for His guidance and intervention.

Generally, however, we can easily identify "the world". We generally know when movies, TV shows, attitudes, and actions are worldly. Unfortunately, we still may struggle to distance ourselves from those things which truly are "enemies of God".

"Friendship with the world is an egocentric, self-indulging, parasitic life—indifferent to the consequence of such a life on oneself or on others. It is to espouse the accumulations of wealth, of prestige, and of power to domineer over others as the standard of success (cf. Luke 12: 16-17; 22: 24-25)" (**The Interpreter's Bible**, Volume 12; New York: Abingdon Press, 1957 page 55).

James 4: 5-6

Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

This statement in verse 5 is not an actual quote from the Bible, but an expression of an overall teaching. **The Message** has translated this verse *And do you suppose that God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely jealous lover." And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you'll find. It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble."*

Jealousy can, of course, be a very negative emotion when fueled by a sense of inferiority and/or a need to control the loved one. But it is a normal reaction when a legitimate love relationship is threatened. God loves us and he is jealous of our attraction to the things of the world. Barclay says there are two possible translations of verse 5 "which in the end give much the same sense. "He, (that is, God) jealously yearns for the devotion of the spirit which He has made to dwell with us," or The Spirit which God has made to dwell within us jealously yearns for the full devotion of our hearts. In either case the meaning is that God is the jealous lover, who will brook no rival, and who will share the human heart with no other love". (Barclay, Wm. **The Daily Study Bible: James**, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, page 122).

There are many Old Testament references to the jealousy of God – Deuteronomy 32:16; 21; Exodus 20:5, 34:14; Zechariah 8:2. "The idea is that God loves men with such a passion that He cannot bear any rival love within the hearts of men" (Barclay, page 123).

In verse 6 James quotes Proverbs 3:34 to illustrate his point that God will give grace to those who are humble enough to ask for it. Humble people know they are dependent on God and his grace. Proud people are not looking for God's grace.

James 4: 7-10

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

A decision of the will is involved. Submit to God and resist the devil. Choices must be made. God is always ready to come near to the one who seeks him. In fact, God is seeking those who will submit.

Submit is not a popular word. We like to see ourselves as competent and, able to handle almost any situation. We hate giving in to anyone—even God. But submitting to God means that God will lift us up to be all that He intended for us to be.

Submitting to God means real repentance for sin. Grieving for past sin and putting away the false pleasures of the past is involved. That does not mean we are destined for a life of doom and gloom. We are lifted up by God into a whole new experience of joy and fulfillment.

James has been talking to believers. He continues to talk to believers. The Christian life is a journey of submission and learning. It is a continual asking for forgiveness from sin even as we ask for our daily needs. And we are continually learning what it means to be lifted up and sustained and guided by God.

James 4: 11-12

Brothers do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?

James has basically returned to the theme of quarrelling with others. Quarrels often come because someone criticizes or judges another. Strong disagreements reflect this judgmental attitude.

The verb used here usually means to speak evil of someone in that person's absence, to criticize, to insult, to slander someone when he is not there to defend himself. "People are slow to realize that there are few sins which the Bible so unsparingly condemns as the sin of irresponsible and malicious gossip" (Barclay, page 131).

To slander another is a breach of the law of God. The royal law which we examined in James 2:8 is that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. It is also taking upon ourselves "...the prerogative of God. To speak evil of our neighbour, to criticize, slander and insult neighbour, is, in fact, to pass judgment upon him. And no human being has any right to judge any other human being; the right of judgment belongs to God and to God alone" (Barclay, page 131).

This leads us back to understanding that our spiritual problem is our failure to leave judgment in the hands of God. We are to pray – we do not have because we do not ask God.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

To help the church decide on actions to take to live in greater harmony with other people.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Stop Quarreling

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

James 4:1-12

Background

James 4:1-12

Main Idea

To live in harmony with others, including in the church, seek God's way of life wholeheartedly rather than seeking to fulfill your selfish desires.

Questions to Explore

Where do conflicts come from? How can they be prevented?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide on actions to take to live in greater harmony with other people.

Connect with Life:

On a white board or large piece of paper have participants write a teaching they remember their parents, grandparents or other caregiver giving them regularly. (These could be things like “share your toys”, “brush your teeth before you go to bed”, “don’t talk back to your mom”).

Talk about how these early teachings sometimes still come to our minds.

Share this comment: We expect children to play nicely together. But adults still have trouble getting along. James has some strong words to say to us.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read James 4: 1-3.

Inquire: What is the root cause of fights and quarrels? (We want something we can't have).

Ask: What are some of the things that cause quarrels in a home situation?

Then ask: What are some of the things that cause disagreements in a church situation?

Continue by asking: Are home churches exempt from the possibility of disagreements?

Discuss with the group: Did James mean that church members actually kill one another? (No).

Continue: If not, what is killed when quarrels erupt in the church? (Unity, fellowship, positive influence on children and teens; witness in the community).

Inquire: What are some basic truths about getting along with others that we learned at an early age? (Refer to white board comments).

Consider with the group: Why is saying "I'm sorry" so hard for adults?

Contrast the prayer which God can always answer with selfish prayer. (God can always answer "Thy will be done". We might pray that we get our way; we might pray that the one with whom we disagree leaves the church).

Comment: However, when we are disagreeing with others, we may not pray at all!

Tell the group: Paul speaks about the inner conflict that is common to all of us in Romans 7:15-20; 24-25.

Read the passage or ask someone in the group to read the passage.

Have someone read James 4:4.

Explain: James is talking about spiritual adultery or unfaithfulness.

Ask: What is meant by "the world" in this passage? (Those things which exist with no reference to God).

Have someone read James 4: 5-6.

Say: The envy or jealousy of God refers to his immense love for us and his grief when we fail to give Him the full devotion of our hearts. God loves men with such a passion that He cannot bear any rival love within the hearts of men.

Have someone read James 4: 7-10.

Ask for comments about the phrase **Submit yourselves to God.** Be sure to emphasize that a decision of the will is involved.

Add: Along with the decision of the will is a need for real repentance which should involve true grief on our part – ***grieve, mourn and wail.***

Have someone read James 4: 11-12.

Urge the group to discuss this question: What do you see to be the difference between the judgment which is condemned here and the need to use discernment in making many decisions about our relationships to others.

Inquire: What is slander? (Encourage the group to understand that slander is often talk about a person behind their backs).

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Finally, leave the group with this thought: This leads us back to understanding that our spiritual problem is our failure to leave judgment in the hands of God. We are to pray – we do not have because we do not ask God.

Ask the group this: In view of our study and these final thoughts, what should we pray for as we close this **Bible Study Time?**

Ask someone to close the study in prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Stop Quarreling **James 4:1-12**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Rules, Rules, and More Rules

Imagine that you are teaching a group of four and five year olds. Various incidents have occurred which indicate that some rules need to be established for the group. You have decided to include the children in deciding what the rules should be. Make a list of rules which both you and the children would think would be appropriate.

Look at your list of rules. What things would apply to you as a teenager? What things would still be necessary for adults to live in harmony?

One major difference about rules for children and those for teens and adults is that children make judgments based on whether the behaviour is punished or rewarded. Teens and adults should have internalized rules so that adherence to the good behaviour is not dependent on whether it is rewarded or punished.

Unfortunately, that is not always true. James tells us that our desires battle within us and lead us to wrong behaviour. He tells that we must ask God to help us in this struggle to live righteously.

Don't be surprised when the four and five year olds don't always obey the rules!

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Stop Quarreling***
James 4:1-12**Beginning the Service:**

Sing one or both of the following:

Refiner's Fire, *The Worship Hymnal* # 592; CCLI # 426298

Lord, Be Glorified, *The Worship Hymnal* # 542; CCLI # 26368

If you have youth in your group, ask two of them to read the following Scripture from Romans 11: 33-36. If you do not have youth, assign the passage to two adults.

First reader:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
And his paths beyond tracing out!

Second reader:

Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?

First reader:

Who has ever given to God,
That God should repay him?

Both together:

For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Questioning, wondering, searching, coping, struggling, surviving and dying – the 13 million people of Dhaka, Bangladesh are suffocating without hope. Dhaka is a concrete jungle in one of the most overpopulated and impoverished countries in the world. Even in the still of the early morning, the silence is broken by hundreds of mosques blaring out their call to prayer to all who slumber. The people of Dhaka believe God is far from them, an unseen force to be feared and whose impending judgment colors every aspect of their lives. May Dhaka rise out of the darkness and into His light. May the harvest be ripe and the workers be plentiful, for God's glory.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Cleanse and Purify James 4: 8

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Another version states:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (New American Standard Bible)

There are four elements in the concept of cleansing in the Bible. It is a cleansing of the lips, the hands, heart, and the mind. The "ethical demand of the Bible is that a man's words and deeds and emotions and thoughts should all be cleansed. Inwardly and outwardly a man must be clean, for only the pure in heart shall see God" (Barclay, page 127).

Isaiah had a vision of God during which he responded to the call of the Lord. ***Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send Me!"*** Isaiah 6: 8.

Prior to this however, Isaiah had confessed his sin and received cleansing. This dramatic incident is recorded in Isaiah 6: 5-7 ***"Woe is me!" I cried. "I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty. Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it***

©2001-2010, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. www.homechurchonline.com
Stop Quarreling – 12-32-04-en

18

Unless otherwise noted, scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

he touched my mouth and said, “See this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

In studying James, Chapter 3, we were made aware of the power of the tongue for good and for evil. Isaiah, a man of God, said he was a man of unclean lips and lived among a people of unclean lips. Like all of us, Isaiah must have said things that were hurtful to others. He realized his sinfulness in that and probably in other areas when in the vision he heard the seraphs calling to one another:

***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
The whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3***

In the face of the holiness of God, he sought and received cleansing of his lips. Then he was a worthy one to be called of God and to respond to God.

Psalms 24:3-5 address both the need for clean hands and the need for a pure heart. The psalmist answered his own question ***Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior.*** We must have cleansing of hands and heart if we are to be in the presence of a holy God and receive his blessing. The things we do and the motivations for doing them must be holy.

The psalmist prays in Psalm 19: 14

***May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,
O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.***

In Psalm 51: 10 he asks

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Finally, we are to have a cleansing of our thoughts. The passage in James 4:8 speaks of the need for the double-minded person to grieve, mourn, and wail. True repentance must occur. Our thoughts are difficult to control. We may think unkind thoughts; we may think sensual thoughts; we may think thoughts of discouragement and fear in the dark of the night. We may wish to turn our thoughts off and cannot do so. The double-minded person does not repent of evil thoughts and desires but presents a picture of moral rightness to the world. Of course, we will not share all of our private thoughts with others. But we need to ask God to give us control over unclean thoughts, negative and worrisome thoughts. We need the steadfast spirit for which the Psalmist longed.

During the trial of Jesus prior to his crucifixion, Peter denied knowing Jesus three different times. Luke 22: 60-62 says ***Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you are talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned***

and looked straight at Peter. The Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

There is no doubt that Peter grieved, mourned, and wailed. He realized that he had betrayed the Lord Jesus with his mouth, with his heart, with his actions and even with his mind. His mind was so filled with fear that he forgot the warning Jesus had given him earlier.

What we speak and do is influenced by what we think and feel. These are not four separate things. Isaiah was repenting of sin as it was expressed in all of his life. We may fool others and even ourselves for a while that our motivations are pure when they are not. We may pretend to love when our hearts are hard and cold. We may excuse harsh words as “plain speaking” or “good advice”, but ultimately if we want to understand what it is to fellowship with a holy God we must, like Isaiah proclaim **“Woe is me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”**

The wonderful truth is ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*** (1 John 1:9). Later, Peter saw the empty tomb, ate breakfast with Jesus by the Sea of Tiberius, and was told to feed the sheep. Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost when three thousand people were baptized. True repentance brings forgiveness and great opportunities for service.

Call to Commitment:

Pray for a cleansing of lips, hands, heart and mind and thank God for his promise of forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We Are an Offering, *The Worship Hymnal* #547; CCLI # 16220

Concluding the Service:

If you have youth in your group, assign two of them to read the following Scripture from Romans 11:33-36. If you do not have youth, assign the passage to two adults.

The copies for use by the readers are found on the final page of this session.

First reader:

***Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
And his paths beyond tracing out!***

Second reader:

©2001-2010, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. www.homechurchonline.com
Stop Quarreling – 12-32-04-en

Unless otherwise noted, scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

***Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?***

First reader:

***Who has ever given to God,
That God should repay him?***

Both together:

***For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen***

If you have youth in your group, as two of them to read the following Scripture from Romans 11:33-36. If you do not have youth, assign the passage to two adults.

First reader:

***Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
And his paths beyond tracing out!***

Second reader:

***Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?***

First reader:

***Who has ever given to God,
That God should repay him?***

Both together:

***For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen***

++++++(Cut here)++++++

First reader:

***Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
And his paths beyond tracing out!***

Second reader:

***Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?***

First reader:

***Who has ever given to God,
That God should repay him?***

Both together:

***For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen***