



Paul concludes this section of his letter by again highlighting some of the teaching that Jesus has already shared. Again, in Matthew 5, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.”

A fundamental assertion of the Christian faith is that evil will be overcome by the good. We struggle to believe that at times. Holding that belief requires us to trust in God and God’s authority over all creation. Sometimes it’s easier to trust in what we can accomplish rather than what God has promised to do.

Do you believe that evil will be overcome by the good? How might your trust in God enable you to honor God in your interactions with others?

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GPS for Families

GrowPrayStudy.org/family

We should teach our children their responsibility as a citizen just as we should teach them math and how to read. Kids will see politics played out on TV and radio, and they will hear you discussing it with others. They will glean some from observations.

However, if you want to help children truly understand how our government is set up — what “conservative” and “liberal” mean and the power of our vote — include them in your conversations. This is not only a great way to help them understand the system but also a way to demonstrate how we should interact with others on these issues. Discuss your views on politicians, important issues and the workings of government. Allow them to ask questions, come up with their own solutions and offer ideas on how to vote. Study the founding fathers and documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights together. Research candidates and their views.

Teach them this is an area where they do not have to agree with you as their parents. This is hard for us sometimes, but it’s important that they understand they can have their own point of view.

Through all of your discussions, remind them that God calls us to love others whether we agree with them or not. Demonstrate how to have a loving conversation when there are differences of opinion. And pray as a family about your choices for elections.

MESSAGE “There’s a Reason We Don’t Talk About this Stuff . . .”

SCRIPTURE James 1:19-25

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Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:

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PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, we live in your world. Your word reminds us that you have called us to be “the light” in this world and “the salt of the earth.” In spite of our differences and in the midst of our struggles, help us to be living witnesses of your grace and love. We pray today, Lord, for your kingdom to come into our lives that we may be used to bring your kingdom into the world. AMEN.

At times, the political process seems perfectly designed to polarize and cause division in our country and within our own relationships. Many of us try to avoid the subject all together because of how heated and passionate exchanges surrounding political issues can become. Over the next three weeks we want to wrestle with the question, “Is there a better way?” Our reading today from the book of James will be our guide as we address this question.

What are the three specific recommendations that James offers in our reading for today? What do you think James means by the statement “be quick to listen”? Can you think of someone in your life who lives out these instructions? How might our commitment to being “quick to listen” help us to be “slow to become angry”?

In what way do these words from James challenge you today?

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For the next four days we turn to Paul’s words from Romans 12. This chapter opens with Paul writing, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship.” With these few words, Paul argues that the fundamental purpose of the life of faith is to live in a way that brings honor and glory to God.

Love is at the center of the Christian life because love honors God. John writes, “We love because God first loved us.” How might the call to love guide us when we find ourselves in conflict?

What do you think Paul means when he says “love must be sincere”? What challenges the sincerity of your love? What does it look like to “cling to good”?

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Zeal is one thing that never seems to be lacking whenever it comes to coverage from the campaign trail. Candidates and their representatives will fill the air waves over the next 10 months as they lobby for votes and the fervor and energy continues to grow towards Election Day. Paul speaks of a different kind of passion as he describes the “spiritual fervor” that allows us to “be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

If two or three people who knew you best were asked to describe the level of passion you have about your relationship with God, what would you want them to say? What would they actually say? How might you close the gap between your hope and your current reality?

What insight do the verses provide on how you might “keep your spiritual fervor” at the level you want it to be?

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The radical teaching that Paul shares here originates in Jesus’ teaching. In the fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” Regardless of circumstance, our calling remains the same. Be a blessing to others.

In our reflection from Tuesday, we noted that “love is at the center of the Christian life because love honors God.” Why do you think God seems to care so deeply about our relationships with others?

Paul notes in the final verse that sometimes, despite our best efforts, peace remains beyond our grasp. Have you ever failed in your pursuit of peace? What might these verses tell us about how to handle that experience?

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