



DO NOT LIFE GROUP MATERIAL

September 8-29, 2019



Do Not Bite & Devour One Another

Week 1

September 8

Scriptures: Galatians 5:15, 1st Corinthians 3:1-4, Matthew 12:33-37

When I was a young and impressionable child, I was almost certain my life would end prematurely by one of a myriad of freak accidents that frequently occupied my mind. Looking back, most all those crazy ideas came to me from TV shows and movies. After seeing *The Princess Bride* for the first time, I was terrified for months I'd be walking through our woods in southern Indiana and be lost forever to a random patch of quicksand (thankfully I was old enough not to be scared of an ROUS infestation...if you don't get that reference, leave your life group right now, go home, and watch that movie!) Once my fear of quicksand abated (mostly) I moved on to another fantastical fear that, to be quite honest, I'm surprised more folks haven't died from, given how likely I once believed it to be. I think I was first introduced to this fear from a random nature show about the dangers of the Amazon River wilderness (some of you already know where I'm going, cause you're getting anxious too)! When I first saw the toothy-blood-churning-flesh-ripping-terror-inducing feeding frenzy of a shoal of red-bellied piranhas, I was terrified of every dark body of water I passed (I got bit on the toe by a bluegill at my in-laws place this summer and immediately remembered all those poor pre-teens who I'm still half-certain have been piranha bait over the centuries)!

I'm not sure what it is about that blood-thirsty little fish that worried me so much. It might be their razor-sharp teeth, or their lightning speed, but more than likely, it's the fact they are prone to attack in such devastating numbers they can bite and devour their way through pretty much anything they choose...and did you know when piranhas get hungry enough, they will commonly turn on and bite each other! I wonder if the apostle Paul was thinking of those little nasties, or something similar, when he penned these words to the early church in the region of Galatia: ***"If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."*** – ***Galatians 5:15***

Whether Paul was picturing those little freshwater devils attacking each other while writing the letter of Galatians or not, he certainly paints a vivid word picture when he warns the early church to be careful of the way they speak to one another. I'm sure Paul was well acquainted with the damage that could be done to a reputation, a friendship, or a ministry by the biting words of others in the Family of God. He has a similar warning for the church in Corinth when they continue to fight over which evangelist (Paul or Apollos) to follow in **1st Corinthians 3:1-4**. Not only does he warn them, but he calls them out as spiritual babies! For Paul, a strong test for whether the church (both in the world and here at C3) is growing in her faith is whether her members are biting and devouring each other. Our faith determines our actions, yes, but as Jesus said, it is ***"out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."*** (**Matthew 12:34**) The way we speak to our brothers and sisters in the Family of God shows whether or not our hearts are truly yielded to Christ...whether or not we are truly part of the Family.



So, what about you? What do your words to and about others speak about your heart...about your place in the Family? That's a question we don't often like to ask in the Church, and probably because we don't often like the answer. However, it is a question we MUST contend with. Jesus finished that little section about the overflow of the heart with these words: ***"...I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned."*** I'm so grateful for the grace of Christ when I read those bold words. But, far from simply celebrating the grace, it HAS to prompt me toward living differently, speaking differently, and choosing never to bite and devour my brothers and sisters.

Discussion Questions:

- What were some of your irrational fears as a child, or now?!
- Have you ever been on the receiving end of biting and devouring words in the Church? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?
- Why do you think this problem can be so pervasive in the Church?
- What are some proactive ways we, as the Body of Christ, can practice NOT biting and devouring one another?



Do Not Lie to One Another

Week 2

September 15

Scriptures: Colossians 3:1-17, Ephesians 4:22-25, Acts 5:1-11, Proverbs 6:16-19

Anyone who has ever had the misfortune of having to spend a great deal of time with someone who struggles with that most basic of common courtesies, telling the truth, knows how maddening it can be. Few things will turn us off to a relationship more quickly than trying to walk through life with someone who is always trying to twist the facts to make themselves appear better than they truly are. And, when you think about it, that's really the universal basis behind most lies...most all are an attempt to recreate the facts of a given situation to make the liar appear better than the truth would say.

- A child lies about a mess on the floor because, if the truth were known, they'd be cleaning it up and have to admit a failure
- A spouse lies about spending too much money because, if the truth were known, they'd be ashamed and have to admit a failure
- A student cheats on a paper and lies to cover it up because, if the truth were known, they'd be given a zero and have to admit a failure

The examples are endless and the sad truth is, we've become increasingly good as a society at living in half-truths and lies. What used to be considered morally reprehensible has now become acceptable and almost encouraged in a secular humanist society where the only moral compass is making much of oneself.

The apostle Paul understood how pervasive this issue was when he penned his letter to the Colossian church. In chapter 3, right in the midst of a section most Bibles entitle "Rules for Holy Living," he lays down this command: ***Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)*** I actually like how the King James version refers to the old and new self as "*the old man with his deeds,*" and "*the new man.*" It's as if Paul is reminding the people the old version of themselves was the version that sought to speak half-truths and lies in order to appear better than they were. But, the new version of themselves, the "*new man,*" is who they are being created to be in Christ...and in Christ, WE SPEAK TRUTH. It's the same message Paul has for the church in Ephesus over in ***Ephesians 4:22-25*** (It's really good too, so your Life Group should read it together!).

If ever there was a place to live in truth, it's in the Church. We are commanded to be a Body that is open and willing to share, not just our successes, but also our failures and weaknesses. We're unable to Bear With One Another, Forgive One Another, Encourage One Another, Pray For One Another, Be Devoted To One Another, and all the other One Anothers if we're not willing to have the common Christian decency to NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER!



So, what about you? Have you been living in truth? Or is your life defined by half-truths and lies to make yourself appear just a little bit better? The truth is...the TRUTH is, Jesus knows everything anyway, and if you're in Him, He's already forgiven you. So, if the Head of the Body knows the truth about you, and loves you just the same, why not let the rest of the Body live that way too? Not so you can be judged, but so you can be loved, cared for, and known for who you truly are. And you wanna know something fun? The person you truly are, deep down inside that you try to keep hidden, well, Jesus loves that person a whole lot. And I'll bet the rest of the Body would too!

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever gotten hurt by the deceit of someone else? If so, what did that do to your relationship with that individual? (If the source of your hurt is in this room, don't share the story, but go, show them their fault [*Matthew 18:15*], extend your forgiveness [*Matthew 6:14-15*], and let satan lose all over the place!)
- Have you ever gotten caught up in telling a lie yourself? What was the outcome?
- Read ***Colossians 3:1-17***: How do you think the church here at C3 is doing in our efforts toward holy living? How about you, personally?
- Read ***Acts 5:1-11***: What does this frankly terrifying story tell us about how seriously God takes lying in His family?
- Read ***Proverbs 6:16-19***: Of all the offenses Solomon tells us the Lord hates and detests, what is the only one he bothers to mention twice? What should that tell us about how we are to live together in the Body of Christ?
- What are some steps you can put in place in your own life to keep living in TRUTH every day?



Do Not Provoke & Envy One Another

Week 3

September 22

Scriptures: Galatians 5:25-26; James 3:13-16; James 4:1-7

Ever spent time around a “bad kid?” You know, the kind of kid that always seems to be in the middle of every fight, every disruption and conflict? It’s been my experience that a little digging into the life of the “bad kid” always shows there is more to the story. Almost every outburst and destructive act has something that preceded it. There’s always something behind the behavior that caused it in the first place. And to make any progress toward reforming the “bad kid,” you’ve got to address the issue behind the issue. Our conversation today is in the exact same vein. The apostle Paul tells the Galatian church not to **provoke and envy each other**, BUT he says those words just after naming the issue behind the issue that is truly the issue. Take a look: ***Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another. Galatians 5:25-26*** (BSB)

In the same breath that he commands the members of the church in Galatia not to provoke and envy one another, Paul also highlights what will cause those two problems in the first place – conceit. I like the way the NASB translates it: ***Let us not become BOASTFUL, provoking one another, envying one another.***

Clearly the issue in the early church of provoking and envying the other members of the Body had as its root an arrogant and boastful spirit. If you’ll remember back to the very outset of our study of the One Anothers, we pointed out, in order to get ANY of them right, we had to get the first one right: ***Submit to one another out of reference for Christ. Ephesians 5:21*** If we aren’t willing to put others ahead of ourselves, to regard other members of the family as worthy of honor and more important than ourselves, then none of the rest of the One Anothers will work. And here Paul is highlighting that same truth. The issue behind all the provocation, the envy, the fighting and the discord is an unwillingness to put other members of the Family of God above ourselves.

And what’s true back then is still true today. If you could supernaturally look into the hearts and minds of every person in this building who has animosity, discord, or envy in their hearts toward anyone else in the building, guess what, I GUARANTEE the root behind it would be an arrogant, boastful, prideful spirit (and if you’ve got any of those same feelings toward others, then I guarantee the same for you).



Paul knew a conceited and arrogant heart would only lead to jealousy, unhealthy competition, disunity, and eventually ruin in the Family of God. James, the brother of Jesus, understood the same idea when he wrote these words in his letter: ***But where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*** James 3:16 Wow, that pretty much covers it all. If we are focused on provoking and envying one another, it won't be long until every...other...evil...practice shows up as well. And the issue behind the issue always has been and always will be an arrogant, boastful, conceited heart. So, here's an idea: Let's Not Do That! Let's listen to the words of Peter when he says: ***Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.*** 1st Peter 2:1 And let's show a lost and broken world what it truly means to be the Family of God!

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think it is so easy to sin regarding envy?
- Read James 4:1-7: What does James give as the antidote for fights, quarrels and envy?
- What do you think are some of the most common reasons we are prone to provoke others? To envy others?
- Have you been guilty of provoking or envying someone? What do you need to do to make that right?
- Read Hebrews 10:24: How might the instructions here be a good alternative to provocation and envy?
- Read Galatians 5:22-26: Do you think Paul intended for those verses to all be together in one thought? What could he have been saying to the Church about conceit, provocation, and envy if he intended those verses all as one thought?



Do Not Judge One Another

Week 4

September 29

“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.” Romans 14:13

Scriptures: Romans 14:1-15:2, 1st Corinthians 8:1-13, Matthew 7:1-5

I know what follows might not be the most exciting way to start our life group discussion today, but in order to really appreciate the depth of what Paul is saying here to the church in Rome, we need to know a bit about the Greek language in which this was originally written, so put your brains on! Paul expertly uses the same Greek verb (*krinō*) in two different places in this verse above as a play on words our English translations don't usually get. In the first use, *krinō* carries the idea of CONDEMNATION and JUDGMENT (***...let us stop passing judgment...***), but in the next phrase that same word, *krinō*, simply means to “make a decision or judgment” (***... make up your mind...***).

Paul is using the same word to mean two very different things (ex. “*That national anthem singer was off pitch before the pitcher even threw the first pitch.” ...or... “*That fly was supa fly while I watched it fly by!*” ...okay, I'm done.)*

If we could translate that Greek word, *krinō*, the same way in both instances, it might read something like this: ***Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another, but let us use our best judgment to keep our brother or sister from stumbling.***

I think that is really the heart of what Paul was trying to say. This section in Romans is about the freedom we have in Christ to live out from under the restrictions of the Old Testament law, but at the same time, our obligation not to cause someone else to stumble if they aren't as liberated in Christ as we are yet. The big issue they were dealing with was specific foods generally used in pagan sacrificial rituals. Some people, like Paul, could easily see the food wasn't the issue, but the pagan ritual itself...AND...since food sacrificed to a false-little g-no real power-made up god didn't change it's nature after the ritual, it could be eaten by anyone. However, there were others so accustomed to certain foods being used for evil pagan purposes they should never eat those foods because it would have gone against their consciences. (See **1st Corinthians 8:1-13**) Paul is here telling the people who have no issues with food not to pass judgment on those who do. Rather, those who have no issues are to do whatever they can to live in peace, harmony and unity with those who do...to ***“use their best judgment to not put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”***



And that lesson is just as relevant to us in the Body of Christ today as it was back then. We're called, in deference to the first One Another ("**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**"), to always seek the interests and well-being of other members of the Family above our own. If some behavior or action of ours is regarded as harmful by others, then we're commanded not to engage in that behavior or action out of respect for them and reverence for Christ. Paul says in 1st Corinthians 8:12 that if we do sin against other Family members in this way, we "**wound their weak conscience,**" and "**sin against Christ.**" Ouch. That seems like a pretty high price to pay just to hang on to our own stubborn judgmental attitudes.

So, let's resolve to live a different way, so we don't weigh others down and we can show them the True Way!

Discussion Questions:

- Do you feel like the issue of judging one another is a big deal in the Church? Why or why not?
- Paul uses food as an example from their cultural situation. Can you think of some parallels for this teaching in our modern culture?
- Can you think of an example from your own life where you've been judged for your convictions on disputable matters (**Romans 14:1**)? What about a time you've been guilty of passing judgment on others?
- What might be some effective alternatives to looking down our noses and passing judgment on others?
- Is there anyone in your life with whom you need to reconcile based upon our study today?