

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

September 1-2

Converting our Careers

By Rev. Keith Herron

What Is This?

This brief guide is intended for use individually, or in small groups. It's your chance to dive deeper into the issues raised in the weekend sermon and to connect a Biblical story with your daily life.

Revisit the Text

James 1:17-27; <https://bit.ly/2NgpoCq>

Big Ideas Raised

- Thus, we begin today a series of sermons from James, the New Testament book that most of the early church questioned and belittled before accepting as Scripture. The book of James bounced around on the fringes of acceptability for several centuries before it was finally admitted into the canon of Scripture.
- The problem with James is its simplicity. We want words that ring with the holy sound of someone adept at writing Scripture. We want flowery pronouncements and long discourses on sacred issues. James is blunt and doesn't mince words. The words of James are simple and challenging and leave little room for confusion. Put simply, James is a Bible for bottom-line believers. It's a hard-hitting word about practical Christian living. So how does James have anything to do with Labor Day?
- Many call the work we do our vocation, an idea that comes from the Latin word, *vocare*, meaning "to call." Frederick Buechner claims we know our calling in the world to the work we do as (a.) the work we need most to do and (b.) the work the world needs us to do. To put it in other words, he says, "The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." The reality is we must find ways to merge our faith-world with our work-world.

Questions Meant to Dig Deeper

- "When we read these words and seek to incorporate them into our daily experience, we realize we are hearing from someone who was pragmatic to the core and understood that the challenge of living the Christian faith was what Søren Kierkegaard called "a long obedience in the same direction." This is Kierkegaard's notion of simplicity so the believer can will one thing over and over again as an act of spiritual direction." The number of things we can will over and over again would be necessarily few. What "long obedience in the same direction" could you claim?
- "In order to live the Christian life in the world where we live and work, we are given practical advice: You must understand this, my beloved: Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness (James 1:19-21, NRSV)." Are you able to grow in these qualities?

Revisit the Sermon

For a recording or a manuscript of this weekend's sermon, please visit:

<https://www.stlucasucc.org/sermons-resources>

¹ Frederick Buechner, "Vocation," *Wishful Thinking, A Theological ABC*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973, 95