

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Introduction

Have you ever opened your Bible and asked the following questions:

- * What does this passage really mean?
- * How does it apply to my life?
- * Why does some of the Bible seem irrelevant?
- * What do these ancient cultures and traditions have to do with today?
- * I love God; why can't I understand what He is saying to me through His Word?

Many Christians do not read the Bible on a regular basis. Why? Because in the pressures of daily living they cannot find a connection between the timeless principles of Scripture and the ever present problems of day by day living. God urges us to apply His Word to our lives, and to show how to put into practice what we have learned. Applying God's Word is a vital part of one's relationship with God and is the evidence that we are obeying Him. As we spend the next several months, studying God's Word, praying and fellowshiping together in our Home Groups, be prepared for Him to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

The New Testament falls into various sections, each dealing with specific themes. A last section, introduced by the book of Hebrews, is concerned with the single theme of faith. The whole drive of these letters of the New Testament is to explain to us what faith is and how it works, and each letter makes its unique contribution to that theme.

James is the second book, in this section that deals with faith. This letter is of unique and particular significance to us because it comes from the one who probably knew more about the Lord Jesus than any other human being.

James, the brother of our Lord, was raised in the same home in Nazareth, grew up with the Lord Jesus, saw him through all those silent years of which we have no record, and joined with his three other brothers (Joseph, Simon, and Judas) in opposition to the Lord Jesus during the early days of his ministry. James was finally converted by the resurrection of the Lord. The Apostle Paul tells us that after the resurrection, the Lord appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7).

Many of us would give a lot to know what happened during that time when James had looked upon Jesus as nothing more than his brother. He was one who had grave doubts that Jesus was indeed the Son of God as he claimed. In fact, once he had regarded him as a madman, and came with his mother and brothers to have him locked up, or at least go home with them and get him out of the public view. But finally, by the resurrection, he was convinced that here indeed was God manifest in the flesh "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1:14), and James, too, saw "*his glory as of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,*" (John 1:14)

So here we have the book of James being a compact, hard-hitting letter about practicing the faith. It reads like a collection of sermons. In fact, except for a brief introduction, it bears none of the traits of an ancient letter. Each of its five chapters are packed with pointed illustrations and reminders designed to motivate the wills and hearts of relatively prosperous believers. James wanted them to grasp a truth taught by Jesus: "*A tree is known by its fruit*" (Matt. 12:33; compare James 1:9–11, 3:12–18; 5:7–8, 17–18). For James, religion is not about church membership, financial contributions, or even teaching in the Sunday school. The acid test of true religion is doing the truth, not just hearing it or speaking it.

Personality Profile “James”

Home: Probably Nazareth.

Family: His father was Joseph; his mother was Mary; his older brother was Jesus; younger brothers were Joses, Judas, and Simon; he had sisters whom Scripture does not name.

Occupation: Unknown, but since his father and Jesus were carpenters, he may have been a carpenter, too.

Best known today for: Leading the church at Jerusalem and writing the book of James.

Author and Setting

The author of this letter identifies himself as James (James 1:1), but at least five men in the New Testament were known by that name. James the brother of Jesus has traditionally been viewed as the author. James was probably the oldest of Jesus' four younger brothers (Mark 6:3). Apparently he was at first skeptical about his brother's claims and ministry (Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21; John 7:5). But after meeting the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:7), he became a strong believer and was numbered among the apostles. He oversaw the church at Jerusalem, and helped resolve the dispute over Gentiles having to keep the Law (Acts 15:13–21). James was well known to the early church, which may explain why he did not identify himself more fully in his letter. He calls himself simply a bondservant rather than an apostle (James 1:1). James gives few hints by which his letter might be dated. Assuming that the brother of the Lord wrote it, it must have been produced before about A.D. 62, the approximate time of that James's death. Certain characteristics suggest that it might have been written very early, maybe even in the late 40s.

Key Scriptures

* *James 1:2 “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials”*

* *James 1:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”*

* *James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”*

* *James 1:19-20 “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

* *James 1:22 “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”*

* *James 2:20 “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”*

* *James 4:1-3 “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*

* *James 4:6-8 “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”*

* *James 4:17 “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*

* *James 5:16-17 “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”*

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson One - James 1:1-18
“Facing Trials and Temptations”

One of the best tests of Christian maturity is tribulation. When God’s people go through personal trials, they discover what kind of faith they really possess. Trials not only reveal our faith; they also develop our faith and Christian character. The Jews to whom James was writing were experiencing trials, and he wanted to encourage them. The strange thing is that James tells them to rejoice! The word “greeting” in v. 1 can mean “rejoice!” How is the Christian able to have joy in the midst of troubles? James gives the answer in this first chapter by showing the certainties Christians have in times of tribulation. James teaches that God’s purpose is to develop Christians who are mature and complete. If it were up to us, that process probably wouldn’t include times of stress, hardship, or testing. But God knows us well, and as our loving Father He knows that our faith and character are developed only through trials and testing. The apostle Paul’s teaching in Roman’s 8:28 makes such a practical difference when we face difficult trials. *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* Although we might be tempted to turn away from God and run during our trials, knowing God’s love and remembering His purpose in them can help us even trust Him more.

Read James 1:1-4 and Answer the Following Questions

1. How do you normally feel and respond when you have to face a trial?

2. Suffering is apparently the way in which God produces perseverance and maturity in us. Why do you think that nothing seems to be as effective as trials at this? (See 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 12:7-10)

Read James 1:5-8

3. What does wisdom have to do with facing trials?
4. What does Proverbs 9:10-12 tell you about wisdom?
5. Describe a time when God's wisdom helped you through a problem.

Read James 1:9-12

6. What does James 1: 9-11 have to do with the theme of enduring trials?
7. How should James 1:10-11 affect your attitude toward your career and possessions?
8. What reward awaits the person who perseveres under trial?

Read James 1:13-18

9. When temptation comes, why do people tend to blame others and excuse themselves instead of taking responsibility for their sin and their action?

10. What can you do to prevent yourself from falling into temptation?

11. Think of one particular area of your life where you are being tempted and led into sin. How can you stop excusing yourself? What can you do to prevent this from happening?

12. From James 1:1-18 how would you summarize the difference between trials and temptations?

13. What do you believe God is trying to teach you this week through the trials and situations you are experiencing?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Rom. 8:28 NLT

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Cor.10:13 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.

Gal. 6:1 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Two - James 1:19-27
“Listening and Doing”

As important as it is to read the Bible, James teaches us that it is not helpful unless we do what it says. It's been said that it's not enough to “talk the walk” we must “Walk the talk”. That's the concern James has for us. As important it is to know God's Word, to be eager learners in personal Bible study and in church, it is equally important to be living out what we believe. Genuine faith will evidence itself in some very practical ways: in righteous living, godly speaking, and compassionate care. Does your life style reflect your Christian faith? Whether you are at church, at a neighborhood gathering, or in the marketplace, people should see a consistency between what you say and how you live. Revelation demands response! Don't fall into the trap of reading or listening to the Bible and then not putting it into practice. The proof of religious conversation is to demonstrate that we have both added a relationship with Christ and we have subtracted sin (repentance). And we multiply proof to a weary world by what we do, our deeds, and our obedience. What we do must confirm what we say. Our deeds are the proof of our repentance. A changed life is one that has added Christ and subtracted sin that attracts a world weary of worn out words. Obedience is the proof.

Read James 1:19-21 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. What instruction did James give about the relationship between speaking, listening, and anger?

2. How do displays of anger and temper affect the witness of a Christian?

3. In what sense is God's Word planted in us? How does this implanting take place?

Read James 1:22-24

4. How do believers deceive themselves by just listening and not acting on God's message?

5. What might be the effects in the life of a person who reads the Bible week after week but never puts any of the truths into practice?

Read James 1:25-26

6. What promise did James give to the person who studies God's Word and practices it?

7. What does it mean to be blessed in what you do?

8. How does our speech reflect our relationship with God?

Read James 1:27

9. What is pure undefiled religion?

10. What does it mean to "keep oneself unspotted from the world"?

11. What is so significant about having a desire to care for orphans and widows? Why would James highlight it as a mark of genuine faith?

12. Which of the following is most difficult for you: listening intently to people, being slow to speak, or being slow to get angry? What can you do to grow in this area of your life?

13. What are some practical ways that you and the body at Calvary Vista can care for orphans and widows? Who are the orphans and widows in your life?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God. 2 Cor. 7:1 NLT

For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. 2 Cor. 9:13 NLT

Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. Titus 3:1 NLT

So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Three - James 2:1-13
“Favoritism Forbidden”

Not only is the mature Christian to be patient in testing, but he also practices the truth. This is the theme of James 2. Immature people talk about their beliefs, but the mature person lives his faith. Hearing God’s Word and talking about God’s Word can never substitute for doing God’s Word. Every believer has some statement of faith or personal expression of what he believes. Most churches have such statements and members are asked to subscribe to the statement and practice it. Most churches also have a “covenant” that they read publicly, often when they observe the Lord’s Supper. Statements of faith and church covenants are good and useful, but they are not substitutes for doing God’s will. We are not simply to have faith; we are to practice it in our daily lives. James wanted to help us practice God’s Word, so he gave us a simple test. He sent two visitors to a church service, a rich man and a poor man; and he watched to see how they were treated. The way we behave toward people indicates what we really believe about God! We cannot separate human relationships from divine fellowship. *“If a man says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”* (1 John 4:20) All Christians have received undeserved mercy from God and are called by God to express mercy to those in need. That’s why favoritism to the rich is so unacceptable. It values that which God says as unimportant. Be very careful in your personal life and in your church to treat people according to God’s values rather than by the values of the world.

Read James chapter 2:1-4 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. What practical example did James use to illustrate how favoritism was practiced in the church?

2. Why is favoritism to the rich inconsistent with believing in Christ?

3. In what ways do adults continue to play favorites at home, at work or in Government?

Read James Chapter 2:5-7

4. What has God promised to the poor of this world?

5. Why do you think God gives such a priority to the poor? Why doesn't God just simply bless them with more material things?

6. How does God's view of wealth compare with your view? In what specific areas do you need to align your thinking about wealth and poverty with God's?

Read James Chapter 2:8-13

7. Think of someone who God has brought into your life who is unattractive or seems to have little to offer you. Perhaps you have been guilty of ignoring this person in the past. Ask God to help you see this person more clearly from his or her perspective. List at least three specific actions that you can take to reach out to this person with God's love.

8. What will happen to those of us who have not shown mercy to the needy? (See James 2:13, Matthew 5:7, and Luke 6:38)

Read James 2:1-13 once again

9. What is James main point in 2:1-13?

10. What one truth from 2:1-13 impresses you as something you need to apply?

11. How can you apply this truth to your walk practically?

12. In the context of 2:1-13 what kind of mercy is James saying we should practice?

13. Study how Jesus treated the poor and the working class in Luke 5:27-31, 14:12-14, 15:1-7. How is this model for you? What can you do to follow that model?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice. ³ And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor. Ex. 23:2-3 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Four - James 2:14-26
“How Faith Works”

Faith is a key doctrine in the Christian life. The sinner is saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), and the believer must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Someone has said that faith is not “believing in spite of evidence, but obeying in spite of consequence.” When you read Hebrews 11, you meet men and women who acted on God’s Word, no matter what price they had to pay. Faith is not some kind of vague feeling that we work up; faith is confidence that God’s Word is true, and conviction that acting on that Word will bring His blessing.

In this section of Scripture, James will discuss the relationship between faith and works. This is an important discussion, for if we are wrong in this matter, we jeopardize our eternal salvation. What kind of faith really saves a person? Is it necessary to perform good works in order to be saved? How can a person tell whether or not he or she is exercising true saving faith? James answers these questions and more by explaining to us the true meaning of saving faith. Being a Christian is not a matter of what we say with the lips; it involves what we do with the life. The whole matter of faith and works is summed up in Eph. 2:8-10: **(1) the work God does “for us” (salvation)** “For by grace you have been saved...not of works”; **(2) the work God does “in us” (sanctification)** “For we are His workmanship”; **(3) the work God does “through us” (service)** “created...for good works.”

Read James 2: 14-17 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. What does James teach about the relationship between faith and deeds?

2. What illustration did James use to explain how real faith affects a person’s deeds?

3. How did James describe faith that has no accompanying deeds?

Read James 2:18-20

4. What would you say to a person who claimed to have faith in Christ but was living an unrepentant lifestyle of sin?

5. What might be some consequences for believers who are not clear on the relationship between faith and works?

Read James 2:21-26

6. In what ways are Abraham and Rahab different? In what ways are they similar?

7. Why do you think Abraham was called God's friend? What did Jesus mean when He called those who follow Him "My friends" (See John 15:14)

8. James offers Abraham and Rahab as two examples of genuine faith. What did Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac prove? (See Genesis 22:12, James 2:22-23)

9. Abraham showed faith by holding nothing back from God, not even his most valued treasure, his son. Are you holding anything back from God? Is there anything in your life that you wouldn't sacrifice for Him?

10. What do you consider the greatest example of faith you have ever seen? Why?

11. What were some of the victories enjoyed by faithful Old Testament believers? (See Heb. 11:32-34)

12. With what do you need to trust God even though you can't see what the future holds? How can you show this trust?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. ²Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. Heb. 1:1-2 NLT

How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?
James 2:20 NLT

I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.
John 14:12 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Five - James 3:1-12
“Taming the Tongue”

Through our study so far, we have identified mature Christians by their attitude toward suffering (Chapter 1) and by their obedience to the Word of God (Chapter 2). Now James tells us that a Christian’s speech is another test of maturity. We read and hear many words every day and forget what a wonderful thing a word is! When God gave us the gift of speech, He gave us a tool to build with; but it can also become a weapon of destruction. Will we ever be able to control what we say? James says that the tongue corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of life on fire, is a restless evil, and cannot be tamed. Yet we should not give up trying. James indicates in 3:2-6 that Christians should work on controlling their tongue. The difficulty with the tongue is that it is connected to the heart. As Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”* **A tongue problem is really a heart problem.** But here’s the good news! God specializes in heart problems, giving each Christian a new heart, one that is alive to God’s Spirit and sensitive to His leading. Then, as we turn from sin and learn to turn to God in faith and trust, God changes us on the inside, making us like Christ. Apart from God, no person can control the tongue, but with a new heart we can find a new strength to use our tongue to glorify God and build up people around us.

Read James 3:1-4 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. What unique responsibility does a teacher bear? In what ways will teachers be judged more strictly?

2. Why is it so difficult for us at times to say the right thing instead of the wrong thing?

3. Why isn't the tongue problem solved when people become Christians? In what ways do you struggle with the tension between "the old man" and "the new man?"

4. James uses some practical examples to explain why controlling our tongues is a key to maturity. He also compares the tongue to a horse's bit and a ship's rudder. What do these images have in common?

Read James 3:5-8

5. How can a person be hurt by the words of others?

6. What practical advice would you give someone who wanted to control his or her tongue better?

Read James 3:9-10

7. What are the ways we sin with our speech?

8. What would you say to someone who professed faith in Christ but was either unwilling or seemingly unable to control his or her tongue?

9. What kind of damage does an uncontrolled tongue do to a family?
To a marriage? , To children? , To a church?

Read James 3:11-12

10. What illustrations from nature did James use to condemn cursing?

11. What can a spring or a fruit tree teach us about speech?

12. What weaknesses in our lives does our speech often expose?

13. How can we submit our tongues to the control of God's Holy Spirit?
What would be the result?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

*Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? ¹³ Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies! Ps. 34:12-13
NLT*

Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything. Prov. 13:3 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Six – James 3:13-18
“Sowing Seeds of Peace”

Wisdom was an important thing to Jewish people. They realized that it was not enough to have knowledge; you had to have wisdom to be able to use that knowledge correctly. All of us know people who are very intelligent, perhaps almost geniuses, and yet who seemingly are unable to carry out the simplest tasks of life. They can run computers but they cannot manage their own lives. *“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.”* Prov. 4:7

James continued to exhort the people in the assembly who wanted to be teachers of the Word (James 3:1). **It is not enough simply to stand before the people and say words; you must have something to say.** This is where spiritual wisdom comes in. Knowledge enables us to take things apart, but wisdom enables us to put things together and relate God’s truth to daily life. All of us have heard preachers and teachers who say many good things, but who somehow miss the heart of God’s message and fail to relate truth to everyday life. It is this kind of “knowledge without wisdom” that James is writing about.

Read James 3:13-14 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. How can a person demonstrate wisdom and understanding?

2. How can we tell when a person is wise?

3. Jesus encouraged people to come learn from Him because He was “*gentle and lowly in heart*” (Matt. 11:29). Paul declared his authority as an apostle and teacher after pleading “*the meekness and gentleness of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:1). Why do you think humility or meekness is such an essential sign of wisdom?

Read James 3:15-16.

4. How would you describe “worldly wisdom”?
5. What damage can bitter envy or selfish ambition do to a person?
6. How do bitter envy and self-ambition affect a person’s ministry?

Read James 3:17.

7. What are the qualities of the wisdom that comes from heaven?
8. All the good traits of James 3:17 spring from acquiring heavenly wisdom and ridding ourselves of devilish wisdom. How can you cultivate heavenly wisdom and its fruits this week?
9. How can we get or experience heavenly wisdom?

Read James 3:18

10. In light of James 3:13-18, what do you think it means to be a peacemaker?

11. What are practical ways we can sow seeds of peace during our life?

12. According to verse 18, sowing in peace produces a harvest of righteousness. Why do you think peacemaking and righteousness are connected like this?

13. List some practical ways you can bring peace to a conflict?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

And this is what he says to all humanity: The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding. Job. 28:28 NLT

“I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment. I know where to discover knowledge and discernment. Prov. 8:12 NLT

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. ⁷ For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. ⁸ That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. Rom. 8:5-8 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Seven – James 4:1-10
“Submit Yourselves to God”

This chapter makes it clear that there were carnal divisions and disputes among these believers. One cause was the selfish desire of many to be teachers, but the basic cause was disobedience. There was a lack of true separation in the lives of the people. It is tragic when brethren dwell together in conflict instead of unity. *“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”* (Amos 3:3)

James doesn't paint a pretty picture of life in the church. It sounds much like life anytime people are together: quarreling, fighting, slandering, and judging. The difference is that there is hope for real change in the church. These problems arise when Christians exchange friendship with God for that of the world. As with all of Satan's treacheries, the world's friendship might sound good at first, but it will soon bring a harvest of sin, jealousy, hatred, and self-centeredness. The good news is that Christians have an alternative, to return to God in confession and dependency. God never tires of welcoming home His wayward children and of lifting them up when they humble themselves before Him. If you find yourself constantly engaged in disagreements and arguments, take a close look at your heart, and come home to friendship with God.

Read James 4:1-3. Pray and Answer the Following Questions:

1. What does the Bible mean when it says a war is waging inside of us?

2. When we ask God for things, why do we often not get what we want?

3. What are the wrong motives for prayer?

Read James 4:4-5

4. What is the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with people?

5. Why is it impossible to be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time?

6. From your own personal experience and your knowledge of the Word, what are some of the symptoms of friendship with the world?

Read James 4:6

7. How does pride show up in our work?

a. Home?

b. Church?

c. Community?

8. Why does God oppose people who are proud?

9. What is the difference between pride and a sense of accomplishment?

Read James 4:7-8

10. What is involved in humbling yourself before God?

11. Have you ever wondered why at times you might not feel God near you? According to James 4:8, is this a failure on God's part or on our part? What should we do when God seems so far away?

Read James 4:9-10

12. How did James describe the way we should come to God?

13. What can you do this week to help you bring more humility into your life?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge. Ps. 62:8 NLT

Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting you. Show me where to walk, for I give myself to you. Ps. 143:8 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
"Practical Advice on Living the Life"
Lesson Eight- James 4:11-17
"The Danger of Pride"

James began chapter 4 talking about war with God, and he ends it talking about the will of God. But the two themes are related: when a believer is out of the will of God, he becomes a troublemaker and not a peacemaker. Lot moved into Sodom and brought trouble to his family. David committed adultery and brought trouble to his family and his kingdom. Jonah disobeyed God and almost sent a shipload of heathen sailors into a watery grave. In each case, there was a wrong attitude toward the will of God. That God would have a plan for each of our lives is an obvious truth. He is a God of wisdom and knows what ought to happen and when it should occur. And, as a God of love, He must desire the very best for His children. Too many Christians look on the will of God as bitter medicine they must take, instead of seeing it as the gracious evidence of the love of God. James turns now to two important warnings and calls Christians to repent of their sins. These two warnings remind us that unless individuals in the church are right with God, there can be no peace.

When people are worldly minded and proud, they are often quick to criticize others. The conflicts among these Christians had their origin in their judging and speaking evil of one another. Here is the tongue again! How many churches have been divided and disgraced by hateful, critical tongues. The Bible teaches us that we must have Christian discernment, but this does not mean that we can judge the hearts and motives of others. In Matt. 7:1-5, Jesus teaches that believers have the right to help others conquer their sins, but they must first judge their own sinfulness. If I have a plank in my eye, what right do I have to criticize the man who has a speck of dust in his eye? And I cannot see clearly enough to help him until I first take care of my own needs. When we judge other Christians without love and mercy, we are making ourselves lawgivers; and God is the only Lawgiver. If all of us would devote ourselves to obeying the Word and not investigating to see how well others obey it, our churches would have harmony and peace. James suggests that the only one with the right to judge is the one with the power to punish namely, God.

Read James 4:11-12 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. When we speak against a fellow believer, what attitude are we having toward God and His law?
2. What do you think you should do if someone slanders another in your presence?
3. How is constructive criticism different from slander?

Read James 4:13-14

4. What warning did James give to those who make plans for the future?
5. What could happen to destroy even the best laid plans?
6. What is a person saying about God and self when he makes plans without consulting God?

Read James 4:15-16

7. What is the best way to plan ahead?
8. How can we make plans for business or living which are pleasing to God?

9. Why do Christians sometimes boast, brag, and make plans for their lives and work but give no thought of God's plan?

Read James 4:17

10. How did James define sin?

11. How do we sin?

12. How can you determine in your daily life what is sinful and what is pleasing to God?

13. What plans for the future are you living by? Evaluate them in the light of 4:11-17.

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged.² For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.³ "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?⁴ How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.
 Matt. 7:1-5 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Nine – James 5:1-6
“Warning to the Rich”

Here in James chapter 5, James lists several sins and shows that the rich were only preparing themselves for coming judgment. If money talks said a popular comedian, “all it ever says to me is good-bye!” But money was not saying “good-bye” to the men James addressed in this section of his letter. These men were rich, and their riches were sinful. They were using their wealth for selfish purposes, and were persecuting the poor in the process.

Jesus spent a lot of time talking about money because there is a close connection between the heart and material possessions. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus asked what it would benefit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul. In this passage, James makes the same point using powerful and dramatic images.

It is nothing less than foolishness to value and pursue things that don't satisfy and won't last beyond the grave. When material possessions become most important, people become expendable. If you have been blessed with riches, guard your heart so they don't become your god. If you find yourself being caught up in the pursuit of material possessions, hear the words of warning and perspective offered by James. Finally if you have suffered under the hand of rich oppressors (even other believers), know that God has heard your cry and will distribute judgment in His time.

The rich person faces a fierce temptation, a temptation so intense that it will consume him unless he lives ever so close to the Lord. What is the temptation that so fiercely attacks the rich? The temptation to bank and hoard money instead of using it to meet the needs of the desperate and dying in the world. The Bible never condemns all rich persons. It only condemns the rich who store up their wealth instead of using it to reach the lost, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, shelter the cold and homeless, nurse the sick and sound the glorious news of salvation around the world. God knows that we are without excuse. This is the reason for this passage. To warn all the rich of this world, all those who keep more than what they need. A question that we might ask ourselves personally is: Do you have your possessions, or do your possessions have you?

Read James 5:1-6 Answer the Following Questions:

1. How does James describe the lifestyle of the rich?
2. What is the effect of their lifestyle on others?
3. What is the effect of their lifestyle on themselves?

Read James 5:1-3

4. What attitude does God have toward hoarding wealth?
5. How does the love of money and riches affect our relationship with God?

Read James 5:4-6

6. What do luxury and self-indulgence have to do with the trouble that lies ahead for rich people?
7. Why does James speak so strongly against self-indulgence? What kinds of self-indulgent activities are “in now”? Why is this inappropriate for believers?

8. Are you investing time and money in anything that is not really worth much from an eternal perspective? If so what?

Read James chapter 5:1-6

9. Compare the descriptions of the rich in this passage with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. How is this an encouragement to you?

10. It has been said that one of Satan's strategies is to change the price tags while no one is looking so that people value the wrong things. In the light of this, what do people tend to pursue that has little eternal value?

11. How can you invest yourself even more in what will matter forever?

12. How can you use money to accumulate treasure in heaven?

13. What do you possess that money cannot buy?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

Trust in your money and down you go! But the godly flourish like leaves in spring. Prov. 11:28 NLT

Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit. Prov. 23:4 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Ten – James 5:7-12
“Patience in Suffering”

James was still addressing the suffering saints when he wrote, “Be patient.” This was his counsel at the beginning of his letter, and his counsel as his letter came to a close. God is not going to right all the wrongs in this world until Jesus Christ returns and we believers must patiently endure and wait expectedly. Three times James reminds us of the coming of the Lord (James 5:7-9). We do not expect to have everything easy and comfortable in this present life. “*In the world ye shall have tribulation*” (John 16:33). Paul reminded his converts that “*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). We must patiently endure hardships and heartaches until Jesus returns. James used two different words for patience. In James 5:7-10, it was the word “*long-tempered.*” The words “*endure*” and “*patience*” in James 5:11 literally mean “*to remain under*” and speak of endurance under great stress. Patience means “to stay put and stand fast when you’d like to run away.” Many Greek scholars think that “*long-suffering*” refers to patience with respect to persons, while “*endurance*” refers to patience with respect to conditions or situations. But the question we must answer is: How can we as Christians experience this kind of patient endurance as we wait for the Lord to return?

Read James 5:7. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Why should believers be motivated to patiently endure?

2. How does God use others to build patience in our lives?

3. How does the illustration of a farmer show the importance of patience?

4. Patience is not a quality we naturally possess. How can we acquire it? (See Galatians 5:22-23)

Read James 5:8-9

5. What do and don't we know about the time of Christ's return? (See Matthew 24:26-27, 36-30)

6. Why should expecting the Lord's coming make you patient?

7. Why should the upcoming Day of Judgment be an incentive for patient living?

Read James 5:10-11

8. Describe Job's experience of perseverance (See Job 1:1-2:11, 29:1-30, 42:1-17). How is his example an encouragement for us?

9. What is the difference between patience and perseverance? Which is more difficult for you?

10. Why does a God "*full of tenderness and mercy*" allow His people to experience suffering?

Read James 5:12

11. What warning did James give concerning swearing?

12. What does swearing, especially by using God's name; do to a person's witness before unbelievers? Why?

13. Think of a time when you persevered in spite of difficult circumstances. What were the rewards of your perseverance?

Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. Rom. 2:7 NLT

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. Rom. 5:3 NLT

Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. ³⁷ "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. Heb. 10:36-37

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD.²⁰ Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." Rom.12:19-20 NLT

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19 NLT

Home Group Study
Book of James
“Practical Advice on Living the Life”
Lesson Eleven – James 5:13-20
“The Prayer of Faith”

The gift of speech is a marvelous blessing, if it is used to the glory of God. As we have seen, James had a great deal to say about the tongue; and this chapter is no exception. He mentioned some of the lowest uses of the tongue: complaining (James 5:9) and swearing (James 5:12). But he also named some of the highest uses of the tongue: proclaiming God’s Word (James 5:10) and praying and praising God (James 5:13).

Prayer is certainly a high and holy privilege. To think that, as God’s children, we can come freely and boldly to His throne and share with Him our needs! Seven times in this section James mentioned prayer. The mature Christian is prayerful in the troubles of life. Instead of complaining about his situation, he talks to God about it; and God hears and answers his prayers. “Taking it to the Lord in prayer” is certainly a mark of spiritual maturity.

James describes believing prayer as a dynamic and powerful activity of the Christian life. It is an instrument of healing and forgiveness and a mighty weapon for spiritual warfare. However, for some Christians, prayer is little more than a comfortable ritual that has few demands and offers even fewer rewards. People with this perspective need to read James with fresh eyes and an open heart. Other people mistakenly view prayer as a way to obligate God to give them whatever they claim in faith, as if God were a heavenly vending machine! They need to remember that though God is pleased to use our prayers to accomplish His purposes, and though He delights in responding in love to our requests, He is never bound by our prayers. As you come to the Father by faith, praying in accordance with His will, prayer will be the single most effective ministry you can have. Never apologize to someone for “just” being able to pray. When you pray, you give the best you have to give.

Read James 5:13-15 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. Why is prayer important?

2. How does prayer make a difference in the lives of believers? What can be accomplished through prayer?

Read James 5:16

3. What hinders Christians from confessing sins and praying for each other?

4. If Jesus is our only mediator and forgives our sins, why does James tell us to confess our sins to each other?

5. What did James mean by saying that, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective"?

Read James 5:17-18

6. What is the point of James' illustration about Elijah?

7. How is Elijah a good example of how God answers prayer?

8. How have you seen prayer bring changes in people or circumstances?

Read James 5:19-20

9. What is a Christian's responsibility toward a fellow believer who has wandered away from the truth?

10. What causes Christians to stumble and fall away from their faith?

11. How could you help someone who has drifted away from his or her relationship with Christ?

12. Having reviewed what James says, it is a good idea to examine how well you are doing in applying the many principles to your life. At the beginning of our James study back in the introduction section, I asked you to go into this study with a list of questions in mind. The purpose wasn't for self-condemnation but for encouragement and growth. Review these questions one more time, and note in the final journaling section any areas (thoughts, attitudes, behavior) in which you have changed as a result of studying James.

1. Am I becoming more and more patient in the testing of life?
2. Do I play with temptation or resist it from the start?
3. Do I find joy in obeying the Word of God?
4. Are there any prejudices that bind me?
5. Am I able to control my tongue?
6. Am I a peacemaker rather than a trouble maker? Do people come to me for spiritual wisdom?
7. Am I a friend of God or a friend of the world?
8. Do I make plans without considering the will of God?
9. Am I selfish when it comes to money? Am I unfaithful in paying my bills?
10. Do I naturally depend on prayer when I find myself in some kind of trouble?
11. Am I the kind of person that others seek for prayer support?
12. What is my attitude toward the wandering brother? Do I criticize and gossip, or do I seek to restore him in love?

For more Bible passages on prayer, see Psalm 6:9; Proverbs 15:8, 29; Matthew 21; 22; Philippians 4:6, 7; Colossians 4:2; 1 Peter 3:12, James 5:16

