

A STUDY IN JAMES

LIVING FAITH



**A Study Guide for Use by
Individuals or Groups**

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LIVING FAITH
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INTRODUCTION

James 1:1

The introduction to this New Testament book on practical Christian living states that James wrote this letter. But which James? The New Testament mentions four: James, the son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve, and a brother of John (Matthew 4:21; 10:2); James the son of Alphaeus, also one of the Twelve (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; 15:40); James, father of Judas, not Iscariot, (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13); and James, the Lord's brother, called the just (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

The James who wrote this letter probably was James, the brother of Jesus and also the leader of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). Although scholars do not know for sure, it is thought that James wrote this letter during the early sixties or possibly in the fifties. The letter suggests that he wrote it during a time of severe persecution. Roman Emperor Nero's persecution took place A.D.37-68. It is one of the earliest of the New Testament books. Some believe it is the earliest.

No record exists to show that James followed Jesus during his earthly three-year ministry. He may have even been embarrassed by him and his claims of being the Messiah. St. John writes (John 7:5), "...Even his own brothers did not believe in him."

James may, however, have been one of the first to hear of Jesus' resurrection (John 20:17). St. Paul asserts, in his great chapter on the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7), that Jesus made one of his appearances to James. Paul undoubtedly was referring to this James since he was by now a believer and the most prominent leader in the Jerusalem church.

Persecution scattered the Christians from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. This letter is for them. Following Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:54-8:3) a great persecution broke out and Christians scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:10). The letter encourages them to joyfully face their trials and to *live their faith*.

Although written to believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire during the first century, it has much to say to us in our time. Our faith needs to be more than intellectual assent to propositional truth. Faith must be living. James says it is living when it produces good works. These good works do not give salvation. They do, however, reveal living faith. This is the message James gave to the scattered Christians, a message still apt for the church today.

LESSON 1

WHEN YOU FACE TRIALS

James 1:2-12

OPENER

Tell about one of the best memories you have of your childhood.

INTRODUCTION

1. You can probably remember days you might call, “the good old days.” What were they like for you?

2. James likely remembered the days when he was a child in the home of Joseph and Mary, and Jesus. Since Jesus was his older half-brother, what memories do you think James might have had?

3. James did not become a believer in Jesus as the Messiah until after the resurrection. Why don't you think he believed before?

Trials came as a result of his faith in Jesus. Yet, James readily faced those trials and taught others that they too should expect such trials. That is where this letter begins.

I. BE JOYFUL (V. 2)

4. Read verse 2. Think about how James begins this letter. James writes, "Consider it pure joy..." What do you think he is saying? How can a person do this?

5. What trials are you going through right now? What trials does your church face?

6. How can this statement of James help you?

7. Read the following Scriptures: Matthew 5:3-13; Hebrews 10:34; Hebrews 12:11. How do these passages help you understand the purpose of trials in your lives? What attitude do these passages encourage the Christian to have? How can you experience this attitude?

II. RECOGNIZE THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS (V. 3, 4, 9-11)

8. Consider the verses in this section. What does James say is the purpose of trials?

9. It has been said, "Yard by yard, life is hard; inch by inch, it's a cinch." In what way would James agree with this outlook? In what way do you agree?

10. Other writers contemplate this subject too. What do these writers say about the trials and the way they should be faced? (See 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 4:12; Job 23:10.)

11. Read Psalm 66:5-12. Rehearse the historical account this psalm is recounting. What trials did these people go through? Why do you think they had trials? How did God keep his promise?

III. DON'T FACE TRIALS ALONE (V. 5-8)

12. "Bite your upper lip and hold on," seems to be a philosophy of many people when facing trials. However, that is not the way to face trials. According to the verses in this section, what should you do?

13. Just when you think you will get a little help, James criticizes the doubter, which we often are, as a double-minded man. Who is the double-minded man and why do you think James is so hard on him? What actions of yours remind you of this man?

14. St. Paul in Ephesians (6:10-20) writes of the Christian's need for help. According to Paul, why do you need help and what help is available?

15. How do you get help? (John 16:24)

IV. REMEMBER THE PROMISE (V. 12)

16. A crown of life awaits the one who perseveres. What is the crown of life? (See 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10.)

17. Since there is a crown of life waiting for you, how should you then live? (1 Corinthians 9:24-26)

CONCLUSION

18. Look back over these verses. How will you react to trials when they come into your life?

LESSON 2

THE TWO BIRTHS

James 1:13-18

OPENER

Share stories, whether from the Bible, literature, or your own life, which illustrate temptation, the subject of this lesson.

INTRODUCTION

1. In the last lesson you discussed trials. This lesson is about temptation. How do you think trials and temptations are different? Alike?

I. THE BIRTH OF SIN (V. 13-15)

2. Read verses 13 through 15. What do you learn about temptation from these three verses?

3. Test these verses by reading several passages of Scripture to see whether or not this is the pattern for the way temptation works. What is the pattern in the following verses?

a. Genesis 3:1-19

b. Genesis 4:2b-16

c. 2 Samuel 11:1-12:10

d. Luke 22:1-6; Matthew 26:47-56; Matthew 27:1-5

4. In each of these stories, how could the outcome have been different?

5. What temptations do people face today and how can these temptations be faced? Which of these temptations have you had to face? How did you overcome them?

6. What was the condition of Jesus when he faced temptation? (See Matthew 4:1-11.)

7. Satan's temptation of Jesus focused on physical desires, possessions and power, and pride. How did Jesus face temptation? (Matthew 4:1-11)

8. What lessons can you learn from Jesus about facing temptation?

II. THE REBIRTH OF SINNERS (V. 16-18)

9. Read verses 16 through 18 in this section. What do you learn about God in these verses?

10. God doesn't change but gives good gifts as a kind and loving heavenly Father. How can this be an encouragement to you today?

11. What kind of gifts do you think our heavenly Father gives?

12. The word of truth gives birth, an amazing miracle when you think about it. What do the Scriptures say about this birth? (Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:3-8; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23)

13. James writes, "...that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created," meaning that there is more harvest to come. What did Jesus say about this harvest and what should the church do about it? (John 4:34-38)

CONCLUSION

14. Jesus has come to bring life, but Satan has come to bring death. St. Peter writes (1 Peter 5:6-11) some helpful words to Christians living in the world and subject to its temptations. How are we to live so that the enemy of our souls, Satan, can be overcome? What has God promised to do for you?

15. What decisions will you make about temptation this week because of what you have been reminded of in the Scriptures you have studied in this lesson?

LESSON 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE RELIGION

James 1:19-27

OPENER

Talk about a person from history, and not found in the Scriptures, whom you believe embodied the characteristics of true religion. Why do you believe this?

INTRODUCTION

1. Based on your study so far (from James 1:1-18), what would you give as the characteristics of true religion?

I. A PERSON WHO HAS TRUE RELIGION LISTENS (V. 19,20)

2. Read verses 19 and 20. Why do you think these three commands are given together? Tell about a time from your own experience when these commands went unheeded.

3. Zeno, the Greek writer said, "We have two ears but only one mouth so that we may hear more and speak less." What do you think about this statement? How might this advice be valuable with a spouse; with children; with the church family?

4. Jesus makes a statement to each of the seven churches to whom messages are given in Revelation 2 and 3. What was that statement and what do you think Jesus meant by it? How should that message be applied for churches and individuals today?

5. After speaking about the importance of being quick to listen and slow to speak, James turns to the subject of anger. Be “slow to become angry.” Why is anger a dreadful trait for a Christian to display? (See Proverbs 29:11 and 30:33.) What is it about anger that keeps a person from the righteous life that God desires? What specific ways will you begin to put this advice from James into practice in your own life?

II. A PERSON WHO HAS TRUE RELIGION REPENTS AND ACCEPTS (V. 21)

6. Read verse 21. James calls for two actions which are:

a.

b.

7. If you aren't careful, these two actions can lead to legalism. First, what do you think James meant by each of these actions; and second, how can you follow James' call for action and avoid legalism?

8. Read Matthew 13:1-8 to find what Jesus says about the Word that is planted in you. Describe each of the hearers in Jesus' parable. How can you become "good soil?"

III. A PERSON WHO HAS TRUE RELIGION ACTS (V. 22-27)

9. Read verses 22 through 27. True religion does not consist of going to church, sitting through services, and going home again. What are the characteristics of the person who acts?

10. What do you think James meant by the perfect law?

11. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 16:24-26. How do these words of Jesus explain James' words in verse 25?

12. Jesus said, "...lose your life..." What do you think he meant by that? How are you to lose your life?

CONCLUSION

13. James summarizes this section with verse 27, saying that pure religion is to help those in need. What does this mean for your church? For you? Where can you start?

LESSON 4

THE LAW THAT GIVES FREEDOM

James 2:1-13

OPENER

What characteristics do you look for when you join a group, such as a church or club?

INTRODUCTION

1. Think for a moment about the word, *favoritism*. What is it? Where do you see it operating? What good does favoritism do? What damage does it do?

2. James describes a church that had a problem. What was it?

I. THE LAW THAT GIVES FREEDOM DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE (2:1-7)

3. Notice how James addresses his audience (v.1,5). Why shouldn't they show favoritism and discriminate?

4. What other motivation do we have for not showing favoritism? (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 10:17-19; 2 Chronicles 19:4-7; Job 34:18,19; Mark 12:14a; Acts 10:34,35; Romans 2:11)

5. Discuss some ways people show favoritism today in the workplace; in the neighborhood; in the church. How can you stop favoritism?

II. THE LAW THAT GIVES FREEDOM SHOWS LOVE AND MERCY (2:8-13)

6. Read James 2:8-13 followed by Matthew 12:1-8. Jesus said, "I desire mercy..." Why do you think he said this? What do you think he meant by this statement?

7. The royal law, spoken of by James, refers back to the statement of Jesus, recorded in John 15:12. How will you treat people if you follow this royal law? What are some practical ways that your study group (or you) can put this into action this week?

8. James implies that you too are a lawbreaker. How does he establish this point? Why do you think it is important to remember that you are a lawbreaker?

9. How has God dealt with us? (2 Samuel 24:14; Nehemiah 9:31; Psalm 25:6; Psalm 28:6; Luke 1:50; Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5)

10. What is the difference between love and mercy?

11. Read Jesus' Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35). What implications does this parable have for your church? For you? How should you love? How should you show mercy?

CONCLUSION

12. James ends this section with a powerful statement (v. 12,13). What is he saying and how should you apply this to yourself?

13. "Mercy triumphs," says James. In what ways have you found this to be true?

LESSON 5

A FRIEND OF GOD AND A PROSTITUTE

James 2:14-26

OPENER

Think of some non-religious situations when you need to exercise trust and talk about them with the group. What causes you to trust in these situations? Tell about a time when your trust was misguided. Why was it misguided?

INTRODUCTION

1. What definition do you have for faith?

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH STATED (2:14-19)

2. Read verses 14 through 19. Based on these verses, what is saving faith? How does James' discussion of faith change your earlier definition?

3. John, the beloved disciple, wrote one of the best known passages on saving faith in the New Testament. He frames his description of faith in an account that Jesus had with a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Read John 3:1-21. According to this passage, how do you describe saving faith?

4. The passage in John says nothing about doing good deeds or living out one's faith. Why not?

5. "Even the demons believe..." writes James, but that doesn't mean they have saving faith. Why do you think James uses demons as an illustration of a faith that doesn't save? What characterizes a faith that doesn't save? What characterizes a faith that does?

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH ILLUSTRATED (2:20-26)

6. Read verses 20 through 26. According to these verses, how is a person justified? Before you answer this question, begin by defining what it means to be justified. (Romans 3:9-28)

7. Consider verse 24. How does that square with what Paul teaches in Romans 3? (See Romans 3:31.)

8. Abraham, well known to the readers as God's friend, was saved (or justified) by faith. Read his story in Genesis 15:1-6 and 22:1-14. Who provided salvation for Abraham?

9. James next uses a prostitute and a Gentile to illustrate the principle of faith. Why do you think he used her? Read her story in Joshua 2:1-24; 6:22-25; Hebrews 11:31; Matthew 1:5. How could she have possibly been saved since she was not of the household of faith (ie. a member of God's chosen people, the Israelites)?

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH APPLIED

10. How is a person saved?

11. Once saved, how is a person to respond?

CONCLUSION

12. How did you come to faith in Jesus Christ?

13. Many people go through life not knowing for sure whether or not they are saved. Many others assume that they are saved but base their salvation on a false assumption. Do you know that you are saved? If you lack assurance talk to your group leader or your pastor. If you are studying alone, and do not have a pastor or a Bible study leader, write to the publisher for help in coming to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

LESSON 6

TAMING THE TONGUE

James 3:1-18

OPENER

Tell about a time when you tried to tame an animal, train a horse, steer a sailboat on choppy water, or manage a fire that had gotten out of control.

INTRODUCTION

1. James, in chapter one, shows that “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak...” In chapter two, he says that Christians should be doers and not hearers only. “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead,” he says (2:17). Now he says they should keep a watch before their mouths when they do speak. Why do you believe this is important?

I. THE PROBLEM OF THE TONGUE (3:1,2)

2. Read verses one and two. Why do you think James exhorts people not to presume to be teachers?

3. What are the chances of speaking wrong words? How have wrong words affected you? How have words you have spoken to others affected them?

4. False teaching uses words in a wrong way. The very first time we see false teaching exposed in Scripture is in Genesis 3:1-5. What wrong words are used? In what way is this characteristic of all false teaching? What false teaching have you been faced with?

5. Read Galatians 1:6-9. What false teaching did St. Paul learn was ravaging the churches in Galatia? What was his response to the false teachers? Why do you think he is so strong in his condemnation?

II. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (3:3-8)

6. We already know the power of the tongue, but we see it illustrated in this section. What metaphors does James use to illustrate the power of the tongue? Why, from your experience, are they so apt?

7. How can the tongue set the whole course of a life on fire (v.6)?

8. James uses strong language in verse 8 when he says, "No man can tame the tongue." In your opinion why does he make such a forceful statement? (See Romans 3:9-18.) How have you experienced this statement of James?

III. THE PROFANITY OF THE TONGUE (3:9-12)

9. Read verses 9 through 12. Here James writes about the contradictory nature of our speech. How can this be?

10. What does verse nine mean? What is it to curse people and why is it so wrong? When have you experienced this? How did you handle the situation?

11. How can a believer get speech under control?

IV. THE PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE (3:13-18)

12. Read verses 13 through 16. Here we have wisdom that looks like wisdom but isn't. What is the cause of "disorder and every evil practice" and how can it be avoided?

13. At the beginning of this chapter, James says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers." How can you see this false wisdom hindering a teacher of the gospel?

14. Read verses 17 and 18. Here we see the wisdom that doesn't look like wisdom but is. What is the source of this wisdom and what does it produce?

15. What part do you think the tongue might have in promoting peace or disorder?

CONCLUSION

16. In order that you might be a doer and not a hearer only, what actions will you take now concerning the use of your tongue?

LESSON 7

THE BATTLE THAT CAN BE STOPPED WITH ONE WORD

James 4:1-17

OPENER

What news stories have you heard this week which are based upon a conflict that has taken or is taking place?

INTRODUCTION

1. Describe a conflict you have observed.

I. THE PROBLEM: FIGHTS AND QUARRELS (4:1-5)

2. Read verses 1 through 5. Why do conflicts come? What is their source? From your own experience how have you seen these verses demonstrated?

3. Desire (v. 1) is a powerful force. How does St. Paul describe this battle in Romans 7:7-25?

4. What answer is there to this struggle in Romans 7?

5. What do you think James means by friendship with the world (v.4)?

6. In chapter three we studied about Abraham who was a friend of God. How can you become a friend of God?

7. We have been taught to believe that envy is wrong, yet we read, "The spirit...envies intensely." What does James mean? What is the Holy Spirit jealous for in your life?

II. THE SOLUTION: GRACE (4:6-17)

8. Read verse six. "But," says James, in the midst of quarrels and fights, "he (God) gives us more grace." What is the meaning of this? What is this grace which God gives? (See John 1:14,16,17; Romans 3:21-25; Romans 5:21; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11-14.)

9. How have you benefited from this grace? What responsibility do you have now that you have received this grace?

10. Read verses 7 through 12. What responses does James give for having received this grace? How can a modern Christian live this in the daily drudgery of life?

11. What promises appear in these verses? What kind of encouragement can they be to you this week?

12. We have an especially strong word against slander. What forms does this often take today in our homes, churches and the workplace? What are some practical ways to eliminate this kind of talk? What can you do?

13. The writer in verses 13-16, teaches us to be realistic in the way we face life. What does he say and how can this apply to you this week?

CONCLUSION

14. How should verse 17 cause you to live? Based on this chapter, what is the good you should do?

LESSON 8

READY FOR THE ADVENT

James 5:1-20

OPENER

Describe a time when an important visitor (or visitors) came to your home. What took place on the days before the visit?

INTRODUCTION

1. Imagine that you are James, the writer of this letter. About 30 years have gone by since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. One of the promises remembered by the disciples was that he would come again (John 14:1-5). At the time of the ascension, the disciples received a further word that Jesus would come again (Acts 1:11). What do you think James might be thinking now and what would you include in a letter if it was yours to write?

I. LISTEN (5:1-6)

2. The rich had failed miserably to use their money properly and it bothered James. What was so wrong about the way they had managed their riches and how could it have been different?

3. Based on what you read here, how should you manage your resources? What injustices do you see in your community? State? Nation? How should Christians react to these?

4. Since God is on the side of the poor, why doesn't he help them?

II. WAIT (5:7-12)

5. Remember how you used to wait when you were young? Those waits, which probably weren't very long, seemed like an eternity to a child. Then it was hard to be patient. Why do you think James is telling his readers to be patient for Christ's coming?

6. What does James say you can know about the coming of Jesus?

7. How should you live in view of Jesus' soon return?

III. PRAY (5:13-18)

8. When should a person pray, according to James? He doesn't list all the times when a person may pray. What are some other times? What experiences have you had with prayer?

9. Why do you think confession of sin is placed so prominently in this section?

10. In what way is Elijah an encouragement for you to pray? Read about him in 1 Kings 17. What was he like? Why did God hear his prayers? How can you be sure God hears your prayers?

IV. RESTORE (5:19, 20)

11. Wandering from the faith is possible. What motivation is there for bringing back the wanderer?

12. Read Luke 15. How does Jesus view the wanderer? How should you view the wanderer?

13. What wanderer should your study group be helping? What wanderer should you be helping?

CONCLUSION

14. Basing your answer on the thoughts in this chapter, how will you prepare for the coming of Christ?

NOTES FOR LEADERS

LEADING THE STUDY

1. Begin with prayer. Make it a simple prayer for open minds to understand the Scriptures and willing hearts to obey. You may have someone else open with prayer but it is usually best to ask such a person ahead of time. Not everyone feels comfortable praying in public.
2. Guide the individual or group through the lesson, question by question. The Scripture passage for the lesson should also be read during the study. Ask for volunteers from your study to read the Bible passages as they come in the lesson. Participation may be further enhanced by using the opener or some other question or activity which will foster dialogue between members of the group.
3. Always seek to summarize each question and aim toward application of the questions to daily living.
4. Start and end on time.
5. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving and committal.

WAYS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION

1. Ask several people to answer the question. You can also use questions such as, "What do the rest of you think?" or "Is there anything else which could be added?"
2. Omit any question which is not relevant to your group or which does not fit into the flow of discussion which is developing.
3. Keep the lesson on track and avoid issues not related to the topic. If such topics are brought up, suggest that they be discussed later in the evening when the study has been brought to a close, or set a later time for the group to discuss the topic.
4. Accept all contributions even if you think they are not correct. Never bluntly reject an answer. Press the rest of the group for their thoughts or in a friendly way ask the respondent on what the answer is based.
5. Don't talk too much as a leader. Let the discussion develop between members of the group. Act as a moderator. Do not feel you must have the last word or be the final authority on every question.
6. Watch the members of the group closely. Some may be hesitant and timid, but you can detect when they have something to contribute. Encourage them.

LESSON 1

4. Notice that James does not say that it is joy. He says, "Consider it joy..." Christians are not to hold a stiff upper-lip and go through life faking it. That is hypocrisy.
9. Florence Chadwick, on July 4, 1952, attempted to swim 21 miles from Catalina Island to the California coast. People in nearby boats encouraged her on. Finally she said, "I can't make it." She was less than half a mile from shore. When she saw how close she was she said, "If only I knew the shore was so close I would have kept on."
11. This account is the story of Moses leading Israel from Egypt (Exodus 14ff). After 40 years, and the death of Moses, Joshua led Israel into the land of promise, in fulfillment of the promise given v generations before to Abraham (Genesis 12:1ff; Genesis 13:14ff).
13. The double-minded man (or woman) is a person who is literally a two-souled person, a person with divided affections; a person who has not subdued his or her will to Christ; a person who wishes to live in both the world of the Spirit and the world ruled by the prince of the power of the air, Satan. Such a person cannot expect that prayers will be answered.
17. A Persian legend tells the story of a king who needed a faithful servant. He hired two men for a day, gave them wages and asked them to drain a cistern. They were to pull the water up by bucket and place it in a wire basket. One thought it a useless exercise and quit. The other kept on until the end, although he wondered at the wisdom of the king to have the water drained upon the ground. When the job was finished, the remaining servant looked into the cistern and saw a glistening object. It was a diamond, a diamond he would never have found had he not endured to the end.

LESSON 2

1. Trials differ from temptations since they are tests which come to make life more difficult, sometimes much more difficult. Trials are an inducement to test our character. Temptation, however, is an inducement to do an act that is wrong, whether in thought, word or deed. Trials can become temptations if we allow Satan through them to entice us to do wrong in thought, word or deed.
3. These are long passages but they illustrate the text of this lesson. If you think you will not have time, you may summarize each story, or appoint a person ahead of time to summarize them for the study group or class.
- 3d. Luke says (Luke 22:3) that Satan entered into Judas. This does not mean that Judas was not a willing accomplice. Judas had a choice and he allowed Satan to be his master (See Genesis 4:7; this text says that sin is crouching at the door. This is another way of saying Satan is crouching there.).
6. While Jesus was and is truly God, he chose to take on the form of human flesh. He had been in the wilderness for 40 days and nights fasting. He was hungry, tired and Satan offered him a shortcut to rule over the kingdom of this world. Satan could offer this because he is the god of

this world.

7. Find the passages which Jesus quoted from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13). This story is not primarily in the Gospel account because it is to show us how to face temptation, but rather to show that Jesus is the Messiah of God who truly has triumphed over Satan. He did what the First Adam could not do (Genesis 3).
11. Share some of the blessings you have received, both spiritual and temporal. You may wish to have the group quote some Bible verses which relate some of the blessings God gives.
14. The lion, most feared among the animals, attacks the sick, the young, and those that straggle. Their victims are weak or have not been alert. Satan too chooses those who have not been alert and those who have been alone. Christians need each other to help ward off the attacks of Satan.

LESSON 3

Opener. Encourage each person to think of one, but don't force it, and don't carry on too long, taking up precious time so that you will not get into the lesson.

4. The statement is, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
5. You could here also ask: "What is the righteous life to which James is referring?" You could also talk about the different kinds of anger. Some anger is good — the kind that leads to justice. But anger which comes out of selfishness is wrong and leads to sin.
7. The Greek word for filth is the same as that for wax buildup in the ear which makes hearing difficult. The Greek word for "get rid" is the same as that of stripping off clothing, especially for a runner who threw off outer garments so they would not hinder while running in a race. Legalism may be defined as a strict conformity to a moral code in order to inherit salvation.
10. Probably the Ten Commandments. We are blessed if we seek to follow these as a guide in our lives. They are like a fence which protects us. However, trying to keep them will not give us salvation in heaven. Keeping them perfectly is impossible. That is why we need Jesus who kept the law perfectly in our place. We want to follow the law because of our love for him. See John 8:32; cf. John 14:6.
13. Encourage members of your study group to begin this week. Covenant with each other to do one action that can be reported on the next time you meet. Be accountable to each other. The action need not be some big philanthropic act; just a small act of kindness to someone in need.

LESSON 4

2. Favoritism could be a problem in the churches of the Roman Empire. Often slaves and freemen were members of the same church.
3. The writers of the Life Application Bible ask the following question which you may wish to use in connection with this section: "Why is it wrong to show favoritism to the wealthy? It is: a) Inconsistent with Christ's teaching; b) Results from evil thoughts; c) Belittles people made in God's image; d) A by-product of selfish motives; e) Goes against the biblical definition of love; g) Shows

a lack of mercy to those less fortunate; h) Is sin.”

4. You need not read all these verses, but if you do, have different people read each passage and briefly ask the question. Summarize quickly when all verses have been read. The first century church had a problem with favoritism. Many, including Peter, at first believed that every Gentile who became a Christian must become like a Jew in every way (see Acts 10 and 15). The great break-through came at the Jerusalem Council (see Acts 15). There are, of course, many forms of discrimination.
10. Love is strong affection. Jesus’ love is so great that he gave his life for those he had created. Mercy is compassion. Jesus saw our helplessness in sin and had compassion on us. He saw that we could not pay the penalty so he loved us by dying in our place.
13. Mercy is what we need. We could never be saved were it not for the mercy of God. Our good deeds could never make us righteous before and acceptable to God (Ephesians 2:4-9). The deeds are done because we love him; done from a heart of gratitude for so great a salvation. How can a person be saved? (See John 1:12; 1 John 1:9; Acts 2:21.)

LESSON 5

- Opener. Many will come to mind when you start thinking about it; driving with someone in a car; driving your car; driving down the highway and trusting that others will obey the traffic signs; eating food in a restaurant; riding an elevator; using a road map; the list can go on. You will probably get many answers, which you may wish to write on a blackboard or some other device, if such is available. Accept all answers.
2. Faith, to be true faith, must be accompanied by action. It is living faith. It is an intellectual assent to the gospel which is lived out in daily life.
 4. Jesus was speaking to a Pharisee who already knew about good deeds and the importance of doing them. What he needed to know was how to be saved by transferring his trust to a Savior who alone could save.
 5. Every morning and evening the pious Jew recited the Shema, found in Deuteronomy 6:4. This statement formed the fundamental creedal statement of Judaism. It was a confession of monotheism. The Jew must believe this. But, says James, merely giving intellectual assent to this belief doesn’t raise one any higher than the devils, for they too believe this. They even tremble, he says, as they hold this article of faith. Such faith clearly does not save. The question then is, “What is the faith that saves?” Go back again to John 3. Throughout history the demons have tried to thwart God’s Messiah from bringing salvation (Genesis 3:15). At every step Satan and his demons tried to hinder Jesus from coming into the world, for they knew that through him there would be salvation. Consider the temptations of Abraham to disbelieve the promise; Herod’s killing of the boy children in Bethlehem; Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. These are but a few of the ways that Satan tried to hinder God from bringing his salvation through Jesus who is the only way to heaven (John 14:6).

6. *The Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism* (Faith and Fellowship Press: Fergus Falls, Minnesota; p.79.) gives this answer: "Justification is the gracious act of God by which He, for Christ's sake, acquits me (declares me not guilty), a repentant and believing sinner of my sin and guilt, credits me with Christ's righteousness, and looks upon me, in Christ, as though I had never sinned." (See also Ephesians 2:8,9; 2 Corinthians 5:21.)
7. The law is upheld. What law? All the moral law, including Jesus' royal law, which implies that a person of faith will demonstrate faith by good deeds done from the heart.
8. The whole story of Abraham is told in Genesis 11 -25. The ram that God provided is typical of Jesus (John 1:29). He is the lamb, who on the same mount shed his blood for our sins, in our place. This question is not included for discussion, but is included because it is essential to show how Abraham was saved. Rather than ask the group for the answer you may wish to give the response to the question yourself.
9. James uses Abraham, God's friend, and Rahab, a prostitute, to show that God does not play favorites. He gives his salvation to anyone who will trust him (which always implies obedience — never only intellectual assent). Faith and works are not opposites but "inseparables," like two sides of the same coin.
12. This question is personal. But if you think some in your group would like to give their own personal testimonies of how they came to faith in Jesus, give them the opportunity.
13. This number is not a discussion question. However, it does offer the opportunity for members of your group to respond to the invitation of Jesus to come to him.

LESSON 6

2. Many of the new converts to Christianity were Jews. This race always held teachers in highest esteem. It was not unusual then that many of these converts aspired to be teachers in this new religion of Christianity which was rapidly spreading throughout the Roman Empire. They should be cautious, however, because words affect the lives of people.
4. Eve adds words and Satan contradicts God's clear teaching. This lies at the heart of all false teaching.
8. The doctrine behind James' statement is that of Original Sin, a natural tendency to sin which we are born with (Romans 5:12,18).
10. To curse here means to call down a curse upon them; and also to belittle them or destructively criticize them in or out of their presence.
11. The secret lies in the illustrations James uses. Fig trees bear figs because they are fig trees. Believers will have good speech because of the new life that flows out from them.
16. Encourage your study group to covenant together to control their tongues. Help them to be specific.

LESSON 7

Opener. You could bring a newspaper or a news magazine to illustrate this question.

1. You could ask some more questions: "How was the conflict handled?"; "If the conflict worsened, why did it?"; "What caused the conflict to stop?" Much conflict, unfortunately, is never solved, only stopped for a time.
3. The word James uses for desire has the same root as hedonism, a belief that pleasure is the chief good in life. Aldous Huxley wrote *Brave New World* in which he said that pleasure would overrun us. He may be right. God is not against pleasure (Psalm 16:7-11). He created it. However, he is opposed to misguided pleasure which is at the expense of others and disobedient to him. John MacMurray said, "The best cure for hedonism is an attempt to practice it."
6. Go back and review the life of Abraham. How did he become God's friend? Remember God became his friend first. Abraham stumbled but also trusted and obeyed. Note the various episodes in his life which illustrate Abraham's journey of faith (Genesis 11-25).
7. See Exodus 20:1-6.
10. In verse 6 James talks about the grace that God gives to us. The responses in verses 7-12 are because of what God has done for us in giving us his grace. Note: "Submit..., then..." In other words, because of the grace God has given you, submit, resist, etc.
13. Some Puritans used to write the letters, D.V. after anything in which they stated their plans. The letters stand for the Latin words, *Deo Volente*, meaning, God Willing. It was their way of saying that their plans could change. They recognized that they were not entirely in charge of their own scheduling.

LESSON 8

4. This is a most troublesome question. The problems posed in this passage are caused by sin. God has taken care of the problem of sin on the cross by the death of Christ. God's way to deal with the problems caused by sin are to send his people into the world. However, people still have choice and they will continue to choose wrongly, even if it means hurting others. We do not yet live in a perfect kingdom. That will come when Jesus returns. Then will come to pass what we have prayed for in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come..." For now it is our job to help the poor. God has given a world full of resources for our use.
6. It is certain, near, and will be a time of judgment.
8. Singing is a form of prayer. Anointing of the sick with oil has sometimes been taken in different ways. Some believe it is a ceremony in which oil is placed on the forehead of the one who is sick and prayer is offered. R.C.H. Lenski in his commentary (Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis) claims it means that we should use the medical help at our disposal and pray for the sick. In James' day, anointing with oil was part of the medical practice used for healing. Certainly in this day we would not ignore the medical gifts of healing which God has given. Neither should we ignore prayer.

9. Sin hinders prayer (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:1,2). Forgiveness brings healing (1 Peter 2:24). NOTE: Not everyone experiences healing in this life. Sickness and death are the results of the Fall. As sinners we share in that Fall. We all have the seeds of death in our bodies. But whenever healing occurs it is a foretaste of the ultimate healing we will all have at the resurrection when our bodies will rise incorruptible.
10. God hears prayers that are consistent with His will (Matthew 26:39; John 6:38; Matthew 6:10; 1 John 5:14,15).



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