

JAMES



SAGE WISDOM
— FOR —
FAITHFUL LIVING



WHERE ARE WE GOING?.....	4
START HERE!	5
HOW TO LEAD A SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY.....	7
WK1 - JAMES 1:17-27 STEADFAST FAITH	9
WEEK 1 DAILY SOAP READINGS.....	9
WEEK 1 DAY 1 – JAMES 1:1-11.....	10
WEEK 1 DAY 2 – JAMES 1:12-16.....	11
WEEK 1 DAY 3 – JAMES 1:17-18.....	12
WEEK 1 DAY 4 – JAMES 1:19-21.....	13
WEEK 1 DAY 5 – JAMES 1:22-27.....	14
WEEK 1 - GROUP MEETING – JAMES 1:17-27 STEADFAST FAITH	15
WK2 - JAMES 2:1-18 SERVING FAITH.....	16
WEEK 2 DAILY SOAP READINGS.....	16
WEEK 2 DAY 1 – JAMES 2:1.....	17
WEEK 2 DAY 2 – JAMES 2:2-7	18
WEEK 2 DAY 3 – JAMES 2:8-10.....	19
WEEK 2 DAY 4 – JAMES 2:11-13.....	20
WEEK 2 DAY 5 – JAMES 2:14-18.....	21
WEEK 2 - GROUP MEETING – JAMES 2:1-18 – SERVING FAITH	22
WK3 - JAMES 3:16-4:6 SPEAKING FAITH	23
WEEK 3 DAILY SOAP READINGS.....	23
WEEK 3 DAY 1 – JAMES 3:1-5	24
WEEK 3 DAY 2 – JAMES 3:5-11.....	25
WEEK 3 DAY 3 – JAMES 3:13-18.....	26
WEEK 3 DAY 4 – JAMES 4:1-3	27
WEEK 3 DAY 5 – JAMES 4:4-6	28
WEEK 3 - GROUP MEETING – JAMES 3:16-4:6 SPEAKING FAITH.....	29
WK4 - JAMES 4:7-12 SUBMITTING FAITH.....	30
WEEK 4 DAILY SOAP READINGS.....	30
WEEK 4 DAY 1 – JAMES 4:7.....	31
WEEK 4 DAY 2 – JAMES 4:8.....	32
WEEK 4 DAY 3 – JAMES 4:9.....	33
WEEK 4 DAY 4 – JAMES 4:10.....	34
WEEK 4 DAY 5 – JAMES 4:11-12.....	35
WEEK 4 - GROUP MEETING – JAMES 4:7-12 SUBMITTING FAITH	36
WK5 - JAMES 4:13-5:6 SHARING FAITH	37
WEEK 5 DAILY SOAP READINGS.....	37
WEEK 5 DAY 1 – JAMES 4:13-17.....	38
WEEK 5 DAY 2 – JAMES 5:1-6	39
WEEK 5 DAY 3 – JAMES 5:7-11.....	40
WEEK 5 DAY 4 – JAMES 5:12.....	41
WEEK 5 DAY 5 – JAMES 5:13-20.....	42
WEEK 5 - GROUP MEETING – JAMES 4:13-5:6 SHARING FAITH.....	43

LEADER'S NOTES.....	44
LEADER'S NOTES WEEK 1 – STEADFAST FAITH - JAMES 1:17-27	45
LEADER'S NOTES WEEK 2 – JAMES 2:1-18 – SERVING FAITH	50
LEADER'S NOTES WEEK 3 – JAMES 3:16-4:6	56
LEADER'S NOTES WEEK 4 – JAMES 4:7-12 SUBMITTING FAITH.....	60
LEADER'S NOTES WEEK 5 – JAMES 4:13-5:6	63
TWO WAYS TO LIVE NOTES (YMB).....	67
DISCIPLESHIP ENGINES (RLM).....	68
GROUP STUDY TOOLS	69
PRINCIPLES FOR STUDYING A BIBLE PASSAGE (CST)	71
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	73

SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to my Flywheel Cohort who encouraged and helped this project take the next step in development. Their encouragement, editing, and ideas continue to refine and define the scope of these books. Their patient toleration of foibles of language and typos are greatly appreciated.

But most of all, I'm honored by their commitment to be a team of preachers who want to be accurate to the text and also prophetic about seeing the Good News bring healing, restoration, and comfort to a world in desperate need of sage wisdom.

- The Rev. Dean Ronald Greiser
- The Rev. Stephen Davis
- The Rev. Dana Boynton
- The Rev. Rags Coxé
- The Rev. Mary Ellen Doran
- The Rev. Jason Collins

Thank you for spending time in the word with me!

Where are we going?

Fr. Thomas McKenzie (1971-2021) wrote in *The Anglican Way* that we should imagine we are, “ what God says you are: a priest... This means that you are blessed, loved, needed, and accepted. It means that your life has purpose and value and meaning. It means that you are more than you realize. And, yes, it means that you are different—maybe even strange. We are an odd people with strange priorities. Our sins our numerous. But the grace we have received is total.”

As James, the brother of Jesus writes to all of the Christians scattered abroad, he is reminding them of this very fact. You are God's people, chosen, and though you may sin and be scattered -- your joy should display a steadfast, serving, speaking, submitting and sharing faith.

This confident faith is at odds with the self-confident world and will put Jesus' followers in harms way. But with sage wisdom from James we will see that God's grace is sufficient to move us from a mere knowledge of our faith to a full bodied active life of faith.

Maybe we can be like Fr. Thomas and realize no matter how far we're scattered, that our ministry is marked by the grace God gives – and maybe we can extend that grace to the world through our steadfast faith in Jesus.

Start Here!

*Mark 1:17 Follow me,
and I will make you become
fishers of men*

What in the world does that mean? We hear it all the time, “Follow Jesus”... but how do I do it?? And what, exactly, is Jesus going to make me into??

This booklet is a compilation of resources to help springboard you into a myriad of conversations with your family, friends and neighbors as we all share the Gospel, make disciples, and equip ambassadors for the world. We hope this will equip you, daily and practically, in following Jesus and helping others follow Him.

We’ve broken down this book into a weekly devotion, daily readings of Scripture, a weekly Bible study for groups, and Leader’s notes to help you go deeper, if needed.

Here’s the key: **You can do this.**

We’re convinced that if you jump in, read on your own, and with others – and look for the plain meaning – God himself will join you on the journey and guide you.

So, what to do first?

Step 1 - Set a time, daily, to read Scripture and reflect. We call this “SOAP Journaling”. There are readings for just five days a week to help you catch up time on the weekend. Take as short as 15 minutes or as long as an hour if you want to really dig in.

Step 2 –Gather a group of people and decide to work through this together. It could be one other person, your family, or a group from work or the neighborhood. Groups keep the Bible as the main curriculum, help focus us on the Gospel and Growth, have between 3-12 people, and help us apply the Bible to our lives and the lives of those around us. Nobody was designed to live the Christian life alone. Join a group of friends and grow forward together!

Step 3 – Share what you’re learning! Keep it simple and share what you’ve learned (questions, struggles and celebrations). If you need help, we’re here to coach!

How to Soap –

SOAP is a method of Bible Study that is easy, practical, and helpful for bringing this ancient text to life in your life.

Scripture

Start by reading the longer section and then focus in on the shorter section. Read the passage slowly and intentionally without skimming or reading too fast. Try reading it two or three times to really get it.

Then write in your journal the passage or (at least) a verse, phrase or word stands out or catches your attention.

Observation/Interpretation Questions: (What does it mean?)

Think about the following questions, looking at what the text (in and of itself) means. Don't try to interpret it, yet. Just work to understand what it means on its own terms.

Does the text contain repeated words, phrases and ideas?

Does it mention attributes of God (things that are true about Him)?

Does the text make several points in a row? Number each point as it is introduced in the text.

Did you come across words you don't understand? Mark them with a question mark. Look them up in a dictionary and write a definition or synonym for them in your copy.

Does the passage include key transition words, such as if/then, therefore, likewise, but, because, or in the same way? Draw an arrow to connect a concluding thought to its beginning argument.

Is an idea confusing? Write your question in the margin to address at another time.

Application Questions: (How should it change me?)

Once you've begun to understand the text (or even just understood what your questions might be) then try to apply it to real life. Ask what the passage means for you (individually). The following questions might be helpful. Write what you're thinking in your journal.

What does this passage teach me about God?

How does this aspect of God's character change my view of self?

How does/might this point to Jesus and the Good News that He brings?

What should I do in response?

We can and should draw other application points from the text, but the God-centered questions should always be our starting point.

Prayer: Now, all you need to do is respond in Prayer. Write out something, from the passage, that has made you thankful. Or, write down something that the passage made you sorry about (perhaps it revealed some sin pattern in your life?). Maybe the passage made you think about something that you need from God. Ask him to please provide what you need. This is the TSP model of prayer: Thank you / Sorry / Please

How to lead a Small Group Bible Study

Perhaps you've been leading Bible Studies for a long time... or maybe this is your first attempt. Either way, know that we're here to coach and guide you! Here are some simple things to keep in mind and a brief outline as you begin:

First, realize what a Small Group Bible Study is. It's not a book club, lecture society, or sensitivity training. A Small Group Bible Study's goal is to apply the Gospel to everyday life as we intersect with the Bible.

A Small Group Bible Study Defined

- 1 – A weekly meeting where the Bible is the one curriculum
- 2 – Two targets: The Gospel and Discipleship Engines
- 3 – 12 People... once it gets larger discussion is hindered
- 4 – Questions to help apply to real life.

Purpose - Discipleship = Follow, Form, Fulfill

"Making Disciples" means we are helping people move into being followers of Jesus to people who are being formed by Jesus to people who are fulfilling the great commission. We are sharing the Gospel, making Disciples, and equipping Ambassadors.

Rules of the Road

#1 BE SELF-AWARE not AUDIENCE AWARE: Be self-aware of how you personally affect the group through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. Use "I" statements about what you think/feel... and make sure everyone talks. No preaching! Let Jesus (through his Word) fix people. Give encouragement; speak truth, point to Jesus.
#2 CONFIDENTIALITY: What's said in the group stays in the group.
#3 LISTEN: (PAUSE and SILENCE and No "Cross Talk") Value one another during the discussions. Don't think about what to say next. Affirm what's being said right now. Take a breath and think about what's just been said before responding. And don't fill the silence... Stay in the moment... be considerate... listen. No side conversations.

Open – Help the group focus on the reason they're there

Start by checking in. Ask what people learned the previous week and shared with anyone. This will help move people from "information" to "transformation".

"Open" questions help break the ice and get people relating with each other and the text. Use what's provided or make one up to help your group connect as you see fit.

A great opening question will tie real life with the theme of the text... and it helps get people on task in a fun relational manner.

Story the Bible Passage - *Leader: Tell the story in your own words, asking the group to re-tell it back to you.*

This method is called “Storying” and it really helps people to engage with the story. It doesn’t replace the reading of God’s Word, but it does help people focus and hear things they might not have from the text. After they’ve heard the passage, and re-told it to you, read the passage. There are some great Storying helps at the end of this booklet.

Dig - Ask the questions in the book OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. This helps keep the Bible the main teacher. Everyone has an opinion, but we always want to go back to what the text says. Help everyone keep in mind that the Bible is God’s Word, all of it, so we need to let it teach us... rather than simply being commentators.

Apply - This is where a group really learns to grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it’s important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God’s character and actions and contrast them to people’s (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it’s easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can’t do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do? Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - *Thank you / Sorry / Please*

Invite everyone to pray together as a group. Keep it simple, inviting everyone to pray, out loud, with simplicity. Simply list the thing(s) you’re thankful for in prayer. Then share what you’re sorry for (Perhaps something in this study reminded you of something about God you need to remember, or something you need to do that you’ve neglected) Then, going around as a group, individually listing out your requests (Ask God to please help you with what you need to do... or help you in another area).



1 Steadfast Faith 1:17-27

WK1 - James 1:17-27 Steadfast Faith ***Week 1 Daily SOAP readings***

On your own – *Read and SOAP these passages for context and deeper understanding*

- Day 1 – James 1:1-11 - *What is your only comfort in life and death? How does that comfort help you remain steadfast in trials?*
- Day 2 – James 1:12-16 - *What does it look like to remain steadfast in trials?*
- Day 3 – James 1:17-18 - *What does it mean, to you, to have gifts from the Father of lights?*
- Day 4 – James 1:19-21 - *How is my speed at listening v. speaking and anger?*
- Day 5 – James 1:22-27 - *What am I doing that blesses me and those in need?*

Use these passages to engage with the Scriptures as you prepare or reflect on this week's main passage. Consider getting a journal to keep your reflections and look to the "How to SOAP" section for helpful hints.

Week 1 Day 1 – James 1:1-11
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What is your only comfort in life and death? How does that comfort help you remain steadfast in trials?

Devotional

If you could edit all the pain out of your life -- or your child's life, would you? Perhaps those trials and tribulations actually produces a resilience and steadfast faith? PT Forsyth, many centuries ago, said:

It is a popular notion that the warmest part of this island must be in the center, away from the cold waters and high gales of the inconstant sea. But the scientific fact is just the reverse. The sea has a benign and steadying influence upon the climate of the coast. The coldest place in England, according to the charts, is a spot at its very heart.

There is a certain grace that comes to our shore and knocks, yea beats, and even lashes, there; and it has more of the changeless love of God in it than in all the affections that sweeten the inlands of life. Sea and shore may indeed meet in storm. But our peace lies through the storm.

Our only hope in life and death is that we are not our own (as the Heidelberg Catechism says), but “belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus.” In the storms of life, we can trust that He will walk on the waves and meet us in the sea.

Week 1 Day 2 – James 1:12-16
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What does it look like to remain steadfast in trials?

Devotional

In his book *If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil*, author Randy Alcorn recalls when his friend, writer Ethel Herr, had a double mastectomy. Two months later doctors discovered that the cancer had spread. One of Herr's friends, shocked and fumbling for words, asked her, "And how do you feel about God now?" Reflecting on the moment the question was posed to her, Herr says:

As I sought to explain what has happened in my spirit, it all became clearer to me. God has been preparing me for this moment. He has undergirded me in ways I've never known before. He has made himself increasingly real and precious to me. He has given to me joy such as I've never known before—and I've no need to work at it, it just comes, even amidst the tears. He has taught me that no matter how good my genes are or how well I take care of my diet and myself, he will lead me on whatever journey he chooses and will never leave me for a moment of that journey. And he planned it all in such a way that step by step, he prepared me for the moment when the doctor dropped the last shoe ... God is good, no matter what the diagnosis or the prognosis, or the fearfulness of the uncertainty of having neither. The key to knowing God is good is simply knowing him."

Week 1 Day 3 – James 1:17-18

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What does it mean, to you, to have gifts from the Father of lights?

Devotional

Preaching Today has a fascinating story about Michelangelo:

The Sistine Chapel is one of the true jewels of world art. After spending four years painting it, Michelangelo finished his masterpiece in 1512, and the chapel went into daily use. In those days the only light source came from candles. As candles burned year after year, the soot began to rise to the ceiling, obscuring the paintings. After over 400 years of soot, grime, and dust collecting on the ceiling, the original art had to be restored. So a team of restorative artists worked on the Sistine Chapel from 1984-1999 until the monochrome colors were restored to their original beauty.

Prior to the restoration process, many in the art community thought that Michelangelo was a genius at composition. After all, how did he think to have Adam's hand stretching out, yearning to find the finger of God, which was already reaching out for him? But it was also widely-believed that Michelangelo's coloration was mediocre. It was too dark, monochromatic, and blah. And yet when they restored those frescoes to their original state, everyone could see the beautiful, fresh, and even spring-like colors—pale pink, apple green, vivid yellow, and sky blue against a background of warm pearly grey. When the maker's true brilliance and goodness were revealed, people had to change their assumptions about Michelangelo.

In a similar way, for many us, over the years the soot, grime, and dust of daily life have obscured our vision of God's goodness. God's character seems blah, mediocre, and maybe even dark. We no longer feel and deeply believe that through Christ we have a good Father. Through the Word of God, the Spirit's presence, and the love of other Christians, God begins a work of restoration so we can see the true colors of his brilliant goodness.

Week 1 Day 4 – James 1:19-21

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

How is my speed at listening v. speaking and anger?

Devotional

We live in the information age and it's tempting to think that more words must be better. But, Ted Koppel, a TV news reporter from the 1980's once asked us to consider this paradox: paradox: *Almost everything that is publicly said these days is recorded. Almost nothing of what is said is worth remembering.*

In 1995 The *Arizona Republic* reported that when Steve Tran of Westminster, California, closed the door on 25 activated bug bombs, he thought he had seen the last of the cockroaches that shared his apartment. When the spray reached the pilot light of the stove, it ignited, blasting his screen door across the street, breaking all his windows, and setting his furniture ablaze. "I really wanted to kill all of them," he said. "I thought if I used a lot more, it would last longer." According to the label, just two canisters of the fumigant would have solved Tran's roach problem. The blast caused over \$10,000 damage to his apartment building. And the cockroaches? Tran reported, "By Sunday, I saw them walking around."

Perhaps more words would be better replaced with more listening?

Week 1 Day 5 – James 1:22-27

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What am I doing that blesses me and those in need?

Devotional

In the summer of 2004, Warren Beamer, a missionary from San Antonio, Texas, visited an orphanage in Nigeria. Beamer was startled when one of the children at the orphanage spoke to him with a southern accent. The girl quickly shared that she was from Houston, Texas. To convince the missionary that this was true, she recited her social security number. Then the girl led Beamer to six other children in the orphanage, whom she described as her brothers and sisters.

The children, who ranged from eight to sixteen years-of-age, had been sent to a Nigerian boarding school by their adoptive American mother. When the woman stopped making tuition payments, the children were sent to the orphanage, living in squalid conditions. Gradually the children gave up hope of ever returning home.

When the children saw Beamer, they began singing the "Star-Spangled Banner" in an effort to convince him of the truth of their claim. With the assistance of Beamer's pastor and a U.S. congressman, the children were back in America within eight days.

James calls us to be doers of the word -- which is a call to uncover for the world who the Father of Lights is and to repatriate them into the Kingdom. Physical and spiritual orphans alike need people of the implanted word who will bless the world with truth wrapped in action.

Week 1 - Group Meeting – James 1:17-27 Steadfast Faith

Open (Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker - What makes you unsteady, uneasy or unbalanced? And, how do you react? Short fuse, big bomb? Long fuse, little fizz? Other?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up, Story, Summarize and Dig (James 1:17-27) (ask Journalist style questions: *Who, What, Where, When, Why* that guide you to the Apply questions below. Make sure to get to the Apply!)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?
2. Looking at vv. 1:1-16, why does James now change to the topic of gifts and their origin?
3. Why is it important that God is light and does not change? Is that comforting in any way?
4. Who chooses to be a child of God?
5. How does the word "first fruits" describe the people of God?
6. When was a time you wish you had been "quick to listen" and "slow to speak"?
7. Why does he say we should put away sin (filthiness and wickedness) before receiving the implanted word?
8. What is the "implanted word" in your life? How can it save you?
9. Looking into a mirror and forgetting what one looks like is amnesia. How do "hearers only" show spiritually amnesia?
10. How can you tell if you are hearing parts of God's Word without actively obeying them?
11. How does this passage encourage us to slow down and be steadfast in our faith

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - Thank you / Sorry / Please



2 Serving Faith 2:1-18

WK2 - James 2:1-18 Serving Faith

Week 2 Daily SOAP readings

On your own – *Read and SOAP these passages for context and deeper understanding*

- Day 1 – James 2:1 - *Am I willing to stand with those who are excluded?*
- Day 2 – James 2:2-7 - *How can I honor the poor in my life?*
- Day 3 – James 2:8-10 - *How am I doing at loving God and loving neighbor?*
- Day 4 – James 2:11-13 - *What would it mean for me to live as if God's law was the most freeing law of all?*
- Day 5 – James 2:14-18 - *What works of mine are a demonstrable fruit of my faith?*

Use these passages to engage with the Scriptures as you prepare or reflect on this week's main passage. Consider getting a journal to keep your reflections and look to the "How to SOAP" section for helpful hints.

Week 2 Day 1 – James 2:1
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

Am I willing to stand with those who are excluded?

Devotional

In his book, *Chase the Lion* Mark Batterson shares that:

Shortly after being installed as the twentieth pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a sermon in November of 1954 titled "Transformed Nonconformist." "The Christian is called upon not to be like a thermometer conforming to the temperature of his society," said King, "but he must be like a thermostat serving to transform the temperature of his society..

"I have seen many white people who sincerely oppose segregation and [discrimination]," said King. "But they never took a [real] stand against it because of fear of standing alone." Are you willing not just to stand but to stand alone?

On December 1, 1955, a transformed nonconformist boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus just five blocks from the pulpit where King delivered that sermon. When the white section filled up with passengers, the bus driver ordered Rosa Parks to give up her seat in the colored section. Rosa politely refused. She took a moral stand by remaining seated.

"Our mistreatment was not right," Rosa said. "I was just tired of it." It wasn't a physical tiredness; it was a moral tiredness. "The only tired I was, was tired of giving in." Rosa Park's stand against racial segregation started a ripple effect. It led to a court battle, which led to a citywide boycott, which led to the Supreme Court ruling segregation unconstitutional.

Until the pain of staying the same becomes more acute than the pain of change, nothing happens. We simply maintain the status quo. And we convince ourselves that playing it safe is safe. But the greatest risk is taking no risks at all.

Week 2 Day 2 – James 2:2-7
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

How can I honor the poor in my life?

Devotional

For most homeowners in a hot housing market, the value of their property tends to rise dramatically. But not for Carlette Duffy. Her home seemed not to rise in value much at all, and Duffy couldn't find a satisfactory explanation--that is, until the answer was too obvious to ignore.

Duffy was looking to borrow against its equity when she got an appraisal for her home. She was surprised when the appraised amount was \$125,000, which seemed low compared to the findings she'd seen anecdotally from other friends and family. So, she had another appraisal done, and the second came out at just \$110,000, just ten thousand more than when she'd bought the place four years prior.

Nagged by her suspicions that the lowball offers were because she was African-American, Duffy again got a third appraisal. But this time, she took pains not to reveal her racial identity, by corresponding via email, and asking a friend's white husband to stand in during the appraiser's visit to the home. That appraisal came back at \$259,000--more than double the original amount.

The rep who conducted the second appraisal claimed that his work was driven by relevant data. But according to Andre Perry, a researcher who studies housing discrimination, that explanation fails to account for the history of institutional racism in real estate.

Perry said, "It's almost when people see Black neighborhoods, they see twice as much crime than there actually is. They see worse education than there actually is. I think this is what's happening when appraisers, lenders, real estate agents see Blackness. They devalue the asset. They devalue the property."

Duffy has since teamed up with the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana to file a complaint with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Source: Alexandria Burris, "Black homeowner had a white friend stand in for third appraisal: Her home value doubled," USA Today (5-13-21)

Week 2 Day 3 – James 2:8-10
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

How am I doing at loving God and loving neighbor?

Devotional

Howard Hendricks said in the sermon “The Problem of Discrimination”:

I was ministering in Fourth Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. We had a Thursday morning father-son breakfast, six-thirty. It was to be over by quarter of eight. There were many people from the military, quite a few people from various government offices, some craftsmen, laborers of various kind--really quite a mix. After I had finished speaking and the meeting was dismissed, I looked over to my right, and there was Senator Mark Hatfield, stacking chairs and picking up napkins that had fallen on the floor. Ladies and gentlemen, if you are impressed that you are a United States senator, you don't stack chairs and pick up napkins. If you are impressed that you are God's gift to the body of Christ as the great preacher of this age, you don't stoop to serve. If you are impressed that, really, you are the greatest thing that ever happened to your local church, you do not serve. You live to be served.

Week 2 Day 4 – James 2:11-13

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What would it mean for me to live as if God's law was the most freeing law of all?

Devotional

Haddon Robinson in "Crafting Illustrations" writes:

Dorothy Sayers, the mystery writer, was also a devoted Christian. Dorothy Sayers was attempting to explain the moral law of God. She pointed out that in our society there are two kinds of laws. There is the law of the stop sign, and there's the law of the fire. The law of the stop sign is a law that says the traffic is heavy on a certain street, and as a result the police department or the city council decides to erect a stop sign. They also decide that if you run that stop sign, it will cost you \$25 or \$30 or \$35. If the traffic changes, they can up the ante. That is if too many people are running the stop sign, they can make the fine \$50 or \$75, or if they build a highway around the city, they can take the stop sign down, or reduce the penalty, making it only \$10 if you go through. The police department or city council controls the law of the stop sign.

But then she said there is also the law of the fire. And the law of the fire says if you put your hand in the fire, you'll get burned. Now imagine that all of the legislatures of all the nations of the entire world gathered in one great assembly, and they voted unanimously that here on out that fire would no longer burn. The first man or woman who left that assembly and put his or her hand in the fire would discover that the law of the fire is different than the law of the stop sign. Bound up in the nature of fire itself is the penalty for abusing it. So, Dorothy Sayers says, the moral law of God is like the law of the fire. You never break God's laws; you just break yourself on them. God can't reduce the penalty, because the penalty for breaking the law is bound up in the law itself.

Week 2 Day 5 – James 2:14-18

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What works of mine are a demonstrable fruit of my faith?

Devotional

Gabe Lyons wrote in “Faithfulness in an Age of Distraction” about a curious new report about fitness in America.

A new report from the Global Wellness Institute, a nonprofit focused on research in preventative health and wellness, found that Americans spent \$264.6 billion dollars on physical activity in 2018, far more than any other nation. The United States leads the world in spending for every segment, including fitness classes (\$37 billion), sports and recreation (\$58 billion), apparel and footwear (\$117 billion), equipment and supplies (\$37.5 billion), mindful movement--such as yoga (\$10 billion), and related technology (\$8.1 billion).

*And yet, according to the academic journal *The Lancet*, for all of this spending, we rank 143rd globally for actual participation in physical activity. More than 40 percent of Americans fail to meet the global standard of 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity (e.g., fast-paced walking, gardening) or 75 minutes per week of intense physical activity (e.g., running, strength training).*

For some strange reason spending money on track shoes, bicycles, or gym memberships won't get you healthy.

Week 2 - Group Meeting – James 2:1-18 – Serving Faith

Open (Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker - For what event would you buy the "best seats in the house"? (World Series? Carnegie Hall? A child's school play?). Now... who would you give those seats up for?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up, Story, Summarize and Dig (James 2:1-18) (ask

Journalist style questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why that guide you to the Apply questions below. Make sure to get to the Apply!)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?
2. In general, what are some ways people show favoritism?
3. How does God look on favoritism? When has favoritism hurt you?
4. What does it mean that God has chosen the poor?
5. Is James "anti-wealth"?
6. What is the "royal law" and how would you summarize it?
7. How can one's preference for a person really be that bad?
8. Why would failing at one part of the law mean complete failure?
9. How can the law be liberty as well?
10. What hope is found in v. 13?
11. What kind of faith is condemned in v. 14? In what ways does this still happen today?
12. Is this a call to ministry with the poor or something more specific (and perhaps more profound)?
13. What is the relationship that James is drawing between faith and works? What do we need when we don't measure up?

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - Thank you / Sorry / Please



3 Speaking Faith 3:16-4:6

WK3 - James 3:16-4:6 Speaking Faith ***Week 3 Daily SOAP readings***

On your own – *Read and SOAP these passages for context and deeper understanding*

- Day 1 - James 3:1-5 - *Who are you teaching?*
- Day 2 - James 3:5-11 - *How can I let God take control of my tongue?*
- Day 3 - James 3:13-18 - *What wisdom am I asking God to bring down from above for my life?*
- Day 4 - James 4:1-3 - *What do I desire so badly that it's actually harmful to me?*
- Day 5 - James 4:4-6 - *What do I love in this world that is so precious to me that if it was lost I would feel like I was lost?*

Use these passages to engage with the Scriptures as you prepare or reflect on this week's main passage. Consider getting a journal to keep your reflections and look to the "How to SOAP" section for helpful hints.

Week 3 Day 1 – James 3:1-5
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

Who are you teaching?

Devotional

In his book *Building a Church of Small Groups*, Bill Donahue relays a story from his time as a part-time youth pastor while attending seminary. He was visiting a farm where two of his students lived, and their father decided to teach Bill a lesson:

He asked if I could help call in the sheep. I enthusiastically agreed. Sheep-calling was like preaching. We stood at the pasture fence, watching 25 sheep graze.

"Go ahead," he dared me. "Call them in."

"What do you say?" I asked.

"I just say, 'Hey, sheep! C'mon in!'"

No sweat, I thought. A city kid with a bad back and hay fever could do this. I began in a normal speaking voice, but Tom interrupted.

"You are 75 yards away, down wind, and they have their backs to you. Yell! Use your diaphragm, like they teach you in preaching class."

So I took a deep breath and put every inch of stomach muscle into a yell that revival preachers around the world would envy: "Hey, sheep! C'mon in!" The blessed creatures didn't move an inch. None even turned an ear.

Tom smiled sarcastically. "Do they teach you the Bible in that seminary? Have you ever read, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me'?" Raising his voice only slightly, he said: "Hey, sheep! C'mon in!" All 25 sheep turned and ambled toward us. Tom seized this teachable moment.

"Now, don't you ever forget," he said. "You are the shepherd to my kids."

Week 3 Day 2 – James 3:5-11
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

How can I let God take control of my tongue?

Devotional

A "slip of the tongue" by an air traffic controller at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport saw two planes come within 300 feet of crashing into each other in July, 2020.

A United Airlines flight from Newark, NJ was making its approach to land at the same time that an EasyJet was preparing to take off for Malaga, Spain. The Newark flight was supposed to be assigned to land on runway 09L, as the Malaga flight was cleared to take off from runway 09R.

Due to an unfortunate slip of the tongue, however, the controller gave clearance for Newark to land on 09R, instead of 09L. Furthermore, the controller didn't have direct line-of-sight access to runway 09R because of an equipment malfunction.

Eventually, the Malaga flight asked why the Newark plane was given clearance to land on their runway, and warned of the imminent collision. The Newark plane was instructed to abort the landing and ascend, but by the time it engaged the evasive maneuver, the two planes were only 300 feet apart.

The tongue has great power. As Laurence Peter said, " Speak when you're angry--and you'll make the best speech you'll ever regret."

Week 3 Day 3 – James 3:13-18

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What wisdom am I asking God to bring down from above for my life?

Devotional

Andrew Murray writes in *With Christ in the School of Obedience*:

The true pupil, say of some great musician or painter, yields his master a wholehearted and unhesitating submission. In practicing his scales or mixing the colors, in the slow and patient study of the elements of his art, he knows that it is wisdom simply and fully to obey.

It is this wholehearted surrender to His guidance, this implicit submission to His authority, which Christ asks. We come to Him asking Him to teach us the lost art of obeying God as He did. ... The only way of learning to do a thing is to do it. The only way of learning obedience from Christ is to give up your will to Him and to make the doing of His will the one desire and delight of your heart.

Week 3 Day 4 – James 4:1-3
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What do I desire so badly that it's actually harmful to me?

Devotional

Thomas Costain's book *The Three Edwards* describes the life of Raynald III, a 14th-century duke in what is now Belgium. Grossly overweight, Raynald was commonly called by his Latin nickname, Crassus, which means fat.

After a violent quarrel, Raynald's younger brother Edward led a successful revolt against him. Edward captured Raynald, but did not kill him. Instead, he built a room around Raynald in the Nieuwkerk castle and promised him he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room. This would not have been difficult for most people, since the room had several windows and a door of near-normal size—none of which were locked or barred. The problem was Raynald's size. To regain his freedom, he needed to lose weight.

But Edward knew his older brother. Each day he sent a variety of delicious foods into the room. Instead of dieting his way out of prison, Raynald grew fatter. When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he had a ready answer: "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills." Raynald stayed in that room for 10 years and wasn't released until after Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined that he died within a year—a prisoner of his own appetite.

Week 3 Day 5 – James 4:4-6
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What do I love in this world that is so precious to me that if it was lost I would feel like I was lost?

Devotional

Lord Kenneth Clark, internationally known for his television series *Civilization*, lived and died without faith in Jesus Christ. He admitted in his autobiography that while visiting a beautiful church he had what he believed to be an overwhelming religious experience. He wrote, "My whole being was irradiated by a kind of heavenly joy far more intense than anything I had known before."

But the "flood of grace" as he described it, created a problem. If he allowed himself to be influenced by it, he knew he would have to change, his family might think he had lost his mind, and maybe that intense joy would prove to be an illusion. So, he concluded, "I was too deeply embedded in the world to change course."

Week 3 - Group Meeting – James 3:16-4:6 Speaking Faith

Open (Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker - How freely and confidently do you approach God? (OR) Who tucked you in at night and heard your prayers?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up, Story, Summarize and Dig (James 3:16-4:6) (ask Journalist style questions: *Who, What, Where, When, Why* that guide you to the Apply questions below. Make sure to get to the Apply!)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?
2. How can you recognize a wise person?
3. What two behaviors indicate a lack of wisdom (v. 16)?
4. What does heavenly wisdom produce? Sound like? Look like?
5. What is at the root of fights and quarrels?
6. What are two reasons we don't have what we want? What might some other reason be for unanswered prayers?
7. How can Christians become adulterous with God?
8. If God is jealous ... what could we possibly do?

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - Thank you / Sorry / Please



4 Submitting Faith 4:7-12

WK4 - James 4:7-12 Submitting Faith

Week 4 Daily SOAP readings

On your own – *Read and SOAP these passages for context and deeper understanding*

- Day 1 - James 4:7 - What fear do I need to submit to God?
- Day 2 - James 4:8 - What would it mean for Jesus to draw near to you?
- Day 3 - James 4:9 - What should we re-evaluate in our lives and maybe mourn?
- Day 4 - James 4:10 - In what area of your life do you need to humbly ask God to lift you up?
- Day 5 - James 4:11-12 - What judgements do I need to repent of?

Use these passages to engage with the Scriptures as you prepare or reflect on this week's main passage. Consider getting a journal to keep your reflections and look to the "How to SOAP" section for helpful hints.

Week 4 Day 1 – James 4:7
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What fear do I need to submit to God?

Devotional

Deacon Lawrence tells a great story about a shepherd who found the resisting power of the Llama:

Like many sheep ranchers in the West, Lexy Fowler has tried just about everything to stop crafty coyotes from killing her sheep. She has used odor sprays, electric fences, and “scare-coyotes.” She has slept with her lambs during the summer and has placed battery-operated radios near them. She has corralled them at night, herded them during the day. But the southern Montana rancher has lost scores of lambs--fifty last year alone.

Then she discovered the llama--the aggressive, funny-looking, afraid-of-nothing llama. Fowler said, “Llamas don’t appear to be afraid of anything. When they see something, they put their head up and walk straight toward it. That is aggressive behavior as far as the coyote is concerned, and they won’t have anything to do with that. Coyotes are opportunists, and llamas take that opportunity away.”

Perhaps we funny looking Christians should walk straight ahead and follow God -- after all, the Devil is an opportunist too!

Week 4 Day 2 – James 4:8
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What would it mean for Jesus to draw near to you?

Devotional

Damien Spikereit was in high school his father passed away rather suddenly. It was just two days before his high school graduation.

At that time in my life I was a baby Christian; immature and shallow. I was still drying off the baptistery waters. All I cared about was not going to hell.

But then my dad died. I found myself in a place I'd never been before. I wanted to hear God speak. I wanted to know what he had to say about this situation; how he was going to get me and my family through this difficult time. So I prayed. And I waited for God to speak.

Then came the day of the funeral. The church was packed. I sat on the front pew with my mother and two younger sisters. The Lutheran priest spoke, but I don't remember what he said. I continued to wait for God to say something. Then the service was over. It was the tradition of this church to have the family line up in the foyer. Everyone would file past us and offer words of condolence and encouragement. Tears were shed, hugs offered, and words were given. I don't remember what anybody said to me in that time. But I continued to wait for God to speak.

Then I saw Kim O'Quinn. She was my age. We were in the youth group together. When she got to me, she didn't say a word. She had tears in her eyes. And she simply hugged me and walked off. But I heard God speak. It dawned on me. Just months before, I had attended another funeral; the funeral for Kim O'Quinn's father. In that moment she knew exactly what it meant to be me.

If you want to hear God's voice in your life look no further than the one who knows exactly what it's like to be you. He knows what it is to be human, he knows what it is to suffer, he knows what it is to be rejected, he knows what it is to be human. If you want to hear God's voice speak, allow your soul to be quieted long enough so that you can hear the one who was in the beginning say to you, "draw near to me and I'll draw near to you."

Week 4 Day 3 – James 4:9
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What should we re-evaluate in our lives and maybe mourn?

Devotional

In a recent speech, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas said his brother's death caused him to reevaluate his own life. Baring his soul, as he often does in public talks, Thomas added, "Work became irrelevant. Being on the Supreme Court became meaningless."

Thomas said he realized that the three *F*'s—faith, family, friends—are paramount, "not who is smartest, not who has written the most opinions or the most dissents."

Week 4 Day 4 – James 4:10
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

In what area of your life do you need to humbly ask God to lift you up?

Devotional

Worship songwriter Brian Doerksen's son, Isaiah, suffers from fragile X syndrome, a genetic condition which results in physical, intellectual, emotional, and behavioral limitations. In his book [Make Love, Make War](#), Brian reflects on the day he and his wife first received medical confirmation of Isaiah's condition. In the midst of his heartache, as Brian considered turning away from worship ministry altogether, God taught Brian a lesson that instead carried him further into his ministry:

[After receiving the test results], I stumbled around our property weeping, confused, heartbroken. At one point I lifted my voice to heaven and handed in my resignation: "God, I am through being a worship leader and songwriter ..."

When I was able to be quiet enough to hear, I sensed God holding out his hand and inviting me: "Will you trust me?" Will you go even with your broken heart—for who will relate to my people who are heartbroken if not those like you who are acquainted with disappointment?"

Reflecting further on this word from God, Brian writes:

I used to think people were most blessed by our great victories. But now I know differently: People are just longing to hear [others] speak of how they have walked through the deepest valleys. The world lifts up the victorious and the successful, but God lifts up the brokenhearted.

Week 4 Day 5 – James 4:11-12

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What judgements do I need to repent of?

Devotional

In his book *The Grace Awakening*, Charles Swindoll recounts an experience he once had while ministering at a Bible conference. On the first night he had briefly met a couple who seemed to be friendly and quite glad to be at the meetings. However, as the week went by, Swindoll noticed that roughly ten minutes after he would start speaking at every meeting, the husband would be fast asleep!

This experience began to irritate Charles so much that by the time of the final meeting, he was convinced that the man was there only to please his wife, and was "probably a carnal Christian." At the conclusion of the final meeting however, the wife requested to speak to Charles for a few minutes. He figured she wanted to talk to him about her husband's lack of interest in spiritual matters.

Imagine how greatly embarrassed he was when the wife mentioned that her husband had terminal cancer and that they had attended the conference mainly at his request. It was his "final wish" to be at the conference even though the pain medication he was taking made him drowsy. She then said, "He loves the Lord, and you are his favorite Bible teacher. He wanted to be here to meet you and to hear you, no matter what." Charles Swindoll wrote, "I stood there, all alone, as deeply rebuked as I have ever been."

What a dangerous thing it is to judge others. Jesus said, "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:2).

Week 4 - Group Meeting – James 4:7-12 Submitting Faith

Open (*Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray*)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker - Can you remember a time when you were humbled? (Was it by someone who you respected or feared)?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up, Story, Summarize and Dig (*James 4:7-12*) (*ask Journalist style questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why that guide you to the Apply questions below. Make sure to get to the Apply!*)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?
2. What does it mean to "submit yourself" to God (4:7)? How does that word carry a negative connotation in our culture today, but why is it such a positive word for James with regard to our relationship with God?
3. How is resisting the devil related to submission to God (4:7)?
4. What commands are we called to do in this passage?
5. What does being wretched, mourning and weeping look like and how does that lead to exalting?
6. What causes us to want to judge others in the first place?
7. How can we rest in the judgement of God?

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - Thank you / Sorry / Please



5 Sharing Faith 4:13-5:6

WK5 - James 4:13-5:6 Sharing Faith

Week 5 Daily SOAP readings

On your own – *Read and SOAP these passages for context and deeper understanding*

- Day 1 - James 4:13-17 - *What plans am I making or not making in light of God's will and control of my future?*
- Day 2 - James 5:1-6 - *How am I using my treasure? To save for myself or invest in God's Kingdom?*
- Day 3 - James 5:7-11 - *In what area of my life do I need to be more patient?*
- Day 4 - James 5:12 - *What promises of God do you need to receive so that you can keep your promises?*
- Day 5 - James 5:13-20 - *What's the biggest prayer that God is calling me to pray today?*

Use these passages to engage with the Scriptures as you prepare or reflect on this week's main passage. Consider getting a journal to keep your reflections and look to the "How to SOAP" section for helpful hints.

Week 5 Day 1 – James 4:13-17

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What plans am I making or not making in light of God's will and control of my future?

Devotional

The romantic comedy *Just Like Heaven* is about a young, driven doctor named Elizabeth (played by Reese Witherspoon) whose determination to succeed often drives her to work long days. At the end of one such day, she loses control of her car and is struck in a head-on collision with a truck.

Three months later, a young, lonely widower named David (played by Mark Ruffalo) moves into Elizabeth's old apartment. When he does, he finds Elizabeth's confused, misplaced spirit still inhabiting the rooms. Only he can see and hear her. In time, he even falls in love with her.

Late in the movie, David and Elizabeth are sitting in the bay window of their apartment, looking at a photograph of Elizabeth celebrating with her sister.

"You look happy," David says.

"I was happy. But what was I doing with the rest of my time?" she asks. "When I think about my life and I...all I can remember is working. You know? Working and working and trying so hard. And for what?"

Trying to comfort her, David reminds her that she is a doctor: "You help people. You save lives."

"Yeah, including my own," she says. "I saved my life—for later. I just...I never thought there wouldn't be a later."

Week 5 Day 2 – James 5:1-6
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

How am I using my treasure? To save for myself or invest in God's Kingdom?

Devotional

Eugene Peterson once said:

If I am an atheist in my heart, making myself sovereign in place of God, and therefore arranging things in accordance with my appetites and needs and fantasies, I become a pirate in society. I relentlessly look for ways in which I can get what is there for my own uses with no regard for what anyone else gets. If I am an atheist in my heart, it is not long before I have become a cancer in the gut of the country.

Fattening our own hearts may seem good for the moment, but it leads to disaster for those around us. And, according to C.S. Lewis, it's not too long lasting for us.

In a question and answer period after one of his lectures, C.S. Lewis was asked which of the world's religions gives its followers the greatest happiness. Lewis paused and said, "While it lasts, the religion of worshipping oneself is best."

Week 5 Day 3 – James 5:7-11
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

In what area of my life do I need to be more patient?

Devotional

Manford Gutzke once said, “To become long-suffering one has to be long-bothered.”

In this world it is hard to suffer with patience. We don't see the purposes of God and feel stuck. But that doesn't mean God isn't growing us. Truett Cathy, of Chick-Fil-A once said:

I believe God wants us to be successful ... and yet success is not always obvious. The Chinese bamboo tree does absolutely nothing--or so it seems--for the first four years. Then suddenly, sometime during the fifth year, it shoots up ninety feet in sixty days. Would you say that bamboo tree grew in six weeks, or five years? I think our lives are akin to the Chinese bamboo tree. Sometimes we put forth effort, put forth effort, and put forth effort ... and nothing seems to happen. But if you do the right things long enough, you'll receive the rewards of your efforts.

Week 5 Day 4 – James 5:12
(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What promises of God do you need to receive so that you can keep your promises?

Devotional

Realize that you can't keep your promises. That may seem like a strange first step toward the goal of keeping promises, but it's true.

Consider this question: If we could keep our promises, wouldn't we have done it by now? How many times have we made the same promises? Let's face it, rededication to keep promises won't work. If it did, we wouldn't find it necessary to keep rededicating ourselves. Many of us have struggled with promise-keeping for one reason: We have focused on our performance more than on Jesus Christ. We have tried to keep our promises, but the Bible teaches that effective Christian living doesn't come by trying. It comes by trusting Christ to express his life through us. He is the only One who can successfully keep promises.

Before we can be effective promise keepers, we must become promise receivers. The Bible is clear about God's promise: the One who has given us his life will be the One who lives it for us. Only Jesus Christ can effectively live the perfect life. He lives inside believers today and wants to reveal His perfect life through us.

Source: Steve McVey, president of Grace Walk Ministries. Men of Integrity, Vol. 1, no. 2.

Week 5 Day 5 – James 5:13-20

(Read and SOAP the passage.)

Consider

What's the biggest prayer that God is calling me to pray today?

Devotional

John Bunyan wrote:

Far away from the Bible's example are most people when they pray! Prayer with earnestness and urgency is genuine "prayer" in God's account. Alas, the greatest number of people are not conscious at all of the duty of prayer. And as for those who are, it is to be feared that many of them are very great strangers to sincere, sensible, and affectionate-emotional-pouring out of their hearts or souls to God.

Too many content themselves with a little lip-service and bodily exercise, mumbling over a few imaginary prayers. When the emotions are involved in such urgency that the soul will waste itself rather than go without the good desired, there is communion and solace with Christ. And hence it is that the saints have spent their strength, and lost their lives, rather than go without the blessings God intended for them

We are called to fervent prayer and trust in God. He is willing and able to answer... its just that we too often fail to ask. Phillips Brooks says it this way:

Pray the largest prayers. You cannot think a prayer so large that God in answering it, will not wish you had made it larger. Pray not for crutches but for wings!

Week 5 - Group Meeting – James 4:13-5:6 Sharing Faith

Open (Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker - Are you a long range planner or do you take one day at a time?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up, Story, Summarize and Dig (James 4:13-5:6) (ask Journalist style questions: *Who, What, Where, When, Why* that guide you to the Apply questions below. Make sure to get to the Apply!)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?
2. How far into the future have you planned your life? What attitude should we have toward our plans?
3. What four areas of life are discussed in 4:13?
4. What is wrong with this type of planning?
5. How does someone boast in arrogance?
6. Westerners are in the top 10% of all wealthy people – including those on social security. How can we handle our wealth appropriately?
7. How can we trust God in such a way that we aren't resisting those who would do us harm? Are there limits to this?

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - Thank you / Sorry / Please

Leader's Notes

Leader's Notes Week 1 – Steadfast Faith - James 1:17-27

Open (5 minutes) Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray. Use the icebreaker below or one that fits the needs of creating community in your group... have fun! (See Leader's notes at the beginning for more)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker – What makes you unsteady, uneasy or unbalanced? And, how do you react? Short fuse, big bomb? Long fuse, little fizz? Other?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up (1 minute) – What has happened in the story so far?

Let the text shape our framework (Context, Line, Structure) - Why did the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book? How did the author organize this text? How does this passage relate to the theme of the whole book? How does this text challenge our normal way of seeing things (or support it)?



James, the author and brother of Jesus, is writing to the 12 Tribes in exile. These “12 Tribes” are who Paul calls “the Israel of God” – or, Israel as understood through the Gospel reality of Jesus and His 12 Apostles. These people include all who live dispersed, oppressed, and away from their heavenly home. They await King Jesus to gather them, finally, home.

The book begins with an invitation for anyone seeking wisdom to simply ask God and trust Him for the answer. The rest of the book will include wisdom for suffering, serving, speaking, submitting, and sharing in this Christian, dispersed, life.

In the midst of these challenging times God is a good gift giver who's sole expectation is that we live in His light and truth.

Story (15 minutes) – James 1:17-27

(Use the Storying Tools to guide you.)

Summarize (1 minute) Staying on the Line of Scripture:

Main idea of the passage - What does the text say, literally?

Specifically? What's the big idea? Central point?

+ _____
- _____

We are called to a steady life in the midst of trials: Slow down. Receive God's good gifts. And share with the afflicted.

Outline (A Leader's Overview)

- A. v 17-18 *God's got you – He's the light giving, gift sharing Father*
- B. v 19-21 *Slow down – Receive God's word... that's salvation*
- C. v 22-27 *Steady. Do the word and bring it to the afflicted*

Digging Deeper (15 minutes) - *The who, what, where, when why facts (Don't linger here... get to the Apply) Ask the questions below OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. (Use the Observation Tools to guide you, but don't linger here. Lead people to the Apply Questions)*

1. **What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?**

- Read the entire text, or each section, and just begin with people's initial impressions. Consider going back to the section on "How to SOAP" and use the questions there or forward to the section "Principles for Studying a Bible Passage" to help your group understand how to read a Bible text.

¹⁷ **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is *no variation* or shadow due to change.** ¹⁸ **Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of *firstfruits* of his creatures.**

Questions

2. Looking at vv. 1:1-16, why does James now change to the topic of gifts and their origin?
3. Why is it important that God is light and does not change? Is that comforting in any way?
4. Who chooses to be a child of God?
5. How does the word "first fruits" describe the people of God?

Notes

- **Every good gift** – Tests and trials will come because we live in a broken world. Whereas trials are normal in and from humanity – gifts are normal from God. God isn't the author of suffering, rather, He provides all manner of gifts for enduring and rescue. "There is no way in which we might come to him in our need and find that he is unwilling, unable or unavailable." (Motyer)
- **Father of lights** – Pagans and Jews believe the lights of the heavens were gods and/or angels. Moderns believe the universe is a chance event. Our God, despite the instability of life, is the Creator and illuminator. Johann Spangenberg () says, "*Why does he call God a Father of lights? With God there is no darkness, no*

alteration, no change, rather there is pure light. He is not inconstant, unstable, or rash, but is immutable. Our days are often darkened by clouds and night, but with God there is no shadow nor darkness. Our wisdom is often darkened by error, but with God there is eternal wisdom”.

- **No variation** – The moon waxes and wanes. Creation crumbles. God does not.
- **Of his own will** – God is the definition of goodness, of light, and fatherly love. He can do whatever He chooses. And His choice – to bring forth condemned sinners, through truth, to life. (John 1:13)
- **The word of truth** – This is a phrase used in Ephesians 1:13 and Colossians 1:5 to speak of “the Gospel”. It is always the Good News that exposes the truth of our sinfulness and the beauty of God’s good salvation.
- **Firstfruits** – The first fruits of the harvest were specifically designated as set apart for the Lord as a thanksgiving offering. The first fruits were the best of the best and were holy. The irony is that he is saying we, sinners, are chosen by God to be the chosen best of His. This continues the bloodline of Israel into the newly covenanted Israel (Jer. 2:3)

*¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person **be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger**; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not **produce the righteousness** of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and **rampant wickedness** and receive with meekness the **implanted word, which is able to save your souls.***

Questions

6. When was a time you wish you had been “quick to listen” and “slow to speak”?
7. Why does he say we should put away sin (filthiness and wickedness) before receiving the implanted word?
8. What is the “implanted word” in your life? How can it save you?

Notes

- **Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger** – Big talkers and angry listeners don’t hear. To hold one’s tongue is not only an act of wisdom but, for the Christian, is rooted in the identity that’s just been described in vv. 17-18. We don’t need to defend ourselves but can rely on the righteousness of God.
- **Produce the righteousness** – The great saint Bede said, “it is stupid to think that someone who is not prepared to learn from others will somehow be well-equipped to preach to them”. As Christians we are called to disciple which requires we rely on

God's righteousness to produce righteous disciples not our own defensiveness.

- **Rampant wickedness** – James is comparing moral filth to dirty garments and saying, not just to clean them but to get rid of them.
- **Implanted Word** - *the word of truth (18) ... the implanted word (21) ... the word (22) ... the word (23) ... the perfect law, the law of liberty (25)* – James is using the “Word” to stand in for the whole Scripture. And more so, the implanted word would be the supernatural reality of the Divine presence. (In v. 18 he is loosely quoting John 1) and this “word” seems to have agency. So, “the word” would be the Scriptures pointing to Jesus and then living through Jesus into the life of the believer. Note that it is received not manufactured by the believer, therefore, putting away wickedness it a restoration rather than a pre-condition for the salvation already begun by The Word made flesh, Jesus.

²² *But be **doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving yourselves.* ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.* ²⁴ *For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.*

²⁵ *But the one who looks into **the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres**, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, **he will be blessed** in his doing.*

²⁶ *If anyone thinks he is **religious and does not bridle** his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's **religion is worthless**.* ²⁷ *Religion that is **pure and undefiled** before God the Father is this: to **visit orphans** and widows in their affliction, and to **keep oneself unstained** from the world.*

Questions

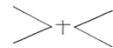
9. Looking into a mirror and forgetting what one looks like is amnesia. How do “hearers only” show spiritually amnesia?
10. How can you tell if you are *hearing* parts of God's Word without actively *obeying* them?
11. How does this passage encourage us to slow down and be steadfast in our faith?

Notes

- **Doer's of the word and not hearers only** – The word that is implanted is meant to be a partnership and participation not a museum curiosity. Knowledge alone is worthless. Doing word studies without impact in life is the dullest and least desired outcome for any author... let alone God who wrote the Word and embodied it!

- **The perfect law, the law of liberty** – The implanted word is the law, writings, speech of God, Himself. Being a God of Love and liberator of souls – to follow His ways it to be drawn from slavery into true freedom. ... **he will be blessed**... indeed!
- **Religious and does not bridle** – Chapter 2 will delve deeper into the work/faith issue but if life comes from the life giving word and that same liberating word does not have any restraining influence on one's own personal expression of free speech then freedom isn't truly being experienced.
- **Pure and undefiled** – The firstfruits were the best fruits and produced a life that was concerned for the hurting **orphans** in the world and yet separate from the stains of the world.

Gospel Centrality - How does this passage relate to the Gospel (death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ?)



Jesus is the very essence of this the firstfruits. He is the Word made flesh who lives a pure and undefiled life, speaking to words of life to the word and remaining silent in the face of death. The result? The firstfruits of the resurrection!

Apply (15 min) - This is where a group really learns to grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it's important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God's character and actions and contrast them to people's (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it's easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (15 min) - Thank you / Sorry / Please

Leader's Notes Week 2 – James 2:1-18 – Serving Faith

Open (5 minutes) *Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray. Use the icebreaker below or one that fits the needs of creating community in your group... have fun! (See Leader's notes at the beginning for more)*

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker – For what event would you buy the “best seats in the house”? (World Series? Carnegie Hall? A child's school play?). Now... who would you give those seats up for?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up (1 minute) – What has happened in the story so far?

Let the text shape our framework (Context, Line, Structure) - Why did the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book? How did the author organize this text? How does this passage relate to the theme of the whole book? How does this text challenge our normal way of seeing things (or support it)?



James roots his argument in the Word of God (the word of truth (18) ... the implanted word (21) ... the word (22) ... the word (23) ... the perfect law, the law of liberty (25)) to explain our security in the midst of trials and tribulations. We can slow down and trust the Father. This secure trusting then gives us insight in how we can serve others.

Story (15 minutes) – James 2:1-18

(Use the Storying Tools to guide you.)

Summarize (1 minute) *Staying on the Line of Scripture:*

Main idea of the passage - What does the text say, literally?
Specifically? What's the big idea? Central point?

+ _____
- _____

Show me your faith by serving with honor for the poor, love and mercy, and generous works of kindness.

Outline (A Leader's Overview)

A. v 1-7 Honor the poor (and the rich) with no distinctions. Clothes and status don't matter... heart does

B. v. 8-13 Love your neighbor without partiality using your liberty to extend mercy

C. v. 14-18 Generous works of kindness display a working servant faith.

Digging Deeper (15 minutes) - *The who, what, where, when why facts (Don't linger here... get to the Apply) Ask the questions below OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. (Use the Observation Tools to guide you, but don't linger here. Lead people to the Apply Questions)*

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?

- Read the entire text, or each section, and just begin with people's initial impressions. Consider going back to the section on "How to SOAP" and use the questions there or forward to the section "Principles for Studying a Bible Passage" to help your group understand how to read a Bible text.

2 **1** My brothers, show **no partiality** as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Lord of glory**. *2* For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, *3* and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "**You sit here in a good place,**" while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "**Sit down at my feet,**" *4* have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? *5* Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? *6* But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? *7* Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?.

Questions

2. In general, what are some ways people show favoritism?
3. How does God look on favoritism? When has favoritism hurt you?
4. What does it mean that God has chosen the poor?
5. Is James "anti-wealth"?

Notes

- **No partiality** – The Ancient world was divided between two classes of people who were very far apart. The Rich (often the senatorial class in Roman society) had all power, influence, connections, and wealth. The Poor had nothing – not even a change of clothing. To get ahead in life (or to move your organization ahead) it was vital to please the wealthy so a benefactor could emerge.
- **You sit... in a good place... you... at my feet** - This is not about giving dignity to the elderly or to a President or to the

Queen – Scripture commends us to honor the King (1 Peter 2:17). Rather, we ought not preference someone because of the externals of life. Being rich and ostentatious (as the one in the story does with his gold bands) is dangerous for the soul.

- **The Lord of glory** – (going back) this is key. The Lord of Glory is the one who became poor, became a servant, lowered himself. If we have faith in Him then we will honor the poor as having equal value with the rich. And, making the connection, the Lord of Glory is the very one who made his presence known to Moses (Exodus 34) when He passed by. James is saying, “God, the only one who deserves honor is present in the worship service – don’t get distracted by serving the very people who blaspheme Him”.
- **Note** – James is not making a case that people with wealth are inherently bad/evil/blaspheme. Abraham, Job, Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea – the Scriptures are full of people with wealth. The issue is who we are valuing – Are we looking with honor to the one with worldly wealth or to the God of all wealth and glory who honors those who are dependent upon Him alone?

⁸ If you really fulfill the **royal law** according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show **partiality**, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but **fails in one point** has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² **So speak and so act** as those who are to be **judged under the law of liberty**. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

Questions

6. What is the “royal law” and how would you summarize it?
7. How can one’s preference for a person really be that bad?
8. Why would failing at one part of the law mean complete failure?
9. How can the law be liberty as well?
10. What hope is found in v. 13?

Notes

- **Royal law** – This is the King’s law, as summarized when we hear what our Lord Jesus says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22). The right response is to ask the Lord for “mercy”. If one

rightly understands they're personal lawlessness and subsequent failure and judgement then they will have no partiality.

- **Fails one point** – James is clarifying the reality that to break one of the laws of God is to break them all. If you think you are an excellent law keeper then pride will creep in, mercy will fall away, and partiality will reign. If all the law and the prophets hand on the Royal Law, as Jesus said – then to not love your neighbor is to break the whole law.
- **So speak and so act** – James is continuing his point that actions and words must be congruous.
- **Judged under the law of liberty** – How does Law = Liberty? It is human nature to see “law” as the opposite of “liberty”. Yet, following God’s commands means we are living according to our created intent. Being free to ourselves may bring permissive individualism – but do we really think that sex without commitment, drugs without limits, and expressive individualism without boundaries is true freedom? As Moyter says, “*We are in the image of God; the law is in the image of God. When we bring these two together, we are ‘being ourselves’; we are truly free. God’s law describes the life of true freedom; obedience opens the door into the free life.*”
- **Mercy triumphs** – If the Royal Law is to love God and love neighbor. And if the law of liberty is to follow God’s commands rather than our own. Then we must ask the question: How is that working out for us? Are we living up to God’s law? Sadly no. And the proper response is: Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy. And, He does.

¹⁴ *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he **has faith but does not have works**? Can that faith **save him**? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “**Go in peace, be warmed and filled,**” **without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?** ¹⁷ So also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.***

¹⁸ *But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.***

Questions

11. What kind of faith is condemned in v. 14? In what ways does this still happen today?
12. Is this a call to ministry with the poor or something more specific (and perhaps more profound)?
13. What is the relationship that James is drawing between faith and works? What do we need when we don’t measure up?

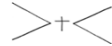
Notes

- **Has faith but not works... save him?** – James is provoking his hearers (whom he’s already called “brothers” to think. What is the nature of faith? Is it just mental assent? Or is it full bodied? Head, heart and hands?
- **Go in peace... what good is that?** – James then furthers his point with an absurd illustration of a rude and hypocritical person. It would be galling to simply say, “bless you” to a Christian brother who is suffering without acting on their behalf. Note – the word brother means that he’s talking to people sitting on your pew in church. He’s not engaging in a debate about how to help the poor in the street or across the oceans. Those are laudable – but this is more pointed. If a person can’t take care of his fellow church goers – then that person does not have real faith.
- **I will show you my faith by my works** – First we must define faith. Faith is not a vague feeling or idea, rather, it is to put trust in someone or something. Christians stand as those who were rightly accused under the law and in need of mercy – and that mercy came through Jesus’ death in our place. We trust in Jesus to be who He said He was and that His death in our place was sufficient to free us. Second, works alone can’t save. James is not saying to do good work and by doing it you’ll be considered righteous. He’s not saying, “If you feed the poor” you’re good with God. He is speaking to brothers who say they have faith in Jesus. Third, he’s simply making an argument of consistency. If we believe we’re law breakers, and God has mercy on us, then we will have mercy on others.
- **Note** – Moyter is helpful here:

Are James and Paul at variance? The answer depends on the meaning of the key passage, 2:14–26, and the disagreement between James and Paul is in fact artificially produced by wrenching James’ words out of their context. Paul and James are no more in contradiction than are Articles 11 and 12 of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England. Article 11 reads: ‘We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith.’ Article 12 reads: ‘Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith ... are ... pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith.’ Paul and James respectively could not be more succinctly expressed. To Paul the question was, ‘How is salvation experienced?’ and the answer, ‘By faith alone.’ To James the question was, ‘How is this true and saving faith recognized?’ and the answer, ‘By its fruits.’ The supposition that Paul and James are at variance is a false trail. Both actually faced the same problem: people were saying that, if salvation

is all of grace on God's side and solely by faith on ours, then how can it matter what way we live so long as we have 'simple faith'? To this both gave the same answer but in different words. Paul answered it by pointing out that saving faith brought us into union not only with the Jesus who died, but also with the Jesus who rose from the dead; if we truly died with him, then we must just as truly live with him. James answered the question by examining the nature of faith itself, and showing that a true definition of faith must include the subsequent life, with those good works which 'do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith'.

Gospel Centrality - How does this passage relate to the Gospel (death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ?)



Jesus – wasn't he the carpenter's son? Isn't Jesus from Nazareth? The true judge of the universe became poor, lived in the "wrong" place, and had a cloud over his birth. He lived a life of exclusion because of the religious rulers' sin of partiality. Yet, he never demands his rights – rather, He takes up the basin and towel to serve.

Apply (15 min) - This is where a group really learns to grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it's important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God's character and actions and contrast them to people's (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it's easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (15 min) - Thank you / Sorry / Please

Leader's Notes Week 3 – James 3:16-4:6

Open (5 minutes) Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray. Use the icebreaker below or one that fits the needs of creating community in your group... have fun! (See Leader's notes at the beginning for more)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker – Whom did you quarrel with the most growing up?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up (1 minute) – What has happened in the story so far?

Let the text shape our framework (Context, Line, Structure) - Why did the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book? How did the author organize this text? How does this passage relate to the theme of the whole book? How does this text challenge our normal way of seeing things (or support it)?



James has reminded us that we can be steadfast and serving as we trust the Father's words and look at the Son's servant example and Royal Law. We can slow down and show our steadfast, serving faith. Now he turns to the hardest part... our words (which he speaks directly to in 3:1-14) and the implications of our words and hearts.

Story (15 minutes) – James 3:16-4:6

(Use the Storying Tools to guide you.)

Summarize (1 minute) Staying on the Line of Scripture: + _____
Main idea of the passage - What does the text say, literally? - _____
Specifically? What's the big idea? Central point?

Speak faith... God gives wisdom to a fighting world and grace to the humble.

Outline (A Leader's Overview)

A. v. 16-17 Wisdom speaks abundant purity and peace to jealousy, selfishness, and vile disorders

B. v. 1-4 Ask God and avoid a fighting world

C. v. 5-6 Grace is given to the humble (who faithfully ask!)

Digging Deeper (15 minutes) - The who, what, where, when why facts (Don't linger here... get to the Apply) Ask the questions below OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when,

why facts of the passage. (Use the Observation Tools to guide you, but don't linger here. Lead people to the Apply Questions)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?

- Read the entire text, or each section, and just begin with people's initial impressions. Consider going back to the section on "How to SOAP" and use the questions there or forward to the section "Principles for Studying a Bible Passage" to help your group understand how to read a Bible text.

¹⁶ For where **jealousy and selfish ambition** exist, there will be disorder and every **vile practice**. ¹⁷ But the **wisdom** from above is first **pure**, then **peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere**. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is **sown in peace by those who make peace**.

Questions

2. How can you recognize a wise person?
3. What two behaviors indicate a lack of wisdom (v. 16)?
4. What does heavenly wisdom produce? Sound like? Look like?

Notes

- **Jealousy and selfish ambition** – These two words summarize the presumption that v. 1-14 talk about – partiality leads to party spirit leads to destructive speech and ultimately self glorification.
- **Vile practice** – When boasting becomes about us rather than God and His Kingdom then it is unholy, unacceptable, evil.
- **Wisdom** – Look at the contrast! (note: Motyer)
 - V. 15 and 16, earthly wisdom
 - Origin? "devilish"
 - Character? full of jealousy, selfish ambition
 - Result? disorder and vile practice
 - V. 17-18, God's wisdom
 - Origin? From above
 - Character? Pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, good fruits, impartial, sincere
 - Result? A harvest of righteousness
- Motyer is helpful here: *James requires us to affirm that whatever displays a sharp, antagonistic spirit of self-concern (jealousy), whatever leads to or favours party spirit or the creation of parties or the dividing of fellowships (selfish ambition), whatever issues in disorder (restlessness, instability, disturbance in the fellowship) and in meanness in thought, word and deed (every vile practice 12)—this is the wisdom which in no way comes down from above*

- **First pure** – Note what comes first – it is a purity that is untainted by jealousy, selfishness and vileness. How? If you're under the Royal Law and confident in Jesus' love for you – then everything else will become less and this fruit will grow

^{4:1} **What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?** ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. **You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.** ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ **You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

Questions

5. What is at the root of fights and quarrels?
6. What are two reasons we don't have what we want? What might some other reason be for unanswered prayers?
7. How can Christians become adulterous with God?

Notes

- **What causes quarrels** – The language here is strong: wars, fighting, murder, the forceful desire to please the self. War is sanitized and played out on foreign soil for most Americans but it is horrifying nonetheless. Imagine the news a family receives from a chaplain showing up at a spouse or parents home – their son having died in a battle far away. Or a family in a foreign land who return home after running from battle only to find a crater rather than their house. This is war and it's effects. This is what happens when Christians quarrel.
- **Your passions** – Desires or pleasures which he is implying are selfish (based on the previous sets of verses)
- **You covet... you do not ask** – This is powerful. Coveting is looking to the world to satisfy your inmost needs and external comforts rather than asking the Father of Lights to show you what you truly need and asking Him to supply it. One leads to war and the other to joy!
- **Adulterous people** – This is a high charge for Jewish Christians. Spiritual adultery is what led to exile in Babylon. He is speaking to Christians who are the Bride of Jesus and are going after a different man.
- **Friend of the world = enemy of God** – Public problems have private causes. These people are erupting in war because of a heart that is not in love with Jesus. A wise life is marked by steadfast faith and serving faith precisely because God is our Father.

⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose **that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?**

⁶ **But he gives more grace.** Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives **grace to the humble.**”

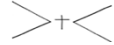
Questions

8. If God is jealous ... what could we possibly do?

Notes

- **That the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously** – James is either quoting a verse that no one has yet found in the Bible or he is summarizing the Old Testament passages dealing with God's jealous longing for his people (EBC). Ultimately, he is contrasting their adultery with the Lord's jealousy (Exodus 20:5 and 34:14).
- **But he gives more grace... grace to the humble** – The good news is that God may be jealous (and rightfully angry) but he has mercy (from c. 1 and 2) and grace for any who will simply ask.

Gospel Centrality - How does this passage relate to the Gospel (death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ?)



Jesus' grace never runs out. He extends it even in our last moment. Think of the thief on the Cross. His passions have led him to vile actions, fits of jealousy, anger and murder... yet because Jesus is jealous for this robber's life He is willing to promise grace to the humble – and then secure it as He dies.

Apply (15 min) - This is where a group really learns to grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it's important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God's character and actions and contrast them to people's (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it's easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (15 min) - Thank you / Sorry / Please

Leader's Notes Week 4 – James 4:7-12 Submitting Faith

Open (5 minutes) *Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray. Use the icebreaker below or one that fits the needs of creating community in your group... have fun! (See Leader's notes at the beginning for more)*

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker – Can you remember a time when you were humbled? (Was it by someone who you respected or feared)?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up (1 minute) – What has happened in the story so far?

Let the text shape our framework (Context, Line, Structure) - Why did the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book? How did the author organize this text? How does this passage relate to the theme of the whole book? How does this text challenge our normal way of seeing things (or support it)?



James has been calling us to a real life faith rooted in wisdom that helps us be steadfast, serving, and speaking in a community of believers, scattered, yet grace filled. Now he calls us to submission which is directly opposite the Devil's adulterous, murderous, quarreling strife.

Story (15 minutes) – James 4:7-12

(Use the Storying Tools to guide you.)

Summarize (1 minute) *Staying on the Line of Scripture:*

Main idea of the passage - What does the text say, literally?

Specifically? What's the big idea? Central point?

+ _____
- _____

We have a judge who can save, so humbly submit with faith in Him, and do (don't judge) the law

Outline (A Leader's Overview)

A. v 7-10 Humbly draw near to God and He will exalt

B. v 11-12 Do the law don't judge the law

Digging Deeper (15 minutes) - *The who, what, where, when why facts (Don't linger here... get to the Apply) Ask the questions below OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. (Use the Observation Tools to guide you, but don't linger here. Lead people to the Apply Questions)*

1. **What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?**

- Read the entire text, or each section, and just begin with people's initial impressions. Consider going back to the section on "How to SOAP" and use the questions there or forward to the section "Principles for Studying a Bible Passage" to help your group understand how to read a Bible text.

⁷ **Submit yourselves** therefore to God. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* ⁸ **Draw near** to God, and **he will draw near to you.** **Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** ⁹ **Be wretched** and mourn and weep. *Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.* ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves** before the Lord, and **he will exalt you.**

Questions

2. What does it mean to "submit yourself" to God (4:7)? How does that word carry a negative connotation in our culture today, but why is it such a positive word for James with regard to our relationship with God?
3. How is resisting the devil related to submission to God (4:7)?
4. What commands are we called to do in this passage?
5. What does being wretched, mourning and weeping look like and how does that lead to exalting?

Notes

- **Submit yourselves** – This is the logical step of the humble. To be humble of spirit is to submit your life.
 - This leads to a series of commands that result in a humble walk with God... submit / resist / draw near / cleanse / purify / mourn / humble yourself.
- **He will flee** – The devil will only flee when vanquished. Calvin makes an excellent point that Satan keeps fighting and is never wearied by it. The is only one who can rout the Devil and that is Jesus – thus we are called to draw near to Him
- **Cleanse, mourn, humble** – these are all the ways of drawing near to God. By shedding sin we are saying "no" to the devil.
- **He will draw near to you** – What great comfort! We might want the verse to be reversed as if God needs to move first. But He already has – our drawing near to God is not convincing Him to do something but rather convincing ourselves. He's already given us grace by making us alive BUT (v. 6) He gives more grace. If we but take a step we will find that He's already drawn near.
- **He will exalt you** – (EBC) "Here the specific form of humbling is that of repentance for the sin of transferring affections from God to pleasures of the world. However, the principle stated in this

verse is much more comprehensive in its application. That God exalts those who humble themselves is a consistent biblical principle (cf. Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Peter 5:6.)”

11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But **who are you to judge your neighbor?**

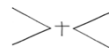
Questions

6. What causes us to want to judge others in the first place?
7. How can we rest in the judgement of God?

Notes

- **Do not speak evil against one another**– If the Royal Law is to love neighbor as self – then it will necessitate bridling our tongue
- **Who are you to judge** – Motyer says, “A dreadful lack of self-knowledge lies behind every judgment passed on a fellow-Christian. *Who am I, indeed!*” There is one judge – and He’s not me!

Gospel Centrality - How does this passage relate to the Gospel (death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ?)



Jesus left His throne from which He judged the world. Why? To be judged by us so that we could be free.

Apply (15 min) - This is where a group really learns to grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it’s important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God’s character and actions and contrast them to people’s (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it’s easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can’t do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (15 min) - Thank you / Sorry / Please

Leader's Notes Week 5 – James 4:13-5:6

Open (5 minutes) Review the Group Purpose, Rules for the Road, and Pray. Use the icebreaker below or one that fits the needs of creating community in your group... have fun! (See Leader's notes at the beginning for more)

- How did you see the truth of God's Word in your life this past week? Where did you see Jesus at work this week?
- Icebreaker – Are you a long range planner or do you take one day at a time?
- Ask: What has happened in the story so far?

Set up (1 minute) – What has happened in the story so far?

Let the text shape our framework (Context, Line, Structure) - Why did the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book? How did the author organize this text? How does this passage relate to the theme of the whole book? How does this text challenge our normal way of seeing things (or support it)?



James calls us to sage wisdom in a world gone mad. That wisdom calls for steadfast, serving, submitting faith that holds life as if God were actually the judge and His law was all that mattered.

Story (15 minutes) – James 4:13-5:6

(Use the Storying Tools to guide you.)

Summarize (1 minute) Staying on the Line of Scripture:

Main idea of the passage - What does the text say, literally?

Specifically? What's the big idea? Central point?

+ _____
- _____

The righteous does not resist because he knows God hold the future and God is his treasure.

Outline (A Leader's Overview)

A. v 13-17 God hold the future so we can trust him with everything from profit to time to doing the right thing in an upside down world

B. v 5:1-6 Riches here rot, corrode and burn – trust God and share

Digging Deeper (15 minutes) - The who, what, where, when why facts (Don't linger here... get to the Apply) Ask the questions below OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. (Use the Observation Tools to guide you, but don't linger here. Lead people to the Apply Questions)

1. What questions, concerns, new things did you discover?

- Read the entire text, or each section, and just begin with people's initial impressions. Consider going back to the section on "How to SOAP" and use the questions there or forward to the section "Principles for Studying a Bible Passage" to help your group understand how to read a Bible text.

¹³ Come now, you who say, "**Today or tomorrow we will go** into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— ¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For **you are a mist** that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Questions

2. How far into the future have you planned your life? What attitude should we have toward our plans?
3. What four areas of life are discussed in 4:13?
4. What is wrong with this type of planning?
5. How does someone boast in arrogance?

Notes

- **Today or tomorrow we will go** – Presumption is the outward and visible manifestation of pride and it is silly. Simply put: **[we] do not know what tomorrow will bring.**
- **You are a mist** – the presumption of the merchant is an arrogance of control, time, and ability. The merchant says, "I will do... at this time... when I say". Mist, is the perfect anti-arrogant foil. Mist has zero control (insubstantial and transient) and the more we look at our lives the more we realize we have very little control.
- *James is not trying to banish planning from our lives, but only that sort of self-sufficient, self-important planning that keeps God for Sunday but looks on Monday to Saturday as mine (Motyer)*
- **If the Lord wills** – This is the antidote to presumption. The Christian is to remind himself that everything under heaven and earth is a gift from the will of God.
- **Boasting is evil** – 16 and 17 are connected. The right thing, throughout this book, is to walk in the sage wisdom of humility. And that call is all encompassing. So when he reminds us (again) not to boast, he is also reminding us to not plead ignorance.

5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ²Your **riches** have **rotted** and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver have **corroded**, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like **fire**. You have laid up **treasure in the last days**. ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which **you kept back by fraud**, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters **have reached the ears of the Lord** of hosts. ⁵You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have **fattened your hearts** in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and **murdered the righteous** person. **He does not resist you**.

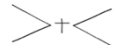
Questions

6. Westerners are in the top 10% of all wealthy people – including those on social security. How can we handle our wealth appropriately?
7. How can we trust God in such a way that we aren't resisting those who would do us harm? Are there limits to this?

Notes

- **Come now, you rich** – This is not a prohibition on wealth but a prohibition on trusting wealth. And, it connects to v. 17, previously. If the Spirit is leading us, then we will know how to humbly use all of our life and resources for the Lord.
- **Riches... rotted, corroded, fire** - This is a reminder of how transient we are and how insubstantial what we own is. Everything rots away. Everyone dies. Treasure in the last days? What a joke!
- **You kept back by fraud... have reached the ears of the Lord** – If he's speaking to Christians then this is egregious behavior he's noticed. We owe our lives to Christ, thus to defraud another, is to fundamentally misunderstand the debts we owe and the humility we should display for our own salvation. And, God hears! God is not inattentive to the harm done to the poor.
- **Fattened your hearts... murdered the righteous** – Those who trust in this world's riches worship something their souls know is fleeting and so they become violent. Idolatry never satisfies and always turns violent.
- **He does not resist you** – What a stunning statement. The righteous man does not need to defend his riches, garments, treasure, or even his own flesh. It all came from the Lord and the righteous trust Him with everything.

Gospel Centrality - How does this passage relate to the Gospel (death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ?)



He does not resist. What an excellent summation of the life and death of our Lord. He who owns everything did not resist the very garments on his back being split between the powerful guards at his crucifixion or even the self-indulgence of the religious ruling class. Why? So that He could clothe us, on the last day, in His righteousness.

Apply (15 min) - *This is where a group really learns to grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it's important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God's character and actions and contrast them to people's (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it's easy to share it with others.*

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (15 min) - Thank you / Sorry / Please

Two Ways to Live Notes (YMB)



Genesis 1:26-31
Revelation 4:6-11

How is the Creator and creation described here? What happened??



Genesis 3:1-6
Romans 1:18-25

What will God do about rebellion?



Deuteronomy 29:16-20

Hebrews 9:27

Romans 6:23

Is that it then? Just death and ruin?



Isaiah 53:3-10

Romans 5:8

1 Peter 2:22-24, 3:18

Why did Jesus die?



Acts 2:22-24, 36

Acts 17:22-32

What fresh start does the Resurrection of Jesus offer?



John 3:16-18, 36

What is the result of our way? God's way?

Which way do I want to live?

Discipleship Engines (RLM)

Definition of a Disciple (Mark 1:17)

- “Come, follow me”: a disciple knows and follows Christ (head).
- “And I will make you”: a disciple is being changed by Christ (heart).
- “Fishers of men”: a disciple is committed to the mission of Christ (hands).

Method of Discipleship

- Jesus was an intentional leader
- Jesus did His disciple-making in a relational environment
- Jesus followed a process that can be learned and repeated.
- An intentional leader + a relational environment + a reproducible process = an infinite number of disciples.

Five Stages of a Disciple’s Growth

- Spiritually dead (unbelief)
- Spiritual infant (ignorance)
- Spiritual child (self-centeredness)
- Spiritual young adult (service, God-centeredness, other-centeredness)
- Spiritual parent (intentionality, reproducibility, strategy)

Moving Disciples Forward

- Spiritually Dead: share the gospel
- Spiritual infant: share your life, share new truth, share new habits
- Spiritual child: connect to God, connect to small group, connect to God’s purpose
- Spiritual young adult: equip for ministry, provide ministry opportunities, release to do ministry
- Spiritual parent: explain discipleship process, release to disciple another with your help, release to disciple alone

Mastering the Discipleship Process (SCMD)

- Moving the spiritually dead toward life: Share
- Nurturing spiritual infants: Share
- Guiding spiritual children: Connect
- Training spiritual young adults: Minister
- Releasing spiritual parents: Disciple

Main Engine: Small Group Bible-storying method (called Orality)

- What new thing did you discover in the story?
- What did you learn about God?
- What did you learn about people?
- Which person is most like you in the story?
- What will you take away from this discussion?
- What will you do with what you have learned?

Group Study Tools

Storying is an excellent way to help people engage with Scripture. Here are some tips to help you.

Learn your story well—memorizing the story is by far the best thing to do. Read it multiple times, read it aloud, visualize it, or tell it to someone outside your group to practice. Take the time to get comfortable with it. As you memorize the story, it will start to impact your life! If you're not using a narrative passage, try to share it as naturally as possible – with some summarization to make it easier. Then read the text.

Tell the Story - Have the Bible open in front of you while you tell the story so that people know the story is from God's Word. Let your personality shine through when you tell the story, but avoid being overly dramatic or speaking in monotone. Tell the story as you would a story from your own life, with expression and meaning. Tell the story as it is in Scripture; save your comments and interpretations until the story is over. Take your time telling the story. There is no rush. End your story by saying, "That's the story from God's Word."

Rebuild: Have group members, as a whole group, retell the story. This will help them learn the story as they have to think it through and then hear it for a second time. Encourage the group to include as many details as they can.

Re-tell: Tell the story again (this is a third telling). This is best done if the story is memorized by the leader, but it can also be read from the Bible this time around. Have the group notice any details that they may have missed in their retelling of the story. The point here is to get the story deeper into the hearts of the listeners, correcting any minor mistakes (because this is God's Word, we want the correct story).

Summarizing Tools - Ask for highlights or top five key ideas. These questions help people begin to grasp the essence of the Bible Passage.

Digging and Observation Tools - After that third telling of the story, discuss as a group. As the leader, don't dominate the discussion; instead, facilitate it. Take your time, allowing about 30 minutes for this process. Let everyone who wants to talk have the opportunity. Possible questions (following an Inductive Bible Study pattern) are as follows:

- Thinking/Head—"What?" observations
 - What new thing did you discover in the story that you didn't know before?
 - What did you like about the story?
 - What didn't you like about the story?
- Feeling/Heart—"Why?" or "So what?" implications/interpretations)
 - What do you learn about God in the story? (Note: This is the most critical question of all to ask, so don't leave this one out. After all, the Bible is God's story!)
 - What do you learn about people in the story?
 - Which person is most like you in the story?
- Action/Hand—"How?" or "Now what?" applications)
 - How would you like your life to be different because of the story?
 - What will you take away from this story?
 - What will you do with what you have learned?

Don't ask too many questions! A few good questions that fit your group is better than just asking question after question.

Principles for Studying a Bible Passage (CST)

#1 Stay on the Line - *We must stay on the line of Scripture, never straying above it or below it*

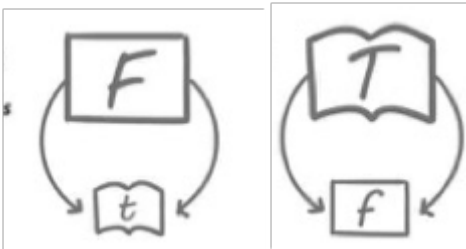


Diagnostic Questions

- What does the text say?
- Where is that found in the text?

Strategies: Be aware of both extremes, anticipate how those who farthest above and the farthest below might treat the text, test consistency of your reading with the rest of Scripture

#2 Let the Text shape your Framework - *We must let the Bible shape our frameworks rather than letting our frameworks shape our interpretations of the Bible*



Diagnostic Questions

- What pre-conceptions am I bringing to the text?
- How would the original hearers understand this?

Strategies: Identify your own frameworks (ideological, political, theological, etc.), constantly approach the text with fresh eyes, consult many different translations of the Bible (e.g. dynamic, literal, paraphrase)

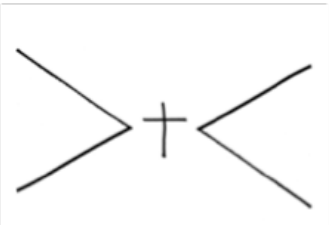
#3 Look for Context - *We must understand the context in order to see how the original audience understood the text*



Diagnostic Question: Why has the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book?

Strategies: Read the chapter on both sides of your text, read the entire book, if paired with another book, then read both books (e.g., 1 and 2 Corinthians), know where your passage is specifically in historical context and read any corresponding passages (e.g., read 1 or 2 Samuel for some Psalms, read Acts for some Pauline epistles)

#4 Travel Through the Cross - *If we are to teach the Bible as Christians, we must show a legitimate connection from our text to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



Strategies: note any cross-references to the other Testament, develop a good sense of Biblical Theology, consider historical fulfillment and theological themes, use typology and analogy (including contrast and irony), know how key doctrines relate

Diagnostic Question: How does my passage relate to the gospel (narrowly defined as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ)?

Acknowledgements

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

IVPBBC – Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

EBC - Frank E. Gaebelin et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*: Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.

ESVSB - Crossway Bibles. *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008.

Motyer, J. A. *The Message of James: The Tests of Faith*. *The Bible Speaks Today*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

YMB – Payne, Tony. *You, Me and the Bible*. Matthias Media, 2014. (matthiasmedia.com/products/you-me-and-the-bible).

RLM – Putman, Jim. *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress 2014

CST – Simeon Course. Charles Simeon Trust. Simeontrust.org

This book rests upon the work of many commentaries, seminary notes and classes. If you've been quoted without attribution, please contact us so that we can make it right.



IONA NETWORK

• next steps in following Christ •

Iona Network exists to welcome people home with Good News and help them their next step as they follow their leader, are formed in love, and fulfill their great purpose

The Rev. Gregory M. Smith has led this effort through church planting, mission outreach, and seminary classes.