

DISCUSSION GROUP LEADER AND ASSISTANT GUIDE

Below is a summary and questions to help guide you in facilitating discussion during your discussion groups. Divide each days' material up between the 2 sessions in a way that will allow you to complete all the material.

MONDAY

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES (JAMES 1:1)

A. AUTHOR (v.1)

It is incredible to see the Lord's brother develop from one who had little to do with his brother and if anything opposed Christ, to an individual who became a leader and a shepherd in the largest, most predominant ecclesia in the first century. James who held so closely to law and abided by it, learnt that it was the spirit behind the law which needed to guide his life as well as those following him and that the salvation which is afforded to believers is also available to the Gentiles. We will find that the very words Christ spoke on behalf of his Father would become the words of James as he humbly submitted to them and embedded them into his epistle. He became such an example that the apostle Paul on more than one occasion mentioned him by name (see **Galatians 1:19**) and called him a pillar of the ecclesia (**Galatians 2:9**). Furthermore, Peter who appeared to be the foremost leader early on for the Jerusalem ecclesia recognized James as an authority by singling him out as the brother that should hear the report of his release from prison (**Acts 12:17**). Although we cannot be certain, Josephus says that at the end of his life he appeared before the Sanhedrin. Instead of disapproving of the Lord Jesus Christ which was the purpose of the Sanhedrin council, he boldly proclaimed that Jesus Christ was the 'Son of God and future Judge of the World'. There James was flung down to the court below and stoned to death. James is an incredible example of a man who genuinely converted to the truth and had every opportunity to use his status as brother of Christ in a lofty way. However, he recognized that it is the spiritual relationship which matters and so he humbly called himself a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, now living and doing the words of Christ not just hearing them.

- 1.) Comment on the development of James' life in the truth. The following verses will take you through some possible stages of his life prior to Christ's resurrection, after the resurrection and finally through to the maturation of the first century ecclesia. While you go through the verses write down what you find out about James. Try to jot down some lessons that we can apply in our own lives throughout this progression.

a. *Natural Relation to Christ:*

Mark 6:3

b. *Spiritual Relation to Christ:*

Mathew 12:46; Mark 3:31-34; Luke 8:19-21; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; John 7:5 cp. Psalm 69:8

c. *Turning point in the life of James:*

1 Corinthians 15:7

d. Change of mindset now evident:

Acts 1:14

e. Position in the Ecclesia:

1 Corinthians 9:5; Acts 12:17; Galatians 1:19, 2:9

f. Activity in the Ecclesia:

Acts 15:13-21

g. Stability in the Ecclesia:

Acts 21:18

B. SETTING (v.1)

A thorough investigation of this book seems to suggest that the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, whom James was addressing, are referring to Jewish Christian converts. As there is no mention of the Jew and Gentile controversy, it is likely that this book is written early on before his involvement at the Jerusalem conference in **Acts 15**, and when few Gentiles had been converted. While the Gentile controversy had nowhere near reached its peak there were still many struggles within the ecclesia. James had to exhort them on this manner, to endure the trials that rich Jewish leaders and opposition hurled their way. James encouraged them to continue working in the truth and not allow a passive faith to take over while at the same time remaining pure from the world and maintaining a bridled tongue in the ecclesia. It would have been so easy to lash out in a time which we can barely even imagine, as Christians such as Stephen were stoned for holding to the truth. Although we are living in a different time period, we too must endure the trials that we are presented with and continue to live in purity working out our salvation.

- 1.) Think about the state of the ecclesia at the time of writing. How might we relate to the brothers and sisters at the Jerusalem ecclesia?

SECTION 2. TRIAL (JAMES 1:2-12)

A. PERFECTED THROUGH TRIAL (v.2-4)

Trial is bound to happen to all of us! It may happen in different ways, it might happen at different times, it might challenge us in a unique manner, but we will all go through trial. It is a matter of being prepared, and if we are completely committed to our God and have a full conviction, then we will be ready. We will be ready to withstand the pressures these trials bring and our faith will work the required patience. This patience will produce fruit and as a result, we can be perfected through trial by our Lord Jesus Christ {See Bonus Material → Perfection In Hebrews (Law, Christ & Us)}.

- 1.) What is the lesson for us when facing trial? Could it have been avoided? What is the false doctrine found in the book of Job and how does this relate?
- 2.) Was James expressing that joy can be found in the trial itself? Why would James say this? Use **Hebrews 12:11** to help understand this concept?
- 3.) What does it mean to have your faith tried? Can you think of any examples in scripture where an individual's faith was tried?
- 4.) Patience is an important element when in the midst of trial. Why? How can we manifest this characteristic in our lives?
- 5.) Thinking back on **James 1:1-4** what is the purpose of trial? What is the lesson for us?

B. UNDERSTANDING TRIAL (v.5-7)

It is a part of God's purpose that he relays to us his wisdom especially in time of trial. God gives us this wisdom with singleness of heart, but he expects that we are devoted to him in singleness of mind. When we ask for this wisdom to understand and get through trial we must do so unswervingly, knowing that how we ask should reflect how God gives. We cannot expect to receive anything when we either doubt God's desire to give or lack the faith that God can give. Thanks be to God for his generosity in providing us the wisdom we need to get through the difficulties of life.

- 1.) Why is wisdom needed in a time of trial? Consider the men and women of faith. What did they have that allowed them to pull through and produce fruit during trial.
- 2.) In **Proverbs 24** what excuse is not acceptable in the time of adversity or when there was work to be done during trial? Will man be held accountable even during difficult times?
- 3.) We learn that God giveth liberally. As we try to manifest our God what can we learn when giving to others?
- 4.) How is a believer supposed to ask God for wisdom? What should his mindset be?
- 5.) Why should that man of **v.7** be thinking he will not receive anything of the Lord? What element of **Matthew 21:22** is missing from the man who will not receive anything of the Lord?

C. EXALTED IN TRIAL (v.8-11)

James emphasizes the importance of remaining focused not getting sidetracked with the riches of this world. For the poor it would be all too easy to look at wealthier brethren or even those who were persecuting the ecclesia and lust after their position. They could get trapped into thinking that everyone else had a better situation because of their status, when the most fulfilling thing was sitting right in front of them; fellowshiping the sufferings of Christ. There is no greater exaltation than this! On the contrary, the rich could have all they need and yet not be satisfied or they could become consumed in their riches and become reliant on wealth rather than God. Riches can be a stumbling block for anyone and can fill our heads with greed, covetousness and jealousy. While all can be affected by this alluring temptation, we pray that we might be satisfied with what we have and glory in the riches we have in Christ. "Give me neither poverty nor riches" says **Proverbs 30:8**.

- 1.) State the number one thing which takes you away from God. In other words, what causes you to be double minded? How will you combat this spirit of doublemindedness?
- 2.) It is all too easy to fall prey to the riches of this world. Discuss how to overcome the 'love' of money when so much of our life (education, career, food, clothing, shelter, car etc.) seems to revolve around it. Discuss the impact of pursuing riches as seen in **James 1:8-11**.

D. REWARD FOR ENDURING TRIAL (v.12)

In the first few verses, James has told us about the perfection that can take place from being developed by trial, but he now goes on to tell us the ultimate reward for enduring trial. This happens in the future, at the resurrection! It is a crown of life given to those who faithfully endure. What a beautiful picture we are left with and a great encouragement for us all as we wade through our difficulties reaching unto that which lies ahead.

- 1.) A believer must be tried or approved in order to receive the crown of life. James talks about another element in this verse that is essential to receiving the crown – the love of God. Discuss its importance.
- 2.) **FIRST PRINCIPLE QUESTION:** What first principle do we learn based on this verse? Some who profess to know God fall into the trap of 'once saved, always saved'. How does this verse show us otherwise and discuss its importance.

SECTION 3. MAN'S OWN LUST VS. GOD'S OWN WILL (JAMES 1:13-21)

A. MAN'S OWN LUST (v.13-16)

While falling into trial is inevitable and is part of developing a Godly character, we must not confuse this with the temptation to sin. In some cases the two may be linked because when we are in the midst of great pressures, like those 'scattered abroad', it is all too easy to stray from God and transgress. This is what comes natural to man as it is his 'own lust' which leads him down the path of sin and finally death.

Thus we only have ourselves to blame and not our Heavenly Father. Thankfully, God has provided another route, a spiritual route, a path that leads to life if we endure trial and overcome sin. This spiritual path is Gods 'own will' and is the antidote to that which is natural.

- 1.) What does man like to do when he is found to be guilty? See **Prov. 19:3** What are the dangers of this attitude? **1 John 1:9,10; Psalm 32:1-5; Proverbs 28:13; James 5:16**
- 2.) Why is it important to recognize how manifests itself and who is at fault? Is this process an internal battle or external battle? How do we know? Give one other verse to prove this.
- 3.) Does James exclude any person from the process of temptation? What phrase does James use that proves this?
- 4.) Look up question 9 in the workbook under Section 3 Part A. What do the words enticed and drawn away mean? How does this help us to understand the process that leads to sin?
- 5.) Discuss the phrase 'Do not err'. Why is it so important to understand how deception is involved with sin?
- 6.) Practically speaking, what ways can we avoid sin? Use **Proverbs 3:13-16; Romans 13:14** to help.

B. GOD'S OWN WILL (v.17-21)

Man is often deceived into sin and the end result is death. This is a sad reality of our nature, however, our loving God of his 'own will' has provided a way to 'save our souls'. We must receive with meekness the 'word of truth' which God, the 'Father of lights,' has provided and be born again both by the water and the word. What an amazing God we worship who gives us both natural gifts and spiritual gifts. Not only has God given us his complete and perfect word of truth, but he has given us his son, who was the Word made flesh. He was the only man who 'received' with an intensity unmatched, that word of life. In so doing he was able to lay aside all wickedness and as a result crucified the flesh with the 'affections and lusts'. He did this day by day using the word of God to combat all that opposes his Father and finally on the cross. What an example we have before us! Let us take up our cross and follow him! Let us resolve in our minds that we must 'live in the spirit' and 'walk in the spirit' so that our Maker might be glorified.

- 1.) Discuss the chart in the workbook found in Section 3 Part A. Q.13.

- 2.) In your own words, describe what you think it means that God has no variableness, neither shadow of turning. How can we draw comfort from this characteristic of God? Consider **Numbers 23:19** in your answer.
- 3.) God is called the Father of lights. Discuss how God is our Father. Why is he the Father of lights? Refer to **Eph. 5:8**.
- 4.) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above? What are these gifts? What does this mean for us?
- 5.) Q.32 → How do we align ourselves with the will of God? **See John 1:12,13; 3:5-7**
- 6.) Discuss the answers for Q35 & Q36 in the workbook under section 3 part B.
- 7.) James is urging his brethren to not follow the impulses of the flesh. This way leads to death! In contrast, he appeals to them by showing the way to life, or that which is able to 'save your souls'. The alternate way is through the word, but the 'engrafted word'. The word engrafted has the idea of inborn; it talks of something with a permanent place. Why is this important to recognize when understanding how salvation can be obtained?
- 8.) **FIRST PRINCIPLE QUESTION:** As James has eloquently expressed, there are two ways of thinking; one that comes naturally and one that must be received. Read **Galatians 5:16-25**. Note the key connections from James and state the first principles that are involved.
- 9.) It may also be profitable to discuss the will of God. What is it? Refer to Appendix 5.
- 10.) Other topics for discussion: the power of 'God's will' knowing that we can be the firstfruits of his creation.
- 11.) How do we lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness? Why is it important to not only put out the 'bad' but take in the 'good'?

TUESDAY

SECTION 4. BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD (JAMES 1:22-2:13)

A. DOERS OF THE WORD OF TRUTH (v.22-25)

While we might strive to be the children of light and implant the word of God within us, there must also be action. We must be 'doers of the word and not hearers only'. If we are a hearer of the word, but choose to go our own way as opposed to the way of God, then we are like one that is baptised, but forgetteth the commitment we made. This is in contrast to one that scrupulously looks into the will of God and consistently abides in this manner serving the ecclesia in love and truth. This is a powerful lesson for us that our walk must be firmly founded upon the word of God. May we all look to walk that straight path which leads to the Kingdom.

- 1.) **V.22** tells us of a huge theme and perhaps the principle theme in the epistle of James. Why do you think James bases much of his epistle on this verse and is the driving force behind many of his thoughts? Hint: Think back to a time when he got rebuked.
- 2.) Why is **V.22** such a fundamental concept? In other words, what good is it if someone is a hearer of the word and not a doer? How does **Matthew 7:21** help us with understanding the importance of this issue?
- 3.) What is the 'perfect law of liberty' in general terms? Look at [Appendix 6](#) where every occurrence of this specific word, liberty in the Gk. is provided. Also look at **Romans 8:1,2** to help.

B. PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFINED (v.26-27)

James is very careful now to define works. They are not simply the ceremonial aspects which exude religion. This is what the Pharisees were good at. Jesus says "All therefore whatsoever they [Pharisees] bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. (**Matt. 23:3**). Basically, Jesus is saying that we are to follow what they say but not as they do, because even they don't do what they say. They had deceived their own hearts thinking that the ceremonial and external aspects were the weighty matters, but instead they were hypocrites, teaching (unbridled tongues), yet not truly driven by the law of liberty unto good works. James admonishes his brethren by articulating what pure religion is all about. It is having the correct spirit of the law (**Deut. 14:28,29**) and letting that spirit work within us to help, save, and redeem others. As God is our Father (**James 1:17,18**) and we are begat by his word of truth it should be our mission to manifest him. Just as he visited and redeemed the Jews **Lk. 1:68** and the Gentiles **Acts 15:14**, we must visit his children (fatherless and widows). Finally, being a doer of the work cannot be limited to positive actions that we must pursue, but

also negative actions that we must abstain from. James tells us that we must keep our garments. If we are able to do this we may be called 'blessed' **Rev. 16:15**.

- 1.) James has just discussed the importance of being a 'doer of the work' but he is very careful to point out what that is, and what it is not. James will do this over the next several verses. In **v.26** there is a form of religion which may seem as though it is meeting the requirements of being a 'doer of the work', but it is not. In fact, it is called 'vain' (**Strongs** - purposeless, devoid of force).
 - a. What is this form of religion that James is talking about? Refer to **Mic. 6:6-8; Matt. 23:23** for guidance.
 - b. How does someone deceive themselves with this form of religion? How can we do the same?
- 2.) Discuss the two importance elements in **v.27**.
 - a. Pure Religion → visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction
 - b. undefiled before God and the Father → to keep himself unspotted from the world
- 3.) Discuss the practical elements found in **Q.10 & 12** of the workbook.

C. RESPECT OF PERSONS (v.1-13)

These thirteen verses of James chapter 2 are filled with practical outpouring of the engrafted Word of Truth. James knows how easy it is for the flesh to justify certain behaviours; whether it be apathy even when hearing the word (**1:22-25**), or following after works of law and teaching men so, rather than works of the spirit (**1:26,27**), or as we have just considered allowing the word to drive action, but doing so mixing it with our own selfish attitudes and giving preferential treatment to some (**2:1-13**). James has told us that if we have the faith of Christ then we should not be respecters of persons. This was not Christ's attitude neither was it in the character of God. James has already told us that the rich man who is double minded will "fade away in his ways" (**1:11**) and Christ tells us that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (**Mark 10:25**). It is the poor who are often rich in faith because they see the need for God. Sometimes we can oppose God by choosing those who are rich in this world, or those who we prefer because of fleshly reasons. We can become so blinded that the very people that we build up will be the people that tear us down or 'drag us before the judgment seats' just like in the first century ecclesia. James tells us to contemplate loving our neighbour (**v.8**); it is this which God is well pleased with and it is this along with loving our God (**v.5**) that fulfills the two greatest commandments. Neighbour must be defined by what we do to others and not what others do to us (**Luke 10:36**), thus loving our neighbour is an example of being impartial in our expression of God's word. Finally, James tells us of the danger involved with partiality. While some may have thought they were loving their neighbour (ones they showed favouritism to) as commanded the law (**Leviticus 19:18**) they missed the fact that 3 verses earlier (**v.15**) they were not to show respect of persons. This was committing sin, and sin leads to death. Therefore, the only chance of life is to receive mercy (removal of punishment where it is deserved). This principle is expressed in the law of liberty which tells us that the curse of the law has been removed in Christ and we can be freed from sin and

death. If we receive mercy then we ought show mercy to others, otherwise the “judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (**Matthew 7:2**). To be in the Kingdom, judgment to death (which we all deserve **2:10**) must be removed and mercy to life must be extended. This truly is “mercy rejoicing against judgment” (**James 2:13**)

- 1.) Read through Q.9 of Section 4 Part C. Discuss.
- 2.) **V. 1** - This verse can sound complicated, but its message is simple; if you have the faith of Christ, then do not show partiality. This flows nicely from the previous chapter because we must help our brethren (fatherless and widows) regardless of personal differences. What is the importance of this principle?
- 3.) **V.2-4** describes an interesting scenario. How is this scenario applicable today? How can we be a respecter of persons in our own ecclesias?
- 4.) Does **v.2-4** tell us that we are not to make judgments? What type of judgements are we supposed to make? What is the difference?
- 5.) God has chosen the “rich in faith”, which also may be those who are seen as poor from the world’s perspective. It is obvious that God chooses the “rich in faith,” but maybe less obvious why he chooses the poor of this world. Why do you think it is the poor of this world that he chooses? Does this mean that there will be no rich people in the Kingdom? Explain and refer to **Matthew 19:21-23** in your answer.
- 6.) What is the royal law? Discuss the importance of this law and the relevant passages associated with this passage. Use Q.36 (Section 4 Part C) to aid in the discussion.
- 7.) It is so important to read all of scripture, and not just a part here or there, without context. James had earlier quoted from **Leviticus 19:18**. Read a few verses prior to that verse and show the inconsistency in the way of thinking that James discusses in **chapter 2** of his epistle. Use this idea in conjunction with q.41 of Section 4 Part C to facilitate discussion.
- 8.) How does mercy rejoice against [triumph over] judgment? Read **Matthew 18:21-35** and contemplate the time of judgment before you answer. How does the parable in this passage show how mercy triumphs over judgment, but that judgment is inevitable for those who show no mercy?

SECTION 5. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD (JAMES 2:14-26)

A. FAITH MUST PROFIT (v.14-20)

In an ecclesia that would have been rife with turmoil, the need to serve was abundant. James showed in the early parts of **chapter 2** just how that service ought to work and the dangers of becoming driven by law. Now he wants to protect against the idea that a mere academic faith is acceptable. Imagine sitting in the comfortable confines of your home meditating on the will of God while brothers and sisters were destitute of daily food and lacked clothing. This was a real scenario for those living in Judaea **Acts 11:28**.

Was the Truth given for growth in knowledge only? Is this even real faith when our brethren are suffering and we simply wish them well? We must always remember the words of Christ when he said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Can we ever pay back the debt of the death of a perfect man? Certainly not! We must have a faith that lives and serves Christ, thus ‘visiting’ (**1:27**) those in need. James also tells us that faith is an individual thing.

Our faith cannot serve others nor can the faith of another save us. Works and faith are so intimately intertwined that the death of one really means the other is dead too. If we don’t comprehend and live the simplicity of an active faith our lives are empty. We will be a dead corpse just as faith is a dead corpse without works. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (**1Co 15:58**).

- 1.) Scan through Q.5 & Q.8. Discuss the practical implications of the verses associated with these questions. Discuss the importance of v.15-17

B. FAITH PROFITING IN ABRAHAM (v.21-24)

- 1.) How is Abraham a good example for us today in demonstrating faith in action?
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To provide evidence that there is an inseparable relationship between faith and works, James turns to the Hebrew Scriptures. There he showed that their father Abraham was a great man of faith and it was accounted to him for righteousness on this basis (**Genesis 15**). However, this faith was proved much later on in his life when the very promises given to him would seem to be in jeopardy from a natural perspective. “Abraham...offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son...accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (**Hebrews 11:17-19**). This incredible work fulfilled that unstoppable faith he had many years before and brought about such a strong relationship with his Father that he was called, “the Friend of God”. While Abraham is not our father naturally he is the “Father of the Faithful” (**Romans 4:12; Galatians 3:7-9**) and was an example to us how that we might be justified through a faith working in our lives day by day. If this is us, and we

“draw nigh to God” (**James 4:8**), then we can have a relationship with our heavenly Father that is unparalleled with any we might have in this life.

C. FAITH PROFITING IN RAHAB (v.25-26)

1.) How is Rahab a good example for us today in demonstrating faith in action?

We are justified by a faith that worketh, and we are justified by works that stem from faith. James demonstrated this in two different individuals. They each came from a different race, with different reputations and had their faith perfected over different periods of time and in different ways. We are all individuals walking different paths of life but we all stand before our Heavenly Father with the same process that leads to our justification and glorification of Yahweh. May it be in our prayers that our walk is as Abraham and Rahab’s that we may receive the crown of life.

WEDNESDAY

SECTION 6. THE TONGUE (JAMES 3:1-12)

A. LEADERSHIP (v.1-2)

During this time in Jerusalem, James needed to be very clear in his efforts to help unify the members of the ecclesia. One of the greatest responsibilities for teachers lies in the use of his tongue. With it he has the ability to build up the ecclesia and cause others to stumble. We probably all know for ourselves just how much our thoughts and motives affect the words we speak and how they can impact others! Consider Christ, who, while he suffered for us “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.” (**1 Pet. 2:22**) Equally important is the need to be a servant to others. Effective leaders are those who are effective servants. This is a glorious paradox designed by God Himself. We may not gather this from the examples of ‘world leaders’ we see today, but we never expect to. Again, consider the example of our Lord: “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (**Matt. 20:28**)

- 1.) According to **1 Tim. 1:3-7, 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13**, what is the main requisite for spiritual leaders (think – what is one of the major themes of the Epistle of James?)
- 2.) Using **Matt. 7:1-5** for support, what is the warning for teachers in **James 3:1**?
 - a. Why is this so critical? Cp. **Rom. 2:20-24**.
 - b. What does this teach us about leadership? What is the purpose of identifying with our brethren? Cp. **Gal. 6:1-5; Phil. 2:7**.
- 3.) Using **Matt. 12:33-37** for support, why is it important that we control our tongue? Cp. **1 Tim. 6:3-5**.

B. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (v.3-12)

As we have already considered, the taming of our tongue is impossible without the Spirit Word of God filling our minds. Consider the words of the Word made flesh – “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” If the Truth is uppermost in our hearts and minds, it will be uppermost in our speech. The beauty of the Truth is that it does not only change the subject matter of our conversation, but the spirit and character in which we speak! As we endeavour to bridle our tongues, we must constantly, prayerfully seek the help of God in doing so. Natural willpower will not help us achieve control. Christ acknowledged “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.” This lesson is of great importance to us, for Christ also instructs us that “by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned,” and “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Self-examination and self-honesty are absolutely essential in identifying where our thoughts are derived from. Is our speech motivated by pure, Spiritual love, in order to help and to strengthen others? Or are we speaking in ways that only draw attention to ourselves? Is our speech in harmony

with the beauty and holiness of our calling? May we find encouragement in the fact that with faith in God and with His Word, taming the tongue is possible. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

- 1.) Where do the words we speak originate? Why is this so critical to understand? Cp. **Luke 6:45**.
- 2.) As compared to the bits in horses’ mouths and the helms on ships, even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. According to **Psa. 73:8-9** (starting at v.1 for context), how are those with an untamed tongue, as it were, characterized?
- 3.) According to **Prov. 16:27; 26:20-21**, what kind of person has a fiery tongue?
- 4.) Man’s dominance of the mind over the animals’ was established in the beginning (cp. **Gen. 1:26; 9:2**). However, if our animal minds are not brought into subjection (**2 Cor. 10:5**), what is the implication? Cp. **Jude 10; 2 Pet. 2:12** (and also Section 6.B question 17).
- 5.) With our tongues we can bless God and curse men – What are Paul’s instructions to the Romans in **Rom. 12:14**?

SECTION 7. WISDOM FROM ABOVE VS. EARTHLY WISDOM (JAMES 3:13-18)

A. WISDOM FROM ABOVE VS. EARTHLY WISDOM (v.13-18)

James closes his thoughts in chapter 3 with a very appropriate connection to the parable of the sower and the character of Christ. It makes sense that in order to sow fruit of righteousness, a spiritual character must already be had by the sower. We are known by our fruits. James is once again stressing the importance for teachers to bear righteous fruit and manifest the character of God because of their position in the ecclesia. **Prov. 11:30** states that “the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.” Again, consider the consistency here with Christ. The call of the Truth and being at one with God and the brethren has everything appealing about it. It is truly all that matters with God and His purpose. We have been invited to be a part of this high calling, and if we embrace it and grow in it, our gracious God will provide us with an unmatched result of eternal life under the King of Peace, manifesting His glory forever. Let us solemnly evaluate the two choices we have in life: “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (**Gal. 6:8**)

- 1.) Proverbs pairs wisdom and understanding together many times. What lessons do **Prov. 3:13-18, 4:5-7** bring out?
- 2.) Using **Luke 22:24-27** for support, how does the principle of meekness tie in with the lessons we considered in James 3 regarding leadership?
- 3.) See the chart in question 9 of Section 7A. It will be helpful to make sure those in your discussion group appreciate the contrast between earthly wisdom and wisdom from above.
- 4.) Why is it important that righteousness comes before peace, and what is the lesson for us in our personal and ecclesial lives?

THURSDAY

SECTION 8. FRUIT OF EARTHLY WISDOM (JAMES 4)

A. ENVY AND STRIFE (V.1-10)

In order to become a faithful doer of the Word, it first needs to be heard (cp. **Rom. 10:17**). If no importance is placed on this, and it is neglected, the outcome will be ugly. Fruits of unrighteousness do not need any enlightenment to make themselves manifest. Such was the case with those whom James rebukes. It is impossible to try and root ourselves in the things of the world while at the same time try to subject ourselves to God's principles. Those are two diametrically opposed ways of life, unable to be reconciled (cp. **Rom. 8:7**). If we truly desire to be a friend of God, we will read His Word and take it seriously. Otherwise, the question is begged of us – does Scripture speak falsely? “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (**Phil. 2:5-11**). May we strive to experience the joy and peace of a humble lifestyle, allowing God to work in us and lift us up.

- 1.) The problem of lusting in v.2 is not unique to James' time. According to **2 Tim. 3:1-5**, what time period will this behavior be prevalent?
 - a. In what ways is this 'lustful' behavior encouraged today?
 - b. How can we combat this? What is Jesus' teaching on this matter? Cp. **Matt. 6:31-33** and **Lk. 12:15**.
- 2.) If we're in a position where we're envious and covetous of another's wealth, and unable to obtain it, what fact are we overlooking? Cp. **Mk. 8:36**.
 - a. How does this understanding help us in our war against this fleshly inclination?
- 3.) It will likely be helpful to go over question 8 in Section 8A. to see what people learned and if there are additional verses that were added to the list.
- 4.) Compared to what was found in question 8 of Section 8A, what can we learn from asking amiss to consume upon our lusts, the way we are to approach our Heavenly Father in prayer and what we pray for? Cp. **Lk. 22:42**.
- 5.) “Friendship of the world” – cp. **1 John. 2:15-17**, what constitutes the 'world'?
- 6.) How/why is humility a vital characteristic to have...
 - a. In the ecclesia?
 - b. In our households?
 - c. At school, work, etc.?

- 7.) Using **Eph. 5:21-22**, how does the wisdom of submission extend and contribute to the success of our personal relationships as well?
- 8.) How does **1 John 1:7** help us understand how we are cleansed and what we are cleansed from?
- 9.) What can we learn from what it means to be 'afflicted' and the mindset behind it?
- 10.) Humility allows God to lift us up. According to **Psa. 46:10** and **Isa. 2:11**, who is it that is really being exalted? How is this consistent with **Num. 14:21**?

B. JUDGING OUR BROTHERS (V.11-12)

Jesus stated in **Matt. 5:17-19**, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." As we have seen throughout our study time and again, James preaches the essence of our Lord's teachings. May we see in this a testament to the consistency and wisdom of God's Word! Rather than use the time we have to exalt ourselves by putting others down, let us believe in Yahweh our God, and be established; and believe His prophets, for then shall we prosper! (**2 Chron. 20:20**)

- 1.) How should we speak to and of others? Cp. **Eph. 4:29**.
- 2.) Comparing James 4:11 to **Rom. 2:1, 13**, why does this principle make sense in light of **Jer. 10:23**?

C. BOASTING ABOUT TOMORROW (V.13-17)

Manifesting awareness and the character of God relies on our desire to develop His perspective in our lives. Without this desire, our natural default will be misguided, selfish thinking. This is why it is folly to lean on our own understanding, and to try and go forward in our own strength. May we not forget our God, Who wills us to live, but remember and acknowledge Him in all our ways. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (**Eccl. 12:13-14**).

- 1.) 'Get gain' – what warning does this give us regarding our interests and relationship with God?
- 2.) How can the plans we make take into account God's will and purpose?

SECTION 9. WARNING TO RICH OPPRESSORS AND EXHORTATION FOR THE OPPRESSED (James 5:1-11)

A. WARNING TO RICH OPPRESSORS (V.1-6)

These warnings regarding the corruptible riches would have served as good reminders for everyone who read James' Epistle. We are likely not facing oppression under wealthy rulers as the believers were in this time period, but the lure to corruptible riches is still something that is impressed on many people today. In order to combat this, and in order to endure through any trial, we must prayerfully and faithfully develop an understanding of God's perspective on the matter. This will allow us to see things for what they truly are, and, with the wisdom God affords to us, allow us to overcome our natural inclinations. We are striving to obtain an incorruptible crown, so let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (**Heb. 12:1-2**).

- 1.) How can evil arise out of wealth? **Cp. Jer. 9:23-24, 1 Tim. 6:10.**
- 2.) Are we seeing the effect of "howling" in our day and age? If so, how?
- 3.) What can we learn from the rust of wealth being used as a witness against the rich oppressors? **Cp. Lk. 12:15.**
- 4.) Who should wealth be used for? **Cp. James 2:6.**

B. EXHORTATION FOR THE OPPRESSED (V.7-11)

Much like James exhorted the oppressed believers, let us never for a moment forget God is caring for us according to His Divine wisdom – the best way possible. This includes trials; for trials are intended to drive us closer to God, so that we consciously rely more and more on Him and His will. This is why we are told to "rejoice in hope" and be "patient in tribulation" (**Rom. 12:12**). We have the assurance that God is able to bring people through their trials with faithful examples in Scripture. We, like Paul (and many others), must reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (**Rom. 8:18**). This is the salvation that we must seek after, a time when we will be rid of this corruptible, putting on incorruptible (**1 Cor. 15:54**). He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (**Matt. 24:13**).

- 1.) Longsuffering is a characteristic of our God (cp. **Ex. 34:6**). Read **1 Tim. 1:7** – what is this intended to do within us?
- 2.) In **1 Thes. 3:11-13**, Paul speaks of the need to stablish our hearts. What further insight are we given here as to what we are to strive for as we stablish our hearts?

FRIDAY

SECTION 10. BUT ABOVE ALL (JAMES 5:12-20)

A. AVOID MAKING OATHS (v.12)

Our attention is captured as James concludes his book and says 'above all'. The first concept following this noteworthy phrase is one which tells us the importance of an inner conviction. To say 'yes' to something and follow through with it, demonstrates a conviction or a strong faith. Similarly, to say 'no' to something and remain strong by not caving in is also a demonstration of an inner conviction. While God expects us to hold true to what we say, James knows that under pressure, as they were in the Jerusalem ecclesia, it is all too easy to be swift to speak. It is at this point where there is weakness, and oaths are made that cannot be kept. This is hypocrisy, doublemindedness (1:8), partialness, and is condemned by God. God, however, has sworn by oaths (**Acts 2:30; Heb. 6:13, 16-18; 7:21**) to show that His Word will be kept of a surety for, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (**Num. 23:19**). Let us therefore, commit to the Truth with integrity while realizing everything is subject to the 'Lord's will' (**James 4:15**).

- 1.) Why does James start off this section with 'but above all'? Discuss the importance of that words which follow this phrase?
- 2.) When do we make oaths today? What is the importance of keeping these oaths? When should we not keep oaths?
- 3.) In the truth, there are times when we need to say 'yea' and other times when we need to say 'nay' to something. Give an example of each. If you need help, read the following verses found in James. One can more clearly be placed in the positive, while the other in the negative. (**James 1:27; 4:17**)
- 4.) How does **James 4:13-15** relate to this topic?

B. DEVELOP RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (v.13-18)

James continues his conclusion in the epistle by moving from having an inner conviction and a strong faith, to expressing that conviction by prayer. Prayer is powerful, and this serves as a fundamental means to communicate and develop a strong relationship with our heavenly Father. Just as Elijah was moved to pray by his inner conviction and love for his brethren, we too can do the same. No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, prayer should be our first means to express our feelings to Almighty God. If we are in times of trial and we want to understand so that our character might develop (**James 1:5-8, 5:13**), let us pray or sing psalms as Paul and Silas did in prison (**Acts 16:25**). If we are in

times of great joy, let us do the same. James also wrote about the benefits of communal prayer. Those that are physically sick would do well to approach the elders to pray over them. The elders who are grounded in the word (oil) understand the power of prayer that physical restoration can only come by praying 'in the name of the Lord'. Sickness can sometimes be the result of sin. Regardless, spiritual health can be strengthened by seeking reconciliation with those with whom we have sinned against or with those who have sinned against us. God forgives us if we forgive others (**Matt. 6:14**) so let us reach out to those whom we have trespassed against and pray for them. Prayer can not only build our relationship with God but it can put us in a frame of mind to help our relationships with our brethren. If we pray without ceasing (**1 Thess. 5:17**) and truly believe God will provide, then our answer may come in a way that may even be beyond our capabilities. This was the case for Elijah, who exemplified someone with an incredible relationship with God, praying 7 times saw rain come down upon the earth, which brought forth fruit. This rain (answer from God) will come, but we must be patient (**James 5:7**).

- 1.) Explain the importance of prayer when going through affliction. Use relevant verses in the discussion.
- 2.) Explain the importance of singing psalms or spiritual songs whether in trial or success. Use a verse in your answer. Use relevant verses in the discussion.
- 3.) Discuss the importance of elders in the ecclesia. Refer to Q.11 of Section 10 Part B.
- 4.) Describe the relationship between sin and sickness? How is it used in the context of James 5?
- 5.) What does it mean to confess our faults one to another and pray for one another? How can this be practically displayed today? How does **Matt. 5:23-24** apply?
- 6.) The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. What practises can we adopt to pray with the intensity and fervour this verse embodies?
- 7.) Discuss Q.7 of Section 10 Part B.
- 8.) Why was Elijah used as an example in this context?

C. SAVE YOUR BRETHREN (v.19-20)

James continues his conclusion in the epistle by moving from the importance of an inner conviction and a strong faith, expressing that conviction by prayer to expressing that conviction in love by saving our brethren. This is where faith and works meet. Faith should compel us to develop our relationship with God Almighty, and to love our brethren. Here we really have faith, hope and love. We also see both the first great commandment; to love the Lord our God, as well as the royal law; love our neighbour as thyself. In a time rampant with trial and persecution, brethren were forsaking the Truth. To forsake the Truth is to leave the domain of Christ's covering, for if we 'sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins' (**Hebrews 10:26**). If we see our brethren or even young people who are straying away from the Truth in doctrine or conduct, it should be our endeavour to lead them in a direction away from the 'error of their way'. It may not be easy to do, but rebuke done in a meek and mild manner may be the expression of love that is needed for the

one turning their back on God. We need to be so careful how we approach a spiritually frail individual, but also realize they need help so that they can be brought into the fold having their sins covered. This will grant them the opportunity for life eternal at the judgement. If we can save others then we are following the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ who submitted to the will of his Father and came to 'save that which was lost' and 'save his people from their sins' (**Matthew 1:21**).

- 1.) What is **v.19-20** all about? Why does James choose to end his epistle this way?
- 2.) What does it mean to convert someone from the 'error of his way'? How should we approach a comparable situation today? These thoughts come from **Lev. 19:17**. What needed to happen to start the conversion process? These passages could also be used in your discussions: **Proverbs 27:6; 28:23; Matt 18:15-17**.
- 3.) How is what we are supposed to do in **v.20** compare with what Christ came to do?