



LIVING
FAITH
Leaders Guide





Spring 2024
ON CAMPUS BIBLE STUDY

WEEK 1

JAMES 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION

James begins his book by addressing the “twelve tribes scattered among the nations.” This points to the fact that Jesus chose twelve disciples to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. He also references that they have been “scattered among the nations.” Some translations reference “the Dispersion” of Jews. This highlights the fact that, at the time James is writing, the Jews had been scattered from Israel by two different exiles (Assyrians around 721 B.C. and Babylonians around 586 B.C.).

James goes on to describe how hard things refine and strengthen our faith. In fact, it seems from this passage that the best way for our faith to be strengthened is by going through hard things.

Here is a good definition of “faith”: A settled trust and confidence in God.

This passage ends with a warning to the rich, which is not uncommon for the Bible. When the rich are mentioned it is often in the context of warning about their vulnerabilities.

To be clear, being rich is not a sin. But when earthly riches are present, they come with unique opportunities for sin to creep in and for the individual to place their faith in those riches, which are so fleeting.

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:
Greetings.*

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. 9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from the passage?
2. What questions do you have from this passage?
3. What can we learn about God’s character from this passage?
4. For the Christian, what is the purpose of suffering? How should that affect one’s attitude towards trials?
5. How should we view earthly possessions?
6. How will you respond to this passage this week?

WEEK 2

JAMES 2:12-18

INTRODUCTION

We continue our study of James as James dives into his signature practicality. Following the theme of perseverance from last week in verse 12, James turns his attention to two practical scenarios where we need to persevere: trials and temptations. There is a difference between trials and temptations, though they can bleed into one another. A trial is perhaps best understood as persecution for the faith, hardship from life in general, or moments that test our faith with doubt. Temptations are those desires within us that yearn for what God has forbidden. Another way to think about it is that trials typically come from outside, temptations come from within.

James wants to make an important point here in our passage: God may allow for trials and temptations to cross our paths, but he is not the source of evil or temptation. God is good and all good things flow from him. He is so good that he can rescue us from our temptations when we cry out. He is so good that he can take our trials and redeem them into a testimony of his greatness when we lean on him. Because of his goodness, we are blessed and able to rejoice even in the face of great challenges like these.

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you in this passage?
2. What questions do you have from this passage?
3. What does this passage teach us about the character of God?
4. What does this passage teach us about our struggle with sin?
5. How does this passage compare and contrast the source of goodness (God) with the source of brokenness/sin (Us)?
6. How will you respond to this passage today?

WEEK 3

JAMES 1:19-27

INTRODUCTION

James has an important challenge for us in the first couple of verses of this passage. His challenge focuses on our reaction to others. In today's world this certainly applies to in-person interactions but it also includes online interactions, where it can be so easy to ignore what he says here.

Verse 20 references "human anger" and how it doesn't produce the "righteousness that God desires." This implies that anger is not a sin in and of itself, but rather it depends on the condition of our hearts. God himself certainly has anger toward sin. The question we should ask ourselves is, "Is my anger mirroring God's perfect heart or my own sinful heart?"

James then admonishes the reader to not just listen to God's word but to do what it says. This is similar to what Jesus says in Matthew 7 when he tells the parable of the wise and foolish builders. The wise builder is the one who hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice. In verses 23-24 James gives a rather humorous example of someone who does not do that.

There is a popular phrase that goes something like this: "Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship." And yet in verse 26-27 James describes the "religion that God our Father accepts." It is important to understand that Christianity is absolutely a religion that encourages its followers to do good works. And yet it centers around a relationship that overflows into those good works, not around good works that flow into a relationship. In these verses James merely paints a picture of what those good works look like.

In future verses he will dig deeper into the relationship between faith and works

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. 26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from the passage?
2. What questions do you have from the passage?
3. What are the characteristics that James lists as being proper for Christians to display? Why are these important? Which are the hardest to display in your own life?
4. How do you think verse 27 relates to the phrase "Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship"?

WEEK 4

JAMES 2:1-13

INTRODUCTION

After charging believers to take care of the least of these in James 1:27, James extends the train of thought to the concept of favoritism. In our text today, James gives examples of what favoritism looks like and why it is wrong. James asserts that when we pick and choose who to love, minister to, or honor we “become judges with evil thoughts.” Why is that? Because God is an impartial judge. He does not show favoritism (Romans 2:11).

Keeping this reasoning going, James makes the point that in order to love well, we must love impartially. We can't only be Christ like to some people. Doing so fundamentally undermines our love. Just as James argues in Verses 10-11, if we keep one part of God's law but not another (showing favoritism in the law), we are by definition law breakers. Instead, we must take love seriously and take the law of God seriously. In doing so, the structure of God's design for our lives leads us to greater freedom even if it forbids certain things or compels us to love people who are hard to love.

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? 8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. 12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you in this passage?
2. What questions do you have about this passage?
3. James gives an example of favoritism in V2-4, but what would be a modern example of this in college?
4. In what ways are you tempted to show favoritism in your day to day life?
5. What does the V8-11 teach us about how God views sin?
6. What is your response to this passage today?

WEEK 5

JAMES 2:14-19

INTRODUCTION

In this passage James continues to flesh out what the life of the Christian looks like, particularly concerning understanding the balance of faith and works.

Essentially he says that if someone claims to have faith but does not have the deeds that should flow from the faith, then the claim to faith is called into question.

It is important to note here that James is not saying that salvation is by works. He is simply saying that works are the proof of faith, not the source of faith. So he is not contradicting Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9 when Paul says that we are saved by grace through faith, not of works.

A good way of thinking about it is envisioning James and Paul standing back to back, each fighting a different enemy. James is fighting the enemy that says, “All you have to do is believe in God and you'll have salvation.” But James says that if that's true then even the demons are saved. Paul is fighting the enemy that says, “You have to achieve salvation by stacking up your good works so God will be happy with you.” But that switches up the order of salvation. Faith comes first, then works.

And here James is merely emphasizing that the works must be there to prove the faith.

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from the passage?
2. What questions do you have about the passage?
3. What does it mean to have dead faith?
4. Throughout Scripture (ex: Luke 7:50, Ephesians 2:8) we see that salvation comes through faith – how do faith and works exist together in the healthy growing Christian?
5. How will you respond to this passage this week?

WEEK 6

JAMES 2:20-26

INTRODUCTION

This passage looks at two key Old Testament figures that the original audience of James would be well familiar with: Abraham and Rahab. To prepare, we recommend reading over the two accounts. The first is the story of Abraham heading off to sacrifice his son in Genesis 22:1-18. In this account, Abraham shows the connection between faith and works in how he obeys God and trusts God even though he doesn't know how this will all play out. Hebrews 11:17 gives us insight into Abraham's thinking – He knew that God had promised him a family through Isaac and even if this seemed to contradict that promise, Abraham had faith to obey God because he believed that God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill his promise. Talk about next level faith. His works of obedience were rooted in his faith in God's character and promise. For more on this, check out Romans 4:13-25.

For Rahab, we see a different example in Joshua 2:1-14. Rahab is a prostitute living in a city that God is about to overtake. She hears tell of God's power (2:8-10) and in light of her belief in the power of God, she takes action by siding with God's people. She realizes that God is the true God and is worthy of her allegiance. In so doing, she helps the people of God. Later, she joins the people of God and her identity of "Rahab the prostitute" is rewritten as she becomes someone in the direct lineage leading up to Jesus. Through her faith, actions, and community, God uses her to impact not just a kingdom, but the entire world through Jesus.

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stands out to you in this passage?
2. When we look at the portion of Abraham's life referenced in this passage (Genesis 22:1-18), how do we see a connection between faith and works?
3. When we look at the example of Rahab (Joshua 2:1-14), how do we see a connection between faith and works?
4. What questions do you have about this passage?
5. What is your response to this passage today?

WEEK 7

JAMES 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION

The tongue is a little thing that has a big influence. Therefore we should be careful in how we use our tongues.

There are three big truths that come out of this passage:

- We are imperfect people (vv. 1-2)
- The tongue has great influence (vv. 3-6)
- The tongue is difficult to control (vv. 7-12)

James compares the tongue to a bit for a horse, a rudder for a ship, a spark that starts a fire, an animal to be tamed, and a deadly poison. Some of those things are simply tools that can be used for good or bad. This matches the tongue. Our words are not necessarily good or bad simply because they are words, but they are good or bad depending on what they communicate and what the heart is behind them.

In the last few verses James observes that both good and bad tend to come from our tongues. He warns us against using our tongues for evil against other people, and his reasoning for doing so is notable. He says that we tend to praise God and then to "curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness." So he ties the evil of cursing human beings to the fact that they are made in God's image, which points all the way back to Genesis 1:26-27.

This also continues James' admonishments to avoid having the double standard of following God in some areas of our lives but not in others. Our words, thoughts, and actions should all be in sync toward glorifying God.

"May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." *Psalm 19:14*

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. 3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from the passage?
2. What questions do you have about the passage?
3. Why do you think teachers are judged more strictly?
4. What are the analogies that James uses to describe the tongue and what can we learn from each one about how to use our words?
5. How have you been using your words lately?
6. How will you respond to this passage this week?

WEEK 8

JAMES 3:13-18

INTRODUCTION

For this week's passage, it would be worth focusing in on the idea of humility. To quote C.S. Lewis, "True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." This is a key theme of James. He wants believers to stop being self-focused and instead love others well through action. The Christian life is different from the world. We don't just strive to get ahead or amass wealth. The world offers wisdom on how to do these things and props them up as the ultimate indicator of success – but this wisdom isn't from God. In most cases, it pulls us away from God. This is what makes this kind of wisdom "demonic" or evil.

When we are all pursuing selfish ends, we shouldn't be surprised when tension, strife, and disorder flourish. Selfishness is at the core of all sin. How do we fight against this? Humility! God's wisdom doesn't drive us to first place, it calls us to serve the least of these and bring people together. A truly wise person is a humble, loving peacemaker

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from this passage?
2. What questions do you have about this passage?
3. How have you seen verse 18 play out in your life?
4. Do you have people in your life that exhibit this kind of humble wisdom? If so, what are they like? If not, how can you find some?
 - a. Leader note: if they do not have these kinds of people in their lives, invite them to your church!
5. What is your response to this passage?

WEEK 9

JAMES 4:1-10

INTRODUCTION

In this passage James addresses our mindsets that lead to fighting, quarreling, coveting, and a host of other sins. The core question that comes out of the passage is this: Are you proudly focused on self or humbly focused on God?

When he talks about "friendship with the world" in verse 4 that does not mean being friendly with a non-believer. If that were true then much of what the rest of the New Testament says would be invalid. Rather James is warning against relying on the things of this world for what only God can give you: peace, guidance, fulfillment, etc.

And don't be tripped up by reading that God "jealously longs" for something in us. For God to be jealous simply means that he has a clear understanding, as our creator, that anything we put our trust in besides him will ultimately lead to our ruin. And since he loves us immensely, he does not want that to happen.

James then calls for humility. Like we saw last week, the author C.S. Lewis has famously said that humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. This characterizes godly humility. It is not mere self-deprecation but a radical others-focus.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from the passage?
2. What questions do you have about the passage?
3. What do we learn about prayer from this passage?
4. What does it mean in verse 4 to have "friendship with the world"?
5. What does it mean to be humble?
6. How will you respond to this passage this week?

WEEK 10

JAMES 4:11-17

INTRODUCTION

James continues his writing with more insight for how to live out the Christian life. In verses 11-12, James comes back his previous conversation about the danger of words. Words have real impact and can scar people for life. Here, James highlights the idea of “slander” or judgement. James is warning the reader against making verbal judgements or pronouncements about other people. Why? Because it is not our place to do so – it is ultimately up to God and the authorities God has appointed. This is not to say that we cannot identify sin or speak truth to power. Rather, James is warning us against a prideful, moral superiority complex that was common at the time and remains common today. We are all guilty before the judge (Jesus) so we have no leg to stand on to decide who is in and who is out of the kingdom of God.

In verses 13-17, James turns his attention to another expression of pride. In making plans for our lives, we can go astray when we think that we can map it all out on our own. We can have dreams and desires, but we need to recognize that it is up to God’s will. It’s good to have a calendar and manage your time, but our time is not our own. It is ultimately God’s! God values our lives, but they are short in comparison to the whole of history – not to mention eternity! Planning in itself isn’t wrong, but we must be humbly open to God changing our plans. If we aren’t careful, all our future planning and dreaming can cause us to ignore or push aside the good things we are supposed to be doing in the here and now (verse 17).

11 Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? 13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. 17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stuck out to you from this passage?
2. What questions do you have from this passage?
3. Why do we tend to become judgmental of other people?
4. How do we strike a balance between calling out sin and being judgmental?
5. How involved is God in the plans you’ve made for your life?
6. What is your response to this passage?

WEEK 11

JAMES 5:1-6

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 opens with James turning his attention to wealthy landowners.

He talks about “the misery that is coming on you,” referring to the final judgment. In doing this, James is directing their perspective to eternal things rather than the things of this earth.

The Bible often does this when talking to or about rich people. Being rich is not a sin in and of itself. But there are unique vulnerabilities to having wealth. Proverbs 30 speaks of forgetting God, Mark 10 tells us that it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God, and 1 Timothy 6 tells us that the desire to be rich can lead to many foolish desires and temptations.

In this passage, James particularly focuses on how rich people treat others, which goes along with what he wrote in chapter 2 when he said to avoid showing favoritism to the wealthy, and that our words mean nothing unless they are followed up with action.

Ultimately, James wants his readers to understand that riches mean nothing in the grand scheme of eternity. It’s all about what you do with riches that counts.

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

QUESTIONS:

What stood out to you from the passage?

1. What questions do you have about the passage?
2. What are some of the charges that James brings against the rich in this passage?
3. What kinds of sin might a rich person be particularly vulnerable to?
4. In light of Scripture, how do you think Christians ought to view money?
5. How will you respond to this passage this week?

WEEK 12

JAMES 5:7-12

INTRODUCTION

Excluded from the context of this passage, it would be simple to just talk about the importance of waiting on the Lord. That's a key theme here, but when you read it along with the flow from 4:1-5:12, there is a throughline of humility. As believers, we are called to humbly submit our lives to God's will. To James, asserting our will is pride. He goes even further here: to be impatient is also a symptom of pride. Impatience elevates our time table and preferences over God's timing.

Nuancing it further, James makes a connection between two other principles. When we are rightly humble, we will have endurance (5:10-11) and integrity (5:12). These sections (5:10-11 and 12) are not disconnected bits of advice. If we humbly put God's way above our own way or preferences, then we will be empowered to endure like the prophets, Jacob, and Job. Likewise, dishonesty (breaking promises/oaths) is rooted in selfishness or self-preservation. If we are humble and truly seeking God, we will be people of our word rather than people who go back on our commitments when it no longer suits our comfort level.

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. 12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you about this passage?
2. What questions do you have from this passage?
3. In what areas of your life do you find it difficult to wait on God?
4. How does humility connect with these three principles of waiting (5:7-8), enduring (5:10-11), and integrity (5:12)?
5. How should we as Christians handle commitments in light of 5:12? Is it ever OK to break a commitment?
6. What is your response to this passage today?

WEEK 13

JAMES 5:13-20

INTRODUCTION

In this final passage of James, he brings it back around to our response to suffering, which he addressed in the first passage of his letter. Essentially, he calls the reader to fix their eyes on the Lord, no matter the circumstances. Prayer and praise are core elements of the Christian life.

When verse 15 says that "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well," it is not describing a formula. James is not saying that there is a minimum amount of faith that automatically results in healing.

He also doesn't mention the faith of the sick person at all, but rather the faith of the person praying. This is good to note, because it can be a common thought among Christians that the only reason someone continues to be sick is because they don't have enough faith.

At the same time, he is not saying that the faith of the person praying will automatically make the sick person well. Rather, he is saying that when you pray, pray in faith that God is sovereign, is in control, and wants what is best for his children. Jesus's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane just before his suffering and death is a good template. He says in Matthew 26:39, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

In the last two verses James highlights the importance of watching out for each other and calling each other to greater holiness. This stands in stark contrast to the common cultural idea that the Bible says "judge not," therefore none of us has the right to call out the wrong we see in others. Christian love is much deeper and fulfilling than that.

13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you from the passage?
2. What questions do you have about the passage?
3. What do we learn about prayer from this passage?
4. In times of suffering in your own life, would you say prayer is closer to a first resort or a last resort?
5. Why do you think it's important for Christians to confess their sins to one another?
6. How will you respond to this passage this week?

