

JAMES:

Guidelines for a Joyful Christian Life – Part 1 & 2

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY June 18th – July 11th, 2020

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Historical and Theological Themes

James, with its devotion to direct, pungent statements of wise living, is reminiscent of the book of Proverbs. It has a practical emphasis, stressing not theoretical knowledge but godly behavior.

James wrote with a passionate desire for his readers to be uncompromisingly obedient to the Word of God. He uses at least thirty references to nature (e.g.,



“waves of the sea” [1:6]; “reptile” [3:7]; and “heaven gave rain” [5:18]), as befits one who spent time outdoors. He compliments Paul’s emphasis on justification by Faith with his own emphasis on spiritual fruitfulness demonstrating true faith.



From Trouble to Triumph

Lesson Text: James 1:1-12

Reference Scriptures: 1 Peter 1:6-9; Proverbs 3:5-6

Icebreaker: James opens his book by emphasizing the reality of hard times.

- How do you usually respond to trials or setbacks in your life? Why?

Learning & Development:

- What do you want to learn from this study?

Ask God to open your heart and mind to be receptive to the no-nonsense approach to living out your faith.

James 1:1-12

1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:

Greetings.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.


4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

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

6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.



9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,

10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.

11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Discussion Questions:


- In what way do trials prove our faith is genuine?
- How does having faith in what we have “not seen” make a difference in difficult times?
- Read Hebrews 11:1-6. What do these verses say about the role of faith in our dealings with God?

Truth for Today

To test the genuineness of a diamond, jewelers often place it's in clear water, which cause a real diamond to sparkle with special brilliance. An imitation stone, on the other hand, will have almost no sparkle at all. When the two are placed side by side, even an untrained eye can easily tell the difference.

In a similar way, the world can often notice the marked differences between genuine Christians and those who merely profess faith in Christ. As with jewels, there is a noticeable difference in radiance, especially when people are undergoing difficult times.

Many people have great confidence in their faith until it is severely tested by hardships and disappointments. How a person handles trouble will reveal whether his faith is living or dead, genuine or imitation, saving and non-saving.



Understanding Temptation

Lesson Text: James 1:13-18

Reference Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-12; Romans 7:8-25

Icebreaker: One of the chief characteristics of sin is the propensity to pass the blame.

- What are some creative “excuses” you have heard people give for doing something that is clearly wrong?
- Think of a time when you have done something wrong, big or small, and to cover it up. What makes it so hard to own up to our own guilt?

James 1:13-18

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.


16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

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

18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Discussion Questions:

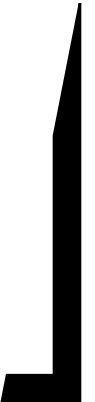
- What do you learn about God’s nature in this passage?
- Describe the progression from temptation to sin? Can you think of any other instances in scripture where the progression is shown?

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- James warns the believers not to be deceived. In what ways can we be deceived when it comes to temptation?
 - What does James mean when he says that in God there is “no variation or shadow of turning” (v. 17)?

Truth for Today

When a person becomes a Christian, God gives him a completely new spiritual and moral capability that a mind apart from Christ could never achieve. The new birth results from God’s sovereignty coming down to a sinner and by His grace cleansing him, planting His Spirit within him, and giving him a completely new spiritual nature.

He then has “put on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24). After Augustine was converted, a woman he had formerly lived with called to him as he walked down the street, but he did not answer. She persisted and finally ran up to him and said, “Augustine, it is I.” To which he replied, “I know, but it’s no longer I.”



Belief That Behaves

Lesson Text: James 1:19-27

Reference Scripture: Colossians 3:1-10

Icebreaker: Rank the following behaviors in order of how reliable they are in pointing out true saving faith (1= mark of a genuine believer; 10= nothing to do with truth faith).

- _____ wears Christian T-shirts and jewelry
- _____ has Christian bumper stickers on the car and drive the speed limit
- _____ gives regularly and sacrificially to the church
- _____ participates in missions and outreach efforts
- _____ sings with the praise team
- _____ Studies God's Word regularly and seeks to live it
- _____ attends church faithfully
- _____ has healthy, loving relationships with friends, family, coworkers, and church members
- _____ prays fervently for the lost
- _____ read a lot of Christian books and listens to sermons on the radio

Why did you rank the items as you did! What do you think are the best indicators of true, saving faith?

James 1:19-27

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

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 observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Discussion Questions:

- What are true believers admonished to do in (vs. 19-22)?
- In the arena of faith, how are the actions of "hearing" and "doing" different? How are they related?
- What is the right response of a child of God to the Word of God?
- What examples does James give as behavior indicative of true faith?

Truth for Today

As important as the proper reception of the Word of God is, without obedience to its truths it is not only without benefit, but also becomes a further judgement against its readers. Obedience to the Word is the most basic spiritual requirement and is the common denominator for all true believers. The bottom line of true spiritual life is not a momentary feeling of compliance or commitment but long term obedience to scripture.

Genuine believers receive Christ and continue in Him. They hear His Word and do it. They know His commandments, and they keep them. They do not claim to know God yet deny Him with their deeds. The validation of salvation is a life of obedience. It is the only possible proof that a person really knows Jesus Christ. If one does not obey Christ as a pattern of life, then professing to know Him is an empty verbal exercise.

Favoritism in the Church

Lesson Text: James 2:1-13

Reference Scripture: Matthew 22:34-40

Icebreaker: It has been said that the most segregated time of the week in this culture is the Sunday morning worship hour. In what ways, if any, have you ever seen this to be true?

- Have you ever experienced negative prejudicial treatment from someone? How did it feel?
- Have you ever experienced positive prejudicial treatment from someone? How did it feel?
- Have you ever accomplished something you didn't think you could do?

James 2:1-13

1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,

3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"

4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?

7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well;

9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

11 For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Discussion Questions:

- According to James, why is showing partiality incomparable with faith?
- What reaction did the poor often get when they visited a Christian assembly? Why did James remind his readers about the poor? (Lev. 25:35-37; Ps. 41:1)
- How does James use the law to explain the problem of partiality (vv. 8-10)?

Truth for Today

There will be no poor in heaven in any sense, no second class citizens. Everyone will be rich in the things that matter eternally. Every believer will receive the same eternal life, the same heavenly citizen in the Kingdom of God, and the same perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to them by the Father. Every one of His children will live in His house and bask alike in His presence and love (John 14:1-3).

Dead Faith

Lesson Text: James 2:14-20

Reference Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Icebreaker Questions:

- How do you define faith?
- How would you explain to a child why we do “good works”?

James 2:14-20

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus 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 without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Discussion Questions:


- What two examples does James cite to show the futility of faith without works (vv. 15-16, 19)? How are these good examples of dead faith?
- Do you think James proves his point, why do you think so?
- Is James suggesting that helping the poor and hungry is a prerequisite to salvation?

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- What did James mean when he said that the “demons believe”? How does this emphasize the difference between dead faith and genuine saving faith?

Truth for Today

It cannot be stressed too often that no one can be saved by works. Salvation is entirely by “grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). If works could have any part in salvation, it would no longer be by God’s grace. But neither can it be stressed too often that, as James declares in the present passage.

“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (2:17). Genuine, transforming faith not only should, but will, produce genuine good works, notably repentance and obedient submission to Christ Lordship. This is the expression of the new nature, created in the new birth (2 Cor. 5:17). It will not be perfect obedience and repentance, but good works will be present. We might say that it costs us nothing to become a Christian but everything to live fully as one.



Faith That Passes the Test

Lesson Text: James 2:21-26

Reference Scripture: Romans 4:1-25

Icebreaker Questions:

- What is the greatest step of faith you have ever seen someone take?
- Do you think some Christians have a greater capacity for faith than others? If so why?
- When in your life have you taken a great risk and followed what you believed to be God's will, even though some friends and family felt your decision to be foolish? How did you feel in the midst of that time? What finally happened?

James 2:21-26

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.


24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Discussion Questions:

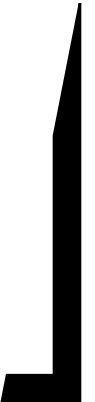
- What three illustrations does James give to continue illustrating his point that faith without works is dead?

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- Paul taught that we are justified by faith alone. James says that Abraham and Rehab were justified by works. When you look at the whole of what James has been saying about faith and works, you can see how the paradox resolves itself. How would you explain this seeming contradiction to someone else?
 - Why is it significant that Abraham was called “the friend of God”?
 - How would you answer the person who argued from James 2:21 that our works (or behavior) do play a role in our salvation?

Truth for Today

Abraham was not a perfect man, either in his faith or in his works. After many years had passed without Sarah’s having the promised heir, he took matters into his own hands, having a son, Ishmael, by Hagar, his wife’s maid. His wavering trust in the Lord led him to commit adultery. In those and other cases, such as when he lied twice about Sarah being his sister (Genesis 12:19; 20:2), his works obviously did not justify him before men.

But James point is that, in the overall pattern of his life, Abraham faithfully vindicated his saving faith through his many good works, above all else by offering Isaac as a sacrifice. When a man is justified before God, we will always prove that that justification before other men. A man who has been declared and made righteous will live righteously. Imputed righteousness will manifest practical righteousness. In the words of John Calvin, ***“Faith alone justifies; but the faith that justifies is never alone.”***





Part 2

Sessions 7 - 12

Taming The Tongue

Lesson Text: James 3:1-12

Reference Scripture: Matthew 12:33-37

Icebreaker Questions:


- What kind of speech generally rolls off your tongue and out of your mouth? Think about your speech over the last week and give yourself a **“thumbs up”** (i.e., I’m innocent!) or a **“thumbs down”** (i.e., I’m guilty!) in the following categories:
 - Bragging/boasting
 - Lying
 - Flattering
 - Slandering
 - Gossiping
 - Verbally abusing others
 - Cursing
 - Off color remarks
 - Backbiting
 - Passing on rumors
 - Shading the truth
 - Arguing
 - Yelling
 - Being sarcastic

How do we as Saints of God guard against these types of sins of the tongue?

James 3:1-12

1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.



3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.


9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

Discussion Questions:

- According to James, where does the root of the problem of evil speech lie?
 - What types of evils are caused by the tongue?
 - Why are the metaphors James uses for the tongue particularly apt? What do they convey?
 - How does Jesus describe the relationship between the heart and the mouth? (Matt. 12:33-37)
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Truth For Today

Nowhere is the relationship between faith and works more evident than in a persons speech. What you are will inevitably be disclosed by what you say. It might be said that a persons speech is a reliable measure of his spiritual temperature, a monitor of the inner human condition. The rabbis spoke of the tongue as an arrow rather than a dagger or sword, because it can wound and kill from a great distance. It can wreak great damage even when far from its victim.





True Wisdom

Lesson Text: James 3:13-18

Reference Scripture: Proverbs 2:1-7

Icebreaker Questions:

- Who is the wisest person you know?
Explain what you see in that person's life that shows wisdom.
- How often does true wisdom really count when we are selecting leaders in the church? Leaders in politics?
- What, in your opinion, is the secret to gaining wisdom?

James 3:13-18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.


15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.


16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Discussion Questions:

- How do we show that we are wise?
 - How is godly wisdom described and defined in this passage?
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- What did James mean when he referred to the “meekness of wisdom” (v. 13)?
 - What is the source of true wisdom? How do we get it?

Truth For Today

If a person professes saving faith in Jesus Christ and claims to have wisdom from God, but has a heart that is proud, arrogant, and self centered and lives a life that is worldly, sensual, and self serving, his claims of salvation are false. He is lying against the truth.



Friendship with the World

Lesson Text: James 4:1-12

Reference Scripture: Psalm 63:1-11

Icebreaker Questions:

- How do you define “worldliness”?
- Give some examples of activities that some Christians might typically view as “Worldly.”
- How do we live “in” the world but not “of” the world?

James 4:1-12

1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

“God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble.”

7 Therefore submit 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 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of 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 one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

Discussion Questions:

- Why is James so intolerant of conflict in the church? What causes this infighting?
- Why does James address some of his readers as “adulterers and adulteresses? What does this phrase mean?
- What does it mean to be friends with the world? What does it mean to be at enmity with God (v. 4)?
- What should be the Christian’s relationship with the world?

Truth For Today

Friendship with the world and friendship with God are mutually exclusive? Christians have a nature so utterly distinct from the lovers of this world, the followers of Satan, that they should never entertain any of the ways or hold any of the loyalties that characterize unbelievers. For believers to pursue worldly things goes against the grain of their new nature, and they cannot be comfortable or satisfied until they renounce those things and return to their first love.

Responding to the Will of God

Lesson Text: James 4:13-17

Reference Scripture: Luke 12:13-21

Icebreaker:

- How do you define the phrase “The Will of God”?
- How do you go about determining God’s will for your life?

“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”
Matthew 26:39 KJV

James 4:13-17

13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”;

14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.


15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”

16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Discussion Questions:

- How does James characterize our lives, for example “the length of our days”? Why is this significant?
- Why does James insist that we preface our plans by saying “If the Lord wills”? What does this mindset indicate?


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- How does a concern for the will of God demonstrate our belief in His sovereignty?

“Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

Proverbs 27:1 NKJV

Truth For Today

The scriptures give many marks of a true Christian, such as love for God, repentance from sin, humility, devotion to God’s glory, prayer, love for others, separation from the world, growth, and obedience. But nothing more clearly summarizes the character of a genuine believer than a desire to do the will of God.





Riches, Trials and Oaths

Lesson Text: James 5:1-12

Reference Scripture: Isaiah 3:14-15; 10:1-4

Icebreaker Questions:

- Some Christians insist that it is an overt sin for believers in America to drive expensive cars when people around the world are starving to death. Others look unfavorably on Western Christians who live in luxurious homes or who take extravagant vacations.
 - Are these advocates of frugal living correct? Why or why not?
 - Would you consider yourself materialistic?
 - In courtrooms every day, witnesses place their hand on the Bible and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Is this a Christian practice or not?

James 5:1-12

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.



7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

Discussion Questions:

- What charges did James bring against the wealthy?
- Why was he so harsh in his rebuke?
- What we're to learn from Job's example of suffering?
- Why did James argue that the Jewish custom of swearing oaths was unnecessary and improper in the church?

Truth for Today

The Bible does not teach that possessing wealth is sinful in and of itself. What is wrong is to misuse one's wealth. Wealth may be a blessing, a gift from God bringing the opportunity to do good. But that can only be true of those who are also "rich in faith" and "rich toward God". If wealth is to be a source of blessings and not condemn, it must not be uselessly hoarded, unjustly gained, self indulgently spent, or ruthlessly acquired.

Righteous Praying

Lesson Text: James 5:13-20

Reference Scripture: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Icebreaker Questions:

- Different people respond differently to difficulties and suffering. How do the unbelievers you know typically respond?
- How do the most mature Christians you know respond? How do you usually respond?
- When the last time you confessed your sin to another person and had them pray with or for you regarding that sin?
- Why do many believers find this difficult, often to the point of not doing it at all?

James 5:13-20

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.


14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.



19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Discussion Questions:

- What kind of suffering does James refer to in verse 13? Is the context speaking of physical sickness, suffering in general, or spiritual weakness?
- How can prayer make a real difference in the life of a struggling saint?
- What does it mean to wander from the truth?
- To what group does James give the label “sinner” in verse 20?

Truth For Today

Maintaining open, sharing, and praying relationships with other Christians will help believers from bottoming out in their spiritual lives. Such relationships help give the spiritual strength that provides victory over sin. And they also provide godly pressure to confess and forsake sins before they become overwhelming to the point of total spiritual defeat.

God has granted to all believers the ministry of reconciling wandering souls to Himself. When the evidence indicates a professed believer's faith is not real, true Christians, knowing the terrible threat of eternal death that person faces, must make it their goal to turn him back from his sin to genuine saving faith in God.

