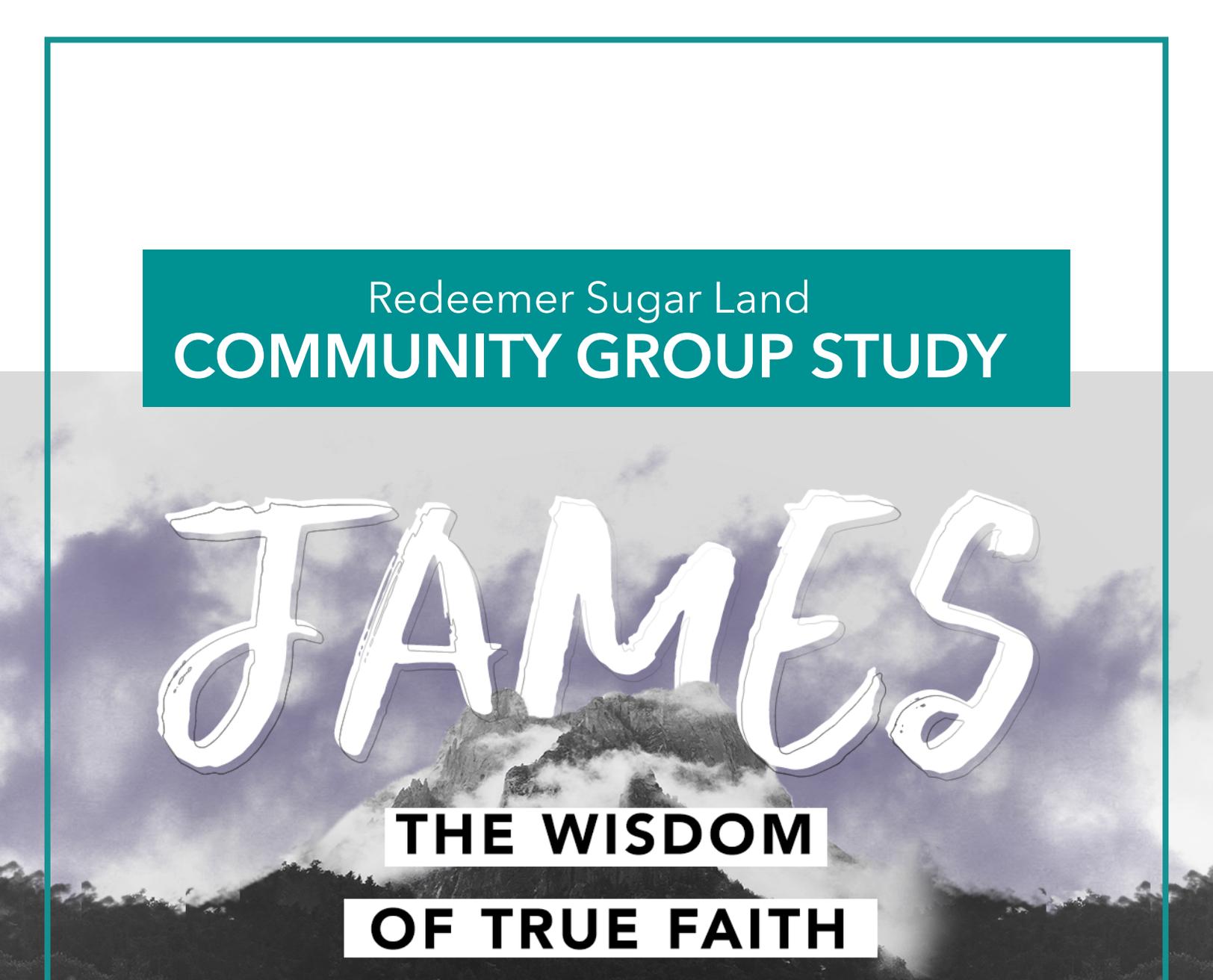


Redeemer Sugar Land
COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY



JAMES

THE WISDOM

OF TRUE FAITH

PART 2
Chapters 4-5

How to use this guide

For the Fall 2021 semester we will be preaching through the book of James. As a way to help you reflect on and prayerfully process it more, we've put together this little guide. This guide isn't necessarily a commentary through James. If you'd like to go into a deeper study of the book of James we'd be glad to recommend some helpful commentaries and resources! Think of this guide more like a **personal reflection journal** and a **community group discussion starter**.

1 Personal Reflection Journal: Before or after each sermon in James it'd be ideal for you to personally work through each section on your own. You can even re-listen to all our sermons on our website and YouTube page. Personal reflecting before/after can help you engage the text in order to internalize God's word in a deeper and more personal way.

One way to help your personal reading is to use the A.C.T.S meditation method (Acrostic for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.)

The Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, had a version of this method of personal bible reading and mediation. In his short letter to his friend and barber, now published as "A Simple Way to Pray", he counsels Peter to:

- (1) Discern and reflect on the truth found in the text
- (2) Give thanks to God for the truth in His word
- (3) Confess ways in which you fail to live out that truth
- (4) Ask the Spirit to help you live out that truth

A.C.T.S is a great way to help you meditate on a biblical text. To help you do A.C.T.S each week in this guide begins with a **bold** section that has a short explanation of the passage followed by discussion questions. These can help you "discern" the truth of the text in order for you to meditate on it with A.C.T.S

2 Group Discussion Starter: Fall and Spring community groups will also be using this guide. In CGs we'll be discussing 1-2 questions from the section of James that was preached the week before. This will give us another opportunity to further apply and talk about ways in which God spoke to us through His word. This can also be used in family worship with your spouse or your children!

We hope and pray that this guide will help you and our church to grow in true wisdom!

– **Redeemer Presbyterian Church Sugar Land**

How to Meditate Using A.C.T.S

To help your personal reflection and meditation on the text use A.C.T.S. Read and reread the passage several times. Keep A.C.T.S in mind as you read. It's helpful to use pen/pencil/highlighter to mark and annotate. We have left blank pages in this guide for you to write on and take notes.

A

Adore:

How does the text lead you to adore God for who He is?
What does the passage reveal about God's character and nature?
Does the passage specifically mention a person of the Godhead, if so, what does it reveal about Him?

C

Confess:

How does the text reveal your ongoing need of God's grace?
What does the passage reveal about the character and nature of humanity?
What do you need to confess?
Does the passage reveal some "fallen condition" which effects people and the world?

T

Thanksgiving:

How does this text lead you to Jesus?
How does the passage cause you to thank God for His unmerited grace?
What does the passage say about the person and work of Christ?

S

Supplication:

How is the Spirit speaking to you based on the text?
What has the Spirit revealed from the passage (obey a commandment, trust a promise, or change a belief)?
What "need" do you need to bring before the Lord in prayer?
PRAY!

WEEK 8

James 4:1-12

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read the Passage
a few times



Listen to the
sermon



Meditate with
A.C.T.S & DQs



Reflect on it in
Community Group

1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. 11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

These twelve verses are extremely relevant for us today and demonstrates that human nature hasn't changed. Verse 1 indicates the beginning of a new section, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" All of us are engaged in relationships: marriage, children, relatives, friends, workmates, church members, neighborhoods, social media community, and even the stranger at the checkout line! We are relational beings coexisting in a "Genesis 3" world. The implications? Relationships are difficult and messy. Sooner or later we all experience conflict and tension to varying degrees. James uses vivid metaphorical language to describe our broken relationships (vv.1-3). In a lot of ways 4:1-12 is a continuation of 3:13-18. True wisdom leads to a "harvest of righteousness" that produces "peace." Here in 4:1-12 we don't see true wisdom but worldly wisdom that leads to wars, murder, and evil speech.

Discussion Questions (DQs)

1. What are ways you would answer James' question, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" He tells us the root reason in v.1b but spend some time honestly reflecting on what you tend to think is the cause of conflict.

2. James says the root cause of conflict is “passions at war within us (v.1b).” The bible does not deny that outward factors contribute to conflict but it simply teaches that the originating cause is an inward heart issue. Why is it hard to admit this? Why is it easier to blame shift? What false comfort might we get when we shift the cause of conflict?

3. How can we evaluate and know if we have disordered desires (vv.2-3)? What does covetousness look like in your own life?

4. How should Christians think about “passions” and “desires?” Is it wrong to have them since it sounds like James says they lead to conflict? How might the contrast of true and false wisdom in James 3:13-18 help us think about passions that lead to peace and not conflict?

5. James says that passions, desires, and covetousness don’t just cause quarrels with our earthly relationships, but it also disrupts our heavenly relationship with God. Why would our disordered passions cause us to be “spiritually adulterous” (v.4a), “friends with the world” (v.4a), and ultimately “enemies of God” (v.4b)? Reflect on Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:24.

6. How does the hope of verses 7-10 help us navigate the passions at war with in us (v.1), our spiritual adultery (v.4), and our tongue (v.11)?

WEEK 9

James 4:13-5:6

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read the Passage
a few times



Listen to the
sermon



Meditate with
A.C.T.S & DQs



Reflect on it in
Community Group

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

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

Many commentators and bible teachers approach the section of James 4:13-5:6 differently. As you've probably noticed the dilemma with interpreting James is not fundamentally "what is James saying" as much as "why is he saying this here in the section of the letter?" This section, therefore, has been studied both as a one unit (one overarching and unifying theme of 4:13-17 and 5:1-6) and also separately. For the sake of this study we will look at it as one unit and try and understand the overarching theme in 4:13-17 and 5:1-6. The repeated phrase "Come now" (4:13, 5:1) as well as themes of pride and wealth tie both passages. In 4:13-17 James addresses the issues of presumption and boasting of human ability, particularly when it comes to trade and business. In 5:1-6 James address the issue of greed that has lead to oppression and economic injustices.

Discussion Questions (DQs)

1. In 4:13-17 the spiritual issue is not planning, goal setting, or making a profit—those things are good and wise—the issue is presumption. Presumption, which "comes from a wrong understanding of ourselves in relation to our own lives and ambitions", leads us to thinking that we control our lives. Why do we struggle with presumption?
2. James uses a vivid image to describe our lives in verse 14, "What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." How is this meant to shape our daily lives?

3. James isn't teaching us to repeat verse 15 "If the Lord wills..." as some good luck charm. "If the Lord wills" should be the attitude and posture of our hearts for the future. What might this attitude and posture look like in your life?

4. How does James 5:1-6 challenge of view of wealth and generosity?

WEEK 10

James 5:7-12

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read the Passage
a few times



Listen to the
sermon



Meditate with
A.C.T.S & DQs



Reflect on it in
Community Group

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

A good study tool when reading scripture is: "whenever you see a 'therefore' in the Bible always ask "what it's there for...?" After speaking of the injustices and suffering that some were experiencing (5:1-6), James writes, "Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord." This new section, therefore, is an exhortation to hold onto the hope of the Lord's coming in light of the "trials of various kinds" (1:2) we experience. James is (and has been!) realistic about life in a fallen world, but he's also confident of the hope and joy we can have as we patiently await for the return of our Lord, who will make all things new.

Discussion Questions (DQs)

1. Have you ever struggled with patience and waiting on the Lord during a season of "trials of various kinds"? How has the Lord helped you in those seasons?
2. James says that as we wait for the Lord we should not "grumble against one another..." (v.9) Why would waiting, specifically in the midst of suffering, cause us to grumble?
3. James offers pastoral care for our times of waiting by pointing us to the faith of the Old Testament saints (vv.10-11). Whose faith (biblical character or another Christian) has encouraged you to "be patient" in the midst of suffering?

WEEK 11

James 5:13-20

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read the Passage
a few times



Listen to the
sermon



Meditate with
A.C.T.S & DQs



Reflect on it in
Community Group

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. 19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James opened up his letter with the theme of suffering: “to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion... count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds... (1:1-2)” Interestingly he ends his letter with themes of suffering, “Is anyone suffering?...Is anyone sick? Let him call for the elders...and let them pray over him...” James speaks about “prayer” together with “anointing oil.” Commentators offer various interpretations but it seems like the “anointing oil” was seen as both symbolically (The Holy Spirit’s power and presence) and medicinally.

Discussion Questions (DQs)

1. How has reading and reflecting through the letter of James challenged and strengthened your faith in Christ?
2. James speaks a lot about suffering in this letter. Why do you think that is? Have James’ words helped you understand and “count it all joy” in the midst of various trials?
3. The big theme we’ve been seeing in James is “the wisdom of a real faith.” James has contrasted true religion, single-minded faith, and consistent belief with false religion, double-minded faith, and inconsistent belief. He ends with a note on wandering. Why do you think he finishes the letter this way?