



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

January 30, 2005
James 1:12-18

OVERVIEW

When things aren't going well and we are faced with trials, we can end up making the wrong decision. We can feel pressured to lie instead of telling the truth, compromise rather than live in integrity, get selfish instead of extending ourselves in love. And then, when we find ourselves out of step with God and in sin, we might be inclined to blame God. "It's your fault! I wouldn't have done that if You hadn't put me in this situation!"

James wants our thinking to be clear. Even though God brings us to places of testing for our growth and good, if we end up in sin it was all our doing!

DISCUSSION

Reflecting on how children tend to "pass the blame" is an innocent way to open up today's discussion. It's just a short jump from there to realizing that we do the same thing as adults.

In James' discussion of trials, he realistically addresses this problem. When we end up "blowing it" when we are in the midst of a difficult situation, we tend to look for someone to blame. And, seeing as it was God who allowed or even orchestrated the trial we are in, we may be inclined to blame Him.

But James wants us to be clear. God is not the author of the temptation to sin. God cannot be induced to do evil; it is out of character for Him. It would then be out of character for God to induce us to do evil. So, where does the sin come from? When we are facing a trial, why do we sometimes end up farther from God? James' answer is simple but challenging.

James tells us that we all "want." (Most translations speak of "lust" in verse 14.) But don't let your people think of that in either the "sexual desire" or "evil and wicked longings" sense only. The word means "strong desires." We all have them. And, if we lived only by our strong desires, we would pretty much live apart from God! So, God brings us into times of testing where we can have a growing and enduring dependence on Him (as seen in 1:2-4). If we ignore depending on God and simply go with our own desires . . . well, we only have ourselves to blame! We don't have to go that way. We could wait on God, look to Him, and come through the testing closer to Him. That's what God has in mind.

Make sure you underscore what James tells us about God. He gives generously what is needed to those who ask (1:5). He gives only what is good for us (1:17). He is entirely consistent when it comes to His dealings with us (1:17). His intention is that we be His personally attended "crop" (1:18).

BIG IDEA

When you are facing a trial, make sure you turn your face toward God. Otherwise, you might be tempted to do things your own way . . . and you will only have yourself to blame for what comes out of that.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

January 30, 2005
James 1:12-18

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

Little children are notorious for responding this way. Mom or dad finds something broken or misplaced. They begin to ask the kids what happened. And, almost invariably, what will each child say?

Like the child who seeks to push the blame away onto someone else, how do adults do that?

When we come into times of testing, we sometimes end up blowing it. We end up heading in the wrong direction and life takes a turn for the worst. In those moments, why do we sometimes look to blame God?

Let's allow James to help us think through this kind of "it's your fault" reaction to the troubles that arise in life due to trials. Read James 1:12-18.

Every trial—seeing as it provides an opportunity for growing—must contain an opportunity to decide wrongly, to head away from God rather than toward God. What does James say is at the center of the reason why we head off in the wrong direction?

To put it simply, in each test we can pass by moving in God's direction or we can fail (and end up in sin and trouble) by heading in our own direction. What help does James offer to us in encouraging us to always pass our tests by heading toward God rather than away from Him?

James offers us some insight into what God is like in verses 17 and 18. How can those insights help you in your dealing with the difficulties that come your way?

Prepared for you by

SOUTHSIDE
fellowship

Woodruff Road &
Highway 14
Greenville, SC
864/234-7033
southsidefellowship.org