



LEADER'S NOTES

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

February 20, 2005
James 1:19-27

OVERVIEW

James does not put his epistle together in a neat “three point outline” way; James moves from thought to thought, stringing ideas together only to come back and revisit an earlier idea. This makes understanding a bit challenging. But don't be discouraged by his style. As we walk through this epistle, continue to keep your eyes open for the big themes, the clear ideas, that James refers to time and again. Listen for the “melodies” that are woven into his well-orchestrated letter.

This section in James seems to string together disparate thoughts. We want to try and help draw an idea or two out of the text, while not doing injustice to what James has written.

DISCUSSION

You can begin by reflecting back on the subject of trials. James has already told us much about them; we will encounter them, they are for our good, they come to us through the loving hands of God, and if we are not careful we could get ourselves into sin by how we respond to trials. One of the thoughts we have touched on is the step we sometimes make in the midst of a trial (that we are not handling so well!) that it is all God's fault. James has told us that is not the case. We are responsible for our response to trials.

But let's piggy-back on that idea. Sometimes (wrongly so) we blame God for our poor handling of a trial or difficulty. What else do we sometimes do? An honest self-assessment should make it clear that we sometimes “vent” in the midst of trials in the way we deal with others. James has something to say about that—such responses never work along the lines of God's righteous plans!

James introduces the metaphor of a mirror. One looks in, sees himself or herself, but then when leaving, promptly forgets what was seen. The result is that the truth revealed by the mirror has no lasting impact. James does not want us to respond the same way to the Word of God. When we look into the Scriptures, we see ourselves and our lives and God's will for us in truth. James is encouraging us to let that image—what we discover in looking into the Word—to have ongoing impact in our lives. If we really are in this faith relationship with God, if we really are seeking to live with him, if we are living out our faith, than it should influence the way we “do life.”

In this section, James is not exhaustive; he doesn't list for us all the ways a living faith should influence the way we live. But, he does give us a few glimpses. An active living faith should influence the way we speak (1:19-20, 26), the way we approach life (1:21), the way we respond to the Word of God (1:21-22), and the way we care for those who are needy (1:27).

BIG IDEA

If you have a living faith, it should influence the way you live.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

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

February 20, 2005
James 1:19-27

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

Sometimes when we face a trying time or have to endure some trial, we end up “taking it out” on someone else. If we aren't managing the trial so well, sometimes we blame God (James 1:13). But at other times, we can “vent” on others. When do you respond that way? Why?

Look at what James has to say along these lines in James 1:19-22. What seems to be his point?

As we have noted, James is interested in helping us understand how we can live out our faith in practical, day-to-day ways. Our faith in God should make a difference in the way we live. Look at what James goes on to say in 1:23-27.

How would you describe the kind of person James wants for us to be?

What is the relationship between “looking intently at the perfect law of liberty” and living out your faith?

James does not give us an exhaustive list of things for Christians to do; he simply suggests the kinds of things that rightly flow out of the life of faith. Taking the passage as a whole, find various ways to complete the following sentence:

A life of genuine faith will effect the way I . . .

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