STANDING TALL
Men building character through the book of James
developed by Denton Corman
STANDING TALL

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Men building character through the book of James
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Standing Tall
Men building character through the book of James

One of the greatest things that happens when we become a follower of Jesus Christ is that God enables us to know Him. To know Him is to love and obey Him. As a result, we become men of character, standing tall in every situation as we walk through the circumstances of life trusting Him.

In James’ writings we are given the challenge to wrestle with a number of character issues of life and experience the transforming power of God and His Word at work in and through our lives as we act in faith. He reminds us that our actions are belated announcements of our thoughts. It is impossible to live differently until we think differently.

This series is designed to give us the opportunity to consider God’s Word through our own study and through the interaction in small group discussion. Join us on this journey of faith as we trust God to make us men who stand tall.

The series video teachers are:

**Andy George**
*Crossroads Fellowship Associate Senior Pastor.*

Andy has been on Crossroads Fellowship staff for over 10 years. He is dedicated to seeing people get connected and grow in their faith.

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Denton has led teams of men and women in the marketplace to present Christ and developed spiritual leaders in cities around the world. God used Denton’s varied background to prepare him for a lifetime of equipping believers to eternally influence their peers in the power of God’s Spirit.
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Attitude

Why adversity? Why would James tell us to consider it all joy when you undergo various trials? What does he know that we don’t know? It is obvious he is looking beyond the circumstances to the character of God and our character development.

Chuck Swindoll, Christian author and speaker, says, “I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you—we are in charge of our attitudes.” 1

So what do we need to learn about trials, and steadfastness? What difference can it make?
James 1:1-5 (ESV)

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

Testing of Your Faith

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,  
3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.  
4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.  
5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Introduction:

• The Perspective

• The Process
• The Product

ATTITUDES ARE NOTHING MORE THAN HABITS OF THOUGHT AND HABITS CAN BE ACQUIRED. AN ACTION REPEATED BECOMES AN ATTITUDE REALIZED.

- DR. PAUL MEIER 2
Discussion Questions:

1. What is our normal response to trials? Why?

2. Why does God allow people to go through trials and difficulties?

3. What good has come out of a difficult situation in your life?

4. How does your relationship with God change as you go through trials and problems?

5. When do you find it hardest to pray?

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THE GREATEST DAY IN YOUR LIFE AND MINE IS WHEN WE TAKE TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR ATTITUDES. THAT’S THE DAY WE TRULY GROW UP.

- JOHN MAXWELL, DEVELOPING THE LEADER WITHIN YOU³
Action Steps:

What do you believe God is trying to teach you through the trials and situations you are experiencing? What is your attitude? Do you see the trial as friend or foe? Are you willing to ask God to give you His perspective?

Jesus invites us in Matthew 11:28-30 to come to Him and find rest. Will you take that step of faith and see what happens? Obey what He tells you.

Memory Verse:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

- James 1:2-3 (NIV)
Standing Tall

Attitude

Do you have an attitude? Why? Is it because of what someone said, or did? Is it long term or short term? What are you going to do about it?

Webster defines attitude as “Position, disposition or manner with regard to a person or thing.” If we are honest, all of us have an attitude about something or someone in our lives. I read somewhere that attitudes are habits of thought. I believe we have inherited some of these habits of thought from our environment (our upbringing, our friends, etc.), but then we have all made up our own habits as well, haven’t we?

Chuck Swindoll, Christian author and speaker, says, “I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you—We are in charge of our attitudes.” Is he on to something? How can two people experience the same difficulty, and respond so differently? Is it just because of the difference of personalities? Or could it have more to do with our how we feel, think, and behave? Is there any help?

Do you feel your way into thinking, and then behaving? Or do you think your way into feeling, and then behaving? Or do you just behave, because that is what you have always done? Could we consider this a little? Is it true that wrong thinking many times leads to wrong feelings, and then often leads to wrong actions? Could it also be true that right thinking can lead to good feelings, and result in beneficial behavior toward others?

One of the things that sets Christianity apart from all religions is found in Philippians 2:12-13 (NLT). “…Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.” Look at what He has given us; the desire and power to do what pleases Him. What is missing? Isn’t it our response to His invitation? Too long we have made Christianity a have-to religion. God wants us to experience a want-to relationship with Him that will give us the freedom to change our thinking, our emotions, and our behavior. When life comes at us, we have the grace of God at our fingertips, enabling us to change our habits of thought resulting in attitudes that give us freedom to respond, rather than react. Are you ready to change?

Adversity! Yikes!

Adversity, what are we to think? Woe is me. You have got to get me out of here. It's not fair. I don’t deserve this. Give me a break! What if our circumstances lead us to ask this question,” What does God have to do with this?” Do you think there are any legitimate answers? Are we ready to listen? If you are, let’s take a short journey with someone who experienced more adversity than any human I know.

His name is Paul. A summary of his adversity is found in II Corinthians 11:24- 12:10. It is pretty amazing. But that is not what I want us to dwell on. I want us to see how Paul was able to endure all of this. What did he know that we need to know? “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NASB). Paul knew in the depths of his being that God completes what we begins. Nothing can stand in the way of that. He knew that he had been plucked from a life of self-righteous religion, to experience on his daily journey, a life of fulfillment and joy, knowing God as His Father. He had a new love to experience, and an ever-expanding reason to live.

As we read on in Romans 8: 31-39, Paul gives us the answer to three major questions we all face.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Can we not trust such a God who gave us His Son, to give us everything else that we need?

“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?” Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Jesus, and He died for us, declared us free from sin, and empowers us with His Spirit living in us, and prays for us every minute of every day.

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” His resounding answer, Nothing!

So what are we going to think? Are we to continue to be conformed to the thinking of this world, or are we willing to have our minds and hearts transformed by the renewing of the Word so that we can experience in and through our adversities, the will of God, that which is good, acceptable and perfect? Let’s take the “Yikes!” out of adversity as we learn to trust one day at a time. Let’s do it together! Will you join me?
Overview Questions for Session 2:
James 1:6-12

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. Doubt - with what doubts have you struggled concerning God and prayer?

2. What causes you to doubt? What does doubt tell you about yourself?

3. James has some strong things to say about a person who doubts or worries. What does he say?

4. What are the benefits of being poor? Why should the rich want to be humbled?
Faith Under Pressure: Doubt

James 1:6-12

Doubt

“First, I want to remind you that in the last days there will come scoffers who will do every wrong they can think of, and laugh at the truth. This will be their line of argument; ‘So Jesus promised to come back, did He? Then where is He? He’ll never come! Why, as far back as anyone can remember everything has remained exactly as it was since the first day of creation.’” II Peter 3:3-4 (TLB)

Question everything! There are no absolutes! It is just your opinion! Really?

Can we know truth? How much evidence must you have? Do you believe there are facts that are beyond reasonable doubt?

What are the consequences of doubt or doublemindedness and is there a solution?
James 1:6-12 (ESV)

6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not 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 boast in his exaltation, 10 and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Review and Introduction:

Double Mindedness

- Its Effect (James 1:6-8)
SESSION 2: Faith Under Pressure - Doubt

- Its Source (James 1:9-11)

- Its Solution (James 1:12)

THE MEASURE OF A MAN’S CHARACTER IS WHAT HE WOULD DO IF HE WOULD NEVER BE FOUND OUT.
- JOHN MAXWELL,
   DEVELOPING THE LEADER WITHIN YOU²
Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the ways hesitation or doubting affects your life?

2. What does wavering tell you about a person? What is going on?

3. Isn’t the solution to a person in humble circumstances to acquire more things? Why or why not?

4. In what ways have material possessions disappointed you once you possessed them? Why didn’t they satisfy?

5. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. What are some steps you can take to begin to correct your double-mindedness?
**Session 2: Faith Under Pressure - Doubt**

**Action Steps:**

Are you double-minded? What is God showing you about your value system? Can God be trusted?

Choose one area of your life where you need to take a stand. Ask God for wisdom and strength. Then step out in faith as He gives you the power to change.

**Memory Verse:**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- Hebrews 11:1 (NASB)
Beyond Reasonable Doubt

I remember several years ago, when we were instructed as a jury to reach a verdict beyond reasonable doubt. Just what does that mean? What an assignment in a world that no longer believes in absolute truth. Over several days, the facts were presented to us, we weighed them, deliberated and came up with a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree. We sentenced the defendant to life without parole. Wow! That was heavy, but we all knew that we had done the right thing.

But what about you? You may not have ever had to be a part of a jury where you had to determine an outcome, but none of us can go through life without facing issues that require a decision with consequences for us and others. What are you facing that you need a verdict beyond reasonable doubt? Who are you turning to? How much evidence must you have? Do you believe there are facts that are beyond reasonable doubt?

In the pluralistic culture we are a part of, have our parameters changed when it comes to truth? Is there such a thing as truth? How do we know? Can we know truth? Recently I found myself in a situation, trusting the integrity of the other party, only to find out before I had signed on the dotted line, that it was not as it had been presented. I was so grateful to God for protecting me. But what if the “truth” had been so blurred that I would not have recognized the error?

The more relativistic we become in our thinking, the more confused we will become. I don’t know about you, but I am so grateful that there are is a God, Yahweh, that I can know. I mean really know. People will fail you, circumstances will change, expectations will be nixed, you will fall short, but God is the same yesterday, today and forever. In fact, in the end of the Old Testament, Malachi 3:6, He says, “For I the Lord do not change…” (ESV). Being able to trust Jesus Christ completely as my Lord and Savior is the main thing that has gotten me this far in life. He has proven over and over, beyond reasonable doubt, that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. What do you need to trust Him for? Let your doubt, or confusion drive you to Him!
What is Truth?

One of the greatest encounters between civil authority and the Kingdom of God took place over 2000 years ago the night before Jesus was crucified. Pilate, the Roman Emperor, was faced with a decision of what to do with Truth when he was given the task of determining what to do with Jesus. Pilate, as he interrogated Jesus was trying to get to the truth. Let’s listen in to a snippet of the dialogue: “Pilate asked Jesus, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘…Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’ Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You said correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’” John 18:33-38a, (NASB). Pilate desperately asked the question all of us must ask. And history has recorded that Pilate, face to face with the Truth, chose the seeming path of least resistance. And the Truth was crucified. But He arose on the third day, defeating the lie, and the source of the lie. That is what Easter is all about.

But where does this leave us? We live in an America today that according to a recent poll, 72% say there is no such thing as absolute truth. So how do we deal with the words of Jesus, who says about Himself; “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:6, or “…and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” John 8:32, or “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14, (NASB). The only hope of the world rises or falls on the veracity of Jesus Christ. He is the source of all truth. We are faced with the same question Pilate faced. What will we do with Jesus?
Overview Questions for Session 3:
James 1:13-18

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. From where does temptation come?

2. How would you explain to a ten-year-old boy why a person does something wrong or evil?

3. What can a person do to stop an evil desire from becoming an actual evil act?
Temptation

The whole issue of doublemindedness or doubt is so important because it is the door to temptation in our lives. Our answer to the question, “Can God be trusted to provide my needs?” is the entry point to either hope or temptation.

Are we trapped by the thorns of habits, consumption, addiction, cravings, sensual lust, pride? What are we to do? What causes people to do what they do? Is there any hope for us? For me?
James 1:13-18 (ESV)

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Review and Introduction:

Temptation

- How God Relates:

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EVERY TEMPTATION SATAN USES IS AN ATTEMPT TO GET US TO LIVE OUR LIVES INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD.

- NEIL ANDERSON,
  WALKING IN THE LIGHT"
SESSION 3: Faith Under Pressure - Temptation

- Our Involvement:

• Our Hope:

HIDE THE WORD OF GOD AWAY IN YOUR HEART. LET THE WORD OF GOD ABIDE IN YOUR HEART AND YOU WILL FIND GREAT POWER OVER THE ENEMY - YOU WILL FIND POWER OVER SIN. BECAUSE THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR GREATEST POWER AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN.

-CHUCK SMITH,
PASTOR,
CALVARY CHAPEL,
ANAHEIM PROMISE
KEEPERS MEN’S CONFERENCE

2
Discussion Questions:

1. If God is not the source of temptation, who is?

2. What is an area of thought or action that you have begun to tolerate in your life?

3. What are some of God’s resources to enable you to resist temptation?

4. What can a person do to stop an evil desire from becoming an actual evil act?

4. What temptations do you need God’s power to resist this week?

We’re now forgiven and can draw near to God. We’re new creations whose core identity is no longer sinner but saint. We have a new appetite within us, a desire for God that is stronger than every other desire, waiting to be discovered and nourished. And we have new power. The spirit of God exists internally within us. His central passion is to awaken our appetite for Christ and reveal him to us.

-Larry Crabb
SHATTERED DREAMS 3
Session 3: Faith Under Pressure - Temptation

**Action Steps:**

What temptation are you struggling with? Do you really want help? Are you willing to submit to God in that area?

Take the way of escape He gives you. Agree with God concerning the source, thank Him for His provision of escape, turn from it in the power of God’s Spirit, and focus on something wholesome.

I will recognize that the Lord is with me the next time I face the temptation of _________________________________.

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**Memory Verse:**

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)
The Adversary

What causes people to do what they do? When things don’t go right, do we chalk it up to chance or just to being humans? Do we even consider whether there is a spiritual battle going on behind the scenes? Traditionally, the subject of spiritual warfare is disregarded by most people. But we are at war! The consistent theme of the Bible from beginning to end is the conflict between good and evil, between God and the devil. It begins with the serpent in Genesis and ends with the devil in the lake of fire in Revelation 20. The intervening chapters depict the swaying tides of battle waged in the heavenly sphere as well as on earth. But what do we know about all this?

In any competitive sport, in order to effectively compete, we must assess our own strength, but also get a good scouting report on the opposition. What are their strengths, what are their weaknesses? Then we prepare accordingly. In a similar fashion we need to engage in the conflict for our souls. We are in a battle. It is for keeps. The very nature of the enemy of our eternal spirit is to defeat us, destroy us, and to kill every thing that is important to us. His pursuit of us is persistent, unrelenting, and always aimed at the most vulnerable area of our lives.

He is a decided fact. Paul, in Ephesians 6:10-13 says, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil days, and having done all, to stand firm.” (ESV). Our adversary is a supernatural person occupying a supernatural position and exercising a supernatural power.

He is a destructive force. Jesus says in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (ESV). He is a taskmaster of every phase of diabolical deception and deviltry to be used to seduce and destroy the human soul.

But the adversary is a defeated foe. See what Christ has done for us in Colossians 2:15, “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.” We are more than conquerors through Him who gave His life for us, and rose again defeating the world, the flesh and the devil.
Overview Questions for Session 4:
James 1:19-27

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What instruction did James give about the relationship between speaking, listening and anger?

2. What does it mean to implant the Word of God?

3. Contrast a “doer” with someone who just hears.
STANDING TALL
Session 4: Act on What You Hear

Act on What You Hear

God’s exhortation to Joshua must be ours today; “Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or the left that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you will be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Joshua 1:7-8 (ESV).

What has taken hold of your heart? Your career? Your happiness? Your family? Or is it God and His Word? Your answer determines not only your destination, but also your journey!
James 1:19-27 (ESV)

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant 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 who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing 26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Review and Introduction:

- Hear:

YOUR WORD I HAVE TREASURED IN MY HEART, THAT I MAY NOT SIN AGAINST YOU.

- PSALM 119:11 (NASB)
SESSION 4: Act on What You Hear

• Do:

He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out.

-Proverbs 10:9 (NASB)

• Evidence:
**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does it affect you when a person is caught doing what they tell others not to do?

2. When are you most likely to lose your temper?

3. What makes it hard for you to be a good listener?

4. How does your speech reflect your relationship with God? How do displays of anger and temper affect the witness of a Christian?

5. From our discussion, what steps of faith has God shown you that you need to implement to become a doer, not just a hearer?
Action Steps:

1. Listen to God.
2. Act on His Word.
3. Walk out authenticity.

Memory Verse:

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

- James 1:22 (NASB)
Obedience

Everything in life is predicated by obedience to a standard, or a pattern or a person. It seems so simple, obey the laws, follow the rules, do it this way, repeat after me... and it is supposed to work, right? I remember as a twelve year old trying to paint by numbers. I was excited. I had the paint, the brushes, the canvas with the outline of a dog, and numbers carefully identified. All I had to do was follow the directions and apply the paint within the lines. But there were problems: I am left-handed, have no spatial skills, and not very coordinated, and the list goes on. Needless to say, it was a sight to behold many years later. Yes, Mom kept it. It is a reminder to me of how difficult it is to obey anything. Have we been set up for failure? Who has made life like this? Is it just something that mankind has come up with?

Let's apply it spiritually. Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? If He is sovereign, then all that He has created must obey Him. Jesus, in John 14:21 says, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (ESV). Eternal life is knowing God. Not just an intellectual exercise, but an affirmative response to His commands. The religions of the world have deceived us to believe that we have the ability in ourselves to obey. No one does.

Obedience is the gift of God to the children of God! But who are the children of God? Read with me; “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves His children, too. We know that we love God’s children if we love God and obey His commandments. Loving God means keeping His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome. For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win the battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” I John 5:1-5 (NLT). God gives us the grace (desire and power to do what pleases God) to become a child of God and obey Him one day at a time.

How do we become a child of God? We receive Christ by personal invitation. We receive Him by faith, as an act of our will. The result: we will become His child, and receive the ability to obey!
The Joy of Desperation

Life is a mystery! What seems like the logical path to happiness many times ends up as a dead end, a detour or a failure. What we think is going to happen never does, instead we are surprised, sometimes with pain, but many times with joy, wondering how did this happen. In many ways we are predictable, and our habits often result in deep ruts, especially in our religious pursuits. Whether we are atheists, agnostics, lukewarm, or passionately involved, we can become so consumed by our own efforts that we fail to realize that we have lost our way, and have become unteachable, or unreachable in our own world. We wake up empty—desperate, discouraged, despairing and hopeless. From our human perspective we see it as desperate, but God sees it as the doorway to joy. Could it be the moment in our lives He has been waiting for?

Listen to what God says in Jeremiah 2; “Has any nation ever traded its gods for new ones, even though they are not gods at all? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the Lord. For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned Me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!” vv. 11-13 (NLT). We have rejected the only true God, and have recklessly pursued the gods of our own making. We are desperate whether we know it or not!

Life is not about our pursuit of gods, but it is about God’s pursuit of us. He wants us to let our desperation drive us to His open arms. Lord make me desperate! Why? So that we can recognize the futility of our own efforts, and repent and return to Him. “God says, ‘Rebuild the road! Clear away the rocks and stones so My people can return from captivity.’ The high and lofty One who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: ‘I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.’” Isaiah 57:14-15 (NLT). Repentance is a change of thinking based on new information from God that results in a change of action enabled by God. He is longing to change our desperation into joy.

Overview Questions for Session 5:
James 2:1-13

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What does James have to say about favoritism?

2. What does practicing favoritism do to a person?

3. In what practical ways can we show genuine love to people of different races, cultures and economic standing?
Love by Faith

Why are we so prone to judge people by their past, not their future, and by outward appearance, rather than the inner attitude of the heart? What do we use as a standard to determine our associations?

The way we behave toward people indicates what we really think about God. Jesus summarized the Commandments with just two: Love God... and Love your neighbor as yourself. Neither of these can be done in our own strength, only through the power of God. Love is an issue of faith, not feeling.

Can you learn to love by faith? Are you ready to let go of favoritism and prejudice?
James 2:1-13 (ESV)

1 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. 11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

BECAUSE OF CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION, WE’RE BOTH FORGIVEN AND EMPOWERED, LOVED FREELY AND ENABLED TO LOVE FREELY.

- LARRY CRABB, CONNECTING
SESSION 5: Love by Faith

Review and Introduction:

- Personal Favoritism:

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CONNECTION BEGINS
WHEN WE ENTER
INTO SOMEONE
ELSE’S BATTLE TO
EXPERIENCE GOD
WITH THE EMPATHY
OF A FELLOW
STRUGGLER AND THE
FAITH TO KNOW IT
CAN HAPPEN.
- LARRY CRABB,
  *CONNECTING* \(^2\)

- Reality Check:

- The Standard Lived Out:
Discussion Questions:

1. Where do you see favoritism or prejudice being practiced?

2. Why is favoritism or prejudice often overlooked as a sin?

3. Have you been guilty of showing partiality to one group over another? If so, what were your motives?

4. Consider the following:
   - Command (John 13:34)
   - Provision (Romans 5:5)
   - Loving by Faith (1 John 5:14-15)

Who do you need to love by faith?
Action Steps:

1. From whom do you need to ask forgiveness this week for showing favoritism or prejudice toward him or her?
2. If you have been a victim, whom do you need to forgive?
3. How does God need to change your perspective about wealth? Where are you finding your security, significance and sufficiency?

Memory Verse:

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

- Romans 2:4 (ESV)
Be With Me

Be with Me. Just spend a few minutes enjoying each others presence. No agendas, no demands, no script, no doing, just be! Does that sound weird to you? I just experienced this phenomena with our little beagle named Daisy that I had not seen for 10 days. She came into my study, crawled up with me in my easy chair and just enjoyed resting in my lap. She felt secure, and loved, and just wanted to be with me. I began to think; Lord that is how you want us to relate to You. The Psalmist says; “Be still and know that I am God!” Psalm 46:10 (ESV). Is it possible to just want to spend time with God or even with our closest friend without demanding something? Have we become such consumer Christians that life is all about us, and we can’t waste a minute not doing something or getting something?

David reminds us in Psalm 23; “The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me…” verses 1-4, (NLT). God is the source of Life; all of life, and He has made Life available to us through a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. He wants us to spend time in His presence, just being with Him.

The amazing thing is as we dwell in Him and He in us, we come alive spiritually, and His life begins to be our life, and His desires become our desires. We begin to no longer just live for ourselves, but those around us become more important than we are. The prophet Isaiah describes it like this: “We free those who are wrongly imprisoned; we lighten the burden of those who work for us. We let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. We share our food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. We give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need our help. Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind.” Isaiah 58:6-8. (NLT).

Jesus with outstretched arms says, “Be with Me!”
Overview Questions for Session 6:
James 2:14:26

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What is the relationship between faith and deeds?

2. How does James define true faith?

3. How is being a Christian supposed to change the way we live?
STANDING TALL
Most of us have spent our lives attempting to gain God’s approval through a system of beliefs, a standard of performance, or a set of rules and it hasn’t worked. It is a religion of works.

The temptation to be like God, to look like God, to act like God by trying harder is the greatest enemy of true faith. In this session, James, through the inspiration of God’s Spirit, wants to help us understand what real faith looks like so that we can be set free from the treadmill of our self-effort.
James 2:14-26 (ESV)

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So 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 apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Review and Introduction:

- Intellectual Faith (James 2:14-17):

FAITH IS BELIEVING THAT SOMETHING IS SO, BEFORE IT IS SO, SO THAT IT CAN BE SO, BECAUSE GOD SAID SO.
- MANLEY BEASLEY
FAITH WORKBOOK

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It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.

- John Calvin

The Wiersbe Bible Commentary

- SESSION 6: Faith and Deeds

  • Emotional Faith (James 2:18-19):

  • Saving Faith (James 2:20-26):
Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between someone who talks about a problem and someone who does something about the problem?

2. What is the relationship between faith and deeds?

3. What is involved in saving faith?

4. How have you been challenged to put your faith to the test?

5. Where is your faith stretching you right now?
Session 6: Faith and Deeds

**Action Steps:**

1. How would your faith be described? Intellectual, emotional or saving faith?
2. Have you trusted Christ and Christ alone for your salvation? Have there been changes in your life?
3. On a scale of 0-100, how sure are you that you have eternal life? If you are not 100% sure, please talk to someone who can help you find that assurance.

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**Memory Verse:**

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

- James 2:26 (NASB)
What Does Faith Have to Do with It?

Everybody believes, right? We are being told every day that we just need to believe in ourselves. If we just have enough faith, it will all work out. Is faith just an instinct of the human soul? Just a positive assumption? Is our problem that we just don’t have enough faith? Does it matter what we believe? Or who we believe? Or why we believe?

Let’s consider the definition of faith. Wikipedia says that “faith is confidence or trust in a person or entity.” Another definition: faith is an act of trust or reliance. In The Green Letters by Miles Stanford, he says; “Faith must be based on certainty. There must be definite knowledge of God’s purpose and will. Without that there can be no true faith. For faith is not a force that we exercise or a striving to believe that something shall be, thinking that if we believe hard enough it will come to pass.”

I would like to propose, faith is only as strong as its object! Unless faith is established upon facts, it is no more than conjecture, superstition, speculation, or presumption. Faith in Christianity is based in and on the work and teachings of Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews says, “Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen. It gives us assurance about things we cannot see.” Hebrews 11:1 NLT.

He goes on to say, “Therefore since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.” Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT). Does the object of our faith matter? You bet it does. Jesus, the source of our faith, gives us first incentive to believe, and is also its Finisher, bringing it to maturity and perfection.

The religions of the world are trusting in what we can do in response to a system of belief, a set of rules, or a standard of performance. In contrast, the follower of Christ trusts in, relies on and clings to the person and work of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. What does faith have to do with it? Who are you trusting? It is determining how you are living this life and the life to come.

The Full Assurance of Faith

Which is your constant companion, fear or faith? You know, they are opposites? Fear comes knocking at the door uninvited every day. What is our answer– conjecture, superstition, speculation, presumption or facts based on the Word of God? If we are going to stand firm in the battles of life, we are going to need the pieces of armor that God has provided. So far we have put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes of peace. Today we want to take up the shield of faith. You know it is impossible to live without faith.

The writer of the book of Hebrews says, “To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.” Hebrews 11:1 (GNT). In order for that to be true, the object of our faith must be trustworthy. I remember flying with white knuckles from St. Petersburg, Russia, to Moscow, on a plane that did not give the appearance of trustworthiness, and it was a long flight! Obviously we made it, but I don’t want to get on that plane again. We were not sure or certain about our safe arrival for the duration of that flight. But that was just a couple hour flight. What about daily life? Is anything trustworthy? Can we have the full assurance of faith?

The good news; “We have, then, my friends, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. He opened for us a new way, a living way, through the curtain– that is through His own body. We have a great Priest in charge of the house of God. So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water. Let us hold firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep His promise.” Hebrews 10:19-23 (GNT). Absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom and goodness come when we put our faith in God and His Word. Everything else is illusionary, and temporary. Faith enables the believing soul to trust the future as the present, and the invisible as visible.

Are you experiencing the full assurance of faith? You can!
Overview Questions for Session 7:
James 3:1-12

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. How does James describe the tongue?

2. What are the three powers of the tongue?

3. “No one can tame the tongue.” (James 3:8) Is there any hope?

4. Why are the sins of the tongue connected to the sins of the whole body?
When You Open Your Mouth

“Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live.” Ephesians 4:29-30 (NLT).

Is the standard too high? How are you doing with your tongue? Are you ready to be accountable for your words, but even more importantly: your heart?
Review and Introduction:

- Power to Direct (James 3:1-4):

James 3:1-12 (ESV)

1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,[a] and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 8 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 9 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 10 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 11 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

A SHARP TONGUE IS THE ONLY EDGE TOOL THAT GROWS KEENER WITH CONSTANT USE.
- WASHINGTON IRVING
RIP VAN WINKLE 1
LET NO FOUL OR POLLUTING LANGUAGE, NOR EVIL WORD, NOR UNWHOLESOme OR WORTHLESS TALK EVER COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTH; BUT ONLY SUCH SPEECH AS IS GOOD AND BENEFICIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS OF OTHERS, AS IF FITTING THE NEED AND THE OCCASION, THAT IT MAY BE A BLESSING AND GIVE GRACE (GOD’S FAVOR) TO THOSE WHO HEAR IT.

- Ephesians 4:29 (AMP)

• Power to Destroy (James 3:5-8):

• Power to Delight (James 3:9-12):

• The Real Issue, the Heart:

WHAT IS IN THE WELL IS WHAT COMES UP IN THE BUCKET.
Discussion Questions:

1. How have you been hurt by someone’s words? How have you been helped by someone’s words?

2. How do you rate yourself on the use of the tongue? When do you fail most often?

3. What is so difficult about taming the tongue?

4. What do love and respect have to do with the Christian’s use of the tongue?

5. Why is Spirit control the key to using the tongue properly?

IF YOUR LIPS WOULD KEEP FROM SLIPS, FIVE THINGS OBSERVE WITH CARE: TO WHOM YOU SPEAK; OF WHOM YOU SPEAK; AND HOW, AND WHEN, AND WHERE.

- WILLIAM NORRIS, AMERICAN JOURNALIST
Action Steps:

1. What do you need to remove from your speech habits this week to make your words more pleasing to God?
2. What positive words do your family and coworkers need to hear from your mouth this week?
3. Are you willing to surrender control of your life to Him, so that He can give you the self control you need to control your tongue? Confess your sins and appropriate His Spirit to change your heart and ultimately your speech.

Memory Verse:

He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.

- Proverbs 21:23 (NASB)
Overview Questions for Session 8:
James 3:13-18

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. How are wisdom and deeds brought together in James 3:13?

2. Compare earthly wisdom and God’s wisdom.

3. Based on verses 17 and 18, how might you identify a truly wise person?

4. Where can we get help to fill our mind and heart with these thoughts?
Empowered

What empowers you? A strong cup of coffee? A tip on the latest stock? Some juicy gossip? A tryst with an important person? Exciting, but usually short-lived! All of us need empowerment, but where are we to get it? Is it up to us, our expertise, our good fortune, our ability to make things happen? What a cruel joke to promise someone something without the empowerment to make it a reality! To know that a person’s efforts are futile, yet coax them on to try harder is sadistic. Yet that is exactly what the religious leaders of the world are doing every day.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, asked this question; “What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?” Later he says, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.” Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 5:10 (NASB). Yes, he was the most wealthy, and the most wise, but he learned just how hollow that can be. Read what he said in the next verses; “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting; to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.” Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 (NASB). Notice the emphasis over and over; God has given! Empowerment doesn’t come from the hand of man. It only comes from God.

The condition of man’s heart is the determining factor of our joy. And only God can give us a new heart. Paul discovered this truth on the road to Damascus. “I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources Her will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your heart as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.” Ephesians 3:16-18 (NLT). God’s way is not a matter of mere talk; it’s an empowered life!

A New Normal

Do you feel like you are living wisely? Are we making the most of our time? Or do we not even care? Are we losing the battle to selfishness? There is a part of us that wants to consider others more important than ourselves, but don’t we usually end up doing what pleases us? Aren’t the moments of selflessness short-lived for most of us? Could there be a better way to live? Would we want to? If the answer is yes, then read on!

“Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the evils of these days. Don’t be vague but grasp firmly what you know to be the will of the Lord. Don’t get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Sing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, your voices making music in your hearts for the ears of the Lord! Thank God the Father at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And ‘fit in with’ each other, because of your common reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:15-21 (J. B. Phillips). Live life responsibly! I think I have heard that even from a liquor commercial. But God is calling us to a new normal: a life lived freely, energized and motivated by His Spirit. Let’s consider, “What happens when we live God’s way?”

Can we escape the compulsions of selfishness? Can we choose to be led by the Spirit and let the Word of God have plenty of room in our lives? When He says that we can speak to one another with words of encouragement and hope, is this just wishful thinking? Is it possible to have a song in our heart that carries us through the day? Can it possibly be that we can give thanks by faith rather than our feelings? And can we submit to one another, rather than always having our way?

Wherever we are in our journey with God, He patiently waits for our response to His invitation to trust Him, yield to Him, and get to know Him as our Lord and Savior. As we begin to walk with Him, the new normal will begin to be our experience.
Wisdom is applied knowledge. J. I. Packer, author of Knowing God, defined wisdom this way: “Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.” ¹

We are in the midst of a knowledge explosion. Is man getting any better? Are we getting along with others better? Who is wise and understanding among you?
James 3:13-18 (ESV)

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Review and Introduction:

Two Kinds of Wisdom

- Contrast: The Source (James 3:15, 17a):

- Contrast: How They Operate (James 3:13-14, 17):
SESSON 8: Live Well, Live Wisely

• Contrast: The Outcomes They Produce (James 3:16, 18):

- So, how do we get this wisdom?

WHAT WE ARE IS WHAT WE LIVE, AND WHAT WE LIVE IS WHAT WE SOW. WHAT WE SOW IS WHAT DETERMINES WHAT WE REAP.
- WARREN WIERSBE

THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY²
STANDING TALL

Discussion Questions:

1. Where do people often go to get wisdom?

2. How would you describe a wise person?

3. What results does worldly wisdom produce? What does Godly wisdom produce?

4. Which of the evidences of worldly wisdom would you like to see less of in your life?

5. What can you do this week to seek God’s wisdom?

Not till we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God’s holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours.

- J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* [3]
SESSION 8: Live Well, Live Wisely

Action Steps:

1. Is there any bitter envy or selfish ambition in your heart?
2. Be honest, what resentment do you harbor inside yourself?
3. What action can you take to plant peace in a relationship or situation that has been troubling you?
4. As we think of the characteristics of godly wisdom, what characteristic are you going to trust God to begin to build into your life this week?

Memory Verse:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

- Proverbs 9:10 (NASB)
We think we are smart, don't we? Look at all we have accomplished. All the knowledge of the world at our fingertips! In any field of endeavor we have been there, done that, right? If we happen to not know how to do something, we just push a button, and up comes the solution in easy 1,2,3 steps. Since we believe we are self-existing, and not created, we answer to no one, and we need no one. We say that there is no such thing as supernatural, so it is up to us to solve all our problems. We just need to throw off all restraints, and do what we feel like.

We might say, “What are these people smoking?” Or we may be shocked and alarmed by legislation, court decisions, and public policies, that are reflecting the above views. But what are we to do? Is there a tipping point when we will wake up, and begin to cry out to God? There are precedents in history. But I forgot we don't like history, or believe that we can learn anything any more from history. We are too enlightened.

Recorded in history, there was a time the Hebrew children were enslaved for 400 years by the Pharoahs of Egypt, and finally they cried out for help. God came to the rescue, and we have all seen “Exodus” on the wide screen of how God delivered His children to the Promised Land. We can learn so much from that rescue. There are many today in our world who are physically enslaved, fearing for their lives, but for most of us, we have the freedom to choose, we just don't want to. Are the answers for the enslavements of our day limited to man's ideas? Are we really left to rescue ourselves from the reasons behind the addictions, and the enslavements we suffer? Can we rescue ourselves? Has it ever worked? Why now?

Good news! God wants to deliver us from the limited thinking of autonomous man. And it starts with our recognizing who we are without Him. In Corinthians 2:14, we read, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (ESV) He so much wants to rescue us from our plight. Before we were a figment of our parents' imagination, He put into effect a plan to rescue us from ourselves. It is the cross of Jesus Christ.

The question is, “Are we ready to listen?”
Questions, Who Are You Asking?

Questions? What good are they? Are you energized by someone who asks questions or are you annoyed by them? Are you the type person who says, “I wish I had asked that question,” or do you just wish they would leave it alone? I am one of those people who has always asked the tough questions, especially if I thought someone might know the answer. I make some people nervous, others I just irritate, probably others I just make uncomfortable, but boy, do I like to ask questions. Why?

Honest to goodness questions can reveal the truth, expose the fraud, uncover the past, and clarify the future. Questions can calm your fears, embolden your convictions, give you clear steps of action and take you places you could never have gone. But there is always a risk. We could get answers we don’t want to hear.

That is the case of an Old Testament character named Habakkuk, a prophet to Judah, seven centuries before Christ. He was perplexed about why God was allowing wickedness and sin to go unanswered in the nation of Judah. He was not afraid to ask God the hard questions. Let’s join him in Habakkuk chapter 1: “How long O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen! ‘Violence is everywhere’ I cry, but you do not come to save... The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked outnumber the righteous, so that justice has become perverted.” Habakkuk 1:2,4 (NLT). Does your situation look hopeless sometimes? Can you identify with Habakkuk? We need to discover what Habakkuk discovered; God doesn’t mind questions. He welcomes them and wants to reveal Himself to us through both the questions and the answers.

God’s answer to Habakkuk, “The Lord replied, ‘Look around at the nations; look and be amazed!’ For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn’t believe even if someone told you about it. I am raising up the Babylonians, a cruel and violent people.’” Habakkuk 1:5-6 (NLT). Not what Habakkuk was expecting. What is your view of God? Can He use evil to accomplish good? What about the cross? What about His promise in Romans 8:28 (NLT); “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them”? He is the God of wonder beyond all majesty.

Bring Him your questions! Then listen and wait.

Overview Questions for Session 9:
James 4:1-12

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What are the battles going on inside a person?

2. What is the root cause of fights and quarrels between people?

3. How does James describe the way a person should come to God?

4. How are we to speak to one another?
Get Serious

Passions are at war within us. The battle is real. And you and I are involved, whether we like it or not. The battle won’t go away. Ignoring it is not an option. We cannot have it both ways with one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom.

We must decide. Who is worthy of worship in your life? Are you ready to submit to God and be set free from your chains?
James 4:1-10 (ESV)

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.

Review and Introduction:

Worldliness

- Its Cause (James 4:1-2):

A disciple is one who is free from the old and free for the new.
- MILES STANFORD, THE GREEN LETTERS

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SESSION 9: Get Serious

• Its Consequences (James 4:3-6):

• Its Cure (James 4:7-10):

SAD TO SAY, THE ONLY BELIEVERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN FREEDOM ARE THOSE WHO HAVE COME TO THE PLACE OF HATING INSTEAD OF HUGHING THEIR CHAINS.

- MILES STANFORD,
  THE GREEN LETTERS²
Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the battle going on inside a person.

2. What does friendship with the world do to our fellowship with God?

3. Why do we hesitate giving our lives totally to God?

4. In what situations do you need to resist the devil this week?

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IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SHARE HIS LIFE UNTIL WE HAVE FIRST IN EVERY DEED SURRENDERED OURSELVES EVERYDAY TO DIE TO SIN AND SELF AND THE LAW AND THE WORLD, AND SO TO ABIDE IN THE UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP OF DISCIPLESHIP WITH OUR CRUCIFIED AND RISEN LORD.

- MILES STANFORD

THE GREEN LETTERS³
Action Steps:

1. Are you ready to be set free from your chains?
2. Accept the cure. Is it going to be your effort or your surrender to God?
3. What do you need to do to draw near to God?

Memory Verse:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

- Galatians 5:16 (NASB)
What causes people to do what they do? Can we always find a person or circumstance, or belief system that we can blame for the way we are? Is it really someone else’s fault that explains our behavior? If all religions were eliminated, would there be a sense of “right and wrong”? Can a civilization exist without self-control? C. S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, said, “First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.”

What will it take to recognize our need for help? What will it take for us to acknowledge our plight as human beings? Is it possible to exercise self-control?

Look at the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” There are 9 fruit that God has given us to equip us to do the right thing, and to enable us to relate to others in a wholesome fulfilling way. The last fruit is self-control. Without it, all the other character qualities would not be possible. The Apostle Paul, as a follower of Christ shared his struggle with the flesh; “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now is is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.” Romans 7:15-18 (ESV). Can we all not identify with Paul’s struggle? The battle that goes on every day to control our emotions, behavior and desires?

But there is good news! Listen to Paul's conclusion; “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!... There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” Romans 7:24-25; 8:1-2 (ESV). God is the source of the self-control we desperately need. Will we appropriate His gift by faith?
The Invisible War

The existentialist John-Paul Sarte wrote, “Man can count on no one but himself; he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth.” To be abandoned is to be left to the mercy of something or someone, right? Implicit in his comments is the idea that there must be someone greater than man who has abandoned man or left him to himself. Against the backdrop of this anguish, could there be a Redeemer? Someone who has fought for us, and died for us? Scripture says, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13-14 (ESV).

There is a Redeemer who does want us to have purpose and design. There is help outside ourselves, and there is a destiny for us if we choose to embrace Him. We are in a fallen world, and are engaged in a battle for our very souls. It is a war being fought on two fronts— Our flesh wages war against the Spirit, and we battle against a supernatural angelic being who fell from heaven. His goal is to destroy us mentally, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically. But greater is He who is in us as believers than he who is in the world.

This God of redemption is the God of providence as well. He is the sovereign God who works things out according to His plan, and His works and will cannot be thwarted. As believers we are called to know, trust and obey the Redeemer. But we live in a world shaped by conflict and we are engaged in a life and death struggle. It is a warfare, a proving ground of faith, an arena of spiritual battle, and a school of deepest learning. We live between the Cross, where the enemy was defeated, and the Second Coming of the Redeemer, when all opposition will be anniliated. We stand on the finished work of that cross, and as we take up the whole armor of God, we will stand firm in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Over the next weeks, we are going to consider how perfect and effective that armor is for each of us as followers of Christ. There is a Redeemer!
Overview Questions for Session 10:

James 4:11-17

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. How does James indict those who judge their brothers?

2. In what ways should God be part of our plans?

3. What sinful attitudes often accompany making plans?
Presumptuous sin! It comes from the same root word for premeditation. There is a seriousness about it before God and our fellow man.

Presumption is a combination of two English words: Pre and Assume. Pre means in front of, before, ahead. Assume is defined to take upon oneself, to take over/ running ahead or taking over.

How do you and I view the will of God for our lives? Definite, negotiable, ignorable, totally rejectable?

Our answer to that question could possibly explain much of what is happening in our lives right now. There are consequences!
James 4:11-17 (ESV)

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?

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.

Review and Introduction:

Presumption and Ambition

- Presumption in Relationships (James 4:11-12):

SINCE LIFE IS SO BRIEF, WE CANNOT AFFORD MERELY TO “SPEND OUR LIVES.” WE MUST INVEST OUR LIVES IN THOSE THINGS THAT ARE ETERNAL.
- WARREN WIERSBE
  BE MATURE
• Presumption in Our Plans (*Being out of the will of God.*)  
(James 4:13-17):

1. Ignoring God’s Will

2. Disobeying God’s Will

3. Obeying God’s Will

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TO TREAT THE WILL OF GOD LIGHTLY IS TO INVITE THE CHASTENING OF GOD IN OUR LIVES.
- WARREN WIERSEBE

BE MATURE
Discussion Questions:

1. What do you want from God most of the time?

2. How do you and I presume we know what God wants?

3. How do you view the will of God for your life?

4. Do I really believe I am accountable to God? Does He even care?

5. What have you been putting off that you know you need to do?
SESSION 10: Nothing but a Wisp of Fog

Action Steps:

1. Are you in the habit of running ahead of God? Name one area or thing you aren’t willing to wait on God for: ________
   ______________________________________________________

2. Name a matter that you tend to deal with in your own way and time: ____________________________
   How about letting Him in on your situation.

3. What are you going to do with your calendar and God’s will?

Memory Verse:

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- Matthew 6:33 (NASB)
A Living Encounter with God

Three types of people seem to have all the influence in the world: the wise, the powerful, and the wealthy. We think that what we have or what we have accomplished will protect us from the troubles of life in a way that only God can. Paul, in his letter to the believers at Rome said, “Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.” Romans 1:21 (NLT).

Who are we trusting in for our security, significance and sufficiency? Do we think that wisdom, power and wealth will meet these needs? Maybe you are already well on that journey. How are you doing? Are you bankrupt yet? For much of the world population, they are at best longings of the heart that will never be met through the efforts of man.

Jeremiah, an Old Testament prophet, wrote to warn the people of Judah and Jerusalem of the impending judgment of God because of their idolatry and their failure to walk with God. Let’s consider what he might be saying to us in Jeremiah 9:23-24, “This is what the Lord says, ’Don’t let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know Me and understand that I am the Lord who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord have spoken!’” (NLT).

In the midst of our pursuits to learn the next morsel of juicy “wisdom,” do we hear God calling us to turn aside and have a living encounter with Him? Are we so bent on taking things in our own hands, instead of asking God to bring justice to the suffering? What about righting all the wrongs, can we in our own strength make it happen? I don’t think so.

Listen to what Jeremiah says about this God in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” (NIV). There is no other offer like that on planet earth. He wants us to know Him so much that He sent His Son to die, and rise again to provide the Way. People all over the world are turning to Him, and experiencing a living encounter with God!
SESSION 10: Nothing but a Wisp of Fog

Worship

You are becoming like the one you worship. Is it God or yourself? God created us to worship Him, but we have chosen to worship everything else but God. What does unchecked selfishness produce in a person’s life? It is a serious thing! “Worship is what we give our hearts away to in return for a promise of life.” (Captivating, John and Stasi Eldridge 4). Is it working out?

We are in a battle between self-supremacy and God that has raged in eternity past and since the Fall of man, has engulfed us. Our hearts were made to worship. It is what we do. We can’t help it. The battle lines are drawn. The question is, who will we worship? The Creator or the creature? Christ came to set us free from ourselves, through His death and resurrection. He has won the battle but it must be acted upon in our hearts if we are to experience that freedom, and live a life that matters.

It is interesting that our entrance into a relationship with God involves two components: “For salvation that comes from trusting Christ— which is what we preach— is already within easy reach of each of us; in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths. For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation.” Romans 10:8-10 (TLB). Worship has these same two components as well— the allegiance of our hearts and the confession of our lips.

We are in a world where self worship is being promoted in every facet of society. Self-help books on every shelf, self-effort being applauded, self-centeredness tolerated, self-focus considered normal, self sufficiency encouraged, and self-image offered many remedies, all without God. In the face of our self-absorption, God says worship Me and Me only. You will have no other gods before you. Why? Because He is an egotist? Or could it be, He wants to rescue us from ourselves? For all time, the Cross and the Resurrection shout to all, “I love you! And I stand with open arms waiting to be worshipped by you!” What will it be?

Overview Questions for Session 11:
James 5:1-6

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. How do money and riches affect our relationship with God?

2. How does God want us to handle money?

3. How does a person’s use of money reflect what is important to him?
Destroying Your Life from Within

The age we are living in could be described as our pursuit of things combined with a narcissistic heart. How are we dealing with this temptation?

This session is a bare-knuckled look at the selfishness of man combined with the opportunity to acquire and use wealth. It is affecting our work, our play, our families, and our very soul. How can we embrace the power of God to deliver us?
**James 5:1-6 (ESV)**

1 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.

**Review and Introduction:**

**Materialism Values and Perspective**

- Attitudes and Motives (James 5:1):

- Our Character Revealed (James 5:3-6):

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**STANDING TALL**

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**PRECIOUS FEW ARE THOSE WHO CAN LIVE IN THE LAP OF LUXURY...WHO CAN KEEP THEIR MORAL, SPIRITUAL AND FINANCIAL EQUILIBRIUM...WHILE BALANCING ON THE ELEVATED TIGHTROPE OF SUCCESS.**

- CHARLES SWINDOLL, *SEASONS OF LIFE* ¹
SESSION 11: Destroying Your Life from Within

• Riches - Promises and Deliveries (James 5:1-4):

• Lessons to Learn:
  1. Faithfulness
  2. Influence
  3. Priorities
  4. Contentment

IT’S IRONIC THAT MOST OF US CAN HANDLE A SUDDEN DEMOTION MUCH BETTER THAN A SIZABLE PROMOTION.
- CHARLES SWINDOLL, SEASONS OF LIFE ²
STANDING TALL

Discussion Questions:

1. How does money change people?

2. How does a person’s use of money reflect what is important to him?

3. How does God want us to handle money?

4. How do money and riches affect your relationship with God?

5. What do you think is a healthy, righteous attitude for a Christian to have with respect to business ventures and material gains?

THERE IS ABOUT 1 IN 100 WHO CAN DANCE TO THE TUNE OF SUCCESS WITHOUT PAYING THE PIPER NAMED COMPROMISE.

- CHARLES SWINDOLL

SEASONS OF LIFE

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Memory Verse:

Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”

- Luke 12:15 (NASB)
A Father’s Love Unrequited

This is one of the most tragic stories in the Bible. There was a second prodigal in Luke 15:25-30. He is the perfect example of most of the people on earth, who are trying to earn the favor of their father, or their god. Yes, there are systems of belief, standards of performance, or sets of rules, but we never measure up.

Remember, the younger brother has come back home, and been embraced, forgiven, and accepted back into the family. Let’s look at the story as Jesus tells it in Luke 15:25-30, “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of his servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years have I served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who had devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’”

The father’s response, “…His father came out and entreated him…And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It is fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive, he was lost, and is found.’” Luke 15: 28, 31-32. (ESV)

The older prodigal; clueless, self-sufficient, proud, doing what was expected, stubborn and without love.

The father’s love:
• Left the feast to find his son and beg him to join them.
• Called him son, showing no reluctance or lack of initiative on his part.
• Wanted his son to experience his presence and provision, but…
• Reminded him, without condemnation, of a love that the elder son refused to embrace.

How tragic! A Father’s love unrequited? Can this be said of us? Why?

God’s Response to Autonomous Man

The saddest people on this earth are those who do not recognize their need for God! William Henley in the words of his poem “Invictus” 4 said,

“It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.”

This attitude must break the heart of God, because God can do absolutely nothing with a man or woman who will not admit that he or she needs anything from God. But that is the plight of autonomous man. It is the sin of idolatry. It started early in our lives, and has continued to grow as we have become more self sufficient, and full of ourselves.

Paul, in his letter to believers in Corinth, says, “For the word of the cross is folly to those, who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God…. Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” I Corinthians 1:18, 20-25 (ESV).

I learned a lesson a few years ago that I hope I don’t ever forget. It is found in Romans 2:4. This is what it says, “Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” For God so loved the world! Will you join me in praying for ourselves, and for those we love, that we will not presume on the love of God, but will acknowledge our need for Him? Only He can set us free from the lie that we can truly be autonomous.
Overview Questions for Session 12:
James 5:7-12

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. Why should we be patient about Christ’s return?

2. What three examples of patience does James give?

3. Why do faithful followers of Christ often undergo suffering and persecution?
Patience

Isn’t it interesting that patience is considered a virtue by all the religions of the world? The dilemma is there is only one Source. No religion has the answer to impatience!

Are you living for now or investing in eternity? How are you handling delays, interruptions, unfulfilled expectations, hardships? It tells a lot about your Christianity.

Only the Jehovah God can make any of us a patient man through the finished work of Christ and His Word implanted through the Spirit of God living in us. Are you learning to walk in the Spirit?
James 5:7-12 (ESV)

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.

Review and Introduction:

- Perspective (James 5:7-9):

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If the robe of purity is far above rubies, the garment of patience is even beyond that. Why? Because its threads of unselfishness and kindness are woven on the Lord’s loom, guided within our lives by the spirit of God.

- Charles Swindoll,
  Seasons of Life

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SESSION 12: Patience

- Endurance (James 5:10-11):

- Discipline (James 5:12):
Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of experiences try your patience?

2. How does God use others to build patience in our lives?

3. What makes it hard to wait on God’s timing?

4. What does God accomplish in His children through suffering?

5. What’s happening in your life right now that’s trying your patience?
Session 12: Patience

Action Steps:

1. What is making me so impatient?
2. What is it going to take to make me a patient person?
3. What spiritual harvest am I trusting God for through my life?

Memory Verse:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)
Elusive Patience

Patience is forbearing, or the state of endurance under difficult circumstances. Another definition says to persevere in the face of delay or the level of endurance one can take before negativity. However we define it, we talk about our need for it, but then don’t want people to pray for us that we would have it. It is considered a virtue in all the religions of the world, yet who do you know that is consistently patient? What would make you or me a patient person? Is it just something we need to learn? Is it a formula, or a state of mind?

It seems the order of the day is impatience. Nothing is done to suit us. Webster defines it as an intolerance of or irritability with anything that impedes or delays. Whatever obstructs, frustrates or delays our goals in life becomes the object of our hostility. Taken to its extreme, resentful people begin to see everything as a threat. Someone has described this threat as a constant nagging fear of not being able to get everything done before we die.

“Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4 (NASB).

Is James crazy? I think not! Have we lost sight of what life is about in the first place? Is it all about us, or our family, or our church or our nation? Would a perfect world produce perfect people? It didn’t. Look at Adam and Eve. If you want to experience the result of patience in this life, then trust God. That is what James says.

But where does this ability to endure, to be patient, to be steadfast come from? “But the fruit of the Holy Spirit (the work which His presence within accomplishes)– is … patience (an even temper, forbearance)…” Galatians 5:22. He continues in verses 24 and 25, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus, the Messiah, have crucified the flesh– the Godless human nature– with its passions and appetites and desires. If we live by the Holy Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.–If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.” (AMP). That elusive patience that we have tried to produce, can be ours– the patience from God.

The Patience of Job

Patience, what happened to it? Patience and power go hand-in-hand. To have patience one must have the power of self-restraint. But where do we get it? Do we dare pray for patience? Almost everyone has heard of Job, an Old Testament character whose life of wealth and prosperity were turned upside down in a day. All was lost - his family, his wealth, his health and friends, but Job, not quietly, but patiently endured. It gets so bad, he even questions God Himself, and in the end learned valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God, and his need to totally trust in the Lord.

Job 19:25-27 says; “But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He will stand upon the earth at last. And I know that after this body has decayed, this body shall see God! Then He will be on my side! Yes, I shall see Him, not as a stranger, but as a Friend! What a glorious hope!” (TLB). How are we handling our circumstances? Job demonstrated a relentless trust in spite of all odds. What did he know through the eyes of faith that we need to know?

I believe what he knew is summarized in this passage from Romans 5:1-6, (TLB). “So now, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith in His promises, we can have real peace with Him because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. For because of our faith, he has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we not stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to actually becoming all that God has had in mind for us to be. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us— they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until our hope and faith are strong and steady. Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we feel that warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love. When we were utterly helpless, with no way of escape, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners who had no use for Him.”

God is patient! And if we know Him, we can experience His patience through His Spirit living in us.

Overview Questions for Session 13:
James 5:13-20

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What is the prayer of faith?

2. Why should we confess our sins to one another?

3. What is a Christian’s responsibility toward a fellow believer who has wandered away from the truth?
Prayer to be Reckoned With

The story begins in 1858. Society was in chaos, and there was a very real fear that this young country would not survive. It was under the cloud of these national traumas that a New York businessman named Jeremiah Lamphier began to pray with a handful of friends. And thereby began a revival that affected the Western world for half a century.

In the beginning, it was just a few people who met each week in the Old North Dutch Church in New York City. The weekly meeting soon turned into a daily one. Within a few months, 10,000 people were gathering daily at noon for open prayer in the streets of New York.

The impact was tremendous. Within 24 months, two million people had received Christ. J. Edwin Orr, a great revival historian, wrote, “Whenever God is ready to do something new with His people, He always sets them to praying.”

Are you ready to expand your prayer experience?
James 5:13-20 (ESV)

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.

Review and Introduction:

• The Prayer of Faith (James 5:13-16):

PRAYER IS NOT GETTING MAN’S WILL DONE IN HEAVEN.
IT’S GETTING GOD’S WILL DONE ON EARTH.
- THE KNEELING CHRISTIAN

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SESSION 13: Prayer to be Reckoned With

• Elijah, a Righteous Man (James 5:13-16):
  (1 Kings 17:1 - 18:42-45)

• The Great Commission (James 5:19-20):

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OUR SPIRITUALITY AND OUR FRUITFULNESS ARE ALWAYS IN PROPORTION TO THE REALITY OF OUR PRAYERS.

- THE KNEELING CHRISTIAN

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Discussion Questions:

1. How does Christ live out His life through Christians?

2. What would you say characterizes a Spirit-filled life? What happens to the Christian who is under the control of the Holy Spirit?


4. What have you seen the Spirit of God do in your life?

5. Since Christ’s power is available to you, what do you need to do to take hold of it this week?

Failure in prayer is due to fault in the heart.
- The Kneeling Christian
Session 13: Prayer to be Reckoned With

Action Steps:

1. Lord, teach me to pray.
2. Time to get rid of the hindrances to prayer in my life.
3. Pray for and invest in 5 men over the next 6 months.
4. Become an authentic man by rejecting passivity, accepting responsibility, leading courageously and investing eternally.

Memory Verse:

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

- James 5:16 (NASB)

What thoughts or images come to mind when you hear the word “prayer”?

All over the world people are praying: to some it is a religious requirement, to others a last resort. But, to those who are desperate, it is life itself. Often prayer is misunderstood. It is thought of as a ritual, just words that if repeated enough will somehow be heard.

Ron Dunn, in *Don’t Just Stand There, Pray Something*, says, “In one way or another, to one god or another, we humans have always prayed, whether we called it that or not. We are devoured by the need of something outside ourselves, something beyond our reach, something spiritual or supernatural, a place to run to, to feel, however slightly, that there is someone out there to cry to, someone who takes notice of our predicament. We long to escape the sense of crushing fate, the feeling that all things are fixed and unalterable. Yes, prayer is much more than a religious exercise. It is a human necessity.”

To the believer, prayer is simply communicating with God- listening and talking to Him. Prayer is practicing the Presence of God. The Bible says in 1 John 5:14,15; “And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked Him.”

What does prayer mean to you? How would you define it? Why do you pray?

In an effort to make “talking with God” a vital part of our lives, join me in embarking on a discussion on the most famous prayer, the Lord’s prayer, found in Matthew 6:7-13. Some of the petitions included in this prayer by Christ were utterly revolutionary. If fully grasped by us, they can overturn much of our own wrong thinking about God.

The Lord’s prayer, in the ESV, contains only 69 words. It can be repeated in less than a minute. Despite its brevity, it has been a huge benefit to multitudes of people down through history. Many of them knew little or nothing else about the Scripture. Yet there is inherent in this prayer all the strength and compassion of our Father in Heaven. For many it has reassured their hearts, strengthened their resolve and led them into personal contact with God, our Father.

Chapter 1 - Faith Under Pressure: Attitude

Chapter 2 - Faith Under Pressure: Doubt
2. Ibid, 42.

Chapter 3 - Faith Under Pressure: Temptation

Chapter 5 - Love by Faith
2. Ibid, 151.

Chapter 6 - Faith and Deeds
Chapter 7 - When You Open Your Mouth

Chapter 8 - Live Well, Live Wisely

Chapter 9 - Get Serious
2. Ibid, 70.
3. Ibid, 75.
5. Sarte, John-Paul, Goodreads 682.

Chapter 10 - Nothing but a Wisp of Fog
2. Ibid.

Chapter 11 - Destroying Your Life from Within
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Chapter 12 - Patience
1. Swindoll, Charles R. Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life. Portland:
Chapter 13 - Prayer to be Reckoned With

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.