

# BELIEVE

WISDOM FROM JAMES FOR THE WAR CALLED LIFE

## GROUP NOTES, WEEK 2

### OPENING QUESTION

*Have you ever felt like a hypocrite? What made you feel that way?*

### SCRIPTURE

Read James 1:19 - 2:13

### BIG IDEAS

In this section of James, the Apostle is giving us some tough love. We'll say, "He did a terrible thing, but he's really a good person." But, to James, our behavior is a direct reflection of our belief. Our actions are the expression of our character. And, he wants us to deal with that.

#### **Believing means being.**

*>> Read v. 19-21. What's the action that James is concerned with here? How are you doing with that? What's his recipe for help?*

If we say we believe the gospel, then we must be self-controlled. All around us are people who react aggressively to the wrongs of the world. But, this is inappropriate for believers.

*>> What does v. 21 mean?*

Second, James wants us to see that being a believer of the word means being a doer word. Hearing the gospel and sitting in church don't magically make one a man of God. We must do what we hear. And once again, v. 25 "the perfect law," that's our key. We must look into it. We must stare and study it, and not forget. Soul-entropy is real, so we need to push against it by staring into the gospel.

*>> Re-read vv. 22-25. How is James' prescription similar to vv. 19-21?*

This, James shows us that believing means being holy people. In vv. 26-27, we're given instructions for holiness. On the one hand, James wants us to be personally holy – guarding our mouths, and remaining

unstained by the world. On the other hand, James wants our holiness to spill out into the way we treat those on the margins.

*>> Re-read vv. 26-27. Does James see a difference between personal and social holiness? How are you challenged by this passage?*

Finally, James wants us to understand that believing the gospel means being impartial – letting go of those prejudices that live in our flesh. We're all inclined to prefer those like us and those we like. James is not okay with this. Partiality is subtle, and it comes in many varieties – racial, social, political, economic ... all of it is wrong.

Partiality is wrong because Jesus has chosen the "unfavored." God has seen the plight of the poor and offered them wealth beyond imagination in the gospel. Partiality therefore is an act of unbelief. It's also an act of judgement, and James wants to remind us that when we get on the judgement train, it takes us to places we don't wish to go.

*>> Re-read vv. 5-12. Why is partiality such a big deal? How has partiality shaped you? What kinds? Are you willing to let go of your preferences and prejudices and embrace all of God's people as spiritual family?*

James wants us to understand that partiality in our actions means partiality in our heart. Being reveals beliefs. But if you look into the "perfect law / law of liberty," then you'll realize that God has been compassionate towards you, and you'll have grace to be compassionate towards others.

*>> How can the gospel – the "perfect law of liberty," as James likes to call it – free us from the proclivity toward partiality? Avoid talking about "the church" out there. Speak personally. How can this happen for you?*

If you are partial, then you'll be judged the way you've judged others, and you'll get no mercy. Because your actions have shown that you've never really believed the gospel. And believing means being. (v. 13)  
Gospel is the perfect law / law of liberty - mercy triumphs over judgement because in it the mercy of God in Christ won victory over the judgement of God for sin.

>> *Read 2:12-13. What does James' admonition mean?*

**PRAY**

This would be a great time to pray for you and our church. Pray that your being would match up to your believing. Pray this for our church, too.