

6 WEEKS



JIM CLASS

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF JAMES



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NO PAIN, NO GAIN

BOOK OF JAMES



WEEK 1

During this 6 week series, we will be walking through the book of James. Consider reading one chapter together each week before you dive in.

READ JAMES 1 TOGETHER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share a situation in your life which, at the time, felt impossible to get through, and what you did in response.

Big Idea:

Trials can

- 1) reveal your true character,
- 2) make you stronger,
- 3) draw you closer to Jesus, and
- 4) don't have to have the last word.

Key Scriptures:

James 1:1-4

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: greetings. Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us

run with perseverance the race set before for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

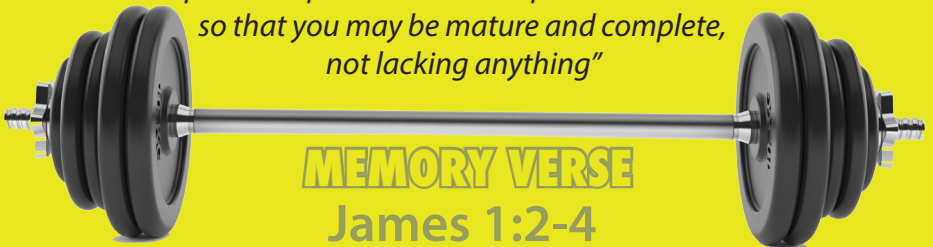
Discussion:

1. Read James 1:1-4.
 - What situation are followers of Jesus in when James writes his letter? How might this have impacted James' writing to them?
 - What response to difficulties and adversity does James encourage?
 - What is the result of facing trials in this manner, and how is that important?
2. Read Hebrews 12:1-2.
 - How did Jesus face His greatest challenge?
 - How are we as followers of Jesus encouraged to face our own challenges?
3. Share a difficulty that you are facing right now or have recently faced where you sense God's presence despite that difficulty?
4. What have you learned from this study that can be of help to you the next time you face adversity and want to give up?
5. What possible benefits from adversity do you see shared in this passages?

Wrapping It Up:

Individually, or as a group, how can you take these truths and encourage someone who is currently facing pain in their life? Consider helping others who are facing difficulties by giving your time and energy to volunteer with a support or recovery ministry. Contact B.J. Van Kalsbeek at bjvk@sunnybrookchurch.org for more info.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything"



MEMORY VERSE
James 1:2-4

COOL DOWN

BOOK OF JAMES



WEEK 2

READ JAMES 2 TOGETHER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

How do you react when you are around someone who talks too much?

Big Idea:

James encourages us to practice one quick and two slows: quick to listen slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Key Scriptures:

James 1:19-20

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

Matthew 27:12-14

"When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, 'Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?' But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor."

2 Corinthians 8:9

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

Philippians 2:5-8

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Who, being in very

nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

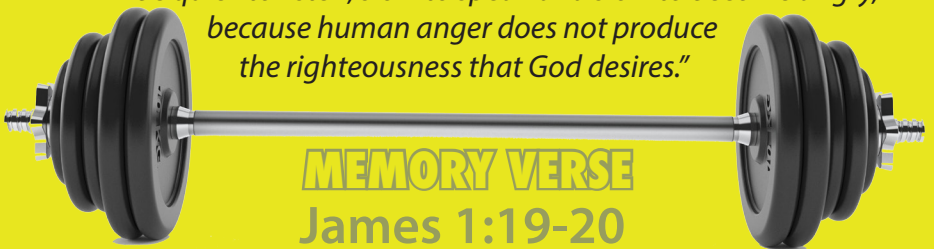
Discussion:

1. Read James 1:19-20.
 - To whom do these verses apply, and how is that different than what normally takes place in social interactions?
 - How can listening, speaking, and becoming angry relate to each other?
 - What do you do when someone doesn't listen to you?
 - What would it look like to be quick to listen?
 - How are your relationships impacted by the amount that you speak, listen, or get angry?
2. Read Matthew 27:12-14, 2 Corinthians 8:9, and Philippians 2:5-8.
 - Why didn't Jesus speak when Pilate asked him to?
 - What was the result?
 - 2 Corinthians 2 and Philippians 2 both speak of Jesus humbling himself and making himself nothing. How does practicing the two “slows”, slow to speak and slow to become angry, relate to humility like we see in Jesus?

Wrapping It Up:

Share some ways you can practice being a good listener. Which of these will you commit to starting this week?

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”



MEMORY VERSE
James 1:19-20

WEAK MADE STRONG

BOOK OF JAMES



WEEK 3

READ JAMES 3 TOGETHER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

In what ways are you prone to favoritism?

Big Idea:

God loves everyone equally, meaning everyone is of equal worth.

Key Scriptures:

James 1:27-2:1

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.”

James 2:14-17

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

James 1:9-11

“Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching

heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.”

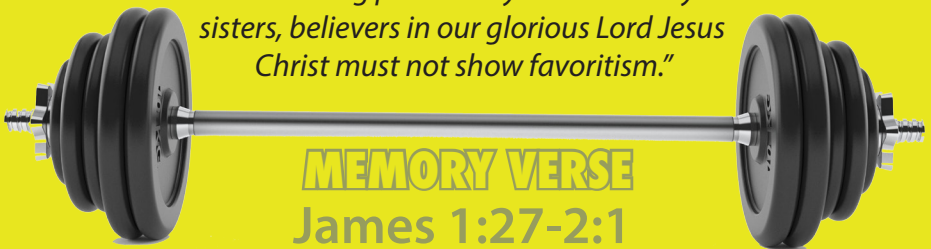
Discussion:

1. Read James 1:27-2:1.
 - How does James describe the type of religion that is acceptable to God our Father? What does it mean?
 - Why do you think James says that pure and acceptable faith does not mix with favoritism?
2. Read James 2:14-17.
 - What does James say about a faith without deeds?
 - What is the purpose/role of good deeds in light of faith?
3. Describe the state of your faith and what role action plays in that faith.
4. Read James 1:9-11.
 - How has James inverted the normal values in our society between being poor or being rich?
 - James says the rich will wither away like a wild flower in the heat of the sun. What does this imply about those in humble circumstances?

Wrapping It Up:

Discuss as a group how you might help those in humble circumstances.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.”



MEMORY VERSE
James 1:27-2:1

FEEL THE BURN

BOOK OF JAMES



WEEK 4

READ JAMES 4 TOGETHER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What is the most shocking thing you've heard come out of someone's mouth?

Big Idea:

Our words matter.

Key Scriptures:

James 3:2-6

"Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."

James 3:7-10

"All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a

restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be."

Discussion:

1. Read James 3:2-6.
 - What is James' observation about the power of words?
 - What does each metaphor in these verses uniquely teach us about our words?
2. Read James 3:7-10.
 - What is the duality that James describes related our mouths?
 - What is the cause of that duality?
 - When we curse someone, what or whom are we cursing?
 - Have you ever observed someone blessing and cursing in the same short period of time? What did that cause you to think about that person?
 - What about you? Could the same be said of you?
3. Between words that bless and words that curse, where do the balance of your words fall and why?

Wrapping It Up:

Make it a goal this week to be conscious of the words you speak to others so that every person you interact with is blessed.

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be."

MEMORY VERSE
James 3:10

READ JAMES 5 TOGETHER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What's the biggest fight you've ever found yourself being part of?

Big Idea:

Our biggest problem is that we cannot solve our biggest problem. Our biggest problem is that we don't just have a conflict or fighting problem; we have a heart problem.

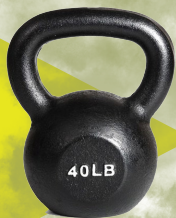
Key Scriptures:

James 4:1-6

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Romans 7:21-25

"So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner



WEEK 5

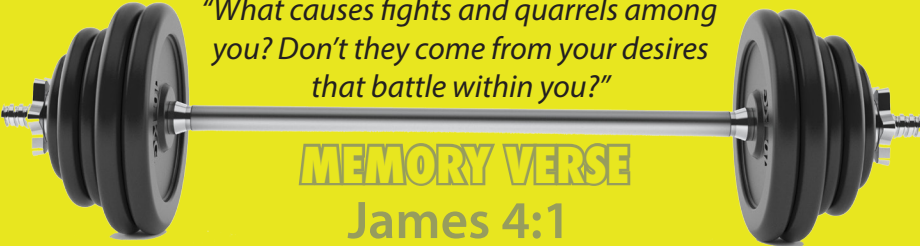
being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

Discussion:

1. Read James 4:1-6.
 - Discuss how what James identifies as the deeper cause of fights and quarrels among us.
 - What desires do you sense battle within you?
 - What is something that you envy in another person(s)?
 - What does James say about why we do not receive what it is that we desire?
 - How do you see the role of grace in this conflict?
 - How would you define "friendship with the world"?
 - What does it mean that God "shows favor to the humble"?
2. Read Romans 7:21-25.
 - Discuss the battle that the apostle Paul describes in these verses?
 - What does the first half of verse 25 reveal about how to approach this difficulty?
 - What do you find yourself being slave to?

Wrapping It Up:

Pray together: Gracious God, we confess that we often approach you as a vehicle to get the things that we really want instead of you. Yet you extend grace upon grace by loving us, forgiving us, and accepting us completely. Help us to humble ourselves and surrender all that we have to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



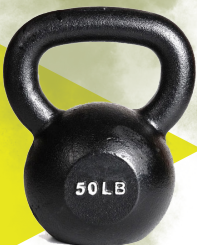
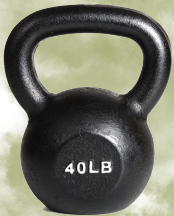
"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

MEMORY VERSE
James 4:1

PROCEED TO FAILURE

BOOK OF JAMES

SMALL GROUP STUDY



WEEK 6

Kicking it off:

What has been the biggest prayer you've seen answered?

Big Idea:

When you're at the end of your rope, turn to God through prayer.

Key Scriptures:

James 5:13-16

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Luke 11:1-13

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say, "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation." Then Jesus said to them, 'Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him." And suppose the one inside answers, "Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything." I tell you, even though he will not get up and

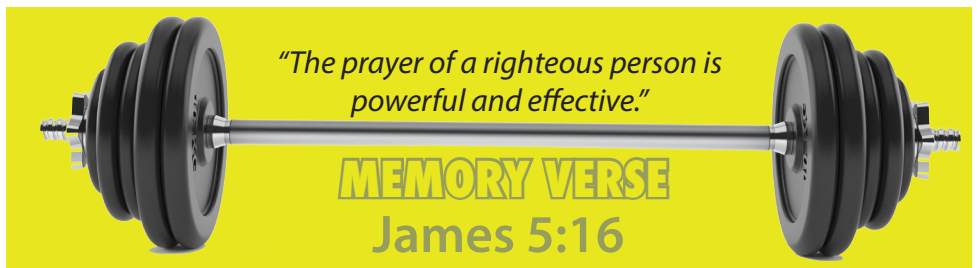
give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Discussion:

1. Read James 5:13-16.
 - According to this passage, when should we should pray?
 - What is the role of confession with prayer? What might it look like for your small group to practice confessing your sins to one another?
 - Why is it important for others to pray for you?
 - What is your role when you pray for others?
2. Read Luke 11:1-13.
 - In spite of all the disciples witnessed Jesus do, this is the only thing that they asked him to teach them. Why do you think this was so?
 - How is Jesus' instructions on prayer different from how we typically pray?
 - How persistent are you when it comes to praying for something specific? Why or why not?
 - Share a time when you felt that God either answered or did not answer your prayer and how it affected your view on prayer.

Wrapping It Up:

Consider spending the next 30 days journaling your prayer requests and prayers as a group. Then take time to mark and share each week the ways in which God answered.



THE LIFE OF JAMES

THE MAN

The writer of the Book of James is James, Jesus' brother, not James the apostle.

THE BOOK

The book of James was one of the earliest letters, probably written before A.D. 50.

THE CONTEXT

James wrote this letter to Jewish Christians throughout the Mediterranean. After Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:55 - 8:3), persecution increased, and the Christians scattered. There were thriving, early-believing, Jewish-Christian communities that did not have the support of established Christian churches. In their hostile surroundings, they were tempted to let intellectual agreement pass for true faith. Throughout the book, James encouraged them, and us, to put faith into action. True faith will produce loving actions towards others.



MEGATHEMES

LIVING FAITH

James wants believers not only to hear the truth, but also to do it.

TRIALS

Successfully overcoming trials and temptations produces maturity and strong character.

LAW OF LOVE

We are saved by God's gracious mercy, not by keeping God's law. We are to love and serve those around us (Jesus' command in Matthew 19:19).

WISE SPEECH

Wisdom shows itself in speech. The wisdom of God that helps control the tongue can help control all our actions.

WEALTH

Because the glory of wealth fades, Christians should store up God's treasures through sincere service. Christians must not show partiality to the wealthy, nor be prejudiced against the poor.



Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
 - Childcare _____
 - When we will meet (day of week) _____
 - Where we will meet (place) _____
 - We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
 - We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
 - Our primary worship service time will be _____
 - Date of this agreement _____
 - Date we will review this agreement again _____
 - Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____
-



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