

## GETTING PERSONAL

1. What are the main things God is impressing on you through this discussion?
  
2. Spend time praying for each other.



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## GETTING STARTED

Most of us have seen those video clips that feature people suffering mishaps (America's Funniest Videos, Ridiculousness, YouTube "Epic Fails" etc.) What is there about watching other people's mishaps so entertaining? Compile a list of possible answers.

Which of these answers is true for you? Why?

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 1:1-11. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 1:1-4.

1. Agree or disagree? "*Considering it joy to go through times of trouble*" is just another version of positive thinking. It's not grounded in reality.
2. Share some examples of tough times you've been through that have had a positive impact?
3. Share some examples of tough times you've been through that have seemingly had no positive impact? Where is God through these times?

### James 1:5-8.

1. Wisdom comes with experience, although here James says it is something God gives. How do you reconcile these two views?
2. Share any situations you faced where God gave you wisdom beyond your own understanding.

### James 1:9-11.

1. "Those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them." Explain this phrase—what does it mean?
2. How do we reconcile these verses with those that people tell us prove that God wants us to prosper?

### **JAMES 1:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the "twelve tribes"—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!

<sup>2</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. <sup>3</sup> For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. <sup>4</sup> So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

<sup>5</sup> If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. <sup>6</sup> But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup> Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.

<sup>9</sup> Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honoured them. <sup>10</sup> And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. <sup>11</sup> The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements.

## James 1:22-25.

1. Discuss: Which is worse— To read the bible and not apply it, or not to read it at all?

## James 1:26,27.

1. *"True religion is worshipping God and glorifying Him. Caring for orphans and widows is just something secondary."* Apparently not according to James. Agree? How do we deal with this verse?
2. What areas of life do you find yourself being in danger of being "corrupted by the world?" How do you stay engaged with the world yet not dragged down by its standards and values.

## **GETTING PERSONAL**

1. James has covered a lot of issues in just a few verses. Which do you particularly want to keep in mind this week?
2. Spend time praying for each other.



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## **GETTING STARTED**

This week's passage ends by exhorting us to refuse to let the world corrupt us. In recent years we seen a growing Christian sub-culture in which we have separated ourselves from the world. Is this a bad thing, a good thing or neither?

To help you answer this discuss the following—are these positive things or not?

- *Christian fiction books*
- *Christian music*
- *Christian movies*
- *Christian bookstores*
- *Christian schools*
- *Christian political parties*

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 1:12-27. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 1:12-18.

1. "The devil made me do it!" How valid is that excuse?
2. Agree or disagree. "*If we're blessed by enduring testing and temptation and if they lead to a crown of life then surely they are good things?*"
3. Note the step by step process leading from our own desires to death (vv. 14 & 15). Share any situations you've faced where you've been conscious of this downward spiral. How and at what point did you stop yourself (or did you!)
4. What do you read in verses 16-18 that can encourage us when we are facing testing and temptation?

### James 1:19-21.

1. "Quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry": Is this the order these three things come to you naturally? Explain. What would you like to change about yourself?

2. What thoughts do you see in these verses that could be helpful for you to think about in overcoming unrighteous anger?

### **JAMES 1:12-27**

<sup>12</sup> God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup> And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. <sup>14</sup> Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. <sup>15</sup> These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

<sup>16</sup> So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. <sup>18</sup> He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.

<sup>19</sup> Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. <sup>20</sup> Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. <sup>21</sup> So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup> But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. <sup>25</sup> But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

<sup>26</sup> If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

## James 2:8-11

1. What do you think James is trying to say here? That favouring some people over others is as bad as murder?
  
2. In what ways do you detect within yourself an unhealthy tendency to “favour some people over others” (v.8)? Explain.

## James 2:12,13

1. Is God’s mercy on us conditional on what Jesus has done or on what we do?

## **FINALLY...**

1. James has covered a lot of issues in just a few verses. Which do you particularly want to keep in mind this week?
  
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## **GETTING STARTED**

1. *“First impressions count”* - or do they? Share your thoughts and experiences.
  
2. Agree or disagree? “Wearing old shabby clothes to church when you have good clothes at home is disrespectful.”
  
3. Churches should be places where everyone is accepted equally. Are they? What sort of people find it hard to fit in and be accepted in churches?

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 2:1-13. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 2:1-4.

1. An implication made by James seems to be that Jesus was an example of not favouring some people over others. Can you think of any incidents from the gospels that back this up?
2. Is judging someone based on appearances the same thing as discrimination?
3. Discuss: Does our church and/or young adult ministry discriminate in any way, treating some people differently from others? Could we be more welcoming?

### James 2:5-7.

1. *"Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith?"* Is it easier for a poor person to be a Christian than it is for a rich person? Reflect on the personal implications of your answer.

2. How would you sum up a Christian's responsibility to the poor?

### **JAMES 2:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people over others?

<sup>2</sup> For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewellery, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. <sup>3</sup> If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

<sup>5</sup> Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you dishonour the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

<sup>8</sup> Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbour as yourself." <sup>9</sup> But if you favour some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

<sup>10</sup> For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. <sup>11</sup> For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

<sup>12</sup> So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. <sup>13</sup> There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

FINALLY...

1. Which trap are you most likely to fall in to:
  - Saying you have faith but neglecting to show this by your works?
  - Doing good deeds but not for God's glory but your own?
2. What do you sense God saying to you through these verses we've been studying?
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## GETTING STARTED

1. *"The biggest obstacle to people becoming Christians is other Christians."*  
Do you agree? Or is "Christian bashing" a cop out people use?
2. Which is better: a hypocritical Christian or an unbeliever who lives a good life?
3. *"Some Christians are better at having faith and others are better at doing good deeds."* Agree or disagree?

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 2:14-26. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 2:14-18.

1. How do you reconcile the statement “*faith by itself isn’t enough*” with Ephesians 2:8,9 which says, “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*”?
2. How do you feel about the money we spend on church buildings versus the money we give to the needy? Do we have our priorities wrong?
3. Are we as a young adult group guilty of producing “*faith without works*”? Discuss.

### James 2:19-20

1. How important is it to have correct theology is even the demons have correct theology?.

## JAMES 2:14-26

<sup>14</sup> What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? <sup>15</sup> Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, <sup>16</sup> and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

<sup>17</sup> So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

<sup>18</sup> Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.”

<sup>19</sup> You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. <sup>20</sup> How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?

<sup>21</sup> Don’t you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

<sup>22</sup> You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. <sup>23</sup> And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” He was even called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

<sup>25</sup> Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. <sup>26</sup> Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

### James 2:21-24

1. How different was Abraham to Rahab?
2. Why do you think James choose these two people to illustrate his point?

## James 3:13– 16

1. Note all the negative actions and attitudes mentioned in these verses.  
How many show themselves through the tongue?
  
2. Which of them do you find give you the biggest problem?

## James 3:17,18

1. Note all the positive actions and attitudes mentioned in these verses.  
How many show themselves through the tongue?
  
2. Which of them would you most like to see evident in your life?

## **FINALLY...**

1. What do you sense God saying to you through these verses we've been studying?
  
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## **GETTING STARTED**

1. Which do you think is harder to control—actions or words?
  
2. "Sticks and stones may break our bones but words will never hurt us." It makes a great children's rhyme but how true is it?
  
3. How much can you tell about a person by the language they use? Give examples.

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 3:1-18. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 3:1-2.

1. Do you think it is fair that those who teach get judged more strictly? Why doesn't God judge us all equally?
2. Discuss the statement "If we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way." An exaggeration?

### James 3:3-6

1. Look at the three illustrations in these verses. What do they have in common? What point do you think James is making?
2. Have you had experiences in which small words have had a big effect, either on you or by you? Explain.

### James 3:7-12

1. What can we learn from these verses about how to control our tongue? More self control?

2. How might you use worship to better control your tongue?

### **JAMES 3:1-18**

<sup>1</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup> Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

<sup>3</sup> We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. <sup>4</sup> And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. <sup>5</sup> In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches.

But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

<sup>7</sup> People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. <sup>10</sup> And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! <sup>11</sup> Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? <sup>12</sup> Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

<sup>13</sup> If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honourable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. <sup>15</sup> For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. <sup>16</sup> For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favouritism and is always sincere. <sup>18</sup> And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

1. James seems to be saying that it's wrong to make plans for the future?  
Agree?

**FINALLY...**

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### GETTING STARTED

1. Which statements about arguing best express your views? Explain.
  - *I love the intellectual stimulation that comes with a good argument.*
  - *I find arguments upsetting and avoid them as much as possible.*
  - *I can argue with someone without getting mad at them.*
  - *I find arguing pointless. It never accomplishes anything.*
  - *When you disagree it's better to argue things through than to just ignore the disagreement.*
2. Discuss the following statement "It's wrong to argue about what the Bible says. Instead we should *do* what it says and just love each other."

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 4:1-17. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 4:1-3.

1. What do these verses state or imply are the characteristics of a quarrelsome person?
  
2. These verses seem to say "If we pray for something that gives us pleasure then we shouldn't expect to have our prayer answered" Or do they? Discuss.

### James 4:4-6a

1. What do you think it means to be friends with the world in a way that makes us enemies of God?

### James 4:6b-12

1. These verses instruct us to "resist the devil". How ? List all the things these verses imply we should do.
  
2. Which things on your list are the most challenging for you?

### JAMES 4:1-17

<sup>1</sup> What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. <sup>3</sup> And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

<sup>4</sup> You adulterers!\* Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the spirit God has placed within us is filled with envy?\* <sup>6</sup> But he gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say,

"God opposes the proud  
but favours the humble."

<sup>7</sup> So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. <sup>9</sup> Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honour.

<sup>11</sup> Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. <sup>12</sup> God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbour?

<sup>13</sup> Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." <sup>14</sup> How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. <sup>15</sup> What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> Otherwise you are boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil.

<sup>17</sup> Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.

1. The person of Job is often used as an illustration of suffering. What did he have to endure? (For help read Job chapters 1 and 2). What did God remind him of in the midst of His suffering? (Read Job chapter 38)
2. What does suffering reveal about ourselves?

What does suffering reveal about God?

3. Share an experience of suffering through which you learnt something about yourself and/or God.



### **FINALLY...**

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### **GETTING STARTED**

1. What are your pet peeves? Describe things that annoy you, test your patience and make you grumble by using the following headings:
  - *School/university/work*
  - *People I live with*
  - *The media*
  - *Technology*
  - *Churches*

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 5:1-11. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 5:1-6.

1. These verses contain a warning for the rich? What are wrong actions and motives of the rich are apparent here
2. Based on your discussions complete the following sentence, "*It is not wrong to be rich provided...*"

### James 5:7,8

1. Do you ever find yourself needing to "be patient" in waiting for the Lord's return? Why or why not?

Why do you think the people to whom James wrote need to be patient?

2. The people were told to be patient for the Lord's return and were reassured it was "near". However, today we are still waiting. And so we might say that these people's patience did them no good. Or did it? Discuss.

## JAMES 5:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. <sup>2</sup> Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. <sup>3</sup> Your gold and silver have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment. <sup>4</sup> For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

<sup>5</sup> You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup> You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.

<sup>7</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. <sup>8</sup> You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.

<sup>9</sup> Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!

<sup>10</sup> For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> We give great honour to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.

### James 5:9

1. How much of a grumbler about other people are you? What things cause frustration for you?
2. What do you do to resist the temptation to grumble?

1. Why are we often reluctant to warn someone who is slowly compromising and slipping away from faith?
  
2. What would you want other members of our group to do if they were concerned about the state of your relationship with God?
  
3. What are the things that would most likely be responsible for your drifting away from faith?



**FINALLY...**

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**GETTING STARTED**

1. Think of all the advice your parents gave you when you were a child. Share with one another:
  - *The best piece of advice for staying healthy.*
  - *The one thing they warned you never to do because it was dangerous.*
  - *One piece of advice you will give to your own children one day.*
  
2. What good advice have you been given about prayer? Share these insights with each other.

## INTO THE BIBLE

Slowly read James 5:12-20. What are the words/phrases/verses that particularly stand out for you? Explain and discuss.

### James 5:12

1. It was common for Jews to make oaths and to do so by swearing by something holy. However by Jesus time the religious leaders had come to use oaths as a clever way of avoiding obligations and telling the truth. For example, if they swore by the temple they were not obligated to keep the oath but if they swore by the gold in the temple, they were (see Matthew 23:16-22). In response to this Jesus says don't swear an oath at all.

What wider meaning do you think this verse has for us?

### James 5:13-16

1. Which do you most often tend to do: pray when suffering hardship or give praise when happy? Why do you think this is?

Why are each of these important?

2. What is the sick person responsible to do in these verses, and what is the responsibility of the elders?

### **JAMES 5:12-20**

<sup>12</sup> But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.

<sup>13</sup> Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. <sup>14</sup> Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! <sup>18</sup> Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, <sup>20</sup> you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.

3. Do you think these verses teach that "Sin is the cause of sickness"? Explain.
4. Suppose a sick person follows these steps and it not healed. What would you say to them?

### James 5:17-18

1. If prayer is so powerful, why do you think we do not pray more often?