

An Intro to Studying the Bible

Placing Books in Context:

Have you ever been so close to something that you cannot see the big picture? It's like the old story of a group of blind men who approach an elephant, and only by their touch, attempt to determine what it is. One man touches the elephant's trunk and says, "This is a garden hose." Another man grabs the elephant's leg and says, "This is a great tree trunk." Finally a third man grabs the elephant's ear and says, "This is a palm leaf." Now, each of these men were somewhat right in their perception of the part, but none of them were right when it came to the whole: the garden hose like nose, the tree trunk like leg, and the palm leaf like ear all combined to make one big elephant! Only in the big picture could the truth be seen.

Many times when we go to study the Bible, we approach it like a blind man feeling our way through an elephant. We drop ourselves in the middle of a book, feel our way around, and try to make sense of something. When we do this, we will see some truth, but many times, we will miss the big picture of what God is trying to teach us.

Because of this, the first thing we need to remember when it comes to studying the Bible is that we must learn to place all that we are reading within a context. First within the book it was written in, then within the Bible as a whole. What I mean by this is that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, given to us to accomplish His purposes. This Word was given to us in 66 different "installments" or books. 39 of those books are found in the Old Testament and 27 of those books are found in the New Testament. (The Old Testament is made up of the books written before the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the New Testament is written after the resurrection of Jesus.) If we are to read the Bible and really understand it, we first must be able to place each of the verses we read into their specific contexts.

First of all, we must look at the verses within the book they were written. When we read the book of Galatians, we will be reading it as one book, not just a collection of verses. By that, I mean that when Paul wrote Galatians, he was writing it to be read by a specific group of people and to accomplish a specific purpose. In order for us to really understand the individual parts of Galatians, we must first look at the whole. Just as if you wrote a letter to a friend, you would want him to read the entire letter, not just a sentence or two at a time; simi-

larly it is important that we understand what the entire book is about before we jump to conclusions about the individual verses. We will be looking first at the “Big Picture” of Galatians, then we will zoom in on the individual parts. We will do this by seeing the overview chart of the book of Galatians found on page 13. With the Big Picture in view, we will be ready to study the individual parts of the book.

Second of all, after we have seen the big picture of a book of the Bible (like Galatians) we must look at how that truth fits with the other 65 books of the Bible. This will help us to understand it better, and maybe answer some questions the book seems to raise about a topic, but does not specifically address. For instance, Philippians talks about the humility of Christ, but we find out just how humble Christ was when we look at examples from the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). As we progress through the book of Galatians, we will need to look at other passages of Scripture in other books that will help us to better understand what is going on in this book.

A 4 Step Process to Studying the Bible:

Maybe you are new to studying a book of the Bible. Maybe you have tried to read the Bible for a long time, and yet you have had a difficult time learning anything from your time in study. Whatever the case, it is helpful to have a plan to direct your steps as you go to read God’s Word. For our purpose in this study, we will be using a 4 step process to help us unlock the treasure chest of God’s Word. Here are the four steps:

1. **Pray.** Always begin your Bible Study with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you in the study of God’s Word. We need to have our spiritual eyes opened by the Lord to understand His truth. This process of Bible Study can either be viewed as an academic exercise, or as an opportunity to commune with our Heavenly Father. By praying, we remind ourselves that God is real, and that His Word is alive. This is not just an academic exercise. Pray the prayer of Ephesians 1:18-19 which says, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”

2. **Observation.** In this step, you read each paragraph of the book of Galatians, and you see *what the passage says*. You don't get too bogged down in trying to figure out what each thing means, you are simply looking at it to see what it says. When I read a paragraph and do observation on it, there are a few things that I always look for:
- A. *Are there any grammatical transitions in the passage?* Words like "Therefore," "and," "because of," etc. These words indicate that there is some relationship between what is found in one verse and what precedes it or what follows it. If you see a "therefore," for instance at the beginning of a paragraph that you are studying, you know that your paragraph is drawing a conclusion from the paragraph that precedes it. These grammatical markers must be observed, and will help serve like road signs to help us understand the text better.
 - B. *Are there any words that are repeated in this paragraph?* If so, these words are probably important to the understanding of the passage. For instance, in 2 Peter 1:12-15, Peter uses the word "remember" or forms of that word three times. That indicates that the concept of "remembering" is important to the meaning of this passage.
 - C. *Notice the verb tenses used in the paragraph.* Are they past tense, present tense, or future tense? Seeing that can be quite significant. It helps us to know if this is a promise for the future or a reality in the present.
 - D. *Are there any quotes in this passage? Who is speaking? Are there any quotations from other books of the Bible?* We can tell both of these things by looking at the punctuation in our paragraph. Obviously, quotation marks indicate someone is talking. In many Bibles, the way you tell if something is a quotation from another book of the Bible, is that they will write the quotation in all caps. This will help us to place what is said within a context from either the life of the individual speaking, or from the Old Testament book in which it was originally written.
 - E. *Notice if there are any lists of things in the paragraph.* Lists of adjectives, names, titles, actions done by someone, or effects. When you see a list, observe what the list is

saying (is it a list of adjectives describing a person, a list of actions done by someone, etc.) When you see what the list is saying, it will help you to better organize what the author is saying in a verse or paragraph. The Apostle Paul especially uses a lot of lists of things. Recognizing those lists will help us to see the connection between a long line of words.

- F. *Does anything else stand out to you from this passage?*
Are there any other interesting things you noticed as you read this passage that you just want to write down to explore later?

These are the six steps of the Observation process in an epistle like Galatians. Remember during this step, you will not need to really figure out what everything means, you will simply be looking at what it says. As you observe this and write it down, it helps prepare you for the second step of this Bible Study process. In our Bible Study of Galatians, you will be given space in each week's study to make some observations of each section. I would encourage you to look over these six steps of the observational process to guide you as you observe the passage each week.

3. **Interpretation.** This is where we look at the paragraph we have just observed, and we seek to determine, "*What does it mean?*" The interpretive step is an important one. It is the time when we seek to determine the original meaning of each of the passages of the Bible. Quite a task. As a matter of fact, it can actually be quite a time consuming task as well. For in order to do a complete job in interpreting a passage, we would need to look up every word in the passage in a Bible Lexicon, read countless commentaries, and do hours of cross referencing work with other related passages to come up with a complete interpretation. This would be great, if this is all we were supposed to be doing. But the reality of life is, that most of us don't have 6 hours a day to study the book of Galatians. Therefore, we need to come up with a way to quickly lead us to the most important issues of interpretation. In order to help myself along on this process, I follow a simple four step process for interpreting a passage. It works pretty well for me, and it may be something that you would like to do as well. Here goes:

- A. *Write out a hypothesis on what you think the passage means in your own words.* In this step, based on what you observed in the previous step, you will seek to write out in your own words what you think the passage is trying to say. An example hypothesis of Luke 15 (the prodigal son) would be, “Jesus told the story of the son who blew the inheritance only to find his father accepting him back in order to illustrate the love and acceptance of the Heavenly Father who welcomes back the runaway rebel with open arms if he will just return. God wants to welcome us back when we are far from Him if we will just let Him.” Keep in mind, though, that as you write this, you will be simply formulating a hypothesis. You are getting ready to investigate this passage further, but this step simply gets you thinking about what you think it might mean. As we progress through interpretation, you will be able to investigate it and see where your original hypothesis needs to be improved.
- B. *Ask questions of the text.* In this step, you will begin to ask questions of the text in areas that are either hard to understand or are especially significant in your eyes. What I mean by this is that in order to help speed up the interpretive process, you need to come up with a list of questions of things you don’t understand, or things that seem really important that you want to understand more. Write these questions out in your notebook underneath your hypothesis of the meaning of the passage. Write out any question that you have of the passage. For instance, take John 3:16. Some questions might be, “What does it mean when it says that God “so” loved the world. Does that mean that He loved the world in this way, or does it mean that He loved the world SO much?” Another question might be, “What is an only begotten Son?” Other questions of significance might be, “What does it entail to believe in Jesus Christ?” One other question might be, “What is the significance of using the verb tense “have” at the end of this verse to describe eternal life? Does that mean that we already have this eternal life? I thought that eternal life did not start until death. What does this mean?” As you work through each of the paragraphs of a book, you can begin to ask these questions. As you tried to write out your hypothesis of meaning, you probably had some questions arise. Now is the time to write those things down.

- C. *Seek to find answers to your questions.* Now that you have questions, how do you find answers to those questions? There are several places you can look to help you with finding these answers. They can be grouped into four categories – the four “C’s”.

Context. Do you find any clues from the surrounding context of the book that would help you to answer the question that you have? Look at your chart of the book, and check out the summaries of the paragraphs that surround the paragraph that you are studying. Are there any clues in those paragraphs that would help to answer your question? For instance, in the case of John 3:16, the salvation Jesus brings is compared to the physical healing God provided through the bronze snake on a stick when the Israelites were bitten by snakes in the wilderness in Old Testament times. This comparison was made in the paragraph surrounding John 3:16. Therefore, that helps in understanding what it means to have true belief in Christ – one of our questions from earlier. Just as the Israelites had to look on the bronze snake that was lifted high in order to be saved, we have to look on the raised cross of Christ, with faith that it is only through what Christ did on the cross that we can be saved. By checking the context, it helps us to better understand what is meant in the passage we are studying. So the first thing you ought to do is see if there is any other information in the surrounding context that helps.

Concordance. A Concordance is a book that catalogs every place in the Bible where a specific word is used. What is helpful about this is that if you are looking at a word that you are unsure about its meaning, you can look it up in a concordance and see where else in the Bible the same word is used. By seeing how a word is used in another context, it might help you to better understand it in the passage that you are studying. By seeing how a word is used, you can almost write your own definition of the word based on how it is used in the Bible. Pay special attention if a word is used more than once in a particular book – like if the word is used twice in Galatians, or if the word is used more than once by the same author in a different book – like if Paul uses the

same word in both Galatians and Romans, he probably still means roughly the same thing by it. This will help answer questions you have about word meanings. If you already own a Concordance, that is great. Some Bibles have a small, yet not exhaustive Concordance in the back of the Bible. However, if you do not have a Concordance (preferably an exhaustive one – it will have a more complete list of words than the ones in the back of your Bible), don't worry. You can actually use one for free online if you have access to the internet. Simply go to <http://www.biblestudytools.net/Concordances/> and you will find several Concordances online that you can use for free. The best one is probably Strong's Concordance. If you are low on funds but have access to a computer with internet access, then this is a good way to go.

Commentaries. After you have checked the context and the concordance, your next place to turn is to a good commentary. A commentary is a book written by a biblical scholar that helps explain, verse by verse, the meaning of the text. Once you have the questions you want answered, it is good to check a good commentary and see if you can get any insight from the commentary to help. If you do not have any commentaries right now, and you are looking to begin building a library with some good commentaries in them, then I would suggest first buying the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck. This two volume commentary has sections on every verse in the Bible, and is pretty good at answering some general questions, without too much technical talk that is hard to understand. If you are interested in buying a larger commentary on just one book of the Bible, then I would recommend beginning to collect the *NIV Application Commentary* series. There is one of these books for each book of the Bible. As such, it is much more in depth than the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, but also more expensive, as you have to buy each book separately. If you have no commentary, and no money, then all is not lost either. If you have access to a computer with internet access there are a few sites you can go to that have good commentary on verses:

- **John Piper's Sermons online:** Pastor John Piper has all

of the sermons he has preached over the past twenty years online and organized by chapter and verse of each book of the Bible. Piper is an amazing teacher, and his sermons read like most commentaries, as they are pretty in depth. You may find some help in answering your questions by looking at a sermon on the passage you are studying. Piper's sermons are found here:

<http://www.soundofgrace.com/piperindex.htm>

- **Bible.org website:** At this website, you can find a wealth of helpful information in studying and interpreting the Bible. Under the Prof's Soapbox section, you will find articles on various areas of theological interest. Under the "Search Studies" area, you can search for any articles on the passage you are dealing with. If you have a question about 2 Peter 3:2, then you just type that in, and the search engine at the site will list all the articles on the bible.org site that refer to this verse. This site is found at <http://www.bible.org>
- **Other commentaries:** At this website, you can find a bunch of other free commentaries including the Scofield Reference Bible Notes, and John Wesley's notes on the entire Bible. I have not looked at all these commentaries, but some of them may prove helpful to you. You can find these at: <http://www.biblestudytools.net/Commentaries/>
- **Tom Constable's notes:** At this website, you can download great notes on every book of the Bible. The notes are prepared by Dr. Tom Constable, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, and the notes are easy to read, and quite insightful. When you get to this site, simply click on the "Study Notes" link at the top of the page. You can find this site at: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable>

Community. Another avenue for helping to understand the Word of God, and to answer these questions is to ask others in your Christian community. That is to ask other believers you know what conclusions they have come to on a certain passage. This is a way to sort of "check out" what you are thinking and to compare it to the conclusions of others you

know. They may see something you don't see.

- D. *Rewrite your original statement on what you think the passage means, incorporating the information you found out in your interpretive process.* In this step, you simply correct your hypothesis where needed to reflect what you found as you asked and answered the questions from the text. At this point, you should have at least a better understanding of what the passage means, and you are ready to move on to the application stage.
4. **Application.** This is the last step of the process, and it will help us answer the question, “How does this information work in my life?” What we seek to do at this step is to put into practice what we have observed and interpreted. In fact, the Bible was given so that we could know God and His will, and that as a result, our lives would be transformed. If we are doing only the observation and interpretation of a passage, then we are missing a key reason why we should be reading the Bible at all. The Bible is intended not just for our curiosity or intellectual exercise, but for our transformation into Christ-likeness, through correct supernatural knowledge of Him. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us this, as it states, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” So the question then becomes, how do we take that which we have learned, and begin to apply it to our lives? The answer to that question comes through a simple three step process of application. These three steps are listed below:
- A. *Know the text, and keep the meaning in view.* It is very important as you move toward application, that you keep the meaning of the text in full view. That means that you rely on the interpretation of the verse to determine the application. This sounds basic, but is not always followed. And when it is not followed, some wrong teaching can result that could potentially be harmful. So, look at the meaning of the verse first, then move on to the application of that verse.
 - B. *Ask the applicational questions.* As you apply this text, ask a few questions to see what kind of application is necessary. . .

- *Is there something to believe?* Is this passage teaching us a truth that we need to embrace? A piece of theology we need to believe, etc.
- *Is there an example I need to follow?* Especially in the narrative passages of the Old Testament historical books (Genesis, Exodus, Judges, etc.) and the New Testament gospels and Acts, we will see stories of individuals and their relationships with God. By seeing their examples, both good and bad, we can see if there is something in their lives that we ought to do too, or if there is something they did that we should avoid.
- *Is there a sin to be avoided?* This is pretty self explanatory. Some passages are direct commands for us to avoid a particular sin.
- *Is there a positive command to follow?* This is when we see a command for us to do something.

C. *Write down your application for accountability with yourself.* As you decide what kind of application is necessary for the verses you are studying, write down that application in your notebook on this passage. This way, you can help keep yourself accountable for the truth you are learning.

Well, there you have it. That is the basic overview of one method for studying the Bible. We will begin to put this into practice with this study. It is my prayer that God blesses you through this process with a clearer picture of Himself through His Word!

Introduction to James

Author

The Hebrew name “Jacob” is routinely transformed into the English name “James” throughout our English New Testaments. Since Jacob (or James) was a very common name, and there are many Jameses on the pages of the New Testament, there is some debate over which James signed his name to this letter in James 1:1. Most conservative scholars agree, however, that the best option for who wrote this book is James, the brother of Jesus, who was the leader of the Jerusalem church (see Acts 15 among other places.) To say that James was the brother of Jesus is to say that he was the Jesus’ half brother, the son of Mary and Joseph after the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Tradition says that James came to faith in Christ after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to the many as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:7.

Date and Destination

James writes this letter to Jewish Christians who are living outside of Jerusalem around the Roman Empire (see James 1:1). Being in a leadership role of the church in Jerusalem, James would have had contact with many Jewish believers who would come to Jerusalem for festivals or business, and hearing their struggles, he wrote this letter to encourage them. According to the historian Josephus, James the brother of Jesus was martyred in A.D. 62, therefore, the epistle must have been written before that. For many reasons, it is believed that this epistle is actually the first book written of our New Testament, dating it around A.D. 48 or about a year before Paul wrote the book of Galatians, the New Testament’s second book. The strongest evidence for this early date, are that there is no mention of Jew/Gentile relationships in the church in this letter . . . A fact that took on considerable importance beginning with Paul and Barnabas’s missionary journeys, their struggles in Galatia (see Galatians 2), and the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. Since there is no reference to any of these details, and since tradition puts the book in the late 40’s, it is reasonable to argue for the early date to this epistle.

Purpose

The purpose of this book is not so much doctrinal, as it is practical. James wanted his readers to fully understand that if they had true faith in God through Jesus Christ, it would be more than just mental assent or warm feelings, but it would lead to life changing action. James seems to have noticed problems of impatience, materialism, partiality, gossip, pride, and other fleshly vices that were present in the Jewish Christian community, and wanted to call these new saints to continue to live a life of “true faith” that would lead them to action.

Theological Emphases

Faith is a word that is often used in the church and throughout Scripture as the summary response that we should have to God’s gracious initiation into our lives. This great word, however, is quite misunderstood today in evangelical circles, and it seems to have been misunderstood by first century Jewish Christians as well. Since our salvation is based upon His work not ours, and since our key response is to have faith in God, some have argued that the Christian life is a life of inaction and sloppy living. James takes on this faulty definition of faith head on in this epistle and argues that “true faith” will always change our actions. As Christians we are called to embrace certain truths about God in faith, then to demonstrate that faith by walking in obedient reliance upon the Holy Spirit within us to empower us to move forward in obedience to those truths. James helps the Christian to accurately understand true faith leads to action. Notice, however, that James does not say that action takes the place of faith. He says that true faith will lead to action. This is a key difference, as it keeps faith in God’s grace, and not our own efforts at the core of the gospel and at the core of the Christian life.

James: True Faith

The Definition of True Faith		The Practice of True Faith			
1:1	2:26	3:1	-	5:20	
True Faith Survives Trials & Temptations 1:1 - 1:18	True Faith Responds to the Word 1:19 - 1:27	True Faith Does not Discriminate 2:1 - 2:13	True Faith Has Works 2:14 - 2:26	True Faith Has An Obedient Tongue 3:1 - 3:18	True Faith Acts in Humility 4:1 - 5:6
1:1-12 A Christian view of & response to trials	1:19-27 Pure religion is to be a doer of the Word, not just a hearer.	2:1-13 Do not show favoritism within the Body.	2:14-17 Faith and works related and defined 2:14-26 Faith and works related, defined, and illustrated	3:1-12 The power of the tongue and our call to tame it. 3:13-18 Two sources of behavior are outlined.	True Faith Trusts in the Lord 5:7 - 5:20
1:13-18 God's Role in our trials				4:1-12 Do not be arrogant toward God or others. 4:13—5:6 Do not be arrogant toward the future or your possessions.	5:7-20 Closing commands and promises to cling to as we live out a life of true faith.

Key verse: “If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.” — James 1:26

WEEK ONE: James 1:1-12

Day One:

1. Read James 1:1-12.

2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For example, one such outline of James 1:1-12 is given below:
 - 1:1. James sends greetings to Jewish followers of Jesus living outside of Israel.
 - 1:2-4. Rejoice in your difficulties, because they are designed to produce in you a more godly Christian character.
 - 1:5-8. Ask God for help in difficulties, but do so with a believing heart.
 - 1:9-11. The poor should rejoice in their spiritual wealth, while the rich should be aware of their inherent fallenness before God.
 - 1:12. Christians who persevere during hard times can expect a reward from God.

Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

(NOTE: Making an outline is a wonderful way to immerse yourself in Scripture. It forces you to think through the content and organization of the text. In addition, it becomes a valuable resource for later review. If you have never done this before, you will probably find this hard to do the first time around. However, it will become easier over time. Persevere! You will be glad you did.)

Day Two:

1. Review James 1:1-12.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”

For example, James tells Christians who persevere through trials that they can expect the “crown of life” (James 1:12). Accordingly, you might ask, “What is the ‘crown of life’?”

Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week.

Day Three:

1. Read James 1:2-4.
2. James' readers were likely Jewish Christians who had been driven out of Jerusalem, perhaps following Stephen's martyrdom (cf. Acts 8:1). Not only were they likely victims of persecution from the Gentile peoples who viewed them as "strange," but they no doubt were also ostracized by the Jewish community for their heretical belief in Christ. Strangers in a strange land, with few rights and little political or financial power, they were vulnerable to persecution and exploitation.
- 2A. In the space below, use your imagination and list some of the "trials" these Christians were likely to have experienced.

- 2B. Explain why it would have been easy for them to doubt God in these circumstances. In other words, imagine that you were in their shoes. What kinds of questions and doubts would you have had?
3. In the midst of these circumstances, James tells his readers to “Rejoice.” What reason does he give them for why they should “rejoice?”
4. In your opinion, what do you think we would be “lacking” if we did not experience “trials”? (1:4)
- 5A. Think of a difficult time that you have gone through in your life. Briefly describe the circumstances in the space below.

- 5B. Notice that in James 1:2, there is a command to rejoice “when” the trial comes, not “after” it has passed. Did you “rejoice” while you were in the midst of your “trials?” If not, do you think you could have “made yourself” rejoice when you didn’t feel like it?

Day Four:

1. Read James 1:5.
2. How would you define “wisdom?”
3. The *Expository Dictionary* in the *Zondervan Bible Reference Software* says this about wisdom: “...wisdom represents the perspective or orientation that one brings to dealing with the issues of life. ... Only when one abandons what seems wise by human standards to accept without hesitation the divine viewpoint as revealed in Scripture can he claim true wisdom.” In this context, consider the following definition of “wisdom:” “*Wisdom is the understanding and application of God’s perspective on how we should live our lives.*” What do you think of this definition? Would you change anything in this definition to make it better? Elaborate in the space below.

3A. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 13:58: “And he did not do many miracles there because of their **lack of faith**.”

Mark 16:14: “Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their **lack of faith** and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.”

Hebrews 11:6: “And without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

3B. How do these verses relate to James 1:6-8?

4. How can God give answers to “How could God allow this to happen to me?” and “How can I get through this difficult time?” if the person who asks these questions doesn’t believe that God is good and stands ready to empower that person to overcome their trial? Explain the problem here.

5. One possible interpretation of James 1:2-8 is the following:
God allows us to go through difficult times because He wants to train us to cling to Him in the midst of trials. He stands ready to help us if we are willing to embrace Him and depend on Him to get us through. In this we should rejoice! However, the very act of doubting Him causes us to keep Him at arm's length, so that we cannot receive the help that we need.
What do you think of this interpretation? Does it capture the main thoughts of James 1:2-8?

6. Suppose you are going through a trial and don't feel any faith in your heart. How do you "make yourself" have faith? How do you make yourself "rejoice" over your trials?

4. Read James 1:12.
5. Consider the following verses:

1 Corinthians 9:25-27: “Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a **crown** that will not last; but we do it to get a **crown** that will last for ever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

2 Timothy 4:8: “Now there is in store for me the **crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

James 1:12: “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the **crown** of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

1 Peter 5:4: “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the **crown** of glory that will never fade away.”

Revelations 2:10: “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the **crown** of life.”

Revelation 3:11: “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your **crown**.”

Biblical Note: The Greek word that is translated “crown” in the verses above is “*stephanos*.” This word had both the meaning of (i) a garland of leaves placed on the victor’s head in Greek athletic competitions (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24,25), and (ii) a symbol of blessing or honor worn on the head (cf. Proverbs 4:9, 16:31, and 14:24).

6. James 1:12 suggests that a “crown” is given as a reward to the Christian who perseveres. The New Testament has much to say about “rewards.” A full consideration of this topic lies beyond the scope of this study, but the interested Bible student can look up the following verses:
- Matthew 5:12
 - Matthew 5:46
 - Matthew 6:1
 - Luke 6:23
 - Luke 6:35
 - 1 Corinthians 3:8
 - 1 Corinthians 3:14
 - 1 Corinthians 9:17,18
 - 2 John 1:8
 - Revelation 11:8
 - Revelation 22:12

Interestingly, the Greek word translated “rewards” in these verses is “*misthos*”, which is elsewhere translated “wages.” In other words, “rewards” are compensation for service.

This should raise some flags for Christians who believe that the Christian life is based on “grace” and not “works.” Romans 4:4,5 clearly teaches that the Christian life is based on grace received by faith, and not on wages earned as a result of works. How then are we to understand Christian “rewards,” and the “crown of life” that James 1:12 speaks of?

God explains this to us in the following set of verses:

1 Corinthians 3:10-15: *“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his **reward**. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*

In other words, the Christian is rewarded for building his life on Jesus Christ. The Christian's "work" is to depend on Jesus, and to allow Him to work through the Christian to accomplish His Kingdom building. The rewards are not for work done "in the flesh." Indeed, these works will be "burned up" at the "believer's judgment." While Scripture does not reveal the precise nature of these rewards, it is clear that they are given on the basis of "faith," of depending on and "building on" Jesus.

What do you think of this discussion? Does it make sense to you? Do you have further questions about "the crown of life" discussed in James 1:12? Write any questions you have in the space below.

7. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.

WEEK TWO: James 1:13-18

Day One:

1. Read James 1:13-18.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

4. The Bible teaches that God is “sovereign,” that He is firmly in control of everything that occurs in the universe. Here is how the *NIV Bible Dictionary* in the *Zondervan Reference Software* describes the doctrine of “sovereignty:”
- “The word ‘sovereign,’ although it does not occur in any form in the English Bible, conveys the oft-repeated scriptural thought of the supreme authority of God (Ephesians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:15). His sovereignty follows logically from the doctrine that he is God, Creator, and Ruler of the universe. The sovereignty of God is sometimes presented in the Bible as an unanalyzed ultimate (e.g., Romans 9:20-21; see Isaiah 45:9; cf. Psalms 115:3; Daniel 4:35). God is not subject to any power or any abstract rule or law that could be conceived as superior to or other than himself.”*
- According to the doctrine of sovereignty, there is nothing beyond God’s control. According to James 1, God is not directly responsible for our temptations. How do you reconcile these two statements?

5. One interpretation of James 1:13 is that, while God is ultimately responsible for all that occurs in a person's life, He is not the direct agent that causes a person to experience trials/temptations. That is, He places man in a world that subjects him to trials and temptations – and, indeed, uses these for His ultimate good purposes. But He is not the one who places temptations in a person's path, nor the one who directly causes difficulties and hardships in a person's life.
- 5A. Do you agree with this interpretation?
- 5B. Do you think that the distinction between being “ultimately responsible” and the “direct agent” who causes trials/temptations is a meaningful one? Why or why not?
- 5C. Why do you think the Holy Spirit through James felt that this was an important distinction to make?

Day Four:

1. Read James 1:14.
2. According to James 1:14, who should get the “blame” for the trials/temptations in a person’s life?
3. Review the study from Day3/Week1.
- 4A. Don’t you think it’s kind of harsh to blame the persecuted/exploited Jewish Christians for their own “trials?”
- 4B. Whatever your answer to Question (4A), how do you interpret James 1:14 when it says that each one experiences trials/temptations because of “his own lusts(NASB)/”his own evil desires(NIV)?”

5. One interpretation of James 1:14 is that -- when the Holy Spirit through James speaks of trials/temptations -- He is making a distinction between external circumstances and internal responses. The Jewish Christians scattered outside of Israel were surely not responsible for the persecution and exploitation they faced at the hands of Gentiles and orthodox Jews. However, they were responsible for how they re-sponded to these circumstances. That is, they were responsible for the internal turmoil which caused them to doubt God and sin.

What do you think of this interpretation? Elaborate below.

6. Why do you think it matters who is to “blame” for the temptations in one’s life? (HINT: How does the assignment of “blame” affect how we view God and ourselves?)

7. One possible interpretation of James 1:13-16 is the following:

When you are going through trials/temptations in your life, don't blame God. While the external circumstances that you are experiencing may be hard, the real problem lies in how you respond to your difficulties, in your heart. If you don't recognize this, you run the risk of turning your back on God and experiencing "spiritual death."

What do you think of this interpretation? Do you think it captures the essence of James 1:13-15? Elaborate in the space below.

8. In 1:15, a separation is made between our initial lust or desire and its conception into full blown sin. There is a link between the two, but not a required connection (i.e. just because we are tempted, does not mean we have to sin.) Think of an area in your life right now where you are experiencing temptation. How does the truth of this passage help you to respond to the temptations in your life in a God-honoring way, instead of giving way to sin?

Day 6:

1. Read James 1:17,18.
2. What does James 1:17,18 say about the character of God?
3. If you are having trials/temptations in your life, what is your only hope of being able to overcome those difficulties?
4. Why is it important that you be convinced that God is good and desires only the best things for your life?

WEEK THREE: James 1:19-27

Day One:

1. Read James 1:19-27.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1. Read James 1:19,20.

2. Why do you think the Holy Spirit through James addresses the issue of anger in these verses? What is the connection between these verses and those immediately preceding it?

3. Read James 1:21.

4. Why do you think the Holy Spirit through James exhorts readers to get rid of “filthiness” and “wickedness”(NASB) / “moral filth” and “evil”(NIV) in their lives? What is the connection between these verses and those immediately preceding it?

5. One (loose) interpretation of James 1:19-21a is the following:
It is “natural” when experiencing trials/temptations to blame God and those around you, even to the point of becoming angry with them. But this doesn’t produce godliness. Instead, have a teachable spirit. Focus on your own heart, and get rid of the spiritual garbage that inhabits your life.
What do you think? In your opinion, does this capture the main meaning of James 1:19-21a?

- 6A. James 1:21b contains two expressions that may be difficult to understand. In the space below, write an explanation of what you think the respective expressions mean:

“humbly accept the word planted in you(NIV)”:

“which can save your souls(NASB)”:

- 6B. Consider the following verses:

2 Corinthians 5:17: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*

Galatians 2:20a: *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me....”*

1 Corinthians 3:16: *“Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

Jeremiah 31:33: *“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

- 6C. Do you see a connection between the verses in (6B) above and the expression *“the word planted in you”* (James 1:21)? Elaborate in the space below.

- 6D. We know that the expression “*save your souls*” in James 1:21 cannot mean to be “be born again” because James is writing to people who are already Christians. It is helpful to know that the Greek word translated “save” in this verse is “*sözö*”, which can also be translated “make well”. For example, this same Greek word is translated “get/made well” in the verses below (cf. boldfaced words):

Matthew 9:21,22: “...for she was saying to herself, ‘If I only touch His garment, I shall **get well**.’ But Jesus turning and seeing her said, ‘Daughter, take courage; your faith has **made you well**.’ And at once the woman was **made well**.”

Mark 5:23: “and entreated Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, that she may **get well** and live.’”

Thus, one interpretation of the expression “*in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls(NASB)*” is the following:

Recognizing your own spiritual weaknesses, embrace the new nature God gave you when you became a Christian, which is able to make your soul well, and deliver you from spiritual trials/temptations.

- 6E. What do you think of the interpretation in (6D) above? Does it capture the essence of this verse? Elaborate in the space below.

7. Putting it all together gives the following (loose) interpretation of James 1:19-21:
*It is “natural” when experiencing trials/temptations to blame God and those around you, even to the point of becoming angry with them. But this doesn’t produce godliness. Instead, have a teachable spirit. Focus on your own heart, and get rid of the spiritual garbage that inhabits your life. **Recognizing your own spiritual weaknesses, embrace the new nature God gave you when you became a Christian, which is able to make your soul well, and deliver you from spiritual trials/temptations.***
8. Go back and consider a time when you were going through trials/temptations. How could you have applied this teaching to your own life? Elaborate in the space below.

Day Four:

1. Read James 1:22-24.
2. Consider the following verses:

Romans 3:28: “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works....”

Romans 4:1-5: “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as

a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

Galatians 2:16: *“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”*

Ephesians 2:8,9: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”*

Hebrews 11:6: *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*

3. As indicated in the verses above, one of the basic tenets of the Christianity is that man’s relationship with God is based on “faith” and not “works.” Do you see a potential conflict between “faith” and James 1:22-24? Elaborate in the space below.

- 4A. Read James 1:23.
- 4B. What do you think Scripture means when it says, “*For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was?*” Elaborate in the space below.
- 4C. One interpretation of James 1:23 is the following:
A Christian who reads the Bible and does not do what it says is like a person who forgets his true identity. Scripture teaches that we are “new creatures in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17) who “delight in God’s law in their inner being” (Romans 7:22). A Christian who doesn’t follow through on what the Bible teaches denies his true nature, or forgets who he really is.
What do you think of this interpretation? Do you think it gets at the main idea of James 1:23? Elaborate in the space below.

- 5A. We will do a lot of wrestling with concepts of “faith” and “works” in the weeks ahead. But consider one possible reconciliation to the apparent conflict between “faith” and “works” presented by James 1:22-24.
- True faith for the Christian involves embracing what the Bible teaches about who he/she really is. If the Bible says that the Christian is inhabited by the Spirit of God, and that that Spirit delights in doing God’s will, but the Christian doesn’t manifest God’s works in his/her life, then this really isn’t an issue of “works” but of “faith.” It indicates that the Christian is merely “hearing” or giving intellectual assent to God’s truth without truly “embracing” or “resting” on this truth. Understood from this perspective, the lack of works in a person’s life is fundamentally an issue of lack of faith.*
- 5B. What do you think about this interpretation of James 1:22-24 which sees “lack of works” as really representing a “lack of faith?” Elaborate in the space below.

Day Five:

1. Read James 1:25.
2. What do you think James 1:25 means when it talks about “looking intently into the perfect law?” (HINT: The context here is “listening to the word.”)

3. One possible of interpretation of what it means to “look intently into the perfect law” comes from contrasting James 1:25 with the immediately preceding verses. *“Merely listening to the word” suggests a nodding acknowledgement of God’s truth. In contrast, “looking intently to the perfect law” suggests an intense desire to know and embrace God’s truth. The man who looks intently into God’s (perfect) word recognizes that herein lies life-transforming truths that he wants to embrace for his life.*
What do you think of this interpretation? Do you think it fairly represents the sense of James 1:25?

4. Review James 1:22-25.

5. Can you think of an example from your life when you have been a “mere hearer” of the word and not a “doer?” That is, you listened to God’s word and intellectually acknowledged its truthfulness without incorporating it into your life? Elaborate in the space below.

6. Can you think of an example from your life when you “looked intently” into God’s truth and embraced it deeply so that you were led to take specific actions in your life? Elaborate in the space below.

Day 6:

1. Read James 1:26-28.
2. According to James 1:26-28, what does “genuine Christianity” look like?
3. A common thought in our culture today is that:
All religions of the world are essentially the same. They all teach that man should do good things: worship God and do good things for other people.
Does James 1:26-28 affirm this notion in its description of authentic Christianity?

WEEK FOUR: James 2:1-13

Day One:

1. Read James 2:1-13.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1. Read James 2:1-4.
2. What is the main point of James 2:1-4?
 - 3A. Review Question2/Day3/Week1.
 - 3B. Why do you think James' immediate readers would have been particularly inclined to seek favor with the rich?
4. Critically evaluate the church that you currently attend. What would it look like for that church to show partiality to the rich and/or disrespect to the poor? Is this a problem in your church today?

5A. If you were on the leadership team for your church, what changes would you make to help your church better reflect the truth of James 2:1-6?

5B. If you began to make these changes, what resistance do you think you would encounter? Why do you think you would encounter that resistance?

Day Four:

1. Read James 2:5-9.
2. Do you think James 2:5-9 is teaching that God prefers poor people over rich people? If yes, why do you think that is? If no, what exactly are these verses teaching?

- 3A. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 25:34-36: *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”*

Mark 10:17-23: *“As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. ‘Good teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ... [Jesus responds] You know the commandments: “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.” ‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’ Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’”*

Luke 6:20: (Jesus speaking) *“Looking at his disciples, he said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’”*

1 Corinthians 1:26-29: *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”*

- 3B. In light of the verses above, revisit Question (2): Do you think James 2:5-9 is teaching that God prefers poor people over rich people? If yes, why do you think that is? If no, what exactly are these verses teaching? Elaborate any new thoughts you have on these questions in the space below.
4. Consider the following answer to Question (2):
The issue isn't poverty, but poverty in spirit. God “prefers” those who have a spiritual need for Him. Often this is related to economic poverty, because the economically poor know that they have needs. In contrast, those who are wealthy can “afford” to not be dependent upon Him. In this sense, God has a preference for those who are “poor.”
What do you think? Do you think this is an accurate characterization of God's attitude towards the poor?

5. How about you? What is your attitude towards the poor? Who are you drawn to? Who do you socialize with and spend time with? Why is that?

Day Five:

1. Read James 2:10,11.
2. Why do you think the Holy Spirit through James says that “he who stumbles in one point is guilty of breaking the whole law?” What is the connection with the preceding verses?
3. We have a tendency, as Christians with fallen sin natures, to rationalize sin in our lives by saying that “I know that I am sinning in this area, but in this other area I am doing well.” In other words, while we would never say this publicly, we accept sin in one part of our lives because we believe we are “compensating” by especially good behavior in other parts. Do you think that is the attitude the Holy Spirit through James is confronting in James 2:10,11?

4. Think about your own life. Are there areas of sin in your life that you are currently tolerating as “acceptable?” Just between you and God, identify them in the space below.
- 5A. One of the dangers of holding onto control of our spiritual lives is that we allow ourselves to “pick and choose” which areas of righteous living we want to “improve” on. That is, we decide what we want to work on in our spiritual lives, rather than following the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Take some time before God in prayer and ask Him to point out an area or areas of your life that He wants you to deal with. Write any thoughts that God lays on your heart in the space below.
- 5B. Do you think your attitude towards the poor is one of those areas that God wants you to grow in? Elaborate in the space below.

Day 6:

1. Read James 2:12,13.
 2. Have you ever heard of the concept of “believer’s judgment?” If so, elaborate in the space below.
-
- 3A. Consider the following verses (note that all these verses are specifically speaking about Christians):

Romans 14:10b. *“For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.”*

1 Corinthians 3:12-15. *“If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*

2 Corinthians 5:9,10. *“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

Romans 14:10b-12: *“...we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

Hebrews 10:26-31. *“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

- 3B. What do the preceding verses say about whether God will punish believers for the sins they commit after they become Christians?
4. Any understanding of “believer’s judgment” must incorporate biblical teaching about the fact that Christians are fully forgiven (cf. Romans 8:1). A full examination of believer’s judgment lies beyond the scope of this study. However, an inclusive understanding of the biblical teaching on this subject is suggested by the 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 passage given above. In particular, the fleshly nature of the Christian will be “burned off,” leaving the new nature (the “real” nature of the Christian) unscathed. Further, the basis of the judgment will be the extent to which the Christian built his/her life on Christ, in faith: (Hebrews 11:6a: *“And without faith it is impossible to please God...”*). What do you think of all this? Does it make sense to you? Do you have any questions? Elaborate in the space below.

WEEK FIVE: James 2:14-17

Day One:

1. Read James 2:14-17.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1. Consider the following verses:

Romans 3:28: *“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”*

Romans 4:1-4: *“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”*

Galatians 2:16: *“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”*

Ephesians 2:8,9: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”*

2. Now consider this week’s verses from James:

James 2:14-17: *“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”*

3. Do you see a problem here? The verses in (1) clearly state that a person is saved/justified by faith, not works. In contrast, James 2:14-17 states that a person who only has faith, but no works, is not saved. How do YOU think these verses can be reconciled? Elaborate in the space below.

4A. You might be tempted to think that the resolution lies in understanding “works of the Law” as something unique to Judaism. However, the meaning of “works of the Law” extends far beyond this immediate application. When the New Testament speaks of “works of the law,” it means *ANY* actions done in the power of the flesh. This can be seen, for example in the following verses:

*Galatians 3:1-5: “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by **observing the law**, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by **human effort**? Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you **observe the law**, or because you believe what you heard?”*

Note from these verses that “observing the law” is equated with “human effort.” These, in turn, are contrasted with “believing what you heard;” i.e., faith. In other words, the New Testament clearly teaches that a person obtains righteousness by faith, and not as a result of anything he/she does.

This distinction is vital. In fact it would not be an exaggeration to say that this is the essence of what separates Christianity from all other religions in the world: Unlike every other religion, Christianity does not teach that people should try to produce righteousness by working harder or being more diligent. Rather, Christianity is unique in that it teaches that righteousness is **RECEIVED** by faith – **NOT PRODUCED** by human effort.

4B. Consider the following verses:

Romans 8:3,4: “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh [i.e., by human effort], but according to the Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 1:30,31: “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who **became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption**, that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that **in him [in Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.**”

Galatians 5:5: “But by faith we **eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.**”

4C. Would you agree that the verses in (4B) above teach that righteousness is received by faith, not produced by human effort? Elaborate any thoughts you have in the space below.

5. So what do YOU think? Is it enough to just believe Christ to produce righteousness in one's life, or does one also need to display a certain minimum amount of works in order to please God? Elaborate your thoughts, comments, and/or questions in the space below.

***NOTE:** The remainder of this week will be devoted to setting the background for the discussion of "faith" and "works" in James.*

- (1) *Day Four will present the Christian doctrine of "grace."*
- (2) *Day Five will discuss the role of faith in the Christian's relationship with God.*
- (3) *Day Six will give you the opportunity to summarize the issues regarding "grace," "faith," and "works."*

So when do we get to reconcile what James says about faith/works with what the rest of the New Testament teaches? Not until next week's study! But don't even think about skipping this week and jumping ahead to next week. (^_^) This week is essential in laying the biblical backdrop so we can appreciate what the Holy Spirit, through James, is teaching us about the real nature of faith.

Day Four: "Grace"

1. "Grace" is the foundational framework of God's "New Covenant" with man. Perhaps you've heard of this word before? If so, provide a definition of "grace" based upon your current understanding of this word.

2. Consider the following verse:

1 Corinthians 15:10: “*But by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and His **grace** toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the **grace** of God with me.*”

3. How does the definition you wrote in Question (2) fit into 1 Corinthians 15:10? That is, can you substitute your definition of grace directly into 1 Corinthians 15:10 and still have this verse make sense?

- 4A. The 1 Corinthians 15:10 passage identifies three meanings wrapped up in one word. First, “grace” is 100% of God (“*but by the grace of God I am what I am*”). Second, “grace” is something given to man (“*His grace towards me*”). Third, “grace” is “God working” (“*I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me*”).

- 4B. In light of (4A), consider the following definition of grace, “*Grace is God’s work in man’s life, given as a gift, entirely of God, without human contribution.*” What do you think of this definition? Can you think of how to make it better? Elaborate in the space below.

- 5A. The New Testament teaches that salvation is “by grace”. God is the one who does the work. Salvation is given as a gift, entirely of God, without human contribution:

Ephesians 2:8,9: “*For **by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.***”

And not only this, but “sanctification” is also by grace:

1 Corinthians 1:30,31: “*But **by His doing** you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and **sanctification**, and redemption, that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’*”

- 5B. A clear implication of any study of the grace of God is that all the spiritual goodness that we experience in our lives is a gift from God which can only be received by faith, and not produced by human effort. How do you see this truth revealed in the preceding verses? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

6. In conclusion, consider the following discussion of “grace:”

“Grace” comes from the Greek word “charis,” from which we get charity. Here is how the Expository Dictionary of Bible Words in the Zondervan Reference Software describes this word: “*The biblical concept of grace is much greater than is suggested in the common definition of ‘unmerited favor.’ ‘Grace’ is a word that expresses a radical view of life and of relationship with God. Grace teaches that God’s attitude toward us is one of acceptance and love; knowing God’s heart, we can ‘approach the throne of grace with confidence’ (Hebrews 4:16) with every sin and need. Grace is a dramatic statement about the human condition. Each person is helpless, trapped in sin and incapable of pleasing God or*

winning his favor. Grace is a proclamation. It is the triumphant announcement that God in Christ has acted and has come to the aid of all who will trust him for their eternal salvation. Grace is a way of life. Relying totally on Jesus to work within us, we experience God's own unlimited power, vitalizing us and enabling us to live truly good lives...grace is not simply a basic orientation to relationship with God. It is also a practical approach to living the Christian life. This aspect of grace helps us to understand the warning found in Galatians 5:4, that those 'who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; [they] have fallen away from grace.' Any attempt by believers to struggle toward a life of goodness by works of the law means a return to the futile way of religion. It involves reliance on ourselves and an abandonment of reliance on Christ, who alone can enable us to live righteous lives. We cannot approach Christian experience from the old perspective, for grace and religion are contradictory. We can only live by full commitment to the way of grace and all that grace involves."

7. Write down any additional thoughts, comments, and/or questions you have about grace in the space below

doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!' The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved'"

John 6:27-29: (Jesus speaking) *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.' Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'"*

Romans 3:19-22a: *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.**"*

- 2C. Consider the following commentary on Romans 3:19-22a:
"The Bible is clear that no one may gain a right standing before God through good works because sin contaminates all (Romans 3:19-20). When man stands before God he is neither righteous, nor able to perform righteous deeds that will satisfy God. 'All our righteousness are like filthy rags' before the LORD God (Isaiah 64:6). ...

God provides a righteousness that pleases Him. It is 'apart from the Law' (Romans 3:21). We do not get any help from the law. It only points its finger and says, 'You are guilty. You are a failure. You can not live up to my righteous demands.' All attempts to live up to the law only proves our repeated failures. All acceptable righteousness is 'apart from' the law. It is 'separated from, or without making use of, or without connection to' the law. Man can not be made right with God by good works.

However, God has made it possible for man to be justified in His sight by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21). 'But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe . . . ' (Romans 3:21-22). God makes it possible for all people to be declared right before God by faith in Christ.

How does God's righteousness come to me? It is 'by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.' Faith is a trusting in Christ, and what He has done on our behalf for our salvation.

*(S O U R C E :
"http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/romsaved.html" .)*

- 2D. Is it clear from the above that a person becomes a Christian by "believing in Jesus Christ," apart from doing any works? Elaborate below on any thoughts, comments, and/or questions you may have.

- 3A. How about after a person becomes a Christian? How does a Christian grow in spiritual maturity/holiness? Elaborate in the space below.

- 3B. What does Scripture say about what a person must do to grow in spiritual maturity/holiness after becoming a Christian? Consider the following verse:

Colossians 2:6: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

In other words, spiritual maturity comes through faith, by believing in Christ, the same way one receives their initial salvation.

- 3C. Is it clear from the above that a person grows in their spiritual maturity the same way they become a Christian – by faith? What do you think it means to “live by faith.” (If you do not know the answer to this question, do not worry, we will explore it further in next week’s study.)

- 4A. Faith is man’s response to God’s grace: God gives. Man receives.

- 4B. Do you agree with the preceding statement? Elaborate below on any thoughts, comments, and/or questions you may have.

Day 6: *“Summary”*

1. Review Day Three through Day Five of this week’s study.
- 2A. In plain English, explain why New Testament teaching about “grace” leads one to conclude that the “work” that makes us Christians and leads us to holiness is done entirely by God, without any contributory effort from man.

- 2B. List the verses (ones from this week’s study guide or others you know of) that provide the clearest support for the statement in (2A) above.

3A. In plain English, explain why New Testament teaching about “faith” leads one to conclude that the Christian’s primary responsibility before God is “to believe,” and not do work.

3B. List the verses (ones from this week’s study guide or others you know of) that provide the clearest support for the statement in (3A) above.

4A. Consider (one last time!) this week’s Scripture from James:

James 2:14-17: *“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”*

4B. In plain English, explain why these verses from James seem to directly contradict the rest of New Testament teaching on “grace” and “faith.”

5. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate

WEEK SIX: James 2:14-26

Day One:

1. Read James 2:14-26.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1A. Consider the following verses:

James 2:17: “...*faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*”

James 2:20: “...*faith without works is useless...*”

James 2:26: “*faith without works is dead.*”

1B. What do you think Scripture means when it says faith without works is “dead” and “useless.”

2. There are only two options when it comes to understanding the verses in (1A) above:

Option #1: Faith without works is not enough.

Option #2: Faith without works is not “real” faith.

Given your current understanding, which of these two options do you think best represents what the Holy Spirit through James is saying when He says “faith without works is dead/useless?” Elaborate in the space below.

3. CLUE NUMBER ONE: Read James 2:14. Find the “clue” which can help you figure out which option is correct. Elaborate in the space below. (HINT: “Can *that/such* faith save him?”)
4. CLUE NUMBER TWO: Read James 2:18. Find the “clue” which can help you figure out which option is correct. Elaborate in the space below. (HINT: How many “faiths” are mentioned here?)
5. CLUE NUMBER THREE: The third clue becomes clear if one takes as their starting point that (i) “real” faith is something that God gives to man:
Ephesians 2:8: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*”
and (ii) God gives faith for a purpose.
Now read James 2:18-26. Three “evidences” are given here that “real” faith is given by God for a purpose, to produce works.
- 5A. Read James 2:19. How do we know that the demons who “believe” do not have “real” faith? (HINT: What “purpose” did the demons’ faith accomplish?) Elaborate in the space below.

- 5B. Read James 2:21. How do we know that Abraham had “real” faith? What “purpose” did his faith accomplish? Elaborate in the space below.
(HINT: This is difficult to answer without going into detail about Abraham’s life and the particular incident mentioned in this verse. An “Optional Section” at the end of this day’s study fills in the background necessary to answer this question.)
- 5C. Read James 2:25. How do we know that Rahab had “real” faith? What “purpose” did her faith accomplish? Elaborate in the space below.
6. Consider the following interpretation of James 2:14-26.
In this section of Scripture, the Holy Spirit through James emphasizes that “real” faith produces works. In verse 14, James calls faith without works, “that faith(NASB) / such faith(NIV),” to distinguish it from another kind of faith, “real faith.” This idea of two different kinds of faith is reinforced in verse 18, where James explicitly identifies two kinds of faith: one without works, and one with works.
And finally, the examples of (i) the demons, (ii) Abraham, and (iii) Rahab in verses 19-26 make clear that “real faith” is given by God to accomplish His purposes. The demons do nothing with their “faith” but shudder.

Clearly their faith is not God-given to accomplish a goal. Abraham's faith accomplished a number of God's purposes. Interestingly, James picks up on Abraham offering his son for sacrifice. What purpose did this accomplish? As discussed in the "Optional Section" at the end of this day's study, the incident of Abraham offering up his son is given by God to provide us a concrete picture of "real faith." Finally, Rahab's faith enabled the Israelites' conquest of Canaan (and established her in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, cf. Matthew 1:5).

Of course, we have one more reason to believe that "Option 2" above is correct: The rest of the New Testament teaches that faith IS enough for salvation. The same God is responsible for inspiring ALL of Scripture. To believe that Scripture says that "faith is enough" in one part of His Word, while stating that "faith is not enough" in another part of His Word, requires that God be inconsistent. This option is a non-starter. Rather, we should understand that the Holy Spirit through James is reminding us that "real faith" results in works.

What do you think of this interpretation of James 2:14-26? Do you have any additional thoughts, questions, and/or comments? Elaborate in the space below.

7. How about in your life? Do you have "real faith?" How do you know?

OPTIONAL SECTION
FOR UNDERSTANDING ABRAHAM'S OFFERING OF ISAAC

A full treatment of Abraham's life lies beyond the scope of this study, but here are the essentials we need to know to appreciate what the Holy Spirit through James is saying.

Abraham is considered the "father of the Jews." His story is recorded in Genesis, the first book in the Bible. Abraham was born in Mesopotamia. In Genesis 12:1-2, the Bible records that God spoke to Abram/Abraham, and told him to go to a different country where he would become a great nation. Abraham was 75 years old at the time and had no children. God continued to tell Abraham that he would have children, which would be the start of a great nation (i.e. Israel). Abraham believed God, and the Bible says this act of faith caused God to make Abraham "righteous."

*Genesis 15:1-6: "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.' And Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.' Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.' And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' **Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.**"*

At age 100, Abraham became the father of a son, Isaac, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham.

This incident of Abraham "believing God" and God "crediting Abraham with righteousness" is picked up in two places in the New Testament as an illustration of grace -- i.e., that God makes man righteous as a gift, and that man's sole responsibility is to accept that gift by faith.

Romans 4:1-5; “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

Galatians 3:3-9: “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? **Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’** Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”

Thus, it is particularly interesting that James uses Abraham -- the poster child of “faith” -- as an example of “works:”

James 2:21-24: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘**AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,**’ and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.”

As discussed above (cf. Question6/Day3), when James says that Abraham was “justified by works, and not by faith alone,” he is making a distinction between two kinds of faith, one with works and one without. “Real” faith has works.

In what sense was Abraham's offering of Isaac evidence that he had "real" faith. "Real" faith should be "useful," not "useless." That is, God gives "real" faith to men and women in order to accomplish His purposes. What was the purpose accomplished when Abraham offered up Isaac? Let us read the Genesis account:

Genesis 22:1-18: "Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.' So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you.' And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD

Will Provide, as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.' Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'"

In what sense was this incident a “test” (cf. Genesis 22:1). It certainly wasn’t a test so that God could learn what kind of faith Abraham had. Either God knew the outcome beforehand, or we’re all in a lot of trouble! Some commentators suggest that the purpose of the test was to convince Abraham of his faith. Perhaps, but doesn’t it make more sense if we think that the real purpose of the test was to convince us, the people who would later read about Abraham in Romans and Galatians and James and wonder what kind of “faith” comprises “saving faith?” The outcome of the test for us is clear: Real, saving faith is a faith that acts on its beliefs.

Isn’t that what is implied in James 2:22? *“You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.”* A better translation for “faith was perfected” is “faith was made complete”, which is how the NIV translates this verse. Abraham “believed” God in Genesis 15:6, and God credited Abraham with righteousness. But that faith was not completed until Abraham was at a point where “reality” conflicted with his belief and he had to choose which to embrace. “Reality” was that if Abraham sacrificed his son, there was no way God could fulfill His promise. Belief was that God said He would do it and Abraham had to trust Him to make good His promise. Abraham embraced God’s word, and thus his internal decision bore fruit as he chose “belief” over “reality.” In a sense, faith is like a seed. The seed has the plant inside of it all along. When the plant sprouts from the seed and grows, it “completes” the seed. In the same way, “real faith” has works inside of it all along. When the works come, faith is completed.

Ephesians 2:8-10: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*

*not as a result of works, that no one should boast. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

NOTE: Day Three's study interpreted James 2:18-26 as making the case that "real" faith is a faith that acts on its beliefs. In Days Four and Five, we explore what "real" faith looks like for (i) a person becoming a Christian, and (ii) a Christian wanting to live a righteous life, respectively.

Day Four:

1. Read James 2:14-26.
2. It is commonly stated that a person needs to "believe in Christ" in order to become a Christian. In your own words, explain what that means in the space below.

3. Day Three's study concluded that "real faith" acts on its beliefs. How do you think that applies in the decision a person makes to become a Christian?

4A. Consider the following verses:

Romans 3:9b-12: “We have already made the charge that **Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin**. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’”

Romans 3:19,20,23: “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and **all the world may become accountable to God**; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin...**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”

Romans 7:18a: (Paul speaking) “I know that **nothing good lives in me**, that is, in my sinful nature.”

1 Timothy 1:15a: “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...**”

1 Corinthians 15:1-3: “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. ... For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures.”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”

- 4B. In light of the preceding verses, consider the following statement:

In order to become a Christian, a person needs (i) to be convinced that they are a sinner, sufficiently wicked in God's sight that they deserve judgment, and (ii) believe that Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient to save them from eternal judgment and secure eternal life for them.

What do you think about that? Does the above capture the essential things a person must believe in order to become a Christian? Elaborate in the space below.

5. How would "real" faith be prepared to act on this belief? Consider the following answer:

"Real" faith would do...nothing. "Real" faith would do nothing because "real" faith knows we are incapable of doing anything good on our own, by human effort. A true embrace of the Christian gospel means giving up on the possibility of doing anything to merit salvation, and simply accepting what Christ has done for us.

What do you think about that? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

Day Five:

1. Read James 2:14-28.

2. Day Three's study concluded that "real faith" acts on its beliefs. How do you think that applies in the Christian's life when it comes to trying to live righteously? Elaborate in the space below.

3. Review Question3/Day5/Week5.

4. Colossians 2:6 states that a Christian who wants to live righteously should do it the same way they became a Christian, by faith in Christ:

Colossians 2:6: *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."*

What do you think it means to live righteously "by faith?"

5. The person who becomes a Christian believes that (i) he/she is a sinner incapable of being righteous on their own, and (ii) Jesus is sufficient to make them righteous.
The Christian who wants to live righteously believes the same two things: that (i) he/she is incapable of living righteously in the flesh, and (ii) Jesus is able to empower him/her to live righteously.

- 6A. When seeking to understand what it means to live righteously by faith, the “real faith” that James is talking about, it is helpful to look at one of James’ examples – Abraham. What about God did Abraham specifically put his faith in when he offered Isaac up on the altar? Answer this question in the space below after considering Hebrews 11:17-19:

Hebrews 11:17-19: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.”

- 6B. Living by faith in God, is not just some mental assent to the existence of God . . . as a Christian, it is not just mental assent to the existence of Jesus. Living by faith for the Christian means embracing SPECIFIC TRUTHS about God, then living our lives according to those truths.
- 6C. Take this specific example . . . Suppose you were struggling with internet pornography. As seen from the example of Abraham, living by faith in this area will begin with embracing certain truths about God and from God in this area. In the space below, write down any pertinent truths from God that might help you in this struggle.

7. So living by faith involves believing that we are incapable of living righteously and that Jesus is capable of empowering us to live righteously as we trust in His specific and revealed truths. However, there is a joyous third part to living by faith that the New Testament reveals to us. Do you know what it is?

8A. The New Testament teaches that a person receives a new nature when they become a Christian. As a result, at the core of their being, they desire to do God's will and please Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17a: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;"*

Galatians 2:20a: *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."*

1 Corinthians 3:16: *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"*

Romans 7:22: *"...in my inner being I delight in God's law."*

Philippians 2:13: *"...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."*

8B. If you are a Christian, do YOU believe this truth about yourself?

8C. How do you think "real" faith would act on this belief?

8D. Suppose you didn't feel like following a certain command of Scripture. For example, suppose you were involved in an inappropriate sexual relationship with somebody of the other sex. You know you should put an end to the relationship, and yet you feel as if you could never be happy again if you gave up this relationship. How would "real" faith respond in this situation?

9. Consider the following statement:

(i) The Christian who wants to live righteously by faith believes that they are incapable of doing so in their own power. They act on this belief by acknowledging their inadequacy to God in prayer and going to Him for help.

(ii) The Christian who wants to live righteously by faith believes that they have a new nature, so that at the core of their being, they desire to do the will of God and please Him. They act on this belief by embracing this truth about themselves even when their feelings tell them differently.

(iii) The Christian who wants to live righteously by faith believes that Jesus stands ready and able to empower them to do His will. They act on this belief by counting on Him to give them strength, clinging to Him to get the work done.

What do you think? In your opinion, does this get at the main point that the Holy Spirit through James is making in James 2:14-28? Elaborate in the space below.

Day 6:

1. Read James 2:14-28.
2. Explain the following statement in the space below:
“Real” faith acts on its beliefs. But there is a big difference between faith resulting in works, and relying on the works themselves.
3. Can you think of an example that could clarify the distinction between “faith resulting in works, and relying on the works themselves?” Elaborate in the space below.
4. This week’s study has focused on James’ assertion that “real” faith has works. Is this truth something that you can apply in your own life? Elaborate in the space below, being as specific as possible.

5. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.

WEEK SEVEN: James 3:1-12

Day One:

1. Read James 3:1-12.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1. Read James 3:1-2a.

2. Why do you think the Holy Spirit through James follows up his teaching on “faith without works is dead” by warning that not many should become teachers? What do you think is the connection? Isn't it a good thing to be a teacher of God's Word?

- 3A. Write out the following verse in the space below:

James 1:22:

- 3B. What is the main point of James 1:22? (HINT: This is *not* a hard question!)

- 3C. With James 1:22 and James 3:1 to guide you, fill in the blank in the following “verse”:

Prove yourselves _____ of the word, and not merely talkers who deceive themselves and others.

3D. There is a strong tendency for many of us to want to be able to teach others things that we have not put into practice in our own lives.

3D1. Why do you think that is?

3D2. Is this a problem that you personally struggle with? If so, what is the lesson of James 3:1 for your life?

4. Consider the following verses:

James 1:26: *“If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle **his tongue** but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.”*

James 3:2b: *“If anyone does not stumble **in what he says**, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”*

5. James 3:2b begins a section on the importance of “not stumbling in what we say.” Why do you think the Holy Spirit through James focuses on this topic right after talking about “faith without works is dead?”

Day Four:

1. Read James 3:3-8.
2. What is the main point of James 3:3-8?
 - 3A. James 3:3-8 emphasizes how much harm the tongue can do. Can you give an example where something somebody said caused great damage to you or to someone you know?
 - 3B. Can you give an example where something you said caused great damage to somebody else?
 - 3C. It is a funny thing: You can do the right things, and generally behave the right ways, but if you slip up once and say something hurtful, that one slip-up can cause great damage. One time of saying the wrong thing can sometimes count more than hundreds of times of doing and saying the right things. Sometimes, just one slip-up of the tongue can ruin an otherwise good relationship. Why do you think that is?

4A. What do you think is the meaning of James 3:8? Is it saying that “taming the tongue” is a hopeless endeavor? That it is impossible – even for Christians – to do?

4B. Why do you think “the tongue” is so difficult to tame?

Day Five:

1A. Read James 3:9-12.

1B. What is the main point of this passage?

2A. Consider the following verses:

1 Corinthians 3:16: “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Galatians 2:20a: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

2B. Consider the following verses:

James 3:11,12: “Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

2C. The verses in (2A) above teach that Christians have a “new nature,” that Christ/the Spirit of God dwells within them. The verses in (2B) say that what comes out of something reveals its nature. Do you see a connection between these verses?

3A. Consider the following verses:

James 3:9,10: “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.”

Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

3B. One possible interpretation of James 3:9,10 is that Christians, by virtue of their new nature, have the capacity to “tame their tongue” and use their speech to edify and encourage rather than to cause hurt and damage. What do you think about that interpretation? Do you think that is the main point of James 3:9-12?

4A. Consider the following verses:

James 3:7,8: “*For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*”

4B. The verses in (4A) seem to suggest that it is impossible to “tame the tongue.” However, this does not make any sense if the main point of James 3:1-12 is to exhort Christians to use their tongues for good rather than for ill. Therefore, consider the following interpretation of James 3:7,8:
In this section, James is stating a truth that we can observe in many settings, all our actions spring from our nature, our core design. A salt water well can only produce salt water. A fig tree can only produce figs. And in this specific setting, what James is saying, is that a person who does not know Jesus cannot speak the encouraging, righteous, edifying words of Jesus when they talk. However, when a person trusts Christ as their Savior, they are given a new nature. Though their old flesh still exists, they now have Christ within, and through the power of His Holy Spirit, a new nature, a new source now exists that can produce in us a different kind of speech. This is only an option for one who has had their true nature changed. Therefore, for the Christian,

4. Three principles of living by faith are
- (i) that I recognize I cannot do good works in my own power;
 - (ii) that I have a new nature that desires to do the will of God; and
 - (iii) that Jesus empowers me to live righteously when I depend on Him and put my faith in specific truths about God that He has revealed to us.
- In the space below, elaborate how you could apply these three principles of “faith living” to “taming the tongue” in your life. What are some specific truths about God that you can put your faith in as you seek to “tame the tongue” in your life?

5. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate.

WEEK EIGHT: James 3:13-18

Day One:

1. Read James 3:13-18.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1. Read James 3:13.
 - 2A. And now for a moment of honest introspection: Are you somebody who wants other people to view you as being “wise and understanding?” Is that something that is important to you? Is it something that a Christian ought to aspire to?
 - 2B. What does the Holy Spirit through James say to those who want to be viewed as “wise and understanding?”
 - 2C. Briefly explain how the statement “Let him show it by his deeds” fits into the main theme of the Book of James.
 - 3A. Think of Christians that you personally know who are “wise and understanding.” Write their names in the space below.

- 3B. What is it about their lives that causes you to think of them as “good examples?” Be as specific as possible.
- 3C. What quality or attribute does James 3:13 say should characterize somebody who aspires to be “wise and understanding?”
4. James 3:13 states that the person who aspires to be “wise and understanding” should have deeds that are characterized by “gentleness/humility” that comes from wisdom. Can you see a connection between “grace” and a life that is characterized by “gentleness/humility coming from wisdom?” Elaborate in the space below. (HINT: Think of the impact it would have on one’s life if a person relied on Christ to produce works, rather than strived in their own power to produce them.)

Day Four:

1. Read James 3:14-16.

Biblical Note: The *NIV Bible Commentary* in the *Zondervan Reference Software* has this to say about the meaning of “wisdom” (Greek = “*sofia*”): “*James does not have in mind the Greek concept of speculative or theoretical wisdom but the Hebrew idea of **practical wisdom that enables one to live a life of godliness.***”

- 2A. These verses speak of a wisdom is “earthly, natural, demonic.” What would that kind of wisdom “look like?” Try and imagine somebody who was recognized as being especially skilled in giving spiritual advice to others. What would be some “clues” that would help one to determine that this wisdom was not from God, but was “earthly, natural, demonic?” (NOTE: This is a tough question.)

- 2B. Verse 14 says that the wisdom that is not from above/heaven is characterized by “bitter jealousy/envy” and “selfish ambition.” What do these attributes have to do with being “wise and understanding?” (NOTE: This is another tough question!)

3. Consider the following interpretation of James 3:14-16:
All of us have a desire to “get ahead,” to be seen as “successful” by those around us. In Christian circles, one advances by being seen as “spiritual.” As a result, there is the danger that we “put on” the airs of somebody who has a lot of spiritual answers so that we look good. This is bad for a lot of reasons, one of which is that our desire to “get ahead” will put us in competition with others. When they get ahead, we fall relatively behind, and this can cause a lot of unhealthy dynamics in the church.
What do you think of this interpretation? Is that what the Holy Spirit through James is warning us about?
- 4A. Do you think this is a problem that you have in your life?
- 4B. Have you ever had your feelings hurt because somebody else was chosen to head up a ministry (say lead a Bible study, or be part of the leadership team) rather than yourself? Or because somebody else was publicly recognized in a Christian setting for their “spirituality” rather than yourself? Could that be an indicator that you have the same problem that James 3:14-16 is talking about?

- 4C. If you answered “yes” to the questions in (4B), what does James 3:14-17 have to say to you?

Day Five:

1. Read James 3:17.
- 2A. James 3:14-17 contrasts two kinds of “wisdom.” One kind is “earthly, natural, demonic.” The other kind is “from above/heaven.” Listed below are some of the characteristics of this latter kind of wisdom. (NOTE: The Greek adjective is listed first, then the NASB and NIV English translations of that word.)

“hagnos”: NASB=NIV = “pure”

This word comes from the same Greek root as “holy,” and it may indicate that, first and foremost, the “wisdom from above” should be 100% Spirit-given, untarnished by man-inspired attempts at wisdom

“eirēnikos”: NASB = “peacable;” NIV = “peace-loving”

Godly wisdom should be concerned with promoting harmony (i) in the fellowship of Christians, and (ii) between man and God.

“epieikēs”: NASB = “gentle;” NIV = “considerate”

This word comes from a Greek root meaning “reasonable, fair.” It has the idea of being sensitive towards somebody’s weaker/vulnerable position.

“eupeithēs”: NASB = “reasonable;” NIV = “submissive”
This word can also have the idea of being approachable or easily entreated.

“eleos”: NASB=NIV = “mercy”
This word incorporates the idea of providing practical help to others.

“karpos agathos”: NASB=NIV = “good fruits”
This word can also be translated as “good crop” or “good harvest”

“adiakritos”: NASB = “unwavering;” NIV = “impartial”
In the context of James, this may have the idea of not being influenced by others

“anupokritos”: NASB = “without hypocrisy;” NIV = “sincere”
In the context of James, this may have the idea of “practicing what one preaches”

- 2B. Below each of the characteristics above, briefly explain why it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for one to have wisdom with these characteristics without God’s direct empowerment. In other words, explain why human wisdom, apart from God, will fail to evidence these characteristics on its own.

3. Can you see a connection between “grace” and the “wisdom that is from above?” Elaborate in the space below. (HINT: Review Week5/Day4’s study on “grace,” especially Questions 4A and 4B.)

Day Six:

1. Read James 3:18.
2. What is the connection between James 3:18 and the preceding verses on wisdom?

- 3A. Consider the following verses:

Ephesians 1:15-17: “*For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give to you a spirit of wisdom** and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*”

Colossians 1:9: “*For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will **in all spiritual wisdom** and understanding.*”

Colossians 2:20-23: “*If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living*

*in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)--in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, **the appearance of wisdom** in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence."*

Colossians 3:16: *"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, **with all wisdom** teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

- 3B. Are you a little surprised by the emphasis the Bible gives to wisdom when it comes to living a righteous life? How can you get that wisdom for your life?
4. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.

WEEK NINE: James 4:1-12

Day One:

1. Read James 4:1-12.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

3B. How does your answer to (3A) match up with the statement in James that the source of “quarrels and conflicts’ is “pleasures that wage war in your members(NASB)” / “desires that battle within you(NIV)” (verse 1)? Elaborate in the space below.

4A. The Bible contains a lot of promises that if we pray for something in faith, we shall receive it. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 18:19: (Jesus speaking) “*Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.*”

Matthew 21:22: (Jesus speaking) “*And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.*”

Luke 11:9-13: (Jesus speaking) “*And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?*”

John 16:23,24: (Jesus speaking) “*And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.*”

*Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.***"

- 4B. How does James 4:3 qualify these promises of Jesus above? Elaborate in the space below. (NOTE: You may also want to check out the following verses: John 15:7; James 1:6-8; 1 John 5:14.)
- 5A. In James 4:1-4, we see several effects that occur when Christians are led away by the "pleasures that wage war in your members." [NOTE: These pleasures are related elsewhere in the New Testament to our "flesh," that part of us that desires to sin and rebel from God.] List out what those effects are below.
- 5B. Do you see evidence of any of these effects in your personal life? In the community of Christians with whom you associate?

Day Four:

1. Read James 4:4-5.

2A. Consider the following verses:

James 4:4: “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

1 John 2:15-17: “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

2B. The verses above warn Christians against being “friends/lovers of the world.” What do you think it means to be a “friend/lover of the world?” Give a specific example that illustrates the kind of behavior/lifestyle that these verses are condemning.

- 3A. James 4:5 is what most scholars believe to be the most difficult verse in the book to translate. Literally, a word for word translation from the Greek reads, “Or vainly do you think the Scripture says, ‘to envy yearns the spirit which dwells in you.’” Therefore, the difficulty comes in whether this spirit is our human spirit, or is it His Holy Spirit. The NASB translates this as the Holy Spirit and speaks of the fact that He is a jealous God, wanting to be shared with no other, a reference to Exodus 34:14 among other places. The NIV translates this as our human spirit and speaks of the fact that our flesh and its pleasures lead to envy and jealousy. In my estimation, the best translation for this phrase is to see James 4:5 as referring to God’s jealousy for Himself, not willing to be “shared” in allegiance in our lives. I think this best fits the immediate context and ties it into the remainder of the passage. Do you agree with this understanding of James 4:5? Write your thoughts below.
- 3B. Given that understanding of James 4:5, how do you apply the truth that God is jealous, and that He does not want us to be a friend of the world to your own life? Is there a specific area where you think that you are trying to become a friend of the world, and in the process compromising Jesus Christ as your Lord?

5. According to James 4:6-10, how can the Christian appropriate this “greater grace” that God gives?

6A. Consider the following verses:

Romans 7:21-25: (Paul speaking) “*So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*”

2 Corinthians 12:9: (Paul speaking) “*And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*”

Hebrews 4:14-16: “*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*”

6B. How do you think the verses above relate to James 4:4-6?

- 7A. James 4:7 says to “submit...to God.” In plain English, explain what it means to “submit to God.”
- 7B. How is “submission” related to faith? What specifically is the Christian believing when they submit themselves to God?

Day Six:

1. Read James 4:11-12.
2. How does James 4:11-12 fit in with the themes that the Holy Spirit through James has emphasized starting in James 3:1 and continuing through James 4:10? Elaborate in the space below.

3A. Consider the following verses:

James 4:11,12: *“Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?”*

Matthew 7:1-5: *(Jesus speaking) “Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”*

Romans 14:4: *“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”*

Romans 14:10a: *“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?”*

3B. What does it mean to not “judge your brother?” If a Christian we know is engaged in immoral behavior, does this mean that we shouldn’t tell them that what they are doing is wrong? Where’s the line between “confronting sinful behavior” and “judging others?”

3C. Read the following verse below:

Galatians 6:1-5: *“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load.”*

3D. How does Galatians 6:1-5 help you to understand the difference between edifying confrontation (which we are to do) and judging others (which we are not to do)?

4A. Give an example (it could be hypothetical) that in your opinion represents a situation where it is okay to say a Christian is doing something wrong.

4B. Now take the same situation you described in (4A) and modify it so that it illustrates the kind of “judging” behavior that James 4:11,12 is warning against.

WEEK TEN: James 4:13 - 5:6

Day One:

1. Read James 4:13-5:6.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

- 5A. Have you ever shared plans with somebody else for the purpose of impressing them? For example, have you ever had conversations like the following:
- “I’ll be attending (elite) _____ university/graduate program”
 - “I will be joining (prestigious) _____sorority/fraternity”
 - “I have tickets to go to the (hottest/biggest) _____ concert/game”
 - “I’m going on a date with (big man/woman on campus) _____”
 - “I’m going to (fabulous resort) _____ for Spring Break”

If so, in the space below, briefly describe an instance in your life when you did this.

- 5B. Do you think the examples of “boasting” in (5A) are the kinds of things that James 4:13-17 is talking about? Look at the overall context of James 4:1-17 as you elaborate on this in the space below.

Day Four:

1. Review James 4:13-17.
- 2A. Consider the following verses:

1 Corinthians 1:26-31: “For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, **that no man should boast before God.** But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, **‘Let him who boasts, boast in the lord.’**”

2 Corinthians 4:7: “For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, **why do you boast as if you had not received it?**”

Ephesians 2:8-10: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, **that no one should boast.** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

- 2B. Why do you think God finds “boasting” intolerable?

3. Consider the following verses:

Isaiah 42:8: “*I am the LORD, that is My name; **I will not give My glory to another.***”

Isaiah 48:11: “*For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act...**My glory I will not give to another.***”

Acts 12:23: “*And immediately an angel of **the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory.***”

4A. Circle whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:
God’s primary goal is the advancement of His own glory.

I AGREE

I DISAGREE

4B. Elaborate your answer to (4A) in the space below.

4C. In your own words, write down what you think it means when we say, “God’s primary goal is the advancement of His own glory.”

- 5A. At this point, what would you say is the main lesson to be learned from James 4:13-17?
- 5B. How should you apply the lesson of (5A) to your life? Is the important thing to preface all public statements about your plans with the phrase, "If the Lord wills...?" Elaborate in the space below.

Day Five:

1. Review James 4:13-17.
- 2A. God is jealous for His glory, and wants us to live with the conscious recognition that our lives are completely dependent on what He decides to do with us. But there is another reason for emphasizing our dependence on "the Lord's will:" For the Christian, the logical consequence of recognizing that our plans depend on God's will is to seek out His will for our lives and submit to it. The process of having one's life directed by God is identified by a number of different names in Scripture, including "walking in the Spirit" and being "led by the Spirit."

2B. Explain the connection between (i) recognizing that our plans depend on God, and (ii) seeking out and being led by God's will for our life. Why is it "logical" that (i) should lead to (ii)?

3A. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 5:16-26: *"But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also **walk by the Spirit**. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."*

3B. Some of the “fruits of the Spirit” include love, peace, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. Can you see how these fruits relate to some of the things that the Holy Spirit through James has been discussing in Chapters 3 and 4 (e.g., James 4:1-3)? Elaborate in the space below.

4. “Walking by the Spirit” and “being led by the Spirit” sound great, but how does one do this? How does one allow their life to be directed by God’s will? (HINT: The “easy” answer is “to pray.” But beyond that, can you think what else one can do?) Elaborate in the space below.

5A. Consider the following verses:

2 Corinthians 1:12: *“Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. **We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.**”*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10: “*But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore **I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.***”

Philippians 3:3: “*...for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and **glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.***”

Hebrews 11:6a: “*And without **faith** it is impossible to please God.*”

Romans 14:23b: “*...whatever is not from **faith** is sin.*”

- 5B. Quickly scan through the many examples of faith from Hebrews 11. In the space below, sum up anything about the nature of true faith that stands out to you from these examples.
- 5C. Do the verses in (5A and 5B) give you some additional ideas for how one can “walk by the Spirit?” Elaborate in the space below.

WEEK ELEVEN: James 5:7-20

Day One:

1. Read James 5:7-20.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

Day Three:

1. Read James 5:7-11.
2. What is the main “lesson” of James 5:7-11?
3. What is the connection between “patience” and “the Lord’s coming?” In other words, why should the knowledge that Jesus is coming back provide motivation to be patient through tough circumstances?
4. How does “patience,” on the one hand; and “not complaining” against other Christians, on the other hand; relate to the reiterated themes in James of (i) rejoicing in tribulation, (ii) doing works out of faith, and (iii) investing in the fellowship of believers?

5. Read James 5:12.

6A. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 5:33-37: (Jesus speaking) “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

6B. James 5:12 clearly hearkens back to Matthew 5:33-37. The practice of “swearing an oath” had devolved to the point where people felt obligated to be truthful only in those circumstances where they explicitly swore an oath. Jesus responded by saying that EVERYTHING that a person says should be truthful.

In light of this, how do you think James 5:12 relates to the rest of James? (HINT: How do you think truthfulness relates to “investing in the fellowship of believers?”)

Day Four:

1. Read James 5:13-18.

Biblical Note #1: It may not be immediately apparent, but there is a close connection between prayer and “singing praises” (cf. James 5:13b). The Greek word translated “sing praises” (NASB) / “sing songs of praise” (NIV) in James 5:13b is “*psallō*.” Whenever this word appears in the New Testament (see also Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15, and Ephesians 5:19), it always means to “sing praises to God.”

4A. Review the Week5/Day4 lesson.

4B. How does prayer relate to “grace?”

5. Read James 5:19-20.

6. Given the main themes of the Book of James, why is James 5:19-20 a fitting end to this book?

Days Five and Six:

NOTE: The remainder of our James study is designed to encourage you to reflect on all that you have learned this semester.

1. Read through the outline below and see if you can find a succinct “heading” for each of the indicated sections of James. Try and write your headings so that by reading them, one after the other, you can “walk through” the main ideas in James. (Feel free to rearrange sections, or come up with your own outline if you’d like.)

HEADING: _____

- 1:1. James sends greetings to Jewish followers of Jesus living outside of Israel.
- 1:2-4. Rejoice in your difficulties, because they are designed to produce in you a more godly Christian character.

HEADING: _____

- 1:5-8. Ask God for help in difficulties, but do so with a believing heart.
- 1:9-11. The poor should rejoice in their spiritual wealth, while the rich should be aware of their inherent fall-
enness before God.
- 1:12. Christians who persevere during hard times can expect a reward from God.

HEADING: _____

- 1:13. Does God cause my trials/temptations? No.
- 1:14. My sin nature is responsible for my tri-
als/temptations.
- 1:15. The consequences of sin is death.
- 1:16,17. But God is a giver of good things.
- 1:18. He chose us for life (not death).

HEADING: _____

- 1:19-21 Don't direct anger about your circumstances to others, but recognize your sinfulness and embrace the help that Jesus provides.
- 1:22. Don't just listen, but do.
- 1:23,24. To listen to the word and not do it is to forget who you really are.
- 1:25. The person who does the "perfect law" will be blessed.
- 1:26-28. True religion consists of controlling one's tongue, looking after orphans and widows, and keeping oneself pure.

HEADING: _____

- 2:1-4. Do not favor the wealthy in your fellowshiping.
- 2:5-6a. God chose the poor to be rich in faith, but you have disrespected them.
- 2:6b-7. The rich have generally been the ones who have exploited and oppressed you, and slandered God.
- 2:8,9. It is God's command to love all and favor none.
- 2:10,11. Breaking one of God's commands is inexcusable even if you are following all His other commands.
- 2:12,13. Live your lives with an eye towards the coming judgment, knowing that God shows favor to those who have extended mercy.

HEADING: _____

- 2:14-17. Faith, if it has no works, cannot save a person.
- 2:18-20. Faith without works is useless.
- 2:21. Abraham was justified by works when he offered up Isaac.
- 2:22,23. Faith worked with Abraham's works, completing Abraham's faith.
- 2:24. This proves that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.
- 2:25. Likewise, Rahab the harlot was also justified by works.
- 2:26. Faith without works is dead.

HEADING: _____

- 3:1-2a. Be wary of becoming a teacher.
- 3:2b. What you say is an indicator of who you are.
- 3:3-8. The tongue has great capacity for harm.
- 3:9-12. Our speech should reflect our new nature.

HEADING: _____

- 3:13. Wisdom and understanding should be reflected in works.
- 3:14-16. There is an “unspiritual” wisdom that produces divisiveness.
- 3:17-18. But the wisdom “from above” knits Christians together.

HEADING: _____

- 4:1-3. Conflict between Christians is related to worldly desires.
- 4:4-5. One cannot be a God worshipper and a “friend” of the world.
- 4:6-10. God gives grace to enable us to overcome our worldly desires.
- 4:11-12. Do not speak against other Christians.

HEADING: _____

- 4:13-17. Do not brag about your plans.
- 5:1-6. Those who grow rich at the expense of others will be judged.

HEADING: _____

- 5:7-11. Be patient in the face of suffering.
- 5:12. Do not make oaths.

HEADING: _____

- 5:13-18. Pray for yourselves and for one another.
- 5:19-20. He who brings back a sinner will save him from many troubles.

2. Reflect on all the great truths that you have learned in your study of James this semester. What did you find most spiritually impacting in your study? Elaborate in the space below.