



GOSPEL CENTERED RECOVERY

B I B L E S T U D Y S E R I E S

THE BOOK OF JAMES

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

BEN FUNKHOUSER

THE REFUGE | WINTERSET, IOWA

GOSPEL CENTERED RECOVERY

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

The Book of James

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

The book of James gives us "street-level" teaching about life. In it, we find practical, spiritual wisdom for the trials and struggles that intersect our lives each day—teaching that helps us right “Where the Rubber Meets the Road”.

© 2023 by The Refuge. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any way except the Study Guide and Discussion Questions pages, which you may reproduce only for your church use.

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

Starting Your GCR Group	7
Introduction	9
Lesson 1 - Trials and Wisdom (James 1:1–8)	13
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	17
Lesson 2 - Facing Temptations (James 1:9–18)	18
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	23
Lesson 3 - Don't Be Deceived (James 1:19–27)	25
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	29
Lesson 4 - No Partiality (James 2:1–13)	31
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	35
Lesson 5 - Faith and Works (James 2:14–26)	37
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	41
Lesson 6 - Controlling Your Tongue (James 3:1–12)	43
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	47
Lesson 7 - True Wisdom (James 3:13–18)	49
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	53
Lesson 8 - Conflicts and Worldliness (James 4:1–12)	55
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	59
Lesson 9 - The Will of God (James 4:13–17)	61
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	65
Lesson 10 - Helpful Instructions (James 5:1–12)	67
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	71
Lesson 11 - Prayer (James 5:13–20)	73
Study Guide and Discussion Questions	77

STARTING YOUR GOSPEL CENTERED RECOVERY GROUP

OUR STORY

Gospel Centered Recovery (GCR) was founded at Redeemer Church in Winterset, Iowa, in 2016. Redeemer Church was a young church plant and regularly asked the question, “Where is the darkness, and how can we take the light into the darkness?” One area of darkness that was showing up over and over was addiction. This led CJ McMurry to begin to ask how to specifically help people struggling with addiction.

After much prayer and counsel, GCR was launched. It immediately became clear that there was also a need for a residential discipleship ministry for men addicted to drugs and alcohol. This led to the establishment of The Refuge (refugewinterset.com) in the same year. Today GCR still happens each week at Redeemer Church and has spread to several other churches in the central Iowa area. GCR is the primary way that The Refuge seeks to equip churches to offer addiction ministry to people in the church and community.

WHY GOSPEL CENTERED RECOVERY

You might be thinking, “That’s a cool story but, why GCR?” I believe this is the foundational question that you need to answer as you think about launching GCR at your church. Without a good answer to the “why,” you will not be ready to enter the messy darkness that is addiction ministry.

WHY GCR?

Because addiction is everywhere, including your community and your church. For nearly 90 years, the most well-known help for people struggling with addiction has come from outside Gospel churches and the Word of God. Colossians 2:8 states, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” Many people enslaved by addiction have been taken captive by worldly philosophy and empty deceit that masquerades as spiritual, when in reality, it is not. Those who are enslaved by addiction don’t need worldly wisdom; they need the power of God to change their lives through the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

WHY GCR?

Because Jesus gave us the Great Commission and told us to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). The call to make disciples of all nations includes the men and women everywhere who are hopelessly enslaved by addiction. We need to take to heart the words of Jesus in John 4:35, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” There is an epidemic of addiction going on, and we have the cure in the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to take the cure to those who need it most.

WHY GCR?

Because even if people find sobriety without Jesus, their greatest need is still unmet. There is no denying that many people can find sobriety without a personal relationship with Jesus, which may lead to a better life now, but what about eternity? Jesus asks a haunting question in Mark 8:36, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” Jesus offers so much more than a life of sobriety. Jesus offers transformation with fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). The answer for the greatest need of life is only found in Jesus.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

GCR is a ministry designed for the local church; it is not meant to operate independently from a local church or be a stand-alone ministry. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said to the Apostle Peter, “I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” The local church is God’s instrument today to take the Gospel to the world, and we believe the local church is the best place for people who struggle with addiction to find hope and help.

GCR is not just for people who struggle with addiction who are already part of your local church. It also should be an outreach to those in your community who are unchurched and unsaved. There may be times when a local church would lead a GCR group that does not meet in the church building, but even then, the church should still be involved and seek to connect people from the GCR group to their church.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16–17 states: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” These verses are part of the foundational, driving Scriptures for GCR.

The Bible is the living Word of God, and it has the answers for all the problems of life, including addiction. The Bible is what God uses to make people mature and complete and more like Jesus. GCR is committed to the truth of Scripture and its sufficiency for us. God’s Word must come first, and it must trump all other human wisdom.

RECRUITING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

You do not need a large team of people or lots of resources to start a GCR group. This ministry does not have to be fancy or flashy. After you have decided that God is leading your church to begin a GCR group, here is what you will need to get started:

- A leadership team of at least two or three committed men and women who are equipped to lead breakout groups.
- A man, or a team of men, who are gifted to teach the Bible. These men don’t have to be extremely polished or gifted, but they do need a love and commitment to God’s Word.
- A weekly meeting time and an available room in your church or meeting place that is big enough for large group Bible teaching, as well as other spaces for breakout groups after the teaching time.
- A plan to promote your new GCR group in your church and community.

SCHEDULING YOUR GCR MEETINGS

The study in this book covers eleven lessons in the book of James, so block out eleven weeks for your group. We encourage you to meet weekly to help the group members stay active in their studies and in their commitments. After completing this study, it would be best to continue the group using another study or by developing your own study materials. You will find that evenings are probably the best time to schedule your GCR meetings.

MEETING SCHEDULE

A typical GCR meeting runs about 80 to 90 minutes. Here is a suggested breakdown of the time, though you can adapt this schedule for your own setting.

- **Welcome & Announcements:** 5–8 minutes
- **Teaching Time:** 25–30 minutes
- **Breakout Group Time:** 45 minutes

YOUR TEACHING CURRICULUM

This book provides the curriculum you can use to teach these lessons in James. Each lesson is in outline form for ease in presentation. We encourage you to do your own personal study from commentaries or other Bible study helps so you can add your thoughts to what is printed.

GROUP MEMBER MATERIALS

At the end of every lesson is a two-page section titled “Bible Study and Discussion Questions.” The first page is a condensed outline of the lesson so the group members can follow your teaching and take notes of their own. The second page is a discussion guide to use in the **Breakout Groups** (see *below*).

Make sure every person in your group has a copy of these two pages for every Bible study. Our recommendation is that you photocopy these pages every week rather than hand them out all at one time. This way, people will not forget to bring back their packet of pages, and those who join you in the middle of your study will not feel like they have missed out on the previous materials. You can photocopy these pages from this book or download the pages from refugewinterset.com.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

At the end of every lesson, gather the people into breakout groups, and use the discussion questions on the second page of the handout. You do not have to discuss each question. These are suggested questions, and you can feel free to write your own discussion questions as well.

The ideal size for a breakout group is five to seven people. Ideally, you should have separate men’s and women’s groups. But if that is not possible, you can have mixed groups. If the groups are mixed, make sure the leaders are sharing what is appropriate for both men and women. If you do not have more than seven people, you can keep the whole group together for the discussion time.

Consider these guidelines for your breakout groups:

- Privacy and confidentiality are essential. Regularly remind people that what is shared in a breakout group needs to stay in the breakout group. Gossip or slander should never be tolerated.
- Never glorify sin or share about sin struggles in a way that could cause someone else to stumble.
- Do not allow one person to dominate the group and talk all the time. Do not respond to everything that is said. Leaders need to be ready to lovingly cut someone off and move on when necessary. It is important to create time for everyone to share if they want to.
- Do not allow participants in the group to take over the group or lead the group. The leader needs to maintain control at all times.

RECEIVING BIBLICAL COUNSELING TRAINING

As you get started with GCR, you will quickly find out that many people who come need more help and accountability than what you can offer one night a week. This is the point when biblical counseling becomes a natural next step. Biblical counseling can be done with a person one-on-one or with a team of counselors. If you do not have trained biblical counselors in your church, you may want to investigate these places:

- **The Addiction Connection**
theaddictionconnection.org/addiction-counselor-training
- **Association of Certified Biblical Counselors**
biblicalcounseling.com/training

GETTING MORE HELP

We at The Refuge have people to help you start a GCR group, and we would be delighted to assist you in any way we can. You can contact us through our website (refugewinter.net) or you can send an email to refugewinter.net@gmail.com.

You don't have to have a ministry called Gospel Centered Recovery to make use of this study. In fact, you don't have to have a name at all. All you need are leaders who are committed to the Word of God as the true hope over addiction and a heart to help people grow in freedom through the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. If you are committed to remaining true to the Scriptures and to loving people as Jesus does, you are ready to begin. We pray God uses this material for His glory.

INTRODUCTION

This study of the book of James is designed for use in weekly meetings of Gospel Centered Recovery (GCR) groups. GCR is a weekly, Bible-based support group for people who struggle with habitual sins or, what our world calls, addiction. At GCR people find hope and help over all kinds of addictive sin struggles, including alcohol and drug abuse; sexual sins; struggles with food, worry, anger; and many more.

At GCR we believe it is important to think Biblically about addiction. Our world tells us many things about addiction, but many of them are not rooted and grounded in the Scriptures. Addiction is not an illness or a disease (although addiction does have physical components such as cravings and withdrawal). Our dedication to thinking Biblically leads us to a belief that addiction is a sin problem rooted in our hearts.

This study will help you take your group members deep into their heart so they can discover what is driving their struggle with their addictive sin and find true freedom in Christ.

Our goal in this series is not to explore every verse of James—we believe that type of teaching or preaching should happen on Sunday mornings. In a GCR setting, our goal is to spend 25–30 minutes teaching and then gather into small groups for discussion, prayer, and accountability.

With that goal in mind, we have designed this study to go through the book of James passage by passage, teaching the big truths and applying them to our lives with a specific focus on struggles with addictive sin. Ultimately, we want to point people to Jesus Christ, who is the true hope over addictions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

You will find quotations in this study from these sources:

Books

Allberry, S. (2015). *James for You*. Charlotte, North Carolina: The Good Book Company.

Crossway Books. (2008). *ESV Study Bible*.

Eyrich, H. (2020). *James: The Other Side of the Coin*. Growth Advantage Communication.

MacArthur, J. (1998). *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary—James*. Moody Publishers.

Platt, D. (2014). *Christ Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in James*. B&H Publishing Group.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1978). *Be Mature: Growing Up in Christ, New Testament Commentary—James*. David C. Cook.

Websites

Tripp, P. (2013, December 29). Trading One Dramatic Resolution for 10,000 Little Ones. *Desiring God*. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/trading-one-dramatic-resolution-for-10000-little-ones>

Mathis, D. (2017, May 25). One Essential Oil. *Desiring God*. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/one-essential-oil>

GotQuestions.org. (n.d.). *God Is Sovereign*. <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-is-sovereign.html>

Sande, K. (n.d.). *Seven As of a Biblical Confession*. The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict. Retrieved from <https://rw360.org/seven-as-of-a-biblical-confession/>

TRIALS AND WISDOM

LESSON 1 | JAMES 1:1-8

AUTHOR: JAMES THE BROTHER OF JESUS

1. James did not identify himself as the half-brother of Jesus, but Bible commentators agree that the author of this book was the half-brother of Jesus.
2. James chose not to highlight his biological connection with Jesus, but rather his spiritual connection with Him – “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”
3. James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–21).
4. The word “servant” or “bondservant” (slave) in the original New Testament text refers to a position of complete obedience, utter humility, and unshakeable loyalty. These were the characteristics that a master expected from a slave in Bible times.
 - a. To be known as an obedient, humble and loyal servant of Christ is a position of great honor.
 - b. You become a servant of Christ by entering into a personal relationship with Jesus.
 - c. Is your identity found in your relationship with Christ, or is it found in something else?

BIG IDEA

As a servant (slave) of Jesus Christ, you will face trials of various kinds. These trials are not accidental, but are part of God’s plan to make you a mature follower of Christ. The way you respond to the various trials of your life will determine how quickly you grow in your faith. God’s desire is that we seek wisdom and help from Him in our trials.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. Trials Are a Reality in Life (1:2)
2. We Have a Responsibility in Trials (1:2)
3. God Has a Purpose for Trials (1:3–4)
4. God Gives Us Wisdom in Trials (1:5–8)

START THINKING

1. Have you ever endured a trial or difficult time in life? What was your response?
2. For some of you, your struggle with addiction might trace its roots back to how you responded to trials in your life. You may have turned to drugs or alcohol as a way to escape trials.
3. Do you know someone who endured great trials and was faithful to God in the midst of them?

If you have a good example of someone who honored God by enduring trials and growing in their faith, you could use that as an opener to this lesson.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. Trials Are a Reality in Life (1:2)

- a. James does not say *if* you meet trials of various kinds, but *when* you meet trials of various kinds. Trials are part of the regular Christian life.
- b. James is not specific about the kind of trials he refers to. He simply refers to them as various trials. James keeps his language broad, which leaves the door open for whatever trial you are facing.
 - Your trials are not unique (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - The trial you are struggling with right now may be a battle with addiction.

2. We Have a Responsibility in Trials (1:2)

- a. “Count it all joy” is a command that addresses how we think. James is telling us how to think, not how to feel.
- b. “Count” is a financial term that means “to evaluate.” Our ability to count the trials of life as joy is dependent on our values. Do you value comfort or character?
- c. Joy does not speak of joyful anticipation of trials, but of joy during trials. We can have joy during trials because we can be confident of their outcome.
- d. True joy is different from happiness. Happiness is based on circumstances and joy is based on God and His presence in our life.
- e. Our ultimate goal in trials cannot be to fix our circumstances, but to glorify God and be pleasing to God by becoming more like Christ (2 Corinthians 5:9).

3. God Has a Purpose for Trials (1:3–4)

- a. God intends to use trials to make us perfect and complete. The word “perfect” does not mean sinless, but mature.
- b. Trials teach us to persevere. God is working to grow patience and endurance in our lives. He wants us to have the ability to keep going when things get tough.

- c. Faith needs the resistance and pushback of trials to grow.
- d. Faith is like a muscle—if it is not used and exercised regularly, it will not grow.
- e. Trials present us with one of the most valuable opportunities on earth—the opportunity to have a faith that is complete and a growing maturity in your relationship with Christ.
- f. Do you believe that God wants to use your battle with addiction to make you more like Christ?

4. God Gives Us Wisdom in Trials (1:5–8)

- a. Trials present us with the opportunity to grow, but that does not mean that we will always know how to handle them or what to do when we meet them.
- b. Trials are not times that we should pretend that we are strong when we are weak. We need to be willing to admit that we lack wisdom for how to handle trials.
- c. We need to ask God for wisdom because He wants to give it to us.
- d. This passage gives us three statements about how God gives wisdom:
 - He gives generously.
 - He gives to all.
 - He gives without reproach or finding fault.
- e. We must ask for wisdom in faith with no doubting. This does not mean that we must be in a state of absolute belief.

- f. The word “doubt” refers to split loyalties or being double-minded.
- This person is someone who wants to hedge his bets. He is willing to ask God for wisdom, but he is also listening for a better offer of help at the same time.
 - This is the person who wants to check out what the Bible says and what the world says all at the same time.
 - How have you been double minded in your struggle against addiction?
 - How have you tried to mix the truth of the Bible with man’s worldly wisdom?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Have you become a servant of Christ by entering a personal relationship with Jesus by faith alone?
2. If you are a Christian, where are you looking for your identity? If you are looking to other things besides Jesus for your identity, how is that working out for you?
3. A battle with addiction can be born out of trials in our lives or can lead to great trials in your life. Are you willing to look to Jesus for wisdom and help as you face the trials of addiction?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 1 | JAMES 1:1-8 | TRIALS AND WISDOM

AUTHOR: JAMES THE SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

START THINKING

1. Have you ever endured a trial or difficult time in life? What was your response?
2. For some of you, your struggle with addiction might trace its roots back to how you responded to trials in your life. You may have turned to drugs or alcohol as a way to escape trials.
3. Do you know someone who endured great trials and was faithful to God in the midst of them?

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. Trials Are a Reality in Life (1:2)
2. We Have a Responsibility in Trials (1:2)
3. God Has a Purpose for Trials (1:3–4)
4. God Gives Us Wisdom in Trials (1:5–8)

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Have you become a servant of Christ by entering a personal relationship with Jesus by faith alone? You can trust Jesus today if you are not already a Christian.
2. If you are a Christian, where are you looking for your identity? If you are looking to other things besides Jesus for your identity, how is that working out for you?
3. A battle with addiction can be born out of trials in our lives or can lead to great trials in your life. Are you willing to look to Jesus for wisdom and help as you face the trials of addiction?

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 1 | JAMES 1:1-8 | TRIALS AND WISDOM

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. What trials are you currently walking through?

REFLECT

1. Are the trials you are facing caused by sin you have committed, or are they simply part of living in a broken world?
2. Are you responding to your trials by turning to your addiction or to Christ? If you are not currently walking through trials, how have you responded by turning to your addiction in the past?

REMEMBER

1. How have you seen God help you through trials in the past?
2. How can that help you endure current trials in a God honoring way?

SURRENDER

1. In what ways have you doubted God's goodness during trials?
2. How have you been guilty of being double-minded by mixing God's truth with man's wisdom as you battle addiction? What steps can you take to surrender this to God and trust Him completely?
3. Have you confessed your sins and trusted in Jesus alone for salvation? You will never be able to endure trials or have victory over addictive sins without a personal relationship with Jesus.

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 1:2-4

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read the account of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. Write down in a journal three to five ways that Joseph responded to trials in a God-honoring way.

FACING TEMPTATIONS

LESSON 2 | JAMES 1:9-18

BIG IDEA

As a believer in Jesus Christ, God allows us to face different tests, trials, and circumstances that are meant to make us more like Christ. In the midst of these hard times, we can be tempted to sin. These temptations do not come from God, but rather from the evil desires that are already in our hearts. Throughout all of this, we can always be sure of God's good intentions and will towards us, no matter what the circumstance.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. We Must Remain Steadfast during Trials (1:8–12)
2. We Need to Understand Temptations to Sin (1:13–15)
3. We Should Rest in the Goodness and Faithfulness of God (1:16–18)

START THINKING

1. Last week, we started this series in James by focusing on the trials that come about in life. We noted that our struggles with addiction (sin and idolatry) many times are born out of a trial in our life or cause trials in our lives.
2. Is someone willing to share a trial that has come into your life because of your struggle with addiction?
3. Today we are going to continue to talk about trials, but we are also going to talk about temptations to sin and how to stop temptation in its tracks.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. We Must Remain Steadfast during Trials (1:8–12)
 - a. We all find ourselves in different places in life. Some people have great wealth and financial means, and others are poor and struggle to get by.
 - b. In this passage, we are called to boast in our position in life. This is not a boasting in ourselves, but rather a boasting in the work of God in our lives. This kind of boasting is not out of step with the Gospel, but falls right in line with the Gospel.
 - c. Those who are lowly or poor are called to boast in how the Gospel has exalted them. In Christ, they are loved and accepted by God in ways that they could never have been on their own.

- d. Those who are rich are called to boast in their humiliation. In Christ, they have been shown that even though they have great physical wealth, they have a great spiritual need. This great spiritual need has been met in the finished work of Christ.
- e. Verse 11 tells us that nothing lasts forever and in fact will be gone sooner than we know.
- f. If we are going to persevere through trials and receive the crown of life, we must learn to boast in our Gospel-given position in life.

2. We Need to Understand Temptations to Sin (1:13–15)

- a. Trials and temptations can go hand-in-hand. God allows trials to come into our lives, and because we are sinful people, we are more easily tempted to sin in the midst of trials.
- b. We also find that temptation is a regular part of the Christian life, even if we are not in a season of trial. We need to expect temptation. It is not a matter of *if* we are tempted but *when* we are tempted.
- c. From the beginning of time, man has been trying to blame others for his sin (Genesis 3:8–13). We want to blame others, our circumstances of the way we were made, or a host of other things before we will own up to our sinful actions. This struggle is very real in those who struggle with addiction. In fact, the world's philosophy reinforces this thinking by calling addiction a disease.
- d. We need to be clear that God does not tempt us to sin. God will allow trials into our lives so that we can become more like Christ, but He will never tempt us to sin.
- e. James 1:14 tells us clearly that we are tempted by our own evil desires that live in our hearts. This is an uncomfortable truth, but the reality is that the temptations to lead us to sin are an inside job.
 - The words lured and enticed are hunting and fishing words. Our desires work to draw us out toward sin.
 - Our sinful desires appear attractive, but they are leading us toward destruction. Our sinful desires bait a hook so that we don't know we will be caught when we bite down.

- f. When a sinful desire has taken root in our hearts, it leads us to begin to think about it and begin to rationalize the sinful desire. We begin to make a plan and creep towards the act of sin.
- g. We begin to justify small steps of disobedience that put us on a path toward large failures. How does this play out in the lives of those struggling with addiction?
 - You tell yourself it is okay to have one or two beers when you have struggled with drunkenness in the past.
 - You say it is okay to smoke a little weed because it is legal in some states.
 - You are not looking at hardcore porn, but you are substituting something else that feeds your lust.
- h. When sin is fully grown, it brings forth death. We need to talk about what the word “death” means.
 - The Bible teaches that for someone who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, sin will lead to eternal death and separation from God in Hell. This is spiritual death.
 - We also need to think about what the word “death” means in the immediate context of James 1:15. In this verse, the idea is not spiritual death, but broken fellowship with God. Believers in Jesus Christ who are living in sin have broken fellowship with God and will not be growing or maturing.
 - Sin also can bring about the “death” of many good things in our lives. For example, we can lose our jobs, finances, marriages and families.
- i. When we get a grasp of the process leading to sin, we are able to stop sinful desires and replace them with thoughts and desires that honor God. Our goal should be to stop the process of sin early on because the longer we allow it to go on, the harder it will be to stop.
- j. If we give any ground to sin in our lives, it will always go farther than we planned.

3. We Should Rest in the Goodness and Faithfulness of God (1:16–18)

- a. How do we continue in the midst of trials and temptations? Where do you find the strength to keep going when you are weary and tired? How do you keep going when your addictive sin has won the victory again?
- b. Remember that God has good and perfect gifts. Remember also the goodness of God. This does not mean that God does not allow difficult times in your life, but we can be encouraged that God is working out a sovereign plan for our good (Romans 8:28).
- c. We also can know that with God, there is no variation or shadow due to change. God is faithful and He never changes.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you find your identity in something you can do, or in the Gospel-given position you have in Christ? Do you have a Gospel-given position from God? Have you been born again?
2. How have you passed the blame for your addictive sins? Are you willing to own up to the reality that your struggles with addictive sins are rooted in your own heart?
3. In what ways has your understanding of the process of sin gone deeper through this teaching? How can you begin to turn from sinful desires before they give birth to sin?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 2 | JAMES 1:9-18 | FACING TEMPTATIONS

START THINKING

1. Last week, we started this series in James by focusing on the trials that come about in life. We noted that our struggles with addiction (sin and idolatry) many times are born out of a trial in our life or cause trials in our lives.
2. Is someone willing to share a trial that has come into your life because of your struggle with addiction?
3. Today, we are going to continue to talk about trials, but we are also going to talk about temptations to sin and how to stop temptation in its tracks.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **We Must Remain Steadfast during Trials (1:8–12)**
2. **We Need to Understand Temptations to Sin (1:13–15)**
3. **We Should Rest in the Goodness and Faithfulness of God (1:16–18)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you find your identity in something you can do, or in the Gospel-given position you have in Christ? Do you have a Gospel-given position from God? Have you been born again?
2. How have you passed the blame for your addictive sins? Are you willing to own up to the reality that your struggles with addictive sins are rooted in your own heart?
3. In what ways has your understanding of the process of sin gone deeper through this teaching? How can you begin to turn from sinful desires before they give birth to sin?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 2 | JAMES 1:9-18 | FACING TEMPTATIONS

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. What temptations do you regularly face and give in to?

REFLECT

1. How have you been guilty of blaming others for your sin?
2. How have you bought into or been influenced by worldly wisdom that says addiction is a disease?
How has this worldly thinking, that removed your responsibility, kept you in bondage to your addiction?

REMEMBER

1. What good gifts has God given to you?
2. What are some practical ways that you can focus on these to strengthen you to keep going in the fight against addiction?
3. How have you seen God's unchanging nature and faithfulness displayed in your life?

SURRENDER

1. What areas of sin are in your life that you need to repent of?
2. What areas of your life have you believed that God is not good that you need to begin to believe that God is good?
3. If you have not entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, what is stopping you from doing that today?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 1:13-15

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

This week, keep a journal of when you are tempted and what you are tempted with. Use this journal to identify patterns of sin and plan to break those patterns of sin by replacing them with new obedience to Christ.

DON'T BE DECEIVED

LESSON 3 | JAMES 1:19-27

BIG IDEA

If you are someone who struggles with life-dominating sin (addiction) now, or has struggled in the past, you know what it is like to be deceived. You may have been deceived into thinking you are okay or that you could quit anytime. The worst deception of all is to think that you can find true freedom apart from Jesus Christ. In this section of James, we are going to read about being only a hearer of the Word of God and not a doer of the Word. True freedom from addiction is found in Jesus, and that freedom flows into our life through obedience to the Word of God.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. We Should First Receive God's Word (1:19–21)
2. We Then Must Obey God's Word (1:22–25)
3. God Gives Blessings When We Obey His Word (1:25)
4. God Gives Examples of How to Obey His Word (1: 26–27)

START THINKING

1. Deception is familiar to all of us. Many of us who have struggled with addictive sins and habits, such as drinking, drugs, porn, and gambling, have to admit that we became good at deceiving people and hiding.
2. Deceiving other people is sinful and destructive, but I want to focus on another kind of deception—self-deception.
3. Have you ever been blind to the real condition of your heart or life? You thought you were okay or that you can get your struggles under control on your own—you weren't ready or willing to get help from others.
4. In James 1:19–27, we are going to learn about the dangers of self-deception when it comes to being only a hearer of the Word and not a doer of the Word. We don't want to fool ourselves when it comes to our walk with Christ—we don't want to think that we are pleasing God if we are not.
5. I want you to walk away knowing that true freedom from your struggles with addiction is found in Jesus and flows through obedience to His Word.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. We Should First Receive God's Word (1:19–21)
 - a. James is writing to people who already knew Jesus as their Savior, "beloved brothers." He is not telling people how to become a child of God but rather sharing how children of God are to live. Are you a "beloved brother"? Are you a child of God?

- b. James give the exhortation to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger so we can be ready to receive the Word of God.
 - God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. We need to really listen to what God has to say to us in His Word
 - If we are defensive, we will become angry when we are challenged by the Word of God.
- c. “Quick to listen” is referring to active listening, which is more than simply not speaking—it is being ready to listen and obey.
 - You may have had a conversation with someone and found out that even though he was speaking, he was not actually listening. This can be frustrating.
 - If we want to receive the Word of God, we need to be active listeners.
- d. We are called to put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness so we can be ready to receive with meekness the implanted Word.
 - To receive the implanted Word is to accept God’s Word and law, and seek to live by them.
 - Do you receive God’s Word, or are you guilty of arguing with the Word of God? Are you humble and teachable, or are you set in your own ways?
- e. Before you can accept God’s Word and live by it, you need to have the Word implanted or written on your heart.
 - This happens when you repent of your sins and put your trust in Jesus alone to save you.
 - If the new birth has not happened in your life, then there can be no real desire to receive and live by God’s Word.
- f. We also need to remove all filthiness and wickedness from our lives. Unrepentant sin makes us unprepared to receive God’s Word.
 - If you are allowing sin to go unchecked in your life, you will not want to accept and obey God’s Word.
 - “Before God’s Word can produce His righteousness in us, we must renounce and put away the sin in our lives that stands between us and that righteousness.” (MacArthur, 74) (See Proverbs 28:13)
- g. Once the Word of God has been implanted in us, we are not free from responsibility—we now must obey the Word.

2. We Then Must Obey God's Word (1:22–25)

- a. Simply reading, or even studying, God's Word does not benefit us at all if we don't do what it says. How many times have you read your Bible or heard a sermon and felt encouraged, but did nothing to follow through with actual change in your life?
- b. "Too many Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles never mark them." (Wiersbe, 61)
- c. You can measure the effectiveness of your Bible study time by the effect it has on your behavior and attitudes.
- d. What kind of look are you taking at the mirror of God's Word?
 - Casual look—a quick glance that does not allow you to see the flaws in your life.
 - Intent look—a deep and continued look into the Word of God that allows you to see flaws and make changes.
- e. In New Testament times, mirrors were typically made of highly polished brass or bronze, although wealthy people could buy one made of silver or gold. Even the most expensive mirrors were primitive, compared to modern glass mirrors. By carefully turning the mirror and finding the best light, a person could eventually see a fairly accurate image of his or her face. This is what James is talking about—a long, intentional look.

3. God Gives Blessings When We Obey His Word (1:25)

- a. Look at verse 25. It's interesting to see the words "law" and "liberty" in the same sentence. We don't usually think the law can bring liberty.
- b. When we think of the law, many times we think of trouble or having things taken away.
- c. We think that obeying all our emotions and giving in to all our desires is what freedom really is, but that is a lie that leads to deception and bondage.

- d. In the Bible, real freedom is not removing all boundaries and constraints, but living under the right boundaries and constraints.
- e. The Bible is full of examples of how obedience brings blessing into our lives. (See Psalm 1)
- f. God's desire is not that we would be free to live however we want to live, but that we would become increasingly free from the presence of sin in our lives as we obey His Word.
- g. "Blessedness is the state that a believer enjoys when by faith he takes God at His Word and lives accordingly." (Eyrich, 64)

4. God Gives Examples of How to Obey His Word (1:26–27)

- a. Keep control of your tongue (1:26). Does the way you use your tongue match with your profession of faith in Jesus Christ?
- b. Care for orphans and widows (1:27). Are you willing to give to people who can offer you nothing in return?
- c. Live a pure and holy life (keep yourself unstained from the world; 1:27). Is there a pattern of repenting of sin in your life, fighting for holiness?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

- 1. The battle against addiction is not just a fight to say "no" to the sinful patterns in your life. Rather, it is a fight to say "yes" to better things by obeying the Word of God.
- 2. In what ways have you been unwilling to hear and receive the Word of God?
- 3. In what ways have you listened to the Word of God, but not been putting it into practice?
- 4. How have you demonstrated by your actions that you are unwilling to turn from your addictive sin because you are afraid it will rob you of freedom and joy?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 3 | JAMES 1:19-27 | DON'T BE DECEIVED

START THINKING

1. Deception is familiar to all of us. Many of us who have struggled with addictive sins and habits, such as drinking, drugs, porn and gambling, have to admit that we became good at deceiving people and hiding.
2. Deceiving other people is sinful and destructive, but I want to focus on another kind of deception, self-deception.
3. Have you ever been blind to the real condition of your heart or life? You thought you were okay, or that you can get your struggles under control on your own—you weren't willing to get help from others.
4. In James 1:19–27, we learn about the dangers of self-deception when it comes to being only a hearer of the Word and not a doer of the Word. We don't want to fool ourselves when it comes to our walk with Christ—we don't want to think that we are pleasing God if we are not.
5. True freedom from your struggles with addiction is found in Jesus and flows through obedience to His Word.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. We Should First Receive God's Word (1:19–21)
2. We Then Must Obey God's Word (1:22–25)
3. God Gives Blessings When We Obey His Word (1:25)
4. God Gives Examples of How to Obey His Word (1:26–27)

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. The battle against addiction is not just a fight to say “no” to the sinful patterns in your life. Rather, it is a fight to say “yes” to better things by obeying the Word of God.
2. In what ways have you been unwilling to hear and receive the Word of God?
3. In what ways have you listened to the Word of God, but not been putting it into practice?
4. How have you demonstrated by your actions that you are unwilling to turn from your addictive sin because you are afraid it will rob you of freedom and joy?

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 3 | JAMES 1:19-27 | DON'T BE DECEIVED

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. How have you been self-deceived by addictive sins? What did this lead to in your life?

REFLECT

1. How has a lack of obedience to God's Word kept you enslaved by addiction?
2. What kind of look are you taking at the mirror of God's Word? Is it a casual look or an intent look?

REMEMBER

1. What reminders can you build into your life to help remember the danger of being self-deceived or the danger of being led by your emotions and desires apart from God's Word?
2. If you are a Christian, what are some things that you could do daily to remember and think about the Gospel?

SURRENDER

1. What attitudes in your heart are keeping you from being ready to receive the Word of God?
Are you willing to surrender these attitudes and turn from them?
2. If you have not entered into a personal relationships with Jesus Christ, what is stopping you from doing that today?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 1:22-23

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read Psalm 1 three times this week. Write down in a journal 3-5 observations from this passage about the blessings of obeying God's Word.

NO PARTIALITY

LESSON 4 | JAMES 2:1-13

BIG IDEA

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to avoid all partiality and to love others equally. We do not love others based on what they can give to us, on their appearance or on their social status. Rather, we are to love them because of the love that God has shown to us through Christ.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. God Gives Us a Command Concerning Partiality (2:1)
2. God Gives Us an Example of Partiality (2:2-7)
3. God Tells Us That Love and Mercy Will Triumph Over Partiality (2:8-13)

START THINKING

1. Has there been a time that you were hurt because someone judged you based on your outward appearance or social status?
2. Has there been a time that you were guilty of showing partiality and judging someone else based on their outward appearance or social status?
3. We live in a world where more and more we are told to be accepting of whatever someone thinks or believes, even when it is unbiblical. This presents a challenge for Christians as we strive to love others and not compromise truth. Even amid this culture, the sin of partiality is still something we need to be on guard against.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. God Gives Us a Command Concerning Partiality (2:1)
 - a. The word “partiality” carries the idea of lifting up someone’s face, with the idea of judging by external appearance and treating people better because of their outward appearance.
 - b. The act of showing partiality or favoritism relates to judging people purely on a superficial level, without considering their heart or true character.
 - c. James is making a simple point that showing partiality or favoritism is profoundly un-Christian and not the way God expects His people to act.

- d. We find many other places in Scripture where God condemns partiality.
- Proverbs 24:23: "These also are sayings of the wise. Partiality in judging is not good."
 - Proverbs 28:21: "To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong."
 - Ephesians 6:9: "Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him."
 - 1 Peter 1:17: "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile."

2. God Gives Us an Example of Partiality (2:2-7)

- a. James' example of partiality would have hit very close to home to his original readers.
- b. Two men walk into a church service. One is well dressed and has a gold ring on his finger, which means that this man had money and was maybe even an important person. This man is treated very well and given the best seat. Another man walks in who is clearly poor and dressed in shabby clothing. This man looks rough and does not look important at all. The second man is asked to stand in the back and is treated quite differently from the first one.
- c. James uses this example to show the sinfulness of giving special treatment to people who are important and well off and treating poor people badly. God has always cared very deeply for poor people. (see Psalm 68:10 and Galatians 2:10)
- d. We need to remember that through the Gospel, God reverses our status in this world. If you are well off and important, the Gospel humbles you to see your need for Christ. If you are poor and treated badly by others, the Gospel gives you eternal riches in Christ that you could never gain on earth.
- e. God is in the business of saving people who are not respected by the world and then using them to do great things for His kingdom. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29: "For consider your calling, brothers; not many of you were wise according to the worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

- f. What are some ways we show partiality in the church today?
- Ideally the church will always be known for welcoming everyone who comes, but we have to be on guard against the temptation to partiality.
 - If this could happen in James' day, it can happen in our day as well.
- g. Churches need to step outside the box and minister, even when it might be difficult and messy. If we truly don't want to show partiality, we need to think about ministering to all groups of people in our communities, such as
- Mercy ministry for those in need
 - Homeless ministry
 - Food pantries
 - Single moms or widows
 - Addiction ministry. This is an area where the church has been turning people over to the world's help and the world's wisdom for far too long. The church needs to "get in the game" and start taking hope and help from God's Word to those enslaved by addiction.
- h. There may be great organizations already established in your community that your church can encourage or partner with.

3. God Tells Us That Love and Mercy Will Triumph Over Partiality (2:8-13)

- a. What is the replacement for partiality? What do we put on in place of sinful partiality or favoritism in our lives and our churches?
The answer James give is love.
- b. We need to start by remembering all that Christ has done for us by dying for our sins and rising again. We need to remember the great love God has shown us.
- Romans 5:8: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
 - 1 John 3:1a: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

- 1 John 3:16: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”
 - 1 John 4:9-10: “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
- c. We also need to think about how much we have been forgiven in Christ and let that realization lead us to love others in radical ways. (See Luke 7:36-50.)

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. We said earlier that one way churches can reach out to all groups of people is by ministering to those who struggle with addictions (habitual sin or idolatry). That is what our group here is all about.
2. Do you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Have you been forgiven? You cannot begin to love people in radical ways without the heart change that comes from salvation.
3. If you are a Christian, do you need a fresh reminder of how much you have been forgiven? It is not right to live under a burden of shame, but at the same time, you don't want to forget all that God has forgiven you.

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 4 | JAMES 2:1-13 | NO PARTIALITY

START THINKING

1. Has there been a time that you were hurt because someone judged you based on your outward appearance or social status?
2. Has there been a time that you were guilty of showing partiality and judging someone else based on their outward appearance or social status?
3. We live in a world where more and more we are told to be accepting of whatever someone thinks or believes, even when it is unbiblical. This presents a challenge for Christians as we strive to love others and not compromise truth. Even amid this culture, the sin of partiality is still something we need to be on guard against.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. God Gives Us a Command Concerning Partiality (2:1)
2. God Gives Us an Example of Partiality (2:2-7)
3. God Tells Us That Love and Mercy Will Triumph Over Partiality (2:8-13)

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. We said earlier that one way churches can reach out to all groups of people is by ministering to those who struggle with addictions (habitual sin or idolatry). That is what our group here is all about.
2. Do you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Have you been forgiven? You cannot begin to love people in radical ways without the heart of change that comes from salvation.
3. If you are a Christian, do you need a fresh reminder of how much you have been forgiven? It is not right to live under a burden of shame, but at the same time, you don't want to forget all that God has forgiven you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 4 | JAMES 2:1-13 | NO PARTIALITY

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. Showing partiality involved judging people on a superficial level without considering their heart.
 - a. How have you been hurt by others who were guilty of showing partiality?
 - b. How have you hurt others because you showed partiality?

REFLECT

1. Have you believed the Gospel for salvation and had your worldly status reversed? If you have believed in Christ, what are some of the evidences that you are living out your new status in Christ? Are you living in humility where before you were proud? Are you rejoicing in your acceptance before God when before you thought you were too far gone to be accepted by Him?
2. Many times our addictions make a mess out of our lives, and we can burn bridges with family and friends who are close to us. How has your struggle with addiction brought you to a low place in life?

REMEMBER

1. Have you ever thought you were too far gone for God to save you? Share how this has played out in your life. How does that way of thinking keep you enslaved?
2. What hope do you find in remembering that God never stops loving you and that you are never too far gone to come to Him?

SURRENDER

1. Are there ways that you have been guilty of showing partiality? Will you surrender those to the Lord through repentance?
2. What are some ways that you can put off partiality and put on love?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 2:13

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read Luke 10:25-37 and write down where you see partiality and where you see love or mercy.

FAITH AND WORKS

LESSON 5 | JAMES 2:14-26

BIG IDEAS

1. When we come to God and to the Bible to find hope and help in our struggles with addiction, we find the Bible offers more than just recovery—it offers total life transformation through the power of the Gospel.
2. Recovery is a good idea, but it falls short of all that God can do when He truly saves and transforms us. The starting point of any transformation is a personal relationship with God through saving faith in the work of Jesus alone.
3. In this session, we are going to look at two experiences that can be confused with saving faith and then finish by studying what true saving faith looks like. The challenge is to examine our lives to see if we truly possess saving faith that leads to lasting transformation.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. **The First False Substitute is Intellectual Experience (2:14-17)**
2. **The Second False Substitute is Emotional Experience (2:18-19)**
3. **True Saving Faith is Belief in Jesus That Leads to Growing Obedience in Daily Life (2:20-26)**

START THINKING

1. James 2:14-26 is a crucial passage of Scripture for all of us because James enters into a discussion of what true saving faith looks like. If you are wrong about the genuineness of your faith, eternity is at stake.
2. It is possible for someone to claim to have saving faith but not actually possess saving faith. Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”
3. What does this study have to do with your struggle with habitual sin and addiction? A genuine relationship with Jesus or having saving faith is the starting point for real transformation in your life and victory over your sin. Remember: we are not only concerned with recovery, but also with transformation.
4. First we will talk about two false experiences that people often confuse with saving faith, and then about what real saving faith looks like. To wrap it all up, we will make some connections and applications to the battle with addiction.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **The First False Substitute is Intellectual Experience (2:14-17)**
 - a. It is easy to be deceived into believing that knowing the truth about God or about salvation is enough to save us.

- b. Knowing the truth about Christ without surrendering your life to Christ is not saving faith.
- c. A faith that is only in your mind and does not change your life does not save—it is dead (v. 17).
- d. Do not be deceived by an “easy believism” or “easy faith” that impacts nothing more than your mind.
- e. We have to be careful with this passage because it can easily be interpreted incorrectly and lead to confusion. James is **not** saying that you have to do good works to be saved. Rather, James is saying that true and living faith will naturally lead to a changed life—true and living faith will lead to good works and obedience.
- f. It’s one thing to have correct beliefs about Christ and even be able to talk about those beliefs, but it is another thing to demonstrate or live your faith in Christ.
- g. Faith without works is dead—it cannot save.
- h. Some have said that James and Paul are in conflict based on their writings in the Bible.
 - Paul taught all throughout the New Testament that salvation is by faith alone, so how can James say that faith without works is dead?
 - Paul and James are not in conflict—they are actually standing back-to-back, contending for the same thing.
 - James is not saying that our works save us, but rather that our obedience (works) are the natural fruit of being saved.
- j. So, the first false substitute for saving faith is knowledge only (intellect) that does not lead to a changed life.

2. The Second False Substitute is Emotional Experience (2:18-19)

- a. Sometimes knowledge and intellect can lead to a strong emotional experience.
- b. Emotions are not bad—God created us with emotions—but a faith in Christ that exists only in our emotions, or is based only on an emotional experience we had at one time, is not saving faith.
- c. Look at what James says about the demons in verse 19.
 - The demons have a correct knowledge about God
 - The knowledge they have leads them to shudder. Their emotions are impacted, but that is where it stops.

- d. Have you ever had a “mountaintop experience” with God that fired you up for a while, but did not lead to lasting change?
 - Sunday sermon, conference message, YouTube video, podcast, retreat, summer camp as a kid?
 - Things were good with you and God while the emotions lasted, but when they died down, things were not so good with you and God.
- e. We don’t live on the mountaintop; we live most of our lives in the valley.
- f. One of the greatest challenges for people enslaved by drugs and alcohol is learning to be obedient and faithful in everyday life.
 - You have lived in a pattern that, when the thrill you are seeking is gone, you go looking for a new thrill.
 - God wants to show you that lasting joy is found only in day-by-day obedience in the normal routine things of life.
- g. Paul Tripp says that “the character of a life is not set in two or three dramatic moments, but in 10,000 little moments.”
- h. A moving emotional experience can be a very real starting point for a relationship with God, but it can’t end there—it must lead to obedience.

3. True Saving Faith is Belief in Jesus That Leads to Growing Obedience in Daily Life (2:20-26)

- a. Saving faith is found by trusting in Jesus Christ alone, and true saving faith will always lead to obedience and fruit, all of which follows salvation.
- b. Abraham showed his faith to be true through his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God (v. 21-24).
- c. Rahab showed that her faith was real by helping the spies (v. 25).
- d. Note the two meanings of the word “justified”. James and Paul do not disagree.
 - Acquittal, that is, declaring and treating a person as righteous.” (MacArthur, 137). This is how Paul almost always uses the word justified.
 - “Vindication or proof of righteousness.” (MacArthur, 137). This is how James uses the word justified.
 - James is not saying that you can become right with God by doing good works. Rather, he is saying that good works are a public presentation of the faith that someone already has.
 - We are not called to be “fruit inspectors”—only God knows someone’s heart. But at the same time, we don’t want to give people false assurance that they are right with God because they “asked Jesus into their hearts” when they consistently live like the devil!

- e. Do you have a desire to know and obey the Lord? If you have zero desire to obey Jesus, you need to do some serious searching of your heart regarding the genuineness of your faith.
 - Obedience ebbs and flows; desire goes up and down. You will have highs and lows, but there has to be some kind of desire and obedience.
 - Some people are crawling, some are walking and some are running, but those who know Christ have a desire to grow and change.
- f. If you have no desire to be obedient to Christ and to live for Him, you don't need to work harder to produce fruit on your own. You need to run to Christ and surrender to Him. You need to truly repent of your sins.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. If you don't know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, the place you need to start to be free from addictions is by repenting of your sins and trusting in Jesus.
2. We talked about false substitutions for real faith: an intellectual experience and an emotional experience.
 - a. You can know in your mind you need to turn from your addiction, but that alone is not enough.
 - b. You can have emotional experiences that tell you that you need to turn from your addiction, but that alone is not enough
 - c. You need to have your heart changed regarding your addiction. The conviction of your need to change has to go deeper than your head and your emotions—it must land in your heart, and only God can change your heart.
 - d. It's not about a new start or a new resolve; it's not about redoubling your efforts. It's about repenting and surrendering.

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 5 | JAMES 2:14-26 | FAITH AND WORKS

START THINKING

1. James 2:14-26 is a crucial passage of Scripture for all of us because James enters into a discussion of what true saving faith looks like. If you are wrong about the genuineness of your faith, eternity is at stake.
2. It is possible for someone to claim to have saving faith, but not actually possess saving faith. Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”
3. What does this study have to do with your struggle with habitual sin and addiction? A genuine relationship with Jesus or having saving faith is the starting point for real transformation in your life and victory over your sin. Remember: we are not only concerned with recovery, but also with transformation.
4. First, we will talk about two false experiences that people often confuse with saving faith, and then talk about what real saving faith looks like. To wrap it all up, we will make some connections and applications to the battle with addiction.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **The First False Substitute is Intellectual Experience (2:14-17)**
2. **The Second False Substitute is Emotional Experience (2:18-19)**
3. **True Saving Faith is Belief in Jesus That Leads to Growing Obedience in Daily Life (2:20-26)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. If you don't know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, the place you need to start to be free from addictions is by repenting of your sins and trusting in Jesus.
2. We talked about false substitutes for real faith: an intellectual experience and an emotional experience.
 - a. You can know in your mind you need to turn from your addiction, but that alone is not enough.
 - b. You can have emotional experiences that tell you that you need to turn from your addiction, but that alone is not enough.
 - c. You need to have your heart changed regarding your addiction. The conviction of your need to change has to go deeper than your head and your emotions—it must land in your heart, and only God can change your heart.
 - d. It's not about a new start or a new resolve; it's not about redoubling your efforts. It's about repenting and surrendering

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 5 | JAMES 2:14-26 | FAITH AND WORKS

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. If you profess to know Jesus as your Savior, have you ever honestly examined yourself to see if you are truly in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5)?
3. The foundation for lasting victory over addiction is a personal relationship with Christ and a desire to glorify God. What is your foundation (motivation for battling addiction)? What wrong foundations do you currently have or have you had in the past?

REFLECT

1. It is easy to “talk the talk without walking the walk.” Christians and non-Christians alike can struggle with this. Do you struggle with this problem? Are there specific areas where you struggle the most?
2. A moving emotional experience is a great starting point for a relationship with Christ, but it can’t end there—it must lead to obedience. How has your relationship with Christ been based too much on emotions?
3. One of the greatest challenges for people enslaved by addiction is being faithful in the normal, mundane routines of life. How have you struggled with this kind of faithfulness?
4. How do you see a desire to know and obey the Lord in your life?

REMEMBER

1. If you are a Christian, how did you come to know Jesus as your Savior? Briefly share a two-minute version of your testimony with the group
2. If you are a Christian, what can you do intentionally to be thankful for what Christ has done for you?

SURRENDER

1. If you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, what is stopping you from confessing your sin and trusting in Jesus today?
2. How have intellectual knowledge and emotional experiences deceived you into thinking you were serious about turning away from addiction when you really were not serious? Are you willing to truly repent and surrender today?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 2:17

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read Matthew 5-7 three times this week and write down characteristics of a true follower of Christ from this passage.

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

CONTROLLING OUR TONGUE

LESSON 6 | JAMES 3:1-12

BIG IDEA

1. Controlling our tongue is important, but it is hard to do.
2. The tongue is a very small part of our body, but it has great power to impact the course of our life.
3. The tongue is a picture into our heart. The tongue reveals the true nature of what is inside us.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. Our Tongue is Part of Growing in Christ (3:1-2)
2. Our Tongue Determines the Whole Course of Our Life (3:3-9)
3. Our Tongue Reveals the Real You (3:10-12)

START THINKING

1. As our journey through the book of James continues, we come to the topic of the tongue and how to control it. This is a relevant and important topic for everyone today.
2. You have probably heard the saying “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Is this true? Are our words truly harmless?
3. Has there been a time in your life that you were hurt by someone’s words? What was the long-term impact of hurtful words in your life?
4. Have you struggled with using your words in hurtful ways?
5. How can our tongue be helpful in the battle against addiction?

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. Our Tongue is Part of Growing in Christ (3:1-2)
 - a. James begins with a warning about words to people who might desire to be teachers, and then he expands to everyone.
 - b. The issue of controlling, or taming, the tongue and speech is a general problem for all believers, and a bigger problem for pastors or teachers in the church.
 - c. The word “perfect” in verse 2 means “mature” or “complete”.
 - If this word means absolute perfection, that would be impossible because Jesus is the only perfect person who has ever lived.
 - People who can control their tongues show that they are mature and have grown in their faith.

- d. If we can control our tongue, we will find that we are able to control other areas of our life as well.
- e. If you claim to be a Christian, you cannot get off the hook for how you use your tongue and how you use your words.

2. Our Tongue Determines the Whole Course of Our Life (3:3-9)

- a. Our tongue has power to control or direct our lives (3:3-5)
 - The tongue is one of the smallest organs in the body and is less than half a percent of our body weight. But even though the tongue is so small, it can control the whole person.
 - Your tongue reveals who is controlling your life—you or God.
 - James uses two illustrations to show the power of the tongue to control or direct our lives.
 - i. Bits in the mouths of horses—a small bit controls a large horse.
 - ii. Rudders on ships—a small rudder controls a large ship
 - The tongue is very small, but it has great power in our lives.
 - i. How have you seen the power of your tongue used for good?
 - ii. How have you seen the power of your tongue used for bad?
 - It may be possible to act like an out-of-control tongue is not a big deal, but it can impact the entire course of our lives.
- b. Our tongue has power to destroy our lives (3:5-6)
 - James says that the tongue is like a small spark that can set a great forest ablaze. So you could burn down the forest of your life or someone else's life by the words you say.
 - Forest fires can cause great destruction in very little time. And likewise, our words can cause great destruction in very little time.
 - We are not able to control the effect that our words will have on people in our lives. Once the words have left our mouths, we can't stop them (Proverbs 18:21).
 - Lots of terrible things are not spoken out loud, but are posted online. The things you say online are as important as the actual words you say to people.
 - James also say that the tongue is set on fire by hell. Satan loves to use our words for evil.

- History records two fires that started small and caused great destruction.
 - i. In 1871, the great Chicago fire destroyed 17,500 buildings, killed 300 people and left 125,000 others homeless.
 - ii. In 1903, a pan of rice boiled over onto a fire in a Korean city, spreading coals across the room and starting a blaze that eventually consumed a square mile of the city, burning some 3,000 buildings to the ground.

c. We can tame lots of created things, but we cannot tame the tongue.

- James is not giving an easy plan to control our tongue. He is saying that controlling the tongue is not something that we can do on our own. We need a power that is greater than our own power—the power of God.
- Taming the tongue is so difficult that it requires divine help.
- Controlling our tongue is difficult because it is an outflow of the heart (Matthew 12:34-35; 15:18)

3. Our Tongue Reveals the Real You (3:10-12)

- a. Our words are a window into our heart.
- b. The tongue reveals who is controlling our life.
- c. “The tongue is you in a unique way. It is a tattletale that tells on the heart and discloses the real person” (MacArthur, 144).
- d. “If you want to know what someone is really like, spend time listening to them talk” (Allberry, 98).
- e. In public, we can put on a good show for others, but our families and those closest to us know us best and are often hurt the most by our words.
- f. “When Jesus Christ is the Lord of the heart, then He is the Lord of the lips, too” (Wiersbe, 100).
- g. Many times, the tongue reveals that we are hypocrites—what we say does not match up with how we live.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What does controlling our tongue have to do with battling addiction?
2. Since the tongue reveals the heart, it can point you to the idols of the heart that fuel addiction in your life. Pay attention to what you say and you will discover what you are truly seeking when you run to your addiction of choice.
3. Follow the trail from your words to the root issues going on in your heart (Mark 7:21-23)
4. It is impossible to control the tongue in your own power. You need the Holy Spirit to help you.
 - a. If you are a Christian, are you relying on the Holy Spirit's power that is in you? Are you walking in the Spirit?
 - b. Maybe you don't have the Holy Spirit in you and you don't have any power to control your tongue. Would you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus as your Savior?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 6 | JAMES 3:1-12 | CONTROLLING OUR TONGUE

START THINKING

1. As our journey through the book of James continues, we come to the topic of the tongue and how to control it. This is a relevant and important topic for everyone today.
2. You have probably heard the saying “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Is this true? Are our words truly harmless?
3. Has there been a time in your life that you were hurt by someone’s words? What was the long-term impact of hurtful words in your life?
4. How have you struggled with using your words in hurtful ways?
5. How can our tongue be helpful in the battle against addiction?

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Our Tongue is Part of Growing in Christ (3:1-2)**
2. **Our Tongue Determines the Whole Course of Our Life (3:3-9)**
3. **Our Tongue Reveals the Real You (3:10-12)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What does controlling our tongue have to do with battling addiction?
2. Since the tongue reveals the heart, it can point you to the idols of the heart that fuel addiction in your life. Pay attention to what you say, and you will discover what you are truly seeking when you run to your addiction of choice.
3. Follow the trail from your words to the root issues going on in your heart (Mark 7:21-23).
4. It is impossible to control the tongue in your own power. You need the Holy Spirit to help you.
 - a. If you are a Christian, are you rely on the Holy Spirit’s power that is in you? Are you walking in the Spirit?
 - b. Maybe you don’t have the Holy Spirit in you and you don’t have any power to control your tongue. Would you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus as your Savior?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 6 | JAMES 3:1-12 | CONTROLLING OUR TONGUE

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. When do you find it hardest to control your tongue?

REFLECT

1. The old saying goes “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Is this true? Why or why not?
2. How have you been hurt by someone’s careless words? How have you hurt others with your careless words?
3. How have you tried to make excuses for not controlling your tongue?
4. The words you use are a window into your heart. What are your words revealing about your heart?

REMEMBER

1. You cannot control your tongue without God’s help. What can you do to remind yourself to pray for God’s help to control your tongue?
2. Today, many hurtful things are posted online that might not be said out loud. Are you guilty of this? What would repentance look like?

SURRENDER

1. Warren Wiersbe said, “When Jesus Christ is Lord of the heart, then He is Lord of the lips, too.” Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your heart? If not, will you make Him Lord today?
2. Since the tongue reveals the heart, it can point you to the root idols that fuel addiction in your life. What is your tongue revealing about your heart? What steps can you take to repent of things that you need to change?
3. Have you hurt people with your words and now need to seek forgiveness? When do you plan to do that?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 3:1-2

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read the following passages and record in a journal the things that stand out:

Psalms 19:14; Proverbs 12:18; Matthew 12:36; 15:18; Ephesians 4:29; 1 Peter 3:10.

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

TRUE WISDOM

LESSON 7 | JAMES 3:13-18

BIG IDEA

1. There are two types of wisdom: worldly wisdom and wisdom from above.
2. Wisdom from above leads to righteous living, and worldly wisdom leads to chaos and disorder.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. True Wisdom Leads to Holy Living (3:13)
2. Worldly Wisdom Leads to Disorder (3:14-16)
3. True Wisdom is From Above (3:17-18)

START THINKING

1. If I were to ask those who know you best, would they say you are wise?
2. What is real wisdom and where do you get it?
3. How can you determine what voices to listen to in a pursuit of wisdom?
4. Someone has said that “origin determines outcome.” Where you seek wisdom will determine the path of your life.
5. Many of you here are in a battle with enslaving sin, and you long so desperately to be free from this sin. To have lasting victory over this sin, you need true wisdom from God. This study will point you to the source of true wisdom that leads to greater victory.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. True Wisdom Leads to Holy Living (3:13)
 - a. In your opinion, what makes someone wise? Is it knowing lots of things and having vast knowledge? Is it having done lots of things in life? Is it being quick-witted and good with your words? Is it having lots of money or physical wealth?
 - b. Where should you turn to find true wisdom? Friends and family? Podcasts? Psychologists or therapists? A boss at work? The news and media?
 - c. Is there a source of true wisdom that never changes?
 - d. True wisdom comes from God and is found in God’s Word, the Bible.

- e. The Bible tells us that true wisdom is not merely intellectual, but it is also behavioral, which means it is shown in holy living.
 - The word wise means “careful application of knowledge to personal living” (MacArthur, 168)
 - Warren Wiersbe says that “wisdom is being able to use knowledge correctly.” (111)
 - You have probably come across people who seem to have a lot of knowledge, but they don’t seem to be able to put it to use and are unable to manage some of the simplest things in life. Or maybe you yourself are that way.
- f. Many people can appear wise simply based on their words, but when you look closely at their lives, you realize they lack wisdom. Warren Wiersbe says, “Knowledge enables us to take things apart, but wisdom enables us to put things together and relate God’s truth to daily life.” (111)
- g. True wisdom is measured in the depth of someone’s character.
- h. This verse also tells us that true wisdom is marked by meekness
 - What is meekness? Meekness is the opposite of arrogance and self-promotion; it is power under control.
 - If you are full of pride and arrogance, you cannot say you have true wisdom. 1 Corinthians 8:1 states, “knowledge puffs up but love builds up.” Knowledge alone leads to pride and arrogance, but wisdom leads to love.”
- i. Stop and think about your life. Is your life characterized by growing holiness?
- j. If your life is not showing the fruits of holiness, you may have a lot of knowledge, but lack true wisdom.

2. Worldly Wisdom Leads to Disorder (3:14-16)

- a. This passage puts wisdom into two categories: man’s wisdom and wisdom from above (God’s wisdom).
- b. Worldly wisdom is earthly or natural; it is the opposite of spiritual wisdom.
- c. Worldly wisdom is characterized by bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.
 - Bitter jealousy is a harsh, resentful attitude towards others.
 - Selfish ambition is seen in strife and self-seeking. This word in the original language of the Bible was used to describe someone in politics who sought to achieve his agenda at any cost.

- d. James uses words that progress from bad to worse to describe worldly wisdom: earthly...unspiritual...demonic. Following worldly wisdom will lead you down a path that progressively moves farther and farther from God.
- e. Worldly wisdom is marked by instability and chaos. Chaos is something we become very familiar with when our lives are gripped by addiction.
- f. Worldly wisdom leads to disorder and every vile practice
 - Disorder is a chaotic frenzy of fighting; it is unstable and restless
 - Disorder is everywhere in our society. Vile practices of all kinds seem to become accepted more and more. These changes do not come from the wisdom from above. We need the wisdom from above to respond rightly in the face of disorder and every vile practice.
 - Disorder and vile practices are things you become very familiar with when your life is gripped by addiction. The presence of disorder and vile practices should tell us that we are walking in worldly wisdom.
- g. Satan has been seeking to get people to trust in worldly wisdom since Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden, and he is still trying to get you to trust in worldly wisdom today.
- h. Worldly wisdom does not see life through an eternal lens, but through the lens of the here and now. In the same way, a person who is enslaved by addiction does not view life through an eternal lens, but through the lens of the here and now.
- i. Worldly wisdom leads to disorder, and that disorder, left unchecked, will eventually lead to destruction and death.
- j. The answer to the disorder of worldly wisdom is to seek wisdom from above through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

3. True Wisdom is From Above (3:17-18)

- a. We have established that worldly wisdom will lead to destruction and death. So what should you do? The answer is to seek wisdom from above that comes from God.
- b. The first step toward wisdom is receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
 - The Bible says that we are all born separated from God by our sin. But the good news of the Gospel is that Christ died on the cross and rose again so that we might be brought to God and reconciled to Him. This salvation comes only by believing in Jesus as your Savior.
 - Some of you may already have a relationship with Jesus, but maybe not all of you. Your greatest need today is to be reconciled to God by believing in Jesus. You will never have wisdom from above if you do not have a relationship with Jesus.
- c. True wisdom comes from being with God.
 - After you have been reconciled to God, you grow in wisdom by spending time with Him.
 - God has given us some specific ways we can be with Him: reading our Bible, praying, memorizing Scripture and meditating on Scripture.
- d. Wisdom from above is characterized by specific qualities:
 - Pure
 - Peaceable
 - Gentle
 - Open to reason
 - Full of mercy and good fruits
 - Impartial
 - Sincere

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Origin determines outcome. Are you living your life based on worldly wisdom or wisdom from above? The type of wisdom you choose to follow will impact what happens in your life.
2. Sowing and Reaping. The law of sowing and reaping is unavoidable. Whatever you sow you will reap. Are you sowing in wisdom from above or worldly wisdom?
3. Do you know Jesus as your personal Savior?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 7 | JAMES 3:13-18 | TRUE WISDOM

START THINKING

1. If I were to ask those who know you best, would they say you are wise?
2. What is real wisdom and where do you get it?
3. How can you determine what voices to listen to in a pursuit of wisdom?
4. Someone has said that “origin determines outcome.” Where you seek wisdom will determine the path of your life.
5. Many of you here are in a battle with enslaving sin, and you long so desperately to be free from this sin. To have lasting victory over this sin, you need true wisdom from God. This study will point you to the source of true wisdom that leads to greater victory.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **True Wisdom Leads to Holy Living (3:13)**
2. **Worldly Wisdom Leads to Disorder (3:14-16)**
3. **True Wisdom is From Above (3:17-18)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Origin determines outcome. Are you living your life based on worldly wisdom or wisdom from above? The type of wisdom you choose to follow will impact what happens in your life.
2. Sowing and Reaping. The law of sowing and reaping is unavoidable. Whatever you sow you will reap. Are you sowing in wisdom from above or worldly wisdom?
3. Do you know Jesus as your personal Savior?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 7 | JAMES 3:13-18 | TRUE WISDOM

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. We talked about two kinds of wisdom: earthly wisdom which is marked by chaos and disorder, and wisdom from above which is marked by righteous living. What is your life marked by, and what kind of wisdom does that point to?

REFLECT

1. Someone has said “origin determines outcome.” Where you seek wisdom will determine the path of your life. What path are you on? Where does the path you are on lead to?
2. True wisdom is found in God and God’s Word, the Bible. How often are you reading your Bible to find true wisdom?

REMEMBER

1. True wisdom is shown by holy living. How are you pursuing holiness in your life?
2. James uses a progression of words to describe earthly wisdom: earthly...unspiritual...demonic. Do you see this progression in your life? If you do, what would repentance look like?
3. The answer to worldly wisdom is to seek wisdom from above. What can you do to seek wisdom from God?

SURRENDER

1. Seeking wisdom from above begins with having a personal relationship with Christ. If you do not know Jesus as your Savior, what is keeping you from trusting Christ today?
2. If you are struggling with addiction, that is an indicator that you need to seek wisdom from above. God has given us some specific ways we can seek His wisdom: reading our Bible, praying, memorizing Scripture and meditating on Scripture. Which of these things are currently part of your life? Which ones do you need to make part of your life?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 3:13-14

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read Proverbs 2 three times this week and write down in a journal what you learn about seeking wisdom.

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

CONFLICTS AND WORLDLINESS

LESSON 8 | JAMES 4:1-12

BIG IDEA

1. The real problem and the real solution. Many times, when we are faced with conflict, we fail to identify the real cause of the problem and that leads us to the wrong solution. We need God's help to see the real problem and be led to God's solution
2. How to humble yourself before the Lord.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. Conflicts Start in the Heart (4:1-3)
2. Beware of Spiritual Adultery (4:4-5)
3. Humble Yourself (4:6-10)
4. Don't Judge (4:11-12)

START THINKING

1. Conflict is a part of life. There is not a family, church or organization that does not experience some conflict.
2. Many people with life-dominating sins have higher levels of conflict.
3. Where does conflict in your life come from? What does external conflict reveal about what is going on in your heart?
4. How can you find help to grow and change in these areas?

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. Conflicts Start in the Heart (4:1-2)
 - a. Many times, we want to blame other people for our conflicts and struggles. A common statement heard in counseling is: "If my spouse would change this, we could get along better," or "If my boss or co-worker would treat me better, we could get along." This is common thinking, but it is incorrect thinking.
 - b. James wants to correct our wrong thinking about the origin of conflicts in our lives. He teaches us that quarrels and fights come from our passions or self-centered desires that are ruling in our heart. **We need to admit that we are the problem.**
 - c. The default setting of life is to live with ourselves at the center of the universe.
 - d. Conflict can show up in our own lives or with other people, but the most serious conflict we can experience is with God.

- e. "Conflict comes because my own selfish desires are not being met." (Sam Allberry, 106)
- f. Wrong desires flow from wrong thinking about God and about life. When we correct this wrong thinking through renewing our mind in the Scriptures, our wrong desires will begin to change.
- g. This passage of the Bible is connected to James 3:14, which tells us that bitter jealousy and selfish ambition are the fruits of out-of-control passions in our heart.
- h. When our desires become out of control, we go to extreme measures to obtain our desires at any cost. This leads to fighting and quarreling.
- i. James gives a rebuke about lack of prayer. We do not have because we do not ask.
 - How many times do you find yourself in conflict with someone over something you need when you have not even asked God for it?
 - "Prayerlessness results in failure to receive many of God's blessings" (ESV Study Bible, 2396).
- j. James also warns that there are times that we ask God for things, but because we are asking for wrong reasons, we do not receive. God desires to give us wisdom and help, but we must ask for right reasons.

2. Beware of Spiritual Adultery (4:4-5)

- a. Some of you here may know the hurt and pain that comes from adultery. You know what it is like to have one of your parents betray their marriage vows and your family. You may know the pain of your spouse committing adultery. Possibly, you are the one who has committed adultery. In any situation, adultery is full of pain and heartache.
- b. James uses strong words to grab our attention. He uses a marriage metaphor to help us understand the seriousness of not being faithful to God.
 - The New Testament refers to Christians as Christ's bride, so if you are a Christian, you have entered a covenant relationship with God through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
 - The great news about this covenant relationship is that it depends on God's faithfulness and not your own faithfulness.
- c. Let this powerful word picture sink in. Think of a husband or wife discovering their spouse is having an affair. This is what we are doing to God when we are friends of the world.
- d. Friendship with the world makes us an enemy of God.

- e. Friendship is a very casual word today. The internet and social media have changed the idea of friendship. In James' time, it was a serious word describing close intimacy.
- f. Friendship with the world starts small and grows bigger and bigger. We need to kill friendship with the world in its smallest forms in our lives.
 - Are there areas of your life in which you have become a friend of the world?
 - Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
 - The more we are conformed to the world, the more we cheat on God.
- h. Fighting against friendship with the world does not mean that we remove ourselves from the world. In John 17:15, Jesus said to His Father, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."
- i. God jealously yearns for our love and affection. In God's perfection, His jealousy is not a sin, and His jealousy does not come because He is lacking something when we don't love him with all our hearts. Rather, it comes because He wants what is best for us. "God is infinitely jealous for his people, and He will oppose with divine force anything or anybody who threatens their good" (Platt 88).

3. Humble Yourself (4:6-10)

- a. These verses describe what it looks like to repent. Repentance is a heart change that leads to transformed behavior.
- b. God gives lavish grace to the humble person, but He resists and sends judgment on the proud person.
 - God has more grace than you could ever need.
 - He will never run out of grace for you if you are truly humble.
- c. Verse 7 gives us a command that comes with a promise. If we submit to God and resist the devil, the devil will flee from us.
 - The word "submit" means "to be subject to", and is commonly used in a military setting. It is the idea of getting into proper rank.
 - Submitting to God is the remedy to conflict. Submitting to God means yielding our lives to God and living under His rule.
 - Total surrender to God is the only way to resist the devil.
 - Submission is not optional. It is not something we add on to our lives if we feel like it.
 - Are there areas of your life that you have not submitted to God?

- d. Verse 8 has another command that comes with a promise. If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.
- e. Drawing near to God must include turning away from sin by cleansing our hands (our lives) and purifying our hearts. Repentance does not happen in the heart alone; it must include how we act in our lives.
- f. Verse 9 tells us about the seriousness of sin. Sin is not a trivial thing to be played with. We are not simply to regret sin, but we are to grieve over it.

4. Don't Judge (4:11-12)

- a. Our Bible passage started out talking about conflicts with other people, and then addressing the heart issues that drive those conflicts. We are going to end by returning to how we deal with conflicts that arise with other people.
- b. When we are in conflict with people, we face a real temptation to speak evil against them.
- c. When we have conflict with people, we find it easy to have a judgmental spirit toward them, but remember that it is not our place to judge them.
- d. We need to resist the urge to speak evil and to judge people, and instead, we should examine our own heart for what is causing conflict.
- e. Only God judges justly all the time (1 Peter 2:23), and we need to ask for His help in conflict.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Conflict starts in the heart, which means that you and I are the real problem. What struggles in your life do you blame on others when you are the problem?
2. Being a friend of the world leads us to commit spiritual adultery by being unfaithful to God Who redeemed us. In what ways have you become a friend of the world, and how can you repent of that unfaithfulness?
3. Some of you may not be born again; you have not been redeemed by God. To be redeemed by God and have a relationship with Him, you need to trust Christ as your Savior.
4. Do you see yourself as "too far gone"? In what areas of your life are you tempted to believe that God no longer will show you grace? What can you begin to do to change your thinking in this area?
5. In what areas of your life do you struggle the most with sin? In what areas of your life do you desire to see the devil flee? How can you begin to submit to God so that the devil will flee from you?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 8 | JAMES 4:1-12 | CONFLICTS AND WORLDLINESS

START THINKING

1. Conflict is a part of life. There is not a family, church or organization that does not experience some conflict.
2. Many times people with life-dominating sins have higher levels of conflict.
3. Where does conflict in your life come from? What does external conflict reveal about what is going on in your heart?
4. How can we find help to grow and change in these areas?

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Conflicts Start in the Heart (4:1-3)**
2. **Beware of Spiritual Adultery (4:4-5)**
3. **Humble Yourself (4:6-10)**
4. **Don't Judge (4:11-12)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Conflict starts in the heart, which means that you and I are the real problem. What struggles in your life do you blame on others when you are the problem?
2. Being a friend of the world leads us to commit spiritual adultery by being unfaithful to God who redeemed us. In what ways have you become a friend of the world, and how can you repent of that unfaithfulness?
3. Some of you may not be born again; you have not been redeemed by God. To be redeemed by God and have a relationship with Him, you need to trust Christ as your Savior.
4. Do you see yourself as “too far gone”? In what areas of your life are you tempted to believe that God no longer will show you grace? What can you begin to do to change your thinking in this area?
5. In what areas of your life do you struggle the most with sin? In what areas of your life do you desire to see the devil flee? How can you begin to submit to God so that the devil will flee from you?

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 8 | JAMES 4:1-12 | CONFLICTS AND WORLDLINESS

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. When do you most often see conflict in your life? Where do you think that conflict comes from?
Has your struggle with life-dominating sins led to conflict in your life?

REFLECT

1. The Bible says that conflict starts in our hearts. How can this truth change your life?
What wrong beliefs about the origin of conflict do you have in your life?
2. Desires of the heart that are out of control fuel conflict. What desires of your heart lead to the most conflict in your life?
3. In what areas of your life are you most tempted to be a friend of the world? If you are a Christian, how does friendship with the world impact your relationship with Christ?
4. This passage of Scripture calls us to humble ourselves before God. Part of humbling ourselves before God is resisting the devil by submitting to God. What is one area of your life where you need to start submitting to God?

REMEMBER

1. Repentance does not happen in the heart alone; it must include what we do with our behavior (our hands). Have you been deceived into thinking that you have repented of sin without changing your behavior? Share with the group.
2. When we are in conflict, there can be a strong temptation to judge others. What does the Bible say about judging others? How are you tempted to have a judgmental spirit?

SURRENDER

1. Submitting to God is the remedy to conflict. If you are not a Christian, you first need to submit to God by repenting of your sins and trusting in Jesus. What is stopping you from trusting Jesus today?
2. If you are a Christian, what is one area of your life that you have been withholding from God, but now need to surrender to Him?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 4:1-3

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read Romans 8:5-11 three times this week and write down in a journal the ways this passage says the mind is involved in submitting to God.

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

THE WILL OF GOD

LESSON 9 | JAMES 4:13-17

BIG IDEA

1. Life is short, so we should make the most of our lives by living in the will of God.
2. The will of God can seem hard to understand, but the Bible gives clear direction on how we can live our lives in obedience to His will wherever we find ourselves.
3. It is sinful and wrong to make plans without consulting God.
4. To know God's will for our life, we need to start with a personal relationship with Jesus.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. **Don't be Arrogant and Ignore God's Will for Your Life (4:13-14a, 16)**
2. **Life is Short (4:14b)**
3. **Be Wise and Live in Obedience to God's Will (4:15)**
4. **Don't Delay Obedience to God's Will (4:17)**

START THINKING

1. Are you living in obedience to the will of God, or do you live your life based on what you desire and what you think is right?
2. Have you ever felt like you had a lot of time to make changes in your life? You know you drink too much, but you think that's just what people in your phase of life do. "I can quit anytime," or "I will settle down eventually." You know that you should be plugged into a good church so the people of God can encourage you in your walk with God. You tell yourself you will make those changes when you are not as busy.
3. We think we will get the most joy out of life if it goes our way, but we easily become anxious or irritated when things don't go our way. This way of thinking can lead to ignoring God's will for our life, and ultimately leads to less joy than if we were living in God's will.
4. In this passage, we are confronted with the brevity of life and the need to live in obedience to the will of God.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Don't Be Arrogant and Ignore God's Will for Your Life (4:13-14a, 16)**
 - a. It is not wrong to make plans for your life, but it is wrong and arrogant to ignore God as you make those plans. Are your plans characterized by boasting, arrogance and self-confidence, or are you depending on God as you plan?
 - b. "James is not against planning; he is warning us against planning that does not acknowledge the Lord's sovereign overruling of our lives." (Allberry, 123).

- c. “The fact that God is sovereign essentially means that He has the power, wisdom and authority to do anything he chooses within His creation” (Got Questions—Sovereignty).
- d. As we make plans for our lives, we must acknowledge that God is sovereign over all we do. God is in control, and we are not.
- e. Proverbs 16:33: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”
- f. Recognizing the sovereignty of God should help bring peace in the circumstances of our lives, but it should not make us passive as we live our lives.
- g. Do your lifestyle and planning choices reflect your reliance on God or yourself?
- h. Is your life centered on your agenda or God’s agenda?
- i. In the busyness of life, it is easy to begin to live like we know what tomorrow holds, but we do not know what tomorrow will bring. It is a hard but necessary truth to admit that we do not know what the future holds.
- j. “Too many Christians look on the will of God as bitter medicine they must take, instead of seeing it as the gracious evidence of the love of God.” (Wiersbe, 137).
- k. You are not able to predict what will happen tomorrow, but you can be sure where you will spend eternity.

2. Life is Short (4:14b)

- a. If you have ever been to the Great Smoky Mountains, you have experienced first-hand the haze or fog that is on the mountains in the mornings. Soon after the sun begins to come up, the fog is burned off and disappears. In the eyes of God, our lives are like the morning fog in the Great Smoky Mountains.
- b. In our view, life may seem long, but in God’s eternal view, life is a vapor.
- c. The Scripture mentions the brevity of life many times, especially in Job—Job 7:6; 8:9; 9:25-26; 14:1-2.
- d. Since life is so short, we should be very careful to spend our time doing things that honor the Lord and that matter for all eternity.
- e. “As the people of God, we ought to make our lives—the mist that comprises who you are for the short while you are here—count under His sovereignty for His glory” (Platt, 95).
- f. Are you taking full advantage of the days that God has given, knowing that life is short (Psalm 90:12)?

3. Be Wise and Live in Obedience to God's Will (4:15)

- a. All the decisions we make in life should be based on submission to the will of God.
 - How do you know the will of God for your life? The place to start is by renewing your mind in the Word of God (Romans 12:2)
 - Some Scriptures tell us specifically what God's will is for Christians. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18, and 1 Peter 2:15.)
 - When the Bible does not speak specifically to a life situation, it gives us principles that can guide us as we make decisions.
- b. The phrase "Lord willing" should be more than something we just say—it should be the heart attitude that rules our life.
- c. God gives everyone 24 hours in a day, and we should use them as God would want us to.
- d. Remember, though, that God still gives grace to you when you are not obedient to His will. Confess those times as sin and seek to be obedient to the will of God again.
- e. "Some people think God's will is a cold, impersonal machine. God starts it going and it is up to us to keep it functioning smoothly. If we disobey Him in some way, the machine grinds to a halt, and we are out of God's will for the rest of our lives. God's will is not a cold, impersonal machine. You do not determine God's will in some mechanical way, like getting a soft drink out of a vending machine. The will of God is a living relationship between God and the believer. This relationship is not destroyed when the believer disobeys, for the Father still deals with His child, even if He must chasten" (Wiersbe, 143).
- f. "When you and I get out of God's will, it is not the end of everything. We suffer, to be sure, but when God cannot rule, He overrules" (Wiersbe, 143).
- g. What is one area of your life where you have been disobedient to the will of God? What are some steps of repentance you need to take?

4. Don't delay Obedience to God's Will (4:17)

- a. It has been said "delayed obedience is disobedience." This is true in relation to our earthly father, but even more so in relation to our Heavenly father.
- b. Many times, we know we are not being obedient in specific areas of our life, but we delay in making changes. God is calling you to be serious about change, and to do it today.
- c. Remember that life is a vapor when compared to eternity. With that in mind, there is no time to waste by disobeying God.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. You are not the ruler of your life—God is. We find the most joy in life when we surrender to God.
2. Jesus obeyed God the Father's will, even when it sent Him to the cross to be our Savior. Have you trusted in Christ to save you?
3. Jesus submitted to the will of God, even when it was deathly hard (Luke 22:42). Are there areas in which you find it hard to obey God? Will you truly surrender those areas today?

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 9 | JAMES 4:13-17 | THE WILL OF GOD

START THINKING

1. Are you living in obedience to the will of God, or do you live your life based on what you desire and what you think is right?
2. Have you ever felt like you had a lot of time to make changes in your life? You know you drink too much, but you think that's just what people in your phase of life do. "I can quit anytime," or "I will settle down eventually." You know that you should be plugged into a good church so the people of God can encourage you in your walk with God. You tell yourself you will make those changes when you are not as busy.
3. We think we will get the most joy out of life if it goes our way, but we easily become anxious or irritated when things don't go our way. This way of thinking can lead to ignoring God's will for our life, and ultimately leads to less joy than if we were living in God's will.
4. In this passage, we are confronted with the brevity of life and the need to live in obedience to the will of God.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Don't Be Arrogant and Ignore God's Will for Your Life (4:13-14a, 16)**
2. **Life is Short (4:14b)**
3. **Be Wise and Live in Obedience to God's Will (4:15)**
4. **Don't Delay Obedience to God's Will (4:17)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. You are not the ruler of your life—God is. We find the most joy in life when we surrender to God.
2. Jesus obeyed God the Father's will, even when it sent Him to the cross to be our Savior. Have you trust in Christ to save you?
3. Jesus submitted to the will of God, even when it was deathly hard (Luke 22:42). Are there areas in which you find it hard to obey God? Will you truly surrender those areas today?

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 9 | JAMES 4:13-17 | THE WILL OF GOD

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. In what ways are you prone to ignoring God's will for your life? How do you live according to your desires, instead of God's will?
3. What step of obedience to God have you been putting off because you think you will have plenty of time to change in the future?

REFLECT

1. You need to make plans for your life, but are your plans characterized by boasting, arrogance and self-confidence, or are you depending on God as you plan?
2. What does it mean to say that God is sovereign? How does God's sovereignty factor into your struggles with addictive sin? How can the sovereignty of God bring you peace during troubled times?
3. All the decisions we make in life should be based on submission to the will of God. How often do you think about God's will for your life? What can you do to be more mindful of God's will?

REMEMBER

1. Some Scriptures tell us specifically about God's will for Christians. Look up one or two of the following passages and share with the group what they teach about God's will: 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 1 Peter 2:15.
2. God has grace for you when you are not obedient to His will. Share with the group one area of your life in which you need to start being obedient to God's will.

SURRENDER

1. It has been said "delayed obedience is disobedience." Is there an area of your life where you are delaying obedience? Are you willing to surrender that area to the Lord?
2. Jesus was willing to obey His Father, even when it meant dying on the cross to be our Savior. Have you trusted in the work of Christ to save you?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 4:15-16

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

Read Luke 22, focusing specifically on verses 39-46. Write in a journal 2-3 things that you learn about submitting to God's will from the example of Christ.

HELPFUL INSTRUCTIONS

LESSON 10 | JAMES 5:1-12

BIG IDEA

1. As Christians, we should be committed to using financial resources in ways that honor God and expand His kingdom.
2. In our culture today, suffering as a Christian does not seem normal, but in Bible times, suffering as a Christian was normal. We need to be prepared to endure suffering and trials in a Christ-like way.
3. As Christians, we are called to lives characterized by honesty and trustworthiness. Our “yes” should be “yes,” and our “no” should be “no.”

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. Use Wealth Properly (5:1-6)
2. Persevere Under Trials (5:7-11)
3. Be Trustworthy in Your Words (5:12)

START THINKING

1. As we begin the last chapter of the book of James, we see that James is packing the end of his letter with all the things he has left to say.
2. In this lesson alone, we will talk about money, suffering and our words—topics we need to hear about.
3. As we hear about what the Bible has to say on these matters, we will also talk about some way that these truths can apply to struggles with addictive sin.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. Use Wealth Properly (5:1-6)
 - a. These verses are speaking about wealthy people who are not Christians and who are abusing their wealth. James makes it clear that the day of judgment is coming for them, and that on that day, they will weep and howl and be in misery.
 - b. These non-Christian rich people abused their wealth in three main ways:
 - Hoarding (5:2-3): stockpiling wealth just to have it without any intention to use it. The wealth these people stockpiled was rotting and corroding.
 - Injustice (5:4): fraudulently withholding wages in a way that led to massive hardship, maybe even loss of life for their workers.
 - Extravagance (5:5): living a life filled with luxury and self-indulgence.

- c. Money is the great revealer of what you truly love and desire in your heart.
- d. In America, we are very blessed financially, and we would all be considered wealthy in other parts of the world.
- e. Even though these verses are primarily addressing people who are not Christians, there are lessons Christians need to learn.
 - James is not condemning wealth, but he is warning against the sinful use of wealth and ignoring the needs of others.
 - It is not wrong to save or invest our money in a wise way. We need to pay our bills on time and take care of our families. It is also not wrong to plan for the future, but it is possible to hoard wealth in a sinful way.
 - Wealth should be used for God's purposes and to serve others, not to serve ourselves.
 - i. Are you selfish with what God has given you, or are you willing to give away what God gives you?
 - ii. Are you missing opportunities to be a blessing because you are hoarding your wealth?
 - It is possible to acquire wealth in ways that do not honor God.
 - Earthly possessions or wealth will all be gone someday, so we need to store up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).
 - You cannot love God and money at the same time (Luke 16:13).
 - Loving money can lead to all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

2. Persevere Under Trials (5:7-11)

- a. These verses shift our focus from the unchristian wealthy people who are mistreating others to the people who are being mistreated.
- b. Christians are called to patiently endure suffering as they follow Christ.
 - Patience means, "to stay put and stand fast when you would like to run away" (Wiersbe, 161).
 - James uses two words for patience. In James 5:7, 8 and 10, he uses the word "patience" that means "long-tempered." In James 5:11, the word "steadfast" literally means "to remain under" and speaks of endurance under great stress (Wiersbe, 161).
 - Trouble and suffering are an inescapable part of life, so we need to be ready to respond in a godly way when suffering comes.
 - Living in America, we are conditioned to believe that life should be easy, but the Bible does not teach that life will be easy.
 - We are prone to grumble when things get hard (5:9), but we should put off grumbling and put on thankfulness.

c. The second coming of Christ is mentioned three times in verses 7-11.

- Our hope in suffering is that one day Jesus will come back.
- Not everything that is wrong will be made right in this life, but if you know Christ, one day everything will be set right.
- No one knows when Christ will return, which should motivate us to be diligent as we live for Christ now.

d. We see three examples of patience in these verses.

- Farmers (5:7): Farmers wait patiently for crops to grow, while trusting God for the rain they need.
- Prophets (5:10): The Old Testament prophets endured much suffering as they shared God's message with people who did not want to hear it. The prophets show us that obedience does not always produce an easy life.
- Job (5:11): Job endured great hardship in life, but he patiently endured his suffering.

e. Why should you be patient and endure suffering? Why persevere when life is hard? Because the reward is worth it. Jesus is worth it.

- "When the going is tough, God is producing a harvest in our lives" (Wiersbe, 163).
- Blessing comes when we remain steadfast (5:11).

3. Be Trustworthy in Your Words (5:12)

a. The words "but above all" let us know that the command in verse 12 is serious. We need to listen and pay attention.

b. Swearing oaths, or taking vows, was a major part of life in Biblical times.

c. This verse does not mean that we should never swear an oath or make a vow. There are times when it is right and appropriate to do so (e.g., a wedding or a courtroom). This verse is saying that flippantly swearing oaths should be unnecessary for Christians since we are to tell the truth at all times. Christians should not have to say things like, "I swear I am telling the truth."

- d. "A Spirit-transformed heart will reveal itself in honest speech" (MacArthur, 265).
- e. We should never use an oath to mislead someone.
- f. Do you say "yes" when you mean "maybe", and "maybe" when you mean "no"?
- g. How many times have you said you were going to change something in your life, but have not followed through? Does your "yes" mean "yes"?
- h. Does the way you use your words demonstrate the faith you claim to have, or do your words harm the faith you claim to have?
- i. As Christians, we are called to be trustworthy in how we speak. Are you known as a trustworthy person?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. To review, we looked at a warning for how we use wealth, a call to persevere under trials and a command to be trustworthy in our words.
2. Most of us here would have to say that we have been blessed financially. Are you honoring God in how you use your money? How can you look to serve or bless someone financially?
3. Trials are a part of life that we will never outrun. Are you grounded in your faith so that when trials come, you can patiently persevere? How does the return of Christ help you carry on when the going gets tough?
4. Are you trustworthy in how you use your words? When you say something, are people able to believe you will follow through? If not, how can you repent and begin to build a reputation of being trustworthy?
5. All the things we have talked about are characteristics of a believer in Jesus Christ. If you don't know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you can't grow in these areas. If you don't know Jesus, the place to start is by trusting in Him.

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 10 | JAMES 5:1-12 | HELPFUL INSTRUCTIONS

START THINKING

1. As we begin the last chapter of the book of James, we see that James is packing the end of his letter with all the things he has left to say.
2. In this lesson alone, we will talk about money, suffering and our words—topics we need to hear about.
3. As we hear about what the Bible has to say on these matters, we will also talk about some ways that these truths can apply to struggles with addictive sin.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. Use Wealth Properly (5:1-6)
2. Persevere Under Trials (5:7-11)
3. Be Trustworthy in Your Words (5:12)

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. To review, we looked at a warning for how we use wealth, a call to persevere under trials, and a command to be trustworthy in our words.
2. Most of us here would have to say that we have been blessed financially. Are you honoring God in how you use your money? How can you look to serve or bless someone financially?
3. Trials are a part of life that we will never outrun. Are you grounded in your faith so that when trials come, you can patiently persevere? How does the return of Christ help you carry on when the going gets tough?
4. Are you trustworthy in how you use your words? When you say something, are people able to believe you will follow through? If not, how can you repent and begin to build a reputation of being trustworthy?
5. All the things we have talked about are characteristics of a believer in Jesus Christ. If you don't know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you can't grow in these areas. If you don't know Jesus, the place to start is by trusting in Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 10 | JAMES 5:1-12 | HELPFUL INSTRUCTIONS

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. As Christians, we are called to use financial resources in ways that honor God and expand His kingdom. How have you been guilty of using financial resources in a way that does not honor God?
3. Christians are called to patiently endure suffering. What trials are you currently enduring?
4. Have you been guilty of not being trustworthy with your words?

REFLECT

1. Money is the great revealer of what you truly love and desire in your heart. If you follow the trail of how you use money, where does it lead? What do your spending and saving habits say about what you love?
2. Not everything that is wrong will be made right in this life, but if you know Christ, one day, in Heaven, everything will be made right. How can a heavenly focus help you endure trials now?

REMEMBER

1. You may not have lots of money, but how else has God blessed you in your life?
2. James used three examples of patience: farmers, prophets and Job. Which one is most helpful for you and why?

SURRENDER

1. As you endure trials, are there matters in your life that you need to surrender to God so that you can endure patiently?
2. Are you willing to surrender your money to God and be generous toward others?
3. If you are not trustworthy with your words, are you willing to surrender that to God and commit to being trustworthy?
4. All the things we have talked about are characteristics of a believer in Jesus. If you are not a believer in Jesus, what is keeping you from trusting Him today?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 5:7-8

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

In this study, we have talked about money, suffering and words. What area do you struggle with the most? Confess that to a brother or sister in Christ this week and ask them to pray for you.

Photocopies of this Study Guide and Discussion Questions may be made for your own church use only.

PRAYER

LESSON 11 | JAMES 5:13-20

BIG IDEA

The big idea in this passage is prayer. Prayer is all over this passage and is mentioned specifically in every verse except verses 19 and 20. Clearly, prayer is a big deal, and we need to spend some time thinking about it. Along with the focus on prayer, there are two other main ideas that can be connected to prayer—confession and restoration.

LESSON OVERVIEW

1. **Make Prayer a Priority (5:13-15, 17-18)**
2. **Confess Sin (5:16)**
3. **Work to Restore Others (5:19-20)**

START THINKING

1. Before James finishes his letter, he emphasizes some important matters. These are matters we are not only called to think about and agree with, but also to put into action.
2. In this passage, James talks about three important matters: prayer, confession and restoration.
3. The three matters won't always be easy or comfortable to do, but they are issues of our lives we need to be intentional about.
4. As we spend time talking about these matters, we will find that they are very important parts of the battle against addictive sins in our lives. No one can have lasting victory over addictive sin without practicing these instructions.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Make Prayer a Priority (5:13-15, 17-18)**
 - a. The word “pray” or “prayer” is used seven times in these verses, showing the importance of prayer.
 - b. James describes many circumstances that Christians could find themselves in—suffering, cheerfulness, sickness—and for each circumstance, the proper response is to pray.
 - c. The word “suffering” in verse 13 refers to evil treatment by people. The Christians that James was writing to were enduring evil treatment, and we will also be called to endure the same kind of evil treatment.
 - d. The phrase “let him pray” in verse 13 is in the present tense in the original Greek language, and suggests a continual pleading with God in prayer. It could be translated “let him keep on praying.” What have you given up praying for that you need to keep praying about continually?
 - e. We should not only pray when things are not going well, but we should also praise the Lord in prayer when things are going well.

- f. In this passage, James mentions three different groups of people who are to pray: individual Christians (5:13), elders or pastors (5:14), and the body of Christ (5:16). In essence, all Christians should pray.
- “Care and prayer for one another are not just intended to happen within the context of leadership in the church, but in the context of the church as a whole” (Platt, 101-102).
 - Are you committed to praying for those in your church? How can you grow to be more faithful in prayer for your church family?
- g. Verses 14 and 15 can present some challenges and leave us with more questions than answers. Here are a few thoughts and cautions.
- In verse 15, James is not giving us a hard and fast formula for healing the sick. Such a formula would not fit with the rest of Scripture or with our life experience. Many people have prayed in faith for healing, but have not received healing in this life.
 - James may be making a connection between sickness and sin, but we should be very careful about doing that. We should always be quick to confess our sin, but we should never insist that all sickness is a result of sin.
 - The focus in this passage is on prayer and not on anointing with oil.
 - Throughout the Bible, anointing someone with oil was a way to set them apart to God.
 - Anointing with oil could be seen as a way to intensify prayers for a very sick person. It could be seen as similar to fasting, in that, it is a way to break normal patterns and be serious about prayer in unusual circumstances.
 - “Anointing with oil is an external act of the body that accompanies, and gives expression to, the internal desire and disposition of faith to dedicate someone to God in a special way” (Desiring God—Oil).
 - The power to heal is not in the oil used for anointing, but “in the name of the Lord” (5:14).
- h. Note the example of Elijah concerning prayer.
- Elijah was used by God in extraordinary ways, but he was still human, just like us, and when it comes to prayer, we need to follow his example. Elijah prayed for big things, and he saw God work in big ways.
 - “Our prayers are powerful when they are prayed in line with God’s purposes and promises” (Allberry, 161).
 - Elijah prayed fervently. He did not quit praying or give up on prayer.
- i. Does your battle against addiction include a commitment to prayer? Are you praying personally? Are you praying with other brothers or sisters in Christ? Are you asking the leaders of your church to pray for you?

2. Confess Sin (5:16)

- a. The first thing we need to get clear in our minds and hearts is that verse 16 is a command, not a suggestion.
- b. When was the last time you confessed your sin to someone? You will never find lasting freedom until you are willing to be authentic and real about your sin struggles.
- c. A literal translation of this verse could be “Make it a habit to confess your sins to each other” (Wiersbe, 177).
- d. We need to cultivate friendships where confession can happen. Are you the type of person someone can confess sin to?
- e. We should be confessing sins to members of the body of Christ, and not just to a pastor.
- f. Confession should always lead to repentance.
- g. Our churches need to be places where people feel safe to confess sin and find help to repent. We should never gloss over sin, but we need to be quick to walk with those who want to turn from their sin.
- h. When someone confesses sin to us, we should ask good questions and provide accountability, but we should always pray with them as well.
- i. A commitment to pray with our brothers or sisters in Christ when they are confessing sin shows our dependence on God for the power to repent of sin.
- j. What sin do you need to confess? Who will you confess it to?
- k. Here are a few guiding thoughts that will lead to proper confessions:
 - Never confess sin beyond the circle of that sin’s influence.
 - Private sin requires private confession. Public sin requires public confession.
 - Use discretion confessing sins publicly. Sharing all the details could do more harm than the original sin.
 - When you are confessing hidden sin to a spouse, it might be wise to have a pastor or counselor there to help guide the conversation.
 - Ken Sande’s *Seven A’s of a Biblical Confession* are very helpful (Seven A’s).

3. Work to Restore Others (5:19-20)

- a. The final command in this passage is to seek after people who are wandering away from the Lord. This group could include believers who have wandered away from their faith, or people who, at one time, confessed Christ, but were not genuine in their faith.

- b. The word “wandering” conveys the idea of a slow fade or spiritual decline. Another word you could use is “backsliding.” This person is one who was once a committed follower of Christ, but who is slowly moving away from the Word of God and the church.
- c. “To wander from the truth is to wander from life” (Allberry, 161).
- d. As Christians, we need to be honest and admit our tendency to wander. An old hymn, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” states it this way:

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.
Here’s my heart, Oh take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.*

- e. “Either wandering will keep you from the truth, or the truth will keep you from wandering” (Allberry, 162).
- f. When a brother or sister in the church is wandering, it is not just their own personal problem. This passage calls Christians to seek after those who are wandering, and by God’s grace to help restore them.
- g. Throughout the history of the church, there have always been people who have professed faith in Christ, only to eventually wander from the truth and leave their faith behind, never to return to Christ. When someone is wandering from the truth, their very soul is at risk.
 - 1 John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”
 - When you get involved in the life of someone who is wandering from the truth, God might be using you to bring them to genuine faith in Christ.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. We have talked about three main ideas from this: prayer, confession and restoration.
2. Are you committed to prayer? Are you fervent in prayer like the example of Elijah? Who do you need to be praying for?
3. Are you committed to praying that God will give you victory over your struggles with addiction? Maybe the reason you are not seeing more growth is because you are not praying fervently?
4. When was the last time you confessed your sin to someone? As long as you hide your sin, you will never know victory and true freedom. Do you have a brother or sister in Christ you can confess to? Are you the type of person that others can confess their sins to?
5. Are you wandering from the truth? Are you as committed to following Christ today as you were when you first became a Christian? Are you willing to pursue other people who are wandering?
6. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? True freedom from sin is found only in a relationship with Him.

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON 11 | JAMES 5:13-20 | PRAYER

START THINKING

1. Before James finishes his letter, he emphasizes some important matters. These are matters we not only are called to think about and agree with, but also to put into action.
2. In this passage, James talks about three important matters: prayer, confession and restoration.
3. The three matters won't always be easy or comfortable to do, but they are issues of our lives we need to be intentional about.
4. As we spend time talking about these matters, we will find that they are very important parts of the battle against addictive sins in our lives. No one can have lasting victory over addictive sin without practicing these instructions.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Make Prayer a Priority (5:13-15, 17-18)**
2. **Confess Sin (5:16)**
3. **Work to Restore Others (5:19-20)**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. We have talked about three main ideas from this: prayer, confession and restoration.
2. Are you committed to prayer? Are you fervent in prayer like the example of Elijah? Who do you need to be praying for?
3. Are you committed to praying that God will give you victory over your struggles with addiction? Maybe the reason you are not seeing more growth is because you are not praying fervently.
4. When was the last time you confessed your sin to someone? As long as you hide your sin, you will never know victory and true freedom. Do you have a brother or sister in Christ you can confess to? Are you the type of person that others can confess their sins to?
5. Are you wandering from the truth? Are you as committed to following Christ today as you were when you first became a Christian? Are you willing to pursue other people who are wandering?
6. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? True freedom from sin is found only in a relationship with Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LESSON 11 | JAMES 5:13-20 | PRAYER

CONFESS

1. What sins have you given in to this week that you would like to confess to the group (James 5:16)?
2. How do you fall short in prayer? How do you desire to grow in prayer?

REFLECT

1. The phrase “let him pray” in verse 13 is in the present tense and could be translated “let him keep on praying.” Does your battle against addiction include a commitment to prayer? If not, how can you become more committed to praying?
2. The word “wandering” has the idea of a slow fade or spiritual decline. How are you prone to wander in your life?
3. If you see a brother or sister in Christ wandering from the truth, do you think it is their own problem or is it your problem, too? Why or why not?

REMEMBER

1. We need to be people who respond well if a brother or sister in Christ confesses sin to us.
2. What would be some good ways to help and encourage someone who has confessed sin to you?

SURRENDER

1. What sin have you been unwilling to confess to a brother or sister in Christ? Will you now surrender that unwillingness to God?
2. Have you been neglecting prayer? Are you willing to pray more?
3. Is there a brother or sister in your life that you need to warn about their wandering? Will you follow through with that person, even if it is uncomfortable?

PRAYER

What prayer requests do you want to share with the group?

MEMORY VERSES

James 5:16

PERSONAL GROWTH PROJECT

We have talked about prayer, confession and restoration. What area do you struggle with the most? Confess that matter to a brother or sister in Christ this week and ask that person to pray for you.

B I B L E S T U D Y S E R I E S

THE BOOK OF JAMES: WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

This study of the book of James is designed for use in weekly meetings of Gospel Centered Recovery (GCR) groups and focuses on addiction as a sin problem rooted in the heart. The study will help individuals discover what is driving their struggle with addictive sin and find freedom in Christ. The study is designed to go through the book of James passage by passage, teaching big truths and applying them to life, with a specific focus on struggles with addiction. The goal is to spend 25-30 minutes teaching and then gather into small groups for discussion, prayer, and accountability, ultimately pointing people to Jesus Christ as the true hope over addiction.

STUDY SERIES OVERVIEW

- Starting Your GCR Group
- Trials and Wisdom
- Facing Temptations
- Don't Be Deceived
- No Partiality
- Faith and Works
- Controlling Your Tongue
- True Wisdom
- Conflicts and Worldliness
- The Will of God
- Helpful Instructions
- Prayer

ABOUT THE GOSPEL CENTERED RECOVERY PROGRAM

Gospel Centered Recovery (GCR) is a weekly support group for men and women who are struggling with addiction, or habitual sins. The program features a 30-minute Bible teaching session, followed by break-out groups for discussion and accountability. GCR emphasizes the importance of biblical community, which can be found in the local church.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Funkhouser is the Executive Director at The Refuge in Winterset, IA. He is a certified biblical counselor with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors and a Commissioned Addictions Biblical Counselor with The Addiction Connection.

[INSERT BACK COVER PAGE]