

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE APPLICATION

Introduction to James

James: The writer of this epistle was a half-brother of Jesus who had earlier misunderstood and challenged Jesus' mission (John 7:2-5). Later he became a leader in the early church, one whose example earned him a reputation for wisdom and godliness. James was not one of Jesus' apostles. He was Jesus' brother, a fact that undoubtedly contributed to his fame. But Jesus had three other brothers. To write off James's authority as merely positional would be shortsighted and inaccurate. No, James was trusted and respected for his personal integrity.

This book is a powerful and practical manual for applying our faith to everyday life. With force, conviction, and clarity, James asserts that an authentic faith is a faith that works; it is not merely verbal but visible, and it changes a believer's conduct and character.

The book of James was one of the earliest letters, probably written before A.D. 50. After Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:55-8:3), persecution increased, and Christians in Jerusalem were scattered throughout the Roman world. Because these early believers did not have the support of established Christian churches, James wrote to them as a concerned leader, to encourage them in their faith during those difficult times. This book is just as applicable for Christians now. It is often considered a how-to book on Christian living. Confrontation, challenge, and a call to commitment await you in its pages.

The greatest insight into James's leadership character comes from reading his epistle. First, we discover that he was a realist. He begins his letter by talking about how to respond to tough times. What kind of man encourages others to rejoice in trials because God will use difficulty to mature his people? Only one who has been there and lived through such trials. His readers knew that he had lived what he wrote.

WEEK ONE
SELF-DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

James 1:1-3

Trials and temptations are a part of every person's life. Believers in Christ, and non-believers, will all face some sort of hardship. James begins the book with the concept of rejoicing in the face of hardships and considering the trials pure joy.

Trials rightly faced are harmless, but wrongly met become temptations to evil. **Self-discipline** plays a major part in how we handle our trials and temptations. We will indefinitely be faced with trials of many kinds. Our faith, like gold, stands the test of fire, or trials, and is the very foundation of our religious attitude.

The key is our knowing and understanding that God uses trials to produce "perseverance". Perseverance is the patience or the "staying power" we will gain from the trials we face.

Think of it this way: Without consistent pressure and heat, a lump of coal will never become a diamond.

WEEK TWO

SELF-DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

We can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure.

JAMES 1:4-6

Verse 4 – In the King James Bible, patience is the word used in the place of perseverance. God wants us to be self-disciplined with our patience so that He can make us mature and complete. This does not mean He will keep us from experiencing pain. Instead of complaining about our struggles, we should see them as opportunities for growth. Thank God for promising to be with you during hard times, and ask Him for strength to solve the problems or endure them. Then be patient. He will help you grow.

Verse 5 – Wisdom is not only knowledge, but the ability to make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. Wisdom is practical discernment. Wisdom begins with respect for God, continues into right living, and results in the ability to tell right from wrong. God will give us this wisdom, but our goals must be God-centered rather than self-centered. A leader has to be willing to humble himself and ask for the wisdom needed and “it will be given **generously** to him”. See also Matthew 7:7 and Proverbs 2:3-6

Verse 6 – God says He will give us wisdom. Our part is to believe and not doubt. Believing in the existence of God is not nearly enough. We must also believe in His loving care and **expect** that he will hear and answer when we pray. Note that sometimes His answers are not our answers, but if we are willing, our desires will become the same as His. Our doubts can consume us and lead us into an unsettled state, just as James compares to the waves of the sea. Disciplining ourselves to focus on the “One who calms the sea” instead of the white caps of the waves will lead to a deeper relationship with God and a sure and solid answer.

WEEK THREE
SELF-DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

James 1: 7-8

In verse 6, the believer who doubts is like the waves of the sea. His request is not really a request at all because he does not believe God will honor it. Verses 7-8 refer to that sort of disbelieving man. A doubter cannot expect to receive anything from God. Why should God reveal His Truth to anyone who would rather fellowship with his or her problem? Consider this: “So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold— am I about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Rev. 3:16) The self-disciplined man is not fickle as the double-minded man is. He seeks the wisdom of God then acts upon His council.

WEEK FOUR
SELF-DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

James 1:9-10

The world's measuring stick of success is high position. God's measuring stick of success is quite the contrary. Because material pleasures can "pass away like a wild flower", (v. 10), God wants us to "glory", or boast, only in our high position as a child of God. Think about your goals: Do they strictly reflect earthly ambitions, or do they include the pursuit of the One that can bring eternal satisfaction and peace?

WEEK FIVE
SELF DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

JAMES 1:11-12

Please note that verse 11 ties in with the previous verses 9 and 10. Here James is emphasizing how temporary the physical things in life are. Consider the things you hold on to as a security blanket: your mate, your children, your home, your job, money, position, health, a friendship, etc. Instead of trusting in that that can be lost at any time, one should invest in a growing relationship with the Lord. The spiritual wealth that God showers upon His children will never be taken away.

James teaches in verse 12 that one of the ways we demonstrate our deep love for God is through faithful perseverance under trial/temptation. The solution for victoriously enduring the trials of life is to be found in a growing relationship with the Father and in choosing to cooperate with His Word. Jesus did not promise life would be free of hardships, but He encouraged us to "...take heart! I have overcome the world" John 16:33. Perseverance in faith and hope always brings the blessing of winning.

WEEK SIX
SELF DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

JAMES 1:13-15

An animal or fish can be successfully trapped when the lure of the bait becomes too pleasurable for them to resist. They will eventually lose caution and ignore a trap or hook when it's bait strongly appeals to their senses and desires. That's the way sin is. It appeals to our fleshly desires by looking attractive, appealing and pleasurable. If left unchecked, our lust, craving, or longing for the temptation will lead to sin. And sin always leads to death: death of relationships, ministries, careers, trust, self-respect, purity, innocence, etc.

What temptations are most difficult for you to resist? All temptation begins in our *thoughts*. It's *there* that we must fight and win the battle. Sin will only have a hold on you if you give it permission, so *choose* to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and *take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*” 2 Corinthians 10:5. When we expose our fleshly lusts to God—to the Light—and *replace them* with what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy (Phil.4:8), peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7)!

WEEK SEVEN
SELF DISCIPLINE: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

JAMES 1:16-18

The strength, perseverance, faith and hope that we need to make it through any trial or temptation in life are available to the believer as a gift from God. Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do everything *through Him* who gives me strength.”

As leaders, if we are going to insist on excellence from our people, we must *set the example* of honesty and integrity for them to follow. We are all subject to temptation because we are clothed in flesh; therefore, it is essential that we “keep watching and praying that (we) may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt.26:41). Only when we resist our fleshly desires and choose to walk in obedience to Christ can we be a positive influence on others.

WEEK EIGHT
SELF DISCIPLINE: LISTENING AND DOING

JAMES 1:19-21

The rest of the first chapter of James describes godly living...things we are to do as followers of Christ to attract the world to Him. In verses 19 and 20 he deals with communication. Reflect upon what kind of *listener* you are. Verse 19 says to be “quick” or “willing to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” A respected leader is one whom others feel is approachable. Do those under your authority feel they can share their thoughts, ideas or concerns with you without you becoming angry, defensive or indifferent? According to verse 21 we must be willing to daily add Christ—“humbly accept the Word planted in you”—and subtract sin—“get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent.” Only then will our conversation exemplify godliness to a world weary of worn-out words.

WEEK NINE
SELF DISCIPLINE: LISTENING AND DOING

JAMES 1:22-25

This passage teaches us that one must not only be a hearer of the Word but also a doer. God does not want us to merely glance at ourselves through the mirror of His Word, and then walk away unchanged. He wants us to look closely at our hearts in light of it, and then cooperate with Him in conforming us to His image. A truly successful leader is one who *humbly* receives the Truth and is willing to adjust his life to it, “for he will be blessed in what he does” (verse 25). The one who obeys God’s Law will find true freedom in life. In John 8:31-32 Jesus said, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free.”

WEEK TEN
SELF DISCIPLINE: LISTENING AND DOING

JAMES 1:26-27

Have you ever known anyone who claimed to be a Christian and yet out of his/her mouth came words of filth, slander, gossip, negativity, etc.? According to Ephesians 4:29, unwholesome talk should not come out of the mouth of the believer. Our speech should build others up and benefit those who listen. Verse 26 admonishes us to keep a tight rein on our tongue in order for our witness to be valid.

Verse 27 emphasizes God's desire for his followers to be pure and faultless in their conduct and character. In conduct, we should tend to the needs of others. In character, we must keep ourselves *free* from the world's evil influence. Ask God to show you any changes in your speech, conduct, or character that you need to make in order to point others to Him. Always keep in mind that *your walk talks more than your talk talks!*

WEEK ELEVEN
SELF DISCIPLINE: FAVORITISM FORBIDDEN

JAMES 2:1-4

As a leader, one of your most important rolls is to be a team-builder. One of the quickest ways to cause division and discouragement amongst your group would be for you to exercise favoritism or preferential treatment. Man's tendency is to judge others based on their appearance, accomplishments, power, wealth, personality, etc. God, however, looks on man's heart, and His Word states that He shows no favoritism (Rom. 2:11). If we are going to imitate Christ, we must regard *all* people with respect and dignity. Effective leaders set an example by treating *every* member of the team as valuable and important.

WEEK TWELVE

FAVORITISM FORBIDDEN

JAMES 2:5-7

Throughout history, God has shown special concern for the welfare of the economically poor by making special provisions for them. For His people to turn their backs on the needy would be contrary to God's character and would show a lack of honor for the poor man. Very often, it is "the poor in the eyes of the world" who are rich in faith and love for God, and who will inherit the fullness of eternity with God.

In verse 7, James goes on to remind his listeners that it has been the financially rich who have caused hardship and misery for them through oppression, exploitation and blasphemy. Note here that James may have been referring to the wealthy Sadducees of his day, who actively and fiercely persecuted Jesus and the early church.

Our character is revealed by the way we treat others. If our character is to reflect the heart of God, we will see *every* person as one whom God loves and has purposefully created. Why has God allowed certain ones to cross our paths? Are we allowing Him to teach us to value the uniqueness of each one? Are we treated *everyone* the way *we* would like to be treated?

WEEK THIRTEEN
SELF DISCIPLINE: FAVORITISM FORBIDDEN

JAMES 2:8-10

If we consider God's law given in Leviticus 19:18, "Love your neighbor as yourself," we find the key to resisting the sin of showing favoritism. This God-given love is expressed through *genuine concern* about the lives of others. It also implies that we take an active roll in ministering to and meeting others' needs. Leaders that integrate love for their "neighbor" in the work place help create an environment of "family" and of positive self-esteem that will only benefit the whole. We *all* want to feel loved, needed and respected. Remember: Those who give have all things.

WEEK FOURTEEN
JUSTICE: FAVORITISM FORBIDDEN

James 2:11-13

We are all guilty of falling short of **God's Standards**. However, when God allows us to see our failures, He is always ready to pick us up, dust us off and set our feet back on the right path. No matter how many times we stumble, He is willing to extend mercy to the one who seeks His forgiveness.

The person who truly appreciates this undeserved forgiveness of God tends to be one who lavishes unconditional love and mercy on others. Are you guilty of scrutinizing others through a self-righteous, critical eye? God's Word teaches that we are **all** lawbreakers; therefore, we should not look down on and pass judgment on one another. (Romans 14:10-13) Let's learn to enjoy people by keeping in mind that God isn't finished with them—**or us**—yet!

WEEK FIFTEEN
JUSTICE: FAITH AND DEEDS

James 2:14-17

In our society, we hear the phrase “talk is cheap”. You really can’t trust and believe everything people say to you. In the same way, our faith is “cheap” unless we accompany it with acts. God-talk without God-acts is nonsense. As leaders, we must strive to have the same characteristics as Jesus. When someone is in need, we must be willing to meet their needs if we have the resources to do so. “Faith without works is dead.”

WEEK SIXTEEN
JUSTICE: FAITH AND DEEDS

James 2:18-19

What a challenge!! “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” Faith and deeds fit together hand in glove. While it is true that our good deeds can never earn salvation, true faith results in a changed life and good deeds. James says that even the demons *believe* that there is one God, and they are afraid of that one God. But, believing that God exists does not make a changed life. True faith involves a commitment of your whole self to God.

WEEK SEVENTEEN
JUSTICE: FAITH AND DEEDS

James 2:20-22

Once again, James makes known the fact that faith without deeds is useless. Would Abraham be considered righteous when he offered his son Isaac on the altar if his faith and actions were not working together? No. But, his faith was made complete by what he did. (See Genesis 22)

The leadership skill in chapter 2 has focused on *Justice*. Consider this verse to help tie together justice, acts, and faith.

Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good.

*And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly
and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

People thrive in a setting in which fairness and justice are practiced. Our faith, when accompanied by just deeds, will bring us one step closer to living out the character of Christ. The character of God is the absolute standard for justice, and our awareness of this standard is part of our having been created in the image of God. Be encouraged to press on, to act justly, and to have an unfailing faith in our Lord.

WEEK EIGHTEEN
JUSTICE: FAITH AND DEEDS

James 2:23-24

What a wonderful scripture! Abraham was called God's friend. James says that Abraham was considered "righteous" for what he *did*. In Romans 4:1-5, Paul says that Abraham was justified because he *believed*. These two statements compliment each other.

Once again, true faith always results in deeds, but the deeds do not justify us. Faith brings us salvation; active obedience demonstrates that our faith is genuine.

WEEK NINETEEN
JUSTICE: FAITH AND DEEDS

James 2:25-26

We are given example after example of how faith and deeds must work together. James does not spend only one or two verses on this concept. Nor is he the only author in the Bible that addresses faith and deeds.

Another example of faith and deeds working hand in hand is Rahab, the prostitute. She acted justly for God's people by hiding them and sending their enemy in a different direction. She also believed in God's power to spare her and her family members from death during the battle.

As James reflects once more on faith and deeds, his closing statement on this is "...so faith without deeds is dead."

WEEK TWENTY
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TAMING THE TONGUE

JAMES 3:1-2

Do you practice what you preach? Does your walk match your talk? That is the challenge not only for teachers and leaders in the church body, but for those in any area of God-given responsibility. Reflect on James 1:22 which instructs us to “not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. *Do* what it says.” If our leadership is to be effective in influencing others to strive for excellency, then we must *set the example* for them to follow.

When we accept the responsibility of leadership, we must also be aware that others will more strictly scrutinize our lives. Though we will never be without fault, self-control in the specific areas of our thoughts, our tongues and our actions is vital. If we want our instruction and authority to carry any weight, others must *see* that we do not practice a double standard.

WEEK TWENTY-ONE
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TAMING THE TONGUE

JAMES 3:3-4

These two verses are illustrations leading up to the point that James will make in verse five concerning our tongues. In the case of the horse, we see that by having control of his mouth, one can control his entire body. In the case of the ship, a comparatively small rudder directs even the largest ship where the pilot desires. Since our very small tongues direct our behavior, we should be conscious of the words that we speak. Let's be willing to daily pray: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be *pleasing in Your sight*, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" Psalm 19:14.

WEEK TWENTY-TWO
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TAMING THE TONGUE

JAMES 3:5-6

James compared a person's tongue to a horse's bit and a ship's rudder to drive home the point that it may be small, but the tongue is extremely powerful and influential. Think of ways the tongue is like fire. What can one spark do to an entire forest? The words that roll off our tongues can cause quick and devastating damage. They can destroy and hurt lives.

On the other hand, Proverbs 12:25 says, "An anxious heart weighs a man down, *but a kind word cheers him up.*" Proverbs 25:11 says that "A *word aptly spoken* is like apples of gold in settings of silver." In any area of leadership or authority, one of your rolls is to be a cheerleader! The genuine confidence and praise you express to others has the power to influence them on to accomplishing nearly anything. Determine to begin today to look for what others around you are doing *right*, and *tell them!* Then note the *results* of that encouragement.

WEEK TWENTY-THREE
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TAMING THE TONGUE

JAMES 3:7-9

Picture in your mind the forked tongue of a snake. Not pretty, huh? So it is with the uncontrolled tongue. Sometimes it spews out encouragement, Truth, blessings and praise to the Father, and other times it emits filth, slander, curses, and hate. Take a close look at verse 8: “but *no man* can tame the tongue. It is a *restless evil*, full of *deadly poison*.” If no human can control this wild beast, what does James mean when he instructs us to keep a tight reign on our tongues (James 1:26)? He means that we are to yield our thoughts and words to the control of God. *Only He* can make our mouths instruments of blessing and praise.

Remember that God gave us two ears and only one mouth. We should strive to listen twice as much as we speak. Instead of being quick to respond, we should ask ourselves if what we are thinking would bless and benefit those who listen (Eph. 4:29). Who needs to hear words of blessing from you today?

WEEK TWENTY-FOUR
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TAMING THE TONGUE

JAMES 3:10-12

Consider the source of your words. Luke 6:45 says, “The good man brings good things out of the *good stored up* in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the *evil stored up* in his heart. For out of the overflow of his *heart* his mouth speaks.” If our words originate in our thoughts, it is here that the Christian must yield in obedience to Christ so that the flow of our words is consistently pure.

What things could you store up in your heart so that your mouth would *only speak* what is pure, lovely, true, noble, right, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8)? Daily Bible studies, meditation on/memorization of Scripture, listening to Christian music and/or sermon tapes and reading Christian materials are all wholesome ways to fill one’s mind.

You’ve probably heard the saying, “Garbage in, garbage out.” Ask God to show you any “garbage” that you are taking in that is affecting your purity. Are you willing to give up what He shows you? Be a leader who strives to develop your character to the highest of standards.

WEEK TWENTY-FIVE
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

JAMES 3:13-14

Think of a person in your life whom you greatly admire. How would you describe him/her? Would you say that you have learned more from watching the way they have lived life or from words they have spoken to you? A wise person in God's eyes is one whose **walk** reflects righteous living. This person understands what the will of God is and makes the most of every opportunity to **actively serve others**. (See Ephesians 5: 15-21.) These people touch our lives and challenge us to better ourselves by their inspiring example!

“Worldly wisdom” teaches us to look out for “number one”. Its self-serving nature tells us to fight for what we “deserve” no matter what the cost, or how we have to manipulate to get it. Its characteristics include deceit, jealousy, selfishness, arrogance, self-elevation and the desire to *be* served. These are not people we tend to gravitate toward, are they?

Contemplate this question: Which person of the two described above has inner peace and joy? It's worth repeating: Those who give have all things.

WEEK TWENTY-SIX
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

JAMES 3:15-16

In verse 15 James reminds us that “wisdom” characterized by *self-centeredness* is not from God. The result of being prideful most certainly damages our relationships with others by causing division, bitterness, divorce, lawsuits, jealousy, anger and loss of love, trust and fellowship.

The world teaches us to look for what *we can gain* in our relationships. It’s a “What’s in it for me?” attitude. Christ’s life demonstrated the exact opposite. He looked for ways He could *give* to others. God’s Word tells us He came to serve, not *be* served. Jesus Himself encouraged His disciples to imitate His example when He said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and *the servant of all*” (Mark 9:35).

Think of one of your most important relationships. Do you look for ways you can serve that person, or do you find yourself preoccupied with ways he/she can meet your needs? What changes in your attitude and behavior do you need to make out of obedience to Christ?

WEEK TWENTY-SEVEN
STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION: TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

JAMES 3:17-18

One thing that God's wisdom motivates His followers to do is to work for peace...to actively be peacemakers. Psalm 34:14 admonishes believers to "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and *pursue* it."

In any "family", be it at work, home, church, in a club, etc., we encounter various personalities. Because of this, from time to time it is inevitable that conflict will arise. Maybe there is someone in your life right now who has hurt you. What are you doing with that wound? Are you harboring bitterness, ignoring, and maybe even belittling that person to others? If so, consider the pain such pride and unforgiveness is causing *you*. Ask God to give you the *desire* to seek peace with this person, and then seize the opportunity He gives you to do so. *You make the first move* to open the door of communication that will bring healing in this relationship.

What are wise and practical ways to negotiate peace? Calm and honest communication, thoughtfully listening to the other person's feelings and hurts, and a willingness to admit and apologize for one's own failures are all ways we can seek reconciliation with others. What are you waiting for?

WEEK TWENTY-EIGHT
SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO GOD

JAMES 4:1-3

Have you ever experienced an occasion when someone, who is typically unhappy and hard to get along with, suddenly does an about face right before asking you for a favor or reward? Can you think of a time when you manipulated someone with an extra deed or word of kindness just so you could get what you desired in return?

You *may* be able to hide your hidden agenda from the eyes of men, but God cannot be deceived. He knows your heart. (See Luke 16:15) Just as we can often “see through” someone who is insincere, our prayers cannot manipulate God. When we ask things of Him, He knows whether or not our desires are for His honor or for our own selfish benefit and pleasures.

Only God can give us pure hearts and pure motives when we lay our requests before Him. As we give Him our hearts through daily prayer and Bible study, He begins to reshape our thinking and our desires into requests that He will pour out His blessings upon.

WEEK TWENTY-NINE
SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO GOD

JAMES 4:4-6

We live in a world that entices us to gratify our fleshly desires. Advertisements glamorizing drinking, smoking, gambling and all kinds of other indulgements lure us to crutches and quick fixes that leave us empty. Many choose to live life in the fast lane. They chase after more money/possessions, power in the workplace, and the pursuit to be known as a valuable and successful member of their community yet still find themselves unfulfilled.

When worldly pleasures captivate our minds and hearts, our relationship with God suffers. Though initially worldly gains may satisfy, they will not provide lasting peace and fulfillment. Jesus says in John 10:10 that He came to give us *abundant life*. Internal joy and satisfaction overflow from those who seek an intimate, daily relationship with Jesus Christ.

WEEK THIRTY
SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO GOD

JAMES 4:7-10

What area in your life do you have trouble *turning over* to God's control? Is it a relationship, a bad habit or addiction, your future plans, your finances or, in general, your "worries"?

Anything that we hang on to or seek control of is what we are enslaved to. God longs to give us complete freedom by asking us to cast *all* of our cares on Him. (See 1 Peter 5:7) Jesus says in John 14:1, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. *Trust* in God; *trust* also in Me."

The more we hold firmly to God's promises and find Him faithful to them, the easier it is to let go and trust Him fully with *all our cares*. Choose inner peace today by asking Him to show you what you are hanging on to that He wants you to surrender to His control. Believe that He only wants what is best for you.

WEEK THIRTY-ONE
SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO GOD

JAMES 4:11-12

One vital characteristic of a successful and positively influential leader is that he/she treats others with respect and dignity. This person is someone whom you can trust to never slander or tear apart your character or person. This is one who looks for ways to build you up rather than habitually pick your efforts apart. You know that this person believes in you by the way he/she challenges you to aim for and achieve high goals.

Do the people you lead know that you will always protect their reputation? Are you someone they know they can trust? Remember that you can positively influence an environment of mutual respect and consideration amongst co-workers by the example *you* set.

WEEK THIRTY-TWO
LONG-RANGE PLANNING: BOASTING ABOUT TOMORROW

JAMES 4:13-14

Wise leaders know that planning and setting goals are necessary for success. However, God tells us in verse 14 that we do not know what will happen tomorrow. He is reminding us that ultimately all of our long-range plans, goals and dreams must be kept submissive to His will.

Consider God's wisdom from two Proverbs passages:

"To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue" Proverbs 16:1.

"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. The Lord works out everything for His own ends" Proverbs 16:3,4a.

God wants to be the One who directs our paths. Before planning for the future, stop and ask God to *lead you* in knowing His will and in establishing the necessary steps for success in reaching His goals.

WEEK THIRTY-THREE
LONG-RANGE PLANNING: THE DANGERS OF PRIDE

JAMES 4:15-17

God's Word makes it clear that a prideful, boastful heart will lead to destruction and failure. (See Proverbs 16:18.) He says to "***Humble*** yourselves under God's mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time" 1Peter 5:6. God delights in revealing His will to us when He knows ***we are willing to obey it***. When we know the right thing to do, we demonstrate a heart of submission, humility and obedience to God by doing it!

When we live for ourselves, thinking we are in charge of our lives, we are destined for failure. On the other hand, embracing humility and dependence on God in everything we do leads to blessing! What has the Spirit been impressing on your heart that He wants you to ***do*** or ***stop doing***? Ask Him to give you the will and strength to obey.

WEEK THIRTY-FOUR
JUSTICE: WARNING TO RICH OPPRESSORS

James 5:1-3

After reading this, you will probably feel one of two ways: glad you aren't rich or afraid because you are rich. Webster's definition of "oppress" is "to crush by abuse of power or authority". James is actually proclaiming the worthlessness of riches, not the worthlessness of the rich.

When Christ returns, today's money will be worthless, so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will be worthwhile in God's eternal kingdom.

Does this mean we should not have money? No. Money is not the problem. The love of money is what will lead to evil. We must have money to live, support our families, help spread the gospel, and support our churches effectively.

Take this as a warning from James to all Christians who are tempted to adopt worldly standards rather than God's standards.
(Romans 12:1, 2)

WEEK THIRTY-FIVE
JUSTICE: WARNING TO RICH OPPRESSORS

James 5:4-6

According to Zechariah 7: 9-10, when true justice is administered, it is expressed in acts of mercy and compassion, particularly for those who are destitute (widows, orphans, aliens, and the poor). Real justice involves the application of power and influence to other concerns.

James is speaking to those rich oppressors who do not pay fairly. With no opportunity to work off their debts, poor people often died of starvation. God called this murder. In today's world, hoarding money, exploiting employees, and living self-indulgently will not escape God's notice.

WEEK THIRTY-SIX
JUSTICE: PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

James 5:7-9

As a farmer waits patiently for his crops to grow, he does not wait without working. There is much to be done. The same is for Christians. We are waiting for Christ's return, but until that time, we must work diligently to further God's kingdom. The farmer and the Christian must live by faith looking for future rewards for their work. As leaders, we must work faithfully to build His kingdom. He'll come when the time is right. Are you ready?

WEEK THIRTY-SEVEN
JUSTICE: PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

James 5:10-11

There were many prophets who suffered and were persecuted. Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah are just a few. Some of them persevered through terrible suffering. Through their stories, we can see how God is full of compassion and mercy.

Let's learn from these prophets. God is the same forever. He is still full of compassion and mercy, and He will reign over this world. When our suffering seems too much to handle, remember that He hears our cries, knows our pain, and will be faithful to pull us through. He has proved it over and over again.

WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT
JUSTICE: PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

James 5:12

“Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’, and your ‘no’ be ‘no’”.

If a person is known for exaggerations and lies, he will probably have trouble getting others to believe him on his word. Christians should never become like that. A simple yes or no should suffice if the person is honest. By avoiding lies, half-truths, and omissions of the truth, you will become known as a trustworthy person.

Leaders are looked upon as leaders because they have demonstrated characteristics of leadership that are honorable and trustworthy. Our tongue can be used for evil or good. Let’s make sure our words are salted with God’s truths and are guarded against Satan’s lies.

WEEK THIRTY-NINE
JUSTICE: PRAYER OF FAITH

James 5:13-14

When do we pray? When we are sick? When we are happy?
When we don't know what else to do? Yes! Always!!

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says for us to pray continually.

We should also share our prayer needs with others. Leaders should count on others for support and prayer. They are often the ones who need it most. After all, to whom much is given, much is required.

Prayer is so important in our daily walk with Christ. Without it, there is no communication between Christ and ourselves. How effective can we be as leaders if we aren't communicating with the greatest of all leaders? Listen and learn... continually.

WEEK FORTY
JUSTICE: PRAYER OF FAITH

James 5:15-16

“The prayer offered in faith” does not refer to the faith of the sick person, but to the faith of those praying. God heals, faith doesn’t, and all prayers are subject to God’s will.

God heals and God forgives. Thankfully, we can go straight to Him for forgiveness. Why then, does James say we should confess our sins to each other? If we have sinned against another, we must ask forgiveness from that person. If we need support as we struggle with a sin, we should confess that sin to those who are able to provide that loving support we need.

God knows our hearts and our intentions and forgives us when we sincerely seek His forgiveness. Let’s also try to do the same for others.

WEEK FORTY-ONE
JUSTICE: PRAYER OF FAITH

James 5:17-18

After reading these verses, you may question the statement “Elijah was a man **just like us**.” He prayed for no rain and there was none. He prayed for rain and it rained. Why were his prayers answered?

The Christian’s most powerful resource is communion with God through prayer. Sometimes the results are greater than we could imagine. Thinking that prayer is a last resort after all else fails is the backward approach to prayer. Why not experience all God has to offer from the start? God’s power is infinitely greater than ours, so let’s rely on it. God encourages us to do so.

WEEK FORTY-TWO
JUSTICE: PRAYER OF FAITH

James 5:19-20

The book of James emphasizes faith in action. Living in obedience to Christ is the evidence and result of faith. God's word is not just something we read or think about, but something we do. When a believer has wandered from the truth and is living a life not consistent with his or her beliefs, it is the responsibility of other Christians to take the initiative, pray for the other person, act in love, and meet the other person where he or she is in order to bring him or her back to God.

The body of believers ought to be an example of heaven on earth, drawing people to Christ through love for God and each other. We are all to be followers *of* Christ, and leaders *to* Christ. Allow God to use you to be the best leader and follower you can be.