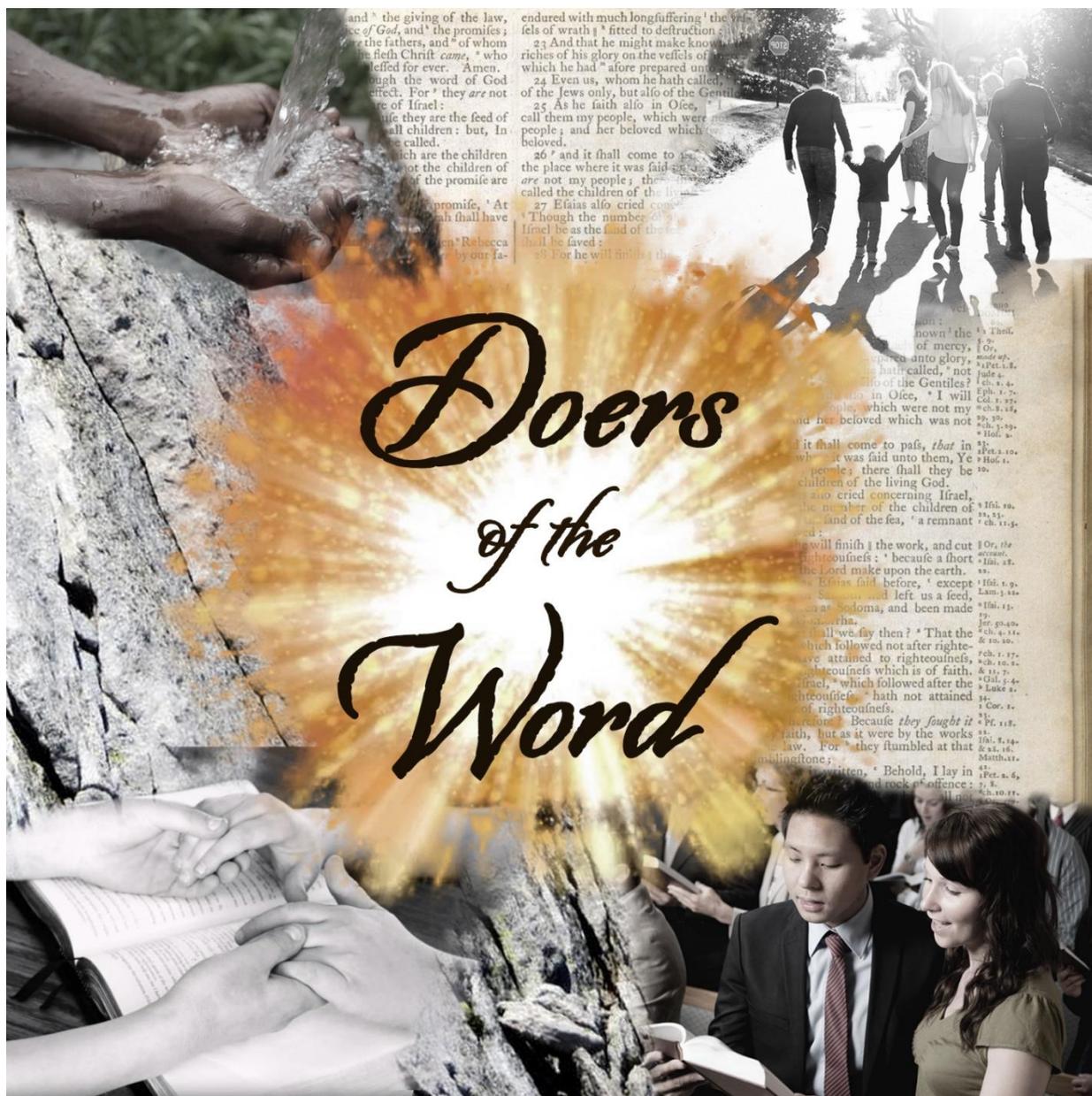


IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

Becoming Doers of the Word



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INTRODUCTION

Our goal for the next three years to become DOERS OF THE WORD. This follows from our previous three years: PEOPLE OF THE BOOK become DOERS OF THE WORD. Each year will have a different focus each beginning with the phrase “Each day I’ll...” Year one’s focus is “Each day I’ll do a golden deed.” This comes from the opening phrase of the song “A Beautiful Life.” Such a goal is going to require doing something. Serving God is not a mental or academic exercise. It is not enough to know a great deal of Bible trivia. We must put the rubber to the road and get to work. Our three-year theme comes from James 1:22: “But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” The Epistles of James is all about application and can help us move from knowledge to action—from people of the book to doers of the word.

Obviously, James is not a long book and we cannot spend 26 classes covering 5 chapters. In discussing what to pair with James we decided on a study of the fruit of the spirit from Galatians 5. If we are going to be doers of the word, if we are going to be people of sacrifice then we must cultivate a spirit, heart, and mind for our Lord. It is very important for us to see and understand that you can only fake it—go through the motions—for so long. You will get tired and quit. But if our spirit, heart, mind, and attitude have been changed by our relationship with Christ then we can continually do what we ought to do. Not because we are checking off the items on a “to-do” list, but because it is right.

Our study of James will be textual, working through all five chapters. Our study of the fruit of the spirit will be more of a topical study, seeing what the Biblical authors had to say about such qualities as love, joy, peace, and patience. We will study James on Sundays with Jonathan teaching. We will study the Fruit of the Spirit with Richard and Nathan. The lessons in the workbook alternate, so lesson 1 is James and lesson 2 is fruit of the spirit. This will enable us to use a single workbook. Odd lessons are for James and Sunday. Even lessons are for the Fruit of the Spirit and Wednesday.

After a lengthy study of sacrifice, let us make sure our hearts are what they ought to be and double our efforts at turning knowledge into action.

Schedule of Lessons – Epistle of James

Sunday, April 5	1. Introduction	James 1-5
Sunday, April 12	3. Wisdom in Testing	James 1:1-8
Sunday, April 19	5. What Does and Does Not Come from God	James 1:9-18
Sunday, April 26	7. Doers of the Word	James 1:19-27
Sunday, May 3	9. Love Your Neighbor	James 2:1-13
Sunday, May 10	11. Faith Without Works	James 2:14-26
Sunday, May 17	13. Watch Your Tongue	James 3:1-12
Sunday, May 24	15. Earthly or Heavenly?	James 3:13-18
Sunday, May 31	17. Resist the Devil	James 4:1-12
Sunday, June 7	19. You Are a Mist	James 4:13-17
Sunday, June 14	21. Advice to the Rich and the Suffering	James 5:1-12
Sunday, June 21	23. Effective, Fervent Prayer	James 5:13-20
Sunday, June 28	25. Review	James 1-5

Schedule of Lessons – Fruit of the Spirit

Wednesday, April 8	2. Summary of Galatians (Part 1)	Galatians 1-3
Wednesday, April 15	4. Summary of Galatians (Part 2)	Galatians 4-6
Wednesday, April 22	6. Works of the Flesh: Sexual Sins	
Wednesday, April 29	8. Works of the Flesh: Paganism	
Wednesday, May 6	10. Works of the Flesh: Division	
Wednesday, May 13	12. The Fruit of the Spirit: Love	
Wednesday, May 20	14. The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy	
Wednesday, May 27	16. The Fruit of the Spirit: Peace	
Wednesday, June 3	18. The Fruit of the Spirit: Patience	
Wednesday, June 10	20. The Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness / Goodness	
Wednesday, June 17	22. The Fruit of the Spirit: Faithfulness	
Wednesday, June 24	24. The Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness / Self-Control	
Wednesday, July 1	26. Review	

INTRODUCTION

Text: Please read the whole Epistle of James

- How many James do we know from the New Testament?
- Who, most likely, wrote this epistle?
- To whom is this letter addressed?
- After reading the epistle, what parallels did you find with Jesus' teaching? Especially the sermon on the Mount?
- After reading the epistle, what parallels did you find with the Old Testament book of Proverbs?
- How does chapter 1 serve as a table of contents for the whole letter?
- Why does James write this letter? Is he dealing with specific issues like Paul did in Corinth?
- What do you think James's main theme is?

SUMMARY OF GALATIANS 1-2

Text: Galatians 1-2

Before we dig into the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, we need to immerse ourselves in the context of the overall letter. This will help us to better appreciate the points that Paul is making in Galatians 5.

- This letter does not open with a typical thanksgiving, but what?
- How did Paul receive the gospel he preaches?
- When was the Son revealed to Paul?
- Trace the timeline provided in Galatians 1-2. How does this compare with the account given in Acts?
- Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised but would not have Titus circumcised?
- When Paul finally met with the apostles, how did his gospel compare to theirs?
- Of what was Peter guilty?
- Since Paul would go to the Gentiles, what request did James, Peter, and John make of him?

WISDOM IN TESTING

Text: James 1:1-8

We should not be surprised that this letter opens with a word about trials and testing. Being a Christian was not easy in the first century; especially being a Jewish Christian. But trials and tests have a role to play in our lives if we have the right outlook and attitude.

- In what way can we count it “all joy” when we face trials? Are we to take pleasure in pain?
- What is the process of growth described in vv. 3-4?
- What does it mean to be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”?
- How is wisdom related to vv. 2-4?
- What Old Testament story might James have in mind?
- When might we ask God for something but not really asking in faith?
- What is the contrast between vv. 8 and 4?
- Consider v. 8: How is this theme woven throughout the whole letter?

SUMMARY OF GALATIANS 3-6

Text: Galatians 3-6

The Law of Moses was not designed to save mankind from their sins. It was designed to be a caretaker until the time of Christ. From the Law we learn of the dangers of an overemphasis on the flesh. Christians are supposed to live according to the Spirit. What does that mean and what does that look like?

- All the spiritual blessings that the Galatians had received, did they come from the law or from faith?
- If the promises made to Abraham were not based on the Law, why did God give the Law?
- How do we put on Christ? How do we become the offspring of Abraham?
- Under the Law, God's people were _____. But now, God's people are _____ (Galatians 4:1-7).
- Ishmael was a child of the _____ and represents the _____. Isaac was a child of _____ and represents the _____.
- What does it mean to walk according to the flesh? What behaviors comprise the works of the flesh?
- What does it mean to walk according to the Spirit?

WHAT DOES AND DOES NOT COME FROM GOD

Text: James 1:9-18

There are some sections of James that appear completely unrelated. Sometimes he uses word links to connect one section to the next. This is one of the ways that this epistle is like Proverbs. The authors move from one practical issue to the next. Sometimes life is random like that.

- How are the poor to regard themselves?
- How are the rich to regard themselves?
- How do James and other writers treat wealth and the wealthy?
- What awaits believers after trials?
- What is the difference between “tempting” and “testing”?
- Where does temptation come from?
- Temptation does not come from God, but what does?
- What does it mean that God has no variation or shifting shadow?

WORKS OF THE FLESH: SEXUAL SINS

In Galatians 5 Paul is contrasting what it means to live according to the flesh and what it means to live according to the Spirit. Therefore, he first discusses the works of the flesh. These can be divided into to three categories: sexual sins, paganism, and division. This lesson will deal with the first category of sins. These include sexual immorality, impurity, and sensuality.

- **Read Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:3-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:8; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; Mark 7:20-23; Romans 1:28-32**
- Notice the prominent role sexual sins play in these lists. Why is that?
- What is the pattern/example for sexual morality? Who does Jesus talk about when discussing marriage and divorce?
- **Read Hebrews 13:4.** Sexual activity is not sinful. It is to be enjoyed as a gift from God. See Proverbs 5:19 and the Song of Solomon. But these things are to be enjoyed within what relationship?
- What biblical stories exemplify the troubles and heartache caused by sexual immorality?
- What about our culture and society make this such a pervasive problem?

DOERS OF THE WORD

Text: James 1:19-27

Christianity is not an academic religion. It is not a set of facts to be known and defended. It is service. It is work. It is following in the footsteps of our savior who came to serve and not be served—who came to seek and save the lost.

- What parallels can you find for James 1:19 in Proverbs?
- Notice vv. 18 and 21. What is it that we should be quick to hear?
- James 1:21 says the word is able to save our soul. What else saves us according to scripture?
- But it is not enough just to hear the word. What must we do?
- Explain the analogy of vv. 23-24 in your own words.
- What is the “perfect law, the law of liberty”?
- In ancient thought, “religion” was what you did in worship: sacrifice, prayer, praise. How does our speech nullify our religion?
- What do orphans and widows have to do with our religion?

WORKS OF THE FLESH: PAGANISM

The second category of sins Paul deals with in the works of the flesh are sins related to pagan worship: idolatry and sorcery. While such things are practiced in some places, we see a more modernized form of these things in our society.

- How has idolatry been modernized?
- How has sorcery been modernized? FYI: Sorcery in scripture was used to determine the will of the gods or to influence the gods. This is not exactly what we see in stories and movies involving magic.
- What are the first two of the ten commandments? How are they distinct from one another?
- In Colossians 3, what does Paul equate with idolatry?
- Read Deuteronomy 18:9-14: Where would the people learn these things? Why doesn't God allow these activities (I realize this involves some speculation)?
- Given our recent study of Revelation, what role(s) did idolatry and sorcery play in first century emperor worship? Why was this such a problem for Christians?

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Text: James 2:1-13

As we think about this text, we may wonder if this was a common problem in first century churches or if there was a specific problem James was addressing. Even today we are quick to join ourselves to those who can benefit us. The rich may appear to have a lot to offer us and we end up mistreating the poor. God forbid. It is to the poor that the gospel is preached. It is the poor who are rich in faith.

- Where do we read that God is not partial?
- Why would we, almost naturally, give preference to the rich man?
- They are not condemned for judgment, but judgment with _____.
- Consider Jesus activities in the Gospels. How is this incompatible with our treatment of the poor man?
- The fact that we honor the rich man is quite ironic. Why?
- What law should guide our treatment of the poor?
- How does mercy triumph over judgment?

WORKS OF THE FLESH: DIVISION

The third category of sins in the works of the flesh is division. When you compare this to the previous two, this might seem to be a lower problem on the scale of evil. However, God speaks harshly about those who would cause division. The works listed in Galatians 5 are enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, and orgies.

- **Read Proverbs 6:16-19:** It is often said that the final entry in these formulas are the climax. In a 3+1, it is the 4th. In a 6+1, it is the 7th. What is the 7th sin in this passage?
- How does enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, rivalries, dissension, and envy lead to division?
- How do drunkenness and orgies lead to division? FYI: the term for “orgy” in 5:21 is less related to sexual activity and more to drinking, especially in a party-like setting.
- **Consider 1 Corinthians:** what were the various issues in Corinth causing division? How does Paul deal with these things?
- **Read Philippians 2:** How does Jesus show us how to prevent division?
- **Read Romans 12:** This passage provides a checklist of behaviors for Christians who are living sacrifices and have been transformed. Make a list of the commandments that directly relate to unity and peace.
- Why do unity and peace require such hard work?

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS

Text: James 2:14-26

Martin Luther did not care for the epistle of James because of this section. He felt it was at odds with Paul's teaching in Romans. Luther called James "an epistle of straw." But James is talking about a faith that works; like what we read about in Hebrews 11. Luther, sadly, misunderstood Romans. The "works" in Romans were works of the law, not obedience to Christ.

- What kind of faith is being discussed in v. 14?
- Why doesn't the faith of v. 15 benefit the person in need?
- What do we show by our works?
- Who else has faith? But what kind of faith is it?
- What did Abraham do even though he already had faith in God?
- How does Rahab show real, active faith?
- **Do you agree?** A faith that does not work is not faith at all. Consider Acts 16:30-34.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE

Text: 1 Corinthians 13

You and I both know we are going to discuss 1 Corinthians 13 as we consider the first fruit of the spirit. Considering love is in pretty much every list of Christian virtues, we should not be surprised that it the first description provided for the fruit of the Spirit. And there is no better text to contemplate than 1 Corinthians when it comes to love.

- List the various qualities of love from 1 Corinthians 13.
- There are four Greek words that are usually translated to the English word “love.” What are they? FYI: The more documents that linguists and scholars find, the more they agree that there isn’t as much difference between these four terms as previously believed.
- Who did Jesus teach us to love? How does this set His followers apart?
- How is Jesus an example of love? When John used one word to describe God, what was it?
- Is it possible that we have watered down the word love with our constant use of it?
- What are some ways that we can show our love for our spouse? Children? Neighbor? Co-workers? What about the coach of the other team that we can’t stand?

WATCH YOUR TONGUE

Text: James 3:1-12

It is easy to say something. It is a lot harder to take it back. It is easy to say something. It is a lot harder to stay silent. We can do much good with our words. We can teach the gospel. We can soothe a troubled soul. We can praise God. But we can also do much damage with our words. We can mislead someone with false doctrine. We can stir up sorrow and strife. We can curse God. At the heart of his letter, James addresses a most practical and difficult problem.

- James's statement in 3:1 is not an absolute prohibition but a warning. How so?
- What two analogies does James use to discuss the power of the tongue?
- How is our tongue like a fire?
- How does James relate our tongue to domesticated and wild animals?
- How does he compare our tongue to water? A tree?
- How does the tongue relate to the idea of a "double minded" man?
- What does Jesus warn about the things we say?

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: JOY

One of my favorite comments from Bill Hall is “I don’t know why, but some Christians look like they were baptized in pickle juice.” As Christians, we should be a joyful people. Of any group of people on earth, we can be certain about our faith and actions. We don’t have to doubt, second-guess, or worry. We have hope. When we live by the Spirit, we will have joy.

- Is there a difference between joy and happiness? What about the word “blessed” in Matthew 5?
- **Read Nehemiah 8:10:** How is this verse true?
- **Read Psalm 16:11:** What does this verse make you think of?
- **Read Romans 15:13:** What is the connection between joy, hope, and peace?
- **Read 1 Peter 1:8-9:** What causes us to “rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”?
- Do a quick read of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. How many times do you see the word “joy” or some form of it?
- **Read James 1:2-4:** What strange places may joy come from? How?
- What are some things we allow to rob us of our joy?

EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY?

Text: James 3:13-18

You can forgive some of the Israelite interest in idolatry. It is was all the other nations did and some of them seemed to succeed. But God was very clear about idolatry from the beginning of His relationship with the Israelites. The facts that it was an abomination and foolish are emphasized repeatedly.

- What two issues does v. 13 discuss that have already been addressed?
- Where does sin begin? Where does Jesus address this problem in detail?
- What does Paul say in Philippians 2 that is the opposite of jealousy and selfish ambition?
- What does jealousy and selfish ambition lead to?
- How is the “wisdom from above” described?
- What characteristic leads to righteousness, according to v. 18?
- **APPLICATION:** What types of things are wise according to the world that are actually the result of jealousy and selfishness?

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PEACE

Don't you just despise those situations where trouble is brewing? There is anger. There is debate. And whether the issue is resolved, or you can get away, that feeling of relief when you can just breathe. You feel yourself slow down. You feel your pulse return to normal. Finally, peace!

- When we think of peace, we often think of the absence of war. What is the peace mentioned in Nahum 1:15?
- According to the world, what leads to peace?
- **Read Isaiah 26:3:** What really leads to peace? What are some parallel passages to this thought?
- In what ways do God's people have peace?
- Look up the song "Prince of Peace." What could this prayer add to our lives?
- **Read Romans 12:18 and James 3:17-18:** How can we have peace in our relationships?
- According to Jesus, what is the result of being a peacemaker?
- How important is a peaceful home? Church? Workplace? Team?

RESIST THE DEVIL

Text: James 4:1-12

As James discusses temptation in chapter 1, he does not mention the work of the devil. In 4:1ff he does not mention Satan. But in 4:7 he finally talks about resisting the devil. It does not appear that Satan causes us to have sinful thoughts, but that he exposes or takes advantage of the desires already present in our heart. Therefore, if we cleanse our hearts Satan will have less to work with.

- In one word, what causes fights among brethren?
- When and how are we adulterous people?
- How is God a jealous God? Isn't jealousy a negative trait (cf. 3:14, 16)?
- How do we resist the devil?
- Note the parallels between vv. 8-10 and the Beatitudes in Matthew 5.
- Note the parallels between vv. 11-12 and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PATIENCE

If only we could be given patience. Sadly, we must earn it and you know what that means. Long lines, red lights, trials, and other opportunities to develop patience. But aren't you glad God has patience with us? Therefore, we ought to have patience with one another. But this only comes when we are walking in the Spirit. If we are walking according to the flesh, we become impatient, rude, and inconsiderate.

- **Read James 1:4:** What does patience do for us?
- **Read 1 Peter 2:20:** What might we have to endure patiently?
- **Read Exodus 14:14; Psalm 27:14; 31:24; 37:7:** Why is it so hard to wait?
- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:3:** What is the connection between love and patience?
- **Read Ephesians 4:1-3:** What is necessary to maintain unity?
- **Read Colossians 3:12-13:** Notice the characteristics of the new man.
- **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 2:24; 4:2; Jude 22:** How does patience benefit the situations described in these passages?

YOU ARE A MIST

Text: James 4:13-17

This is a short lesson and will provide some time for review or catch-up. This is a lesson that is hard for us to learn. Sometimes, especially when we are young, we feel we have all the time in the world. But do we? Are you guaranteed tomorrow?

- What is being described in v. 13?
- Doesn't the Bible encourage making plans and counting the cost? Where?
- How do the various versions translate "mist" in v. 14?
- "If the Lord wills" is not just a tagline for our stated hopes. It is an attitude. How so?
- How is making plans like what we see in v. 14 boasting?
- We often take v. 17 from its context. It is a good statement and makes a good point, but what does it mean in the context of making plans and submitting to the will of God?

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: KINDNESS AND GOODNESS

Is it just me or does it seem like these two things are just evaporating? I am writing this lesson in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic as people are fighting over toilet paper, hoarding food, and robbing people as they come out of grocery store. But I also heard of a story where a man gave up the last one of something an elderly couple needed. In times like this, it is easy for others to see those who are kind and good.

- How would you define/describe kindness (some versions use the word gentleness) and goodness?
- This really ties into last quarters' study of sacrifice. How can we participate in the "pay it forward" culture?
- When and where do we see the kindness and goodness of Jesus?
- **Read 2 Peter 2:5-9:** Notice the connection to fruit and blindness.
- What are common obstacles to kindness and goodness?
- How did people like Barnabas, Cornelius, and Tabitha display these characteristics?
- How can we cultivate these characteristics in our lives, homes, and churches?

ADVICE TO THE RICH AND THE SUFFERING

Text: James 5:1-12

We should be careful how we feel about and approach money. The warnings are numerous. But having lots of money can be just as dangerous as suffering for lack of it. It is as if there is never enough and this is true of the rich and the poor. How does Paul handle this subject?

- What kind of rich people is James talking to in vv. 1ff?
- Where do the “rotted,” “moth-eaten,” and “corroded” language of vv. 2-3 come from?
- Where does the Old Testament address the problem discussed in v. 4?
- Amos and Jesus frequently address the issue discussed in vv. 5-6. What do they say?
- How is the man in vv. 1-6 compared/contrasted with the man in vv. 7-11?
- What is the grumbling of v. 9?
- What does “swearing” have to do with the rest of this section?

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITHFULNESS

When we think of faithfulness, we usually think of our faith in God and Christ. But, considering the context of the fruit of the spirit, the faithfulness here is most likely a reference to our dependability, stability, and loyalty. Obviously, these two concepts are not unrelated. Faith in God is a prerequisite to this kind of faithfulness.

- **Read Psalm 105:** What does this Psalm have to do with faithfulness?
- **Read Psalm 106:** What does this Psalm have to do with faithfulness?
- **Read Romans 1:16-17:** How does this passage relate to God's faithfulness, especially to Abraham?
- **Read Proverbs 25:19:** What is the wise man saying?
- **Consider the parable of the talents:** What was the master/Jesus looking for?
- Who, in scripture, stands out to you as being faithful, dependable, and loyal?
- To whom and in what ways are we called to be faithful?

EFFECTIVE, FERVENT PRAYER

Text: James 5:13-20

This is probably the most difficult passage in James to interpret. Even if there is disagreement on the nature of the sickness in vv. 14-16, there is still a lot to learn and apply in this section. How should we respond to various emotions? Does prayer really work? How can we help our struggling brethren?

- What is the correct response to suffering? Cheer? Sickness?
- It is important to note that the term translated “sick” is usually translated as “weak.” If James is talking about physical sickness, what are we to do? For what purpose?
- If James is talking about spiritual weakness, what are we to do? For what purpose?
- What is the purpose of confessing our sins and praying for one another?
- Elijah could perform miracles—how did he have a nature like ours?
- How can we save someone’s soul?
- What does James mean when he says that we can “cover a multitude of sins”?

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL

American often have a reputation for violence and excess. Maybe, we even take some pride in it. But that should never be the reputation of a Christian. We are to be marked by gentleness and self-control.

- The ESV uses the term “gentleness”; some versions use “meekness.” What is a good definition for “meekness”?
- Why does it make sense to treat these two qualities together?
- **Consider Jesus’ power and miracles:** yet who wanted to come sit in His lap?
- When might our gentleness come into play?
- **Consider Galatians 2:20:** How does this related to self-control? Some have argued that self-control is the very basis of being a Christian. Why might that be the case?
- Who, in the Bible, exemplifies self-control? Who exemplifies a lack of self-control?
- Where, in our lives, do we most struggle with self-control?

REVIEW

James is a very practical letter. This review focuses on one big thing per chapter. Make a note of your favorite section or subject. Which is the most difficult section to understand? Which is the most difficult section to apply?

- How is James 1 a “table of contents” on the rest of the book?
- Are James and Paul at odds with one another on the issue of works?
- What is it about the tongue that is so dangerous and difficult to control?
- What is “friendship with the world”? What does Jesus say about this?
- What role do the elders play in healing the sick?
- Note the parallels between the Epistle of James and the teaching of Jesus.

REVIEW

I realize we just spent 12 lessons on five verses. But when these verses provide the qualities of the life of a Christian, when they provide a measuring stick for our lives, then we do well to see how we measure up and how we can do better.

- What other lists in the New Testament parallel the works of the flesh?
- What other lists in the New Testament parallel the fruit of the spirit?
- What determines whether we are walking by the flesh or by the spirit?
- Who provides an example of walking according to the flesh?
- Who provides an example of walking according to the spirit?
- The fruit of the spirit is not miraculously present when you wake up the day after you obey the gospel. How do we develop these qualities?
- Of the nine qualities of the fruit of the spirit, which do you struggle with the most? What about those of the world?
- What must we do to keep in better step with the spirit?