



5:13-20

Share instances where you have seen healing take place.

How should we approach praying for those who are sick?

What is our part in the process of praying?

What examples should we keep in mind?

Do you think we sometimes underestimate the power of prayer? At what times?

In the light of these discussions, what do you need prayer for, today?



JAMES A Discussion Book



Martin Luther referred to the letter of James as a “right strawy epistle.” For him it lacked the theological argument of other letters like Romans. For many today that is the very attraction of James. It is an intensely practical piece of writing. However it is practical because it assumes that faith is present, and points to the outworking of that faith. James says that faith without works is dead, but he no doubt believed that works without faith were equally dead.

Luther also saw James as “strawy”, because there is no progressive, logical structure, rather an interlocking of ideas and reoccurring themes. For that reason we will approach it on the basis of its themes as follows:-

Trials and Temptations
Wisdom
Rich and Poor
The Tongue
Faith and Works
Asking

This James was probably the half brother of Jesus (1 Cor 15:7, Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18, Gal 1:19) a leader in the church. He wants Christians to abandon an inconsistent, half-hearted faith for a growing commitment to God in thought, word and deed. He probably wrote before 62AD, to Jewish Christians who scattered after the stoning of Stephen.

What does it mean to *judge the law* when we judge another person? (4:11-12)

Is failure to live out one’s faith just laxness or something worse? (4:17)

It could be argued that the need to live out one’s faith is the underlying theme of James. How do the previous discussions in this series bear this out? (Also look at humility in 1:4, 1:21, 3:13, 4:6, 4:16)

In what aspects of your life, and your church life are there dangers of being *hearers* of the word, and not *doers*?

6

Asking
1:5-7
1:17
4:2-3
5:13-20

James sets high standards in Christian living. How does James suggest we should ask for help? What attitudes are to be avoided in asking?

5

Faith and Works

1:22-25

2:8-13

2:14-19

2:20

3:13

4:17

How can we square what James says about faith and works in 1:22-25 and 2:14-19 with verses like Ephesians 2:8-10, Romans 5:1-2 and Titus 3:4-7?

Why is believing that there is one God insufficient? (2:19)

2:8-13

James argues for consistency in our Christian lives. What is the *royal law* that he wants us to fulfill (Why *royal*)? (Compare with 1:18 & 1:25)



Are we then doomed if we fail in one point of law?

How can James refer to it as “*the law of liberty*” (2:12)

How does mercy *triumph over judgement*?

1

Trials & Temptations

1:2-4

1:12-17

5:7

1:2-4

“Consider it pure joy”

The word “consider” means “take the attitude.”

It is an act of will and choice.

Do you count it all joy when you are faced with trials?

From the passage, what might help you to do so?

How do we know when we’ve reached maturity?



1:12-16

The verses seem to suggest that we have to endure temptation to receive the crown of life. What sort of temptation do you think James has in mind here? (note that the word for *trials* in 1:2-4 and the word *temptation* here, are the same in the Greek)

Who do people tend to blame when they fall to temptation? Where does the responsibility really lie?

5:7-11

What can we do if we find that we constantly give in to temptation?

Where can we gain strength in the times of trial

In the light of your discussion, what do you think “*save us from the time of trial*” means in the most recent translation of the Lord’s Prayer (the word is the same as *trials* and *temptations* in James)

Why does James say that the tongue has such a place of prominence in a person’s life? (Note 1:26 & 4:1)

4:13-16

What attitude does the tongue reveal in these verses?

In what ways are we to judge, and which instances should we refrain? (4:11-12) (note: 1 Cor 6)

2

Wisdom

1:5

3:13-14

3:17-18

4:1-4

What is wisdom?

How does it show itself in a person’s life?

(3:13, 17, 18)

How do we know if we lack wisdom?

(3:14, 4:1-4)



In what practical ways may our tongues be tamed? (1:19, 5:12)

4

The Tongue

1:19

1:26

3:1-12

4:11

5:12

Comment on the following:

*“Sticks and stones may hurt my bones,
but names will never hurt me”*

*More damage is done by people taking offence,
than people intending offence.*

*A time when you have been misunderstood
and people talked about you.*

*A time when you found yourself putting someone
else down.*



An instance where talk did great damage.

3:1-12

To what does James liken the tongue in these verses?

Do you find them accurate descriptions in your own experience?



See Solomon
1 Kings 3:5

What can we do about a lack of wisdom? (1:5)
(Do you think that wisdom is a gift for a few Christians, or for all Christians?)

Certain books in the Old Testament are classified as Wisdom Literature, namely Job, some Psalms (eg 1, 37, 78 etc), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs. Briefly discuss the features of some of these books. What marks them off as different from other Old Testament books?

What does Paul see as God's wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:20-31?

Other references: Acts 6:3, 9-10, 7:9-10.

3

The Rich and Poor

1:9-11

1:27

2:1-9

5:1-6



Do you consider yourself rich or poor?

With whom were you comparing yourself?

What do you think is the “high position” enjoyed by those in humble circumstances? (1:9)

What is the “low position” that the rich Christian is to take pride in? (1:10-11)

In 1:27 what do you take the word “religion” to mean?

Why do you think James mentions orphans and widows in particular? Would we still single them out or who might we mention in their place?

2:1-9

Do we show favouritism towards the rich
- in society?

- in the church?

- in our church?

Are there people you tend to discriminate against?

Are there those you tend to favour?

How may we guard against showing favouritism?

Read 5:1-6

What are the dangers in riches, evident here?