

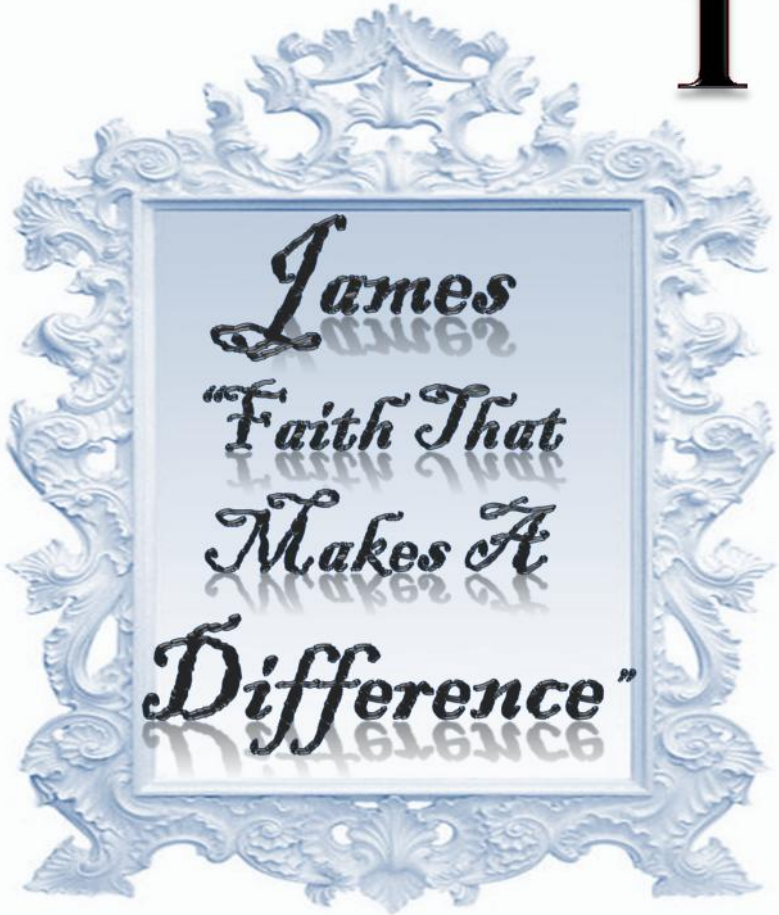
Making Life Count Series

A Bible Study Book on the Epistle of James

April & June 2013

James 1:1-17

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*Growing to a Deeper Level of Spiritual Maturity,
and a Higher Quality of Christian Character.*

Christ E Free Church Pulpit Series

April & June 2013

Jesus Christ
Our Highest Calling,
Our Greatest Purpose,
Our Soul's Source and Joy
And Our All-Consuming Passion.

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“Studying The Bible On Your Own”

-- Growing Up in the Faith --

TEXT: James

April 7, 2013

*"Study to show yourself approved unto GOD,
a workman that does not need to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15*

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more
than a college education.
--Theodore Roosevelt

INTRODUCTION

Every day, a man walks aimlessly by restaurants, grocery stores and food pantries. Day by day, he wanders the streets as life slowly fades from his body. Every day he grows weaker – more malnourished, until he finally collapses on the door step of a local soup kitchen – dead from starvation. We think, “that can’t be!” “That could never happen in America.” And yet, spiritually speaking, there are people starving to death from malnourishment and lack of spiritual food, necessary to sustain life.

American Bible Society survey:

- 88% Americans own a Bible.
- 80% Believe the Bible to be “sacred”.
- 61% wish they read the Bible more.
- The average household in America has 4.4 Bibles.
- 26% of Americans read the Bible regularly (4 or more times / wk)
 - That is 1 out of 5 get a reasonable amount of spiritual nourishment in a given week.

America is starving to death, spiritually.

As we begin our study on the book of James, we do so with a lesson on How to Study the Bible on Your Own.

Today we have 3 Points of Importance in Personal Bible Study

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

Jeremiah 36:8 *And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD'S house.*

The reading of scriptures was a practice in the Jewish traditions of worship (Neh.8:3). Scripture was also read in the new testament church.

1 Timothy 4:13 *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine* (or instruction) [read 1 Tim.4:9-15]

Here, reading is distinct from actual studying or teaching. I believe that without a doubt, the best and most effective Bible study skill is reading and re-reading. It is one thing to look at a

passage of scripture and opening a commentary to see what someone else has to say about the text, but it is another thing all together to read, read and re-read a passage. This allows taking time to think over it, to meditate upon it and to be praying through it. Reading and studying through a passage is necessary for responsibly handling it and discovering on your own, what GOD has to say to you in His word.

Don't think it is a waste of time to read a passage over and over many times. Don't feel the need to hurry through large portions of scripture.

Charles Spurgeon once said, *"I'd rather soak my soul in a few verses than to rinse my hands in a few chapters."*

I believe the best way to begin to study is to read and re-read.

Benefits of reading

(1) It helps you become **familiar** with a certain passage of scripture or book. For example, read Hebrews ch. 1 through and you become familiar with the flow of the chapter. Ch. 1 speaks of Jesus, prophets and angels.

(2) Read the book a few times and you get a better **handle** on the overall content, themes and lessons that begin to stand out. OK, now we realize that ch.1 deals with Jesus as GOD's final word to us and His exaltation over and above the prophets of old, as well as his exaltation over and above the angels. Suddenly you realize the author is presenting the absolute supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Read it more and you **remember** more the locations of certain verses, quotes, commands, etc. Vs.1-3 deal with Christ and his description of GOD's ultimate prophet, priest and king. He is

the glory of GOD who is now seated at GOD's throne in heaven. Furthermore, you see the extended OT quotes and comparisons to the angelic realm. You might also notice that vs.1-3 bear a striking similarity to Col.1.



Having re-read the book of Hebrews, we begin to see other things of significance. Deep levels of theology are formed. The exaltation of Jesus Christ is brought forward. We also discover that Hebrews is like a multi-level pyramid. Each level is built upon the one before it and is inseparably linked together.

(4) Read it more and you begin to commit it to memory - even unintentionally. And as a result you take it with you every moment of the day. **Hebrews 1:3** *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

These things can be accomplish simply by reading and re-reading and re-reading.

We must not underestimate the importance of reading and re-reading passages of Scripture.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

To discount the importance of prayer is like discounting the importance of gasoline in your car. Sometimes we just jump in and start driving – assuming it will run and take where we want to go. But once we run out of gas, we realize we failed to fill up on the necessary fuel.

Prayer is important for guidance and understanding

John 16:13 *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.*

John 14:26 *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

Luke 11:9 *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

The Utmost Importance

Prayer is not just a formality – something we do before a meal, or check off before going to sleep at night or do first thing in the morning.

Prayer does not prepare us for the greater work - prayer is the greater work! -- Oswald Chambers

The Bible is GOD's word and He wants us to know *and* understand His word. Therefore, we must approach GOD's word with prayer,

asking the Author of scripture to open our eyes to His truth. We must pray for the HS to guide us in discovering GOD's truth and that He would protect us from error.

Psalm 119:18 *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

As we are reading and studying, we must also be praying for understanding of Scripture.

The gospel is veiled. We must also be praying for understanding of the gospel message by unbelievers.

2Co 4:4 ESV In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There is need for spiritual understanding

There is need to not only hear or read Scripture, but we need to pray for understanding that can only come from God.

Mat 13:19-23 ESV When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and **does not understand** it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. (20) As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (22) As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (23) As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and **understands it**. He indeed bears fruit and

yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

One does not understand, therefore he does not bear fruit. One does understand and he is the one which bears fruit – abundantly.

Reading and re-reading can help saturate both mind and spirit with God's word. In so doing, we allow God's Spirit time to move and work in us, using His word that He has promised to teach and bring to our minds.

Prayer and the study of GOD's word are inseparable

The 12 Apostles were committed to study and prayer.

Acts 6:4 *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

The Disciples knew of the crucial importance of prayer and that it was non-negotiable to precede the ministry of God's word with prayer. So much so, that they selected 7 men (we call them deacons) to perform ministries of service, while they focused on prayer and GOD's word.

Prayer and Study were important to the disciples. *They are important for everyone!*

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING WELL

It is important for the purpose of our own spiritual growth that we study well. Bible study should not replace Bible reading, nor should reading replace study.

Physical food requires a steady, balanced diet of things our bodies need: fruits, veggies, pastas, and meats. *Let's hear it for the meat!*

It is necessary for spiritual nourishment

God's own word informs us that we are alive and nourished by the word of God. (Deut.8:3; Mat.4:4).

Hebrew1:1-3 speaks of God as creator and sustainer of all things and upholds all things by His powerful *Word*.

Heb. 5:12 *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Some are well nourished and growing. Others are malnourished and failing to grow as they ought to be. If the sun, moon and stars are dependent upon God's word, how much more are we as mere humans?

Studying enables us to progress from milk to meat or from the basics of the faith to a deeper level of maturity and obedience.

For Personal Assurance

Personal Bible study, is necessary for first hand understanding of God's Word, for person assurance in the faith. I liken Bible study to parachuting out of an airplane. I don't think I could ever parachute out of a plane, unless I learned how and packed my own parachute for myself. If you think about it, you are jumping out of a plane with a parachute that someone else has packed. *There's a lot riding on that!*

Suppose that person was having a bad day and was distracted with relationship problems. Or perhaps he was angry with his boss, and not paying attention to the chute he was sloppily throwing together.

Bible study is a lot like that. If you always depend on someone else to feed you scripture, you are placing a lot of trust in someone else. Suppose they get it wrong? *There's a lot riding on that!*

There was a group of believers in Berea, who, when they were taught lessons from Scripture, they took what they were told and measured it against the truth of God's word to see if it was accurate or not.

Acts 17:10-11 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

We must know for ourselves, whether or not things we are taught by others are true. Its not that we never get input from others, but we need to learn how to feed ourselves from Scripture. That is a sign of spiritual maturity.

2Tim.3:13-14, (13) But evil men and seducers will increase more and more, deceiving, and being deceived. (14) But continue in the things which you have learned and have been **assured** of, knowing of whom you have learned them;

4:3-4 (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

God has promised there is coming a time when there will be false teachers, and spiritual seducers, who will deceive others, and who are themselves, *deceived*. When these times come, and they are already here - the mature Christian should not be fully

dependent upon the Biblical input from others, who themselves, may be in error.

For Biblical discipleship

Personal Bible study is necessary for Biblical discipleship.

2Tim.2:1-18

[READ vs.1-2]

v.2) - "...the things which thou hast heard..." - what things has he heard? 1:13 - sound words - words of truth taught by Paul himself.

What is Timothy charged to do with these sound words of truth? "Commit this truth to faithful men who are able to teach others also". IN other words, faithfully pass them on to those who will faithfully pass them on to others. That means, be able to feed others with God's spiritual food, who are not yet mature enough to feed themselves.

How is one able or capable to teach? It comes as an enabling from GOD. Also, in order for us to be able to teach, we must be able to study. In order to pass on to others – for the purpose of Biblical discipleship – it is important to study well.

[READ vs.3-10]

We are given 3 clear and direct analogies of a soldier, an athlete and farmer. All 3 require unusual dilligence and perseverance. All 3 require an acquired ability and comittment to their cause. All 3 require determination that refuses to give up. All 3 have a tremendous responsibilities.

Indirectly, Paul implies a 4th analogy, do you know what it is? It is that of a teacher. The mature teacher does not merely pass on what others have taught him. He will become skilled in the word of God

and able to study for him or herself, thus passing on what they have discovered in God's word for themselves.

The teacher also requires unusual diligence and perseverance. A teacher also requires ability and commitment to the cause of truth. A teacher also requires determination that refuses to give up. And a teacher also has a tremendous responsibility.

James 3:1 - *"My brethern, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment".*

[READ vs.11-14]

v.14)- What is the danger of empty and meaningless words? they end up subverting the hearers. This is also addressing, not only empty words but error filled teachings. That word "subvert" is the word *katastrophe*. It is our word for catastrophe. It has the idea of demolition, or annihilation. It is a reference to overthrowing a person's faith or causing catastrophic consequences in the spiritual life of another person. The implication is that wrong teachings may lead to spiritual apostasy. Do not strive about words which are empty and meaningless with no profit for anyone. Instead be concerned - in fact be very concerned with the truth of the word of GOD which can transform the very soul of the hearer.

How can we protect ourselves from making mistakes in our own understanding and teaching of others?

[READ v.15]

"Study to show thyself approved unto GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Dilligence - Study is a word meaning "to make haste" or "with zeal" - "to strenuously exert oneself". If we took this back to the analogies of the soldier, the athlete and the farmer, it would refer to applying oneself physically, 110% towards the training to become

a good soldier. It would mean exercising vigorously in training to become a winning athlete. It would mean tirelessly working long hours, for the farmer to bring in the harvest at the right time.

And as a teacher it is a challenge to labor carefully and diligently in the process of reading, meditating, praying, studying, pouring over and making a responsible effort towards the understanding of GOD's word. And when we are dealing with the word of GOD, anything less is unacceptable.

[READ vs.16-18]

v.18) - "concerning the truth, have erred..." that is exactly what we have been talking about.

QQ- What is the result of their error? the faith of some have been overthrown.

Listen! Because you are a Christian, there will be people who will look to you as the authority - the one whom they can trust - the one they can believe. You will be they one to come to for answers. We need to be able to help people get answers for their lives from the word of GOD - and we need to be able to help them get the *right* answers.

"Study to show thyself approved unto GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

We should study to teach. Someone has made the statement, Don't teach for information sake, but for *transformation* sake. (H.Hendricks)

Notice what Scripture tell us about Ezra.

Ezra 7:9b-10 - "...according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances."

The good hand of the Lord was upon Ezra - Why? Because he had committed in his heart to:

- (1) Study GOD's word
- (2) Obey GOD's word
- (3) Teach GOD's word - he was passing it on to others.

Let us be men and women who are blessed with the good hand of the Lord to be upon us. And let us commit to studying the word of GOD, obeying it, and teaching it to all who will listen.

John 5:39-40 – This speaks of searching scriptures for life. It is the word of God that helps us find Christ, and it is in Him that we find life.

(cp.5:24 - He who hears My word and believes...)

Mt. 7:21 – They cast out demons in His name. There is the emphasis on doing or obeying what we have read or studied that is important.

John 17:3 - Life is to know Christ. Knowing scripture is how we know God and Christ. In order for us to be good teachers, we must first be good students of the word of truth.

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

- (1) We are commanded to.**

2Tim.2:15 *Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

We are commanded to **study** God's word *well*!

(2) To defend our faith – We are warned of false teachers.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of

1 Peter 3:15 *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

Defending our Christian faith, is not simply a 2 or 3 verse strategy. Our faith is based on all the word of God. From the OT to the NT. That is why we should be growing in our understanding of the Bible, so we can take any number of passages and defend our faith at any number of levels on any number of topics.

Acts 8:34-35 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

In order for us to be able to give a reason to all people who ask, we must know the scriptures well - very well. And we must have it as a mental resource that we may be able to access it whenever the opportunity arrises and through GOD's word, communicate the hope that we as believing Christians have.

(3) To enhance our worship

Sound doctrine and proper teaching are the basis for true worship and not merely the melody.

Ephesians 3:17-19 *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

As we grow in our understanding of GOD's word, we grow in our understanding of GOD, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. As our knowledge and understanding grow, so shall grow our worship for Him.

(4) To Satisfy our Spiritual Hunger for God's word. This is a trait of a growing believer

1Pet 2:2 ESV Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—

God expects every Christian to be a growing Christian, one who is growing in a deeper level of Spiritual maturity, being evidenced by a higher quality of Christian character.

(5) For deeper obedience - As growing Christians, we are to study, not merely for knowledge sake. We are instructed to study in order to develop a level of deeper obedience.

Eph 1:17 ESV that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

Eph 4:13 ESV until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

(6) To feed ourselves

This is a sign of maturity. It is not natural for a person to grow older, but not to grow in their ability to care for or feed themselves.

It is similar as a Christian. We must begin to be able to feed ourselves.

1Cor.3:2 I fed you with **milk**, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,

Heb5:13 for everyone who lives on **milk** is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

Paul writes to correct and rebuke some for their immaturity, due to lack of growth from God's word. These are references to those who should be feeding themselves by now, but are not.

(7) Feed and pass on to others -

Ezr 7:10 ESV For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Heb 5:12 ESV For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

Study the Bible

- It is important to Read.
- It is important to Pray
- It is important to Study Well.

----- Thinking Things Through -----

What does it mean to study the Bible? What does it take to study the Bible? What is the purpose in studying the Bible? How well am I able to feed myself from God's Word? How much of my Christian faith am I actually able to pass onto others?

*"Study to show yourself approved unto GOD,
a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly
dividing the word of truth." -- 2 Timothy 2:15*

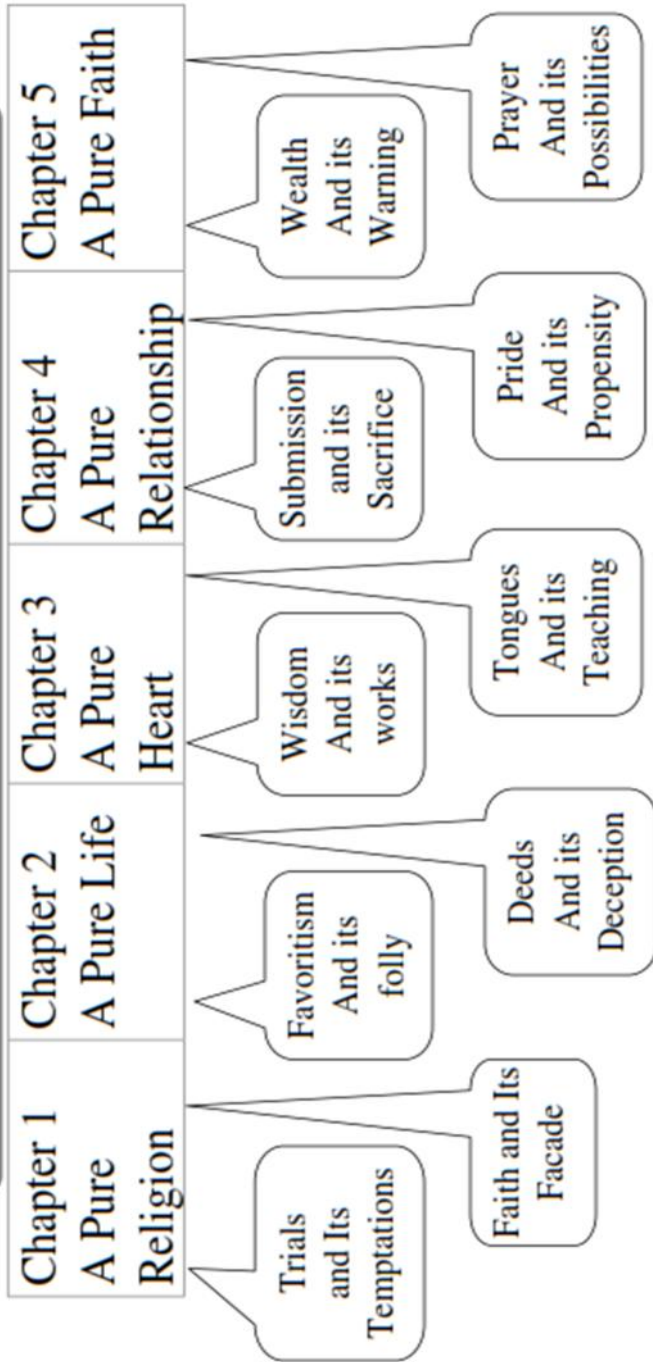
-----Praying It Through-----

Dear Father, Help me to be a faithful student
Your Holy Word. Make me into an obedient
minister of your Word, both for my life and
for others.

In Jesus' Name,
--Amen!



The Epistle of James



“James: An Introduction”

- Faith That Makes A Difference -

TEXT: James 1

April 14, 2013

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:1-4 (ESV)

Faith consists in believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe.

-Voltaire

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, I was on a plane and I had taken this devotional commentary on the book of James, by Warren Wiersbe, entitled ***Be Mature***. At one point in the flight I attempted to turn on the lights above my seat. I punched the button and nothing happened. I punched it again, still nothing. So, I began punching it repeatedly, thinking that if I punched it fast enough it would somehow come on.

Shortly a stewardess came up to me and said in a rather irritated voice, “Excuse me mister, but do you need something?” I said, “well my light doesn’t seem to be working.” She said, that’s not the light button it’s the stewardess button. The light button is the one *next to the light*.” Then she looks down at the book I was reading entitled *Be Mature*. She says, “for someone reading a book on maturity, you certainly are immature.” And she walked away.

Your assignment from last Sunday was to read the book of James. We studied it Wednesday night at Bible study and Prayer meeting, or what is now renamed our “middle of the week nourishment for the soul meeting”.

Warren Wiersbe said, “Not everybody who grows old, grows up; there is a big difference between **age** and **maturity**.” This is certainly something each of us must consider.

Ideally, the older we are, the more mature in our faith we should become. Unfortunately that does not always occur. The result is problems -- problems in personal lives, in homes, and in churches. Failing to grow up spiritually can even result in disobedience and sin against God.

*Some
grow old,
without ever
growing up.
-W. Wiersbe*

The Epistle of James

The story has been told of a Sunday School teacher who asked her students if they knew what an “epistle” is. One student raised his hand and blurted out, “it’s the wife of an apostle!” Actually, an epistle, refers to a letter. The book of James is often referred to as the epistle of James.

James was written to help us understand and achieve a deeper level of spiritual maturity.... . “...that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:4)

This is not a reference to being perfect in terms of sinless perfection. This is, however, a reference to become spiritually mature as believers in Christ. James is all about, forming a *Faith That Makes a Difference*.

With this lesson, we begin a series of very practical lessons based on **The Epistle of James**: “Faith That Makes A Difference.” It is the purpose of this series, that we would grow to a deeper level of spiritual maturity, which will be evidenced by a higher quality of Christ like character.

BACKGROUND TO JAMES

Each book of the Bible has its own background and story behind the book. The circumstances surrounding the book help us to understand the content or even the terms that may be used. Who the author was and who his recipients were, are all important in gaining a fuller grasp of the content, its meaning and understanding how the message of the book should be received and obeyed.

Introduction to the person of “James”?

The Author identifies himself as James. James is the English translation from the name, Jacob . That’s a good Hebrew name. This was eventually, one of the leaders of the church of Jerusalem. He was also one of the key leaders of the Jerusalem Council, which we read about in Acts chapter 15.

There were several people in the NT who went by the name James.

1. There was **James, son of Zebedee and brother of John**

a. A fisherman, he was called by Christ and was one of the 12 disciples (**Mt 4:17-22**)

b. Together with John, they were nicknamed “Sons of Thunder” because of their impulsiveness - cf. **Mk 3:17** with **Lk 9:51-56**

c. This James was killed by Herod in 44 A.D., just prior to Peter’s imprisonment. (**Acts 12:1-2**)

2. There was also **James, son of Alphaeus.**

Another of the 12 apostles - **Mt 10:3; Ac 1:12**, yet it seems **that** very little is actually known about him.

3. **James, the brother of our Lord** (Gal.1:19)

He was also known as “James the Just”.

Gal 1:18-19 ESV Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. (19) But I saw none of the other apostles except ***James the Lord's brother***.

While our information is not conclusive on this, it seems most likely the candidate for the author of this epistle is the brother of Jesus, even though he identifies himself only as “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ja 1:1)

The fact that Jesus had a brother named James is evident. (**Mt 13:55**)

Mat 13:55 ESV Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

1) It appears that James did not at first, believe in Jesus (**Jn 7:5**)

Joh 7:2-5 ESV Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. (3) So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. (4) For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." (5) For not even his brothers believed in him.

2) After the resurrection of Jesus and an appearance by Jesus to him, he became a disciple (**1 Co 15:7; Ac 1:14**)

1Co 15:7 ESV Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

What kind of man was James?

He must have grown to become a spiritually mature man, to gain such prominence in the church at Jerusalem. As we read this epistle of James, we realize he was a man of deep conviction regarding believers commitment to Christ and to the *evidence* of that commitment. He expects to see faith at work. He allows little room for Christians who are not living up to their own beliefs.

In James' theology, faith and works are inseparable. In fact James places them so closely together in importance, that it was Martin Luther who at one point, believe the book of James should be removed from the canon of scripture, because he felt it was teaching salvation by works.

In his writings, James dispels 2 inaccurate theological positions.

1) That once you are saved, you can live as you please, sin as you desire and be as disobedient as a pagan and still be considered as Christian. 2) The 2nd inaccurate theological position which James lays to rest is that a person is saved by his or her works or good deeds.

James also has no room for those who profess a faith in Christ with no life change to prove it. Much of his writings directly reflect some of Jesus' teaching.

Mat 7:20-23 ESV Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (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. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

This was not promoting salvation by works, but salvation by faith which is real enough to be evidenced by works. James writes to help his readers grow to a deeper level of Christian maturity, which will be evidenced in a higher quality Christ like character.

If you want more on that, you'll have to join us Wednesday nights as we study through the book of James from a small group Bible study level.

James is a shepherd after GOD's own heart (Jere. 3:15), because he explains quite passionately and quite unapologetically that followers of Christ, i.e. the body of Christ, are to be pure, obedient and powerful and has little tolerance for those who think otherwise. Following the resurrection of Christ, James grew to a deeper level of maturity, eventually becoming a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Gal 2:9 ESV and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars,...

When Peter was delivered from prison, he sent a special message to James.^[Act 12:17] . As was mentioned before, James played an

important role in the conference at Jerusalem .^[Act 15:13-33] When Paul visited Jerusalem, it was to James that he brought greetings.
[Act 21:18-19]

Tradition tells us that he was a great man of prayer. Some have described James as a man who had knees like that of a camel, which might be a reference to his much praying. We know that James himself, was no stranger to trials, as it is believed that tradition attributes James' death to Christian martyrdom in 62 AD.

A Humble Servant

Jas 1:1 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

Too often Christians get too hung up on degrees, positions and titles. When such a lofty self-perception arises, the humility of a solid servant for Christ falls by the wayside. How would you describe or introduce yourself?

James does not list himself as the brother of Jesus, though that would certainly be an influential manner in which to present himself. He doesn't sign his name as the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. He is not the notable nor the "most venerable" James. He merely and humbly describes himself as a servant of God and of Jesus.

THE RECIPIENTS OF JAMES

To whom was James writing?

Jas 1:1 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

To the 12 Tribes... (James 1:1)

He writes to Christian Jews. He addresses them as the 12 tribes, referring to the 12 tribes of Israel. Perhaps this is James' way of encouraging them that they have not lost their identity as God's chosen people, but are now truly complete in Christ as their Messiah. He also refers to his recipients as *brethren* throughout this epistle.

The Poor and Oppressed

To the *SCATTERED...*" (Ja 1:1)

Jas 1:1 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes *in the Dispersion*: Greetings.

Your version may use the word "dispersion" or scattering.

The word *Diaspora* is a word in history used to depict the scattering of Christian Jews during an outbreak of intense persecution in the early church. In Acts, Jesus' last words to His disciples, just prior to His ascension, were to go into all the world as His witnesses.

Act 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Until this point in Acts, for the most part, it appears that they had remained in their home area. In Acts 7, Stephen became the first martyr for Christ. Following that, the Bible tells us that "there arose... a great persecution against the church".

Act 8:1-4 ESV And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. (3) But Saul was

ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (4) Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

The word “scattered” or “dispersion” is the word that also refers to “sowing” seed. Seed is scattered or sown. And as the persecution grew in its intensity, the believers began fleeing for their lives, leaving family members, possessions, friends, jobs, and citizenship behind. As one might perceive it, it was as though God reached down out of heaven into the lives of His people and sowed them out into the mission field – eventually to “the ends of the earth”.

As we consider this sowing as a result of persecution, it is amazing at what is taking place. If anyone had a good excuse to keep their mouths shut, they had it. “Let’s just keep our mouths shut. Keep a low profile – don’t do or say anything that might call attention to who we are and make things worse for ourselves.” But they didn’t.

As we read Acts 8, we see those who are being “sown” as doing some “sowing” also. Verse 4 says, they “went about preaching the word.” Those who were being persecuted and running for their lives, were sowing the word of God as they went. Amazing.

Every disciple today

Other recipients James writes to is the church *today*. This should hit home for every true believer. Some today, may have excuses why they keep quiet when it comes to talking about religious things or sharing their faith with others. Some excuses involve not wanting to offend others, or not finding the time or opportunity to be “a witness” for Christ. Yet these being persecuted and dispersed are a great example to each of us of courage, obedience and a resolved trust in God, that as they obey His calling, He will care for them in their trials.

James has a very practical and very relevant instruction for each of us as true believers and active followers of Jesus Christ. If you claim Christ as your Savior, and Lord, then you are a disciple of Jesus and this book is for you. These lessons are for each of us, as we are growing together in our spiritual maturity.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES

A Summary of the Book

James is a letter describing the process by which our faith can make a difference and grow to become stronger (ch.1). As that faith increases, we are more able to trust the word of GOD in order to more readily obey it. The key concept here is “steadfastness”.

In ch.2, the key concept is Faith and Works. James says that a faith which is alive and strong will be able to manifest itself in noticeable ways. Faith by word alone is not enough. True Christian faith will be demonstrated by good works. As Abraham’s faith led him to take action and put his faith to work, so our faith should be demonstrated by the works or deeds we perform for Christ. (Eph.2:10)

Ch.3 discusses that faith in the context of believing GOD rather than the wisdom of this world. Walking by faith and not by sight is a sign of spiritual maturity. (II Cor.4:18) Much of the church is focused on our words. The key concept here is the attitude of the heart and the content of our speech.

A vibrant faith, full of life, will be able to die to self and live a life more surrendered to the Lord (ch.4). A key concept here is submission to God. And ch.5 concludes with that living faith,

enabling one to trust GOD with the unseen and to believe Him for power when life is completely out of control.

James sets forth very practical, Biblical theology. We are not given seminary text book stuff, but real life understanding and application. Throughout James, we get an overview of Biblical elements in the Christian life, that will evidence a deeper level of Christian maturity, with a higher quality of Christ like character.

A Servant of the Lord

Jas 1:1 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Earlier, we noticed that James describes himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.... This is the word which refers to a *slave*. Most people would not describe or identify themselves as a slave of anyone. For most, “slave” is not an honorable title. But James wears that as a badge of honor. To be known as a slave for Jesus Christ is not dishonorable, but in fact is of the highest honor.

We would view a servant as being *realistically humble*. There is certainly no worldly affluence attached to that. There is no notoriety to being a slave. So a servant of Jesus Christ must be one of genuine humility in attitude and perspective.

Phil. 2:5-7 ESV Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

We would also assume a servant to be one who is *willingly obedient*. By definition, a servant is one who places himself under

the authority or even the ownership of his master. The servant does not call the shots. Instead he or she carries out the orders. It is the master who makes the plans. It is the servant who provides the shoe leather or leg work required to get the plans done according to the expectations and satisfaction of the master.

Being a servant requires sweat and hard work. The Apostle Paul identified himself multiple times, as a servant. (eg. Titus 1:1)

Mark Copeland lists several well-known servants from Scripture.

Moses refers to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob as servants (Deut.9:27)

Solomon refers to Moses as a servant (1Ki.8:53)

Joshua is referred to as a “servant of the LORD” (Josh.24:29)

God describes Caleb as “My servant” (Numb.14:24)

When dialoguing with Satan, God describes Job as “My servant” (Job.1:8)

In Isaiah, God speaks to the supreme commander of Assyria and refers to Isaiah as “My servant” (Is.20:3)

And as God is addressing Israel, He describes His chosen prophets as “My servants” (Jere.7:25)

OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE

How do you identify yourself to others? How do you view yourself before God? Am I a true and faithful servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Do you consider yourself to be “a servant”? And do you consider “servant” as a term of honor? If you are, how do you serve Christ? In what ways am I obedient?

Am I a servant to others? To my family? To the needy in my community? Am I a servant in my church?

Is my church a servant church? Do we serve the needy? The community? Do you have ideas as to how you and your church can serve your neighborhood or community?

If you do, then share it with others in your church. Share your thoughts with your church leadership, so that you and your church can be the kind of servant that makes a Master pleased!

----- Thinking Things Through -----

What does it take to be a true follower of Jesus? What were the believers experiencing? How did it affect their faith? What hardships do I experience? Are there any excuses I may use to explain why I am not following Christ as I should?

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness “ -- James 1:2-3

----- Praying It Through -----

Dear Father,

Help me to become a deeply devoted disciple of my Lord Jesus Christ. He is worthy of my life!

In Jesus' Name,


--Amen!



“4 Promises for Every True Believer”


TEXT: James 1:1-8

April 21, 2013



James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:1-4 (ESV)



A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man
perfected without trials.

--Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Theme: Faith that makes a difference is faith that is growing in depth of obedience and increasing in quality of spiritual maturity.

Your Assignment was to read the book of James. I hope you were able to do that.

INTRODUCTION

Faith that makes a difference is a growing faith, that pleases heaven and has a positive kingdom impact on earth. Today we look at 4 promises from James.

THE PROMISE OF TRIALS – *The Experience*

The Key concept here is *Anticipation*.

When we think of all the promises of God, the promise of trials is not one of those promises we are quick to claim, and cling to as a blessing. Trials are not what we expect and certainly not what we are hoping for. Nevertheless, they are necessary. *They are necessary.*

Jas 1:1-4 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Trials are hardships. They are opportunities to doubt and temptations to turn away from God. Trials can drive us from God or draw us to God. In fact, trials can bring us closer to God than we have ever been before.

Question: What can we know about Trials?

The Real and The Normal

We know that trials are a real and normal part of life. If someone thinks that Christians have no problems, they are sadly mistaken.

If anyone tells you that, if your faith is strong enough, you won't have any trials, and that your life will work out like you would like – that person is either a false teacher or severely misinformed regarding the Christian faith.

If we can grasp it – Trials are actually evidence that God is at work in your life – even in the life of a Christian organization or business. The first issue James addresses is that of trials and temptations. At first appearance, it is a fairly general address, however it is specific in that it deals with how trials and temptations are different, and how they relate to one another. In James' point of view they *are* connected.

Joh 16:33 ESV I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Trials and troubles, hardships or tribulations are all a normal part of life. That is a promise from God.

The Promise of Trials

We Know That Trials Are a Promise for Those Who are Truly and Whole Heartedly Living for Jesus.

* *The key to this promise of trials is Anticipation.*

The knowledge of an earthquake and anticipating the tsunami to follow, can help you prepare for survival. When you anticipate something, you are more likely to be prepared for it. If our understanding is correct and if we can begin to anticipate trials – then when they come we will be more prepared for them and they will be more effective in accomplishing that which God has intended to accomplish.

Imagine you hear a noise outside your front door at 3am in the

morning. You go to the door and open it, to discover someone is rushing toward you with a mask over his face and an ax in his hand. You might scream, then slam and barricade the door. You weren't anticipating that experience.

But if you were awake enough to smell the smoke in your house and noticed the flashing lights outside your windows, you would immediately realize your house was on fire. Then you may realize the man in the mask, carrying an ax was a fireman rushing to save your life.

Being informed and anticipating trials, can help us be better prepared to handle them in a productive manner. Trials are promised and they are purposed to bring Biblical growth and spiritual maturity.

Act 14:21-22 ESV When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Act 8:4-5 ESV Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. (5) Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

Spiritual maturity will be demonstrated in our lives, when we begin anticipating trials, so that when they come, we are not knocked off track or caught off guard, but that in the trials, our faith remains strong, and our prayers remain constant. In trials, our connection to the Christian community or the Church is kept intact and our service to Jesus Christ continues. That is the strengthening of faith and deepening of spiritual maturity.

God's purpose in trials is to strengthen us. Satan's purpose in trials is to devastate us and cause us to stop what we are doing for Christ until full recovery takes place. We must understand and anticipate trials.

The Key concept here is *Anticipation*.

THE PROMISE OF JOYS – *The Response*

The Key concept here is *Consideration*.

Jas 1:1-4 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Question: How Can We experience that kind of joy in our trials?

“Count it all joy when you meet trials..” or consider by faith, the outcome of what we cannot see. Consider your situations to be in God's hands, under His control, and an experience that will bring you to a level of deeper spiritual maturity and higher quality of Christian character than you ever imagined.

Joy And The Kingdom

Considering trials as joy, has to involve a kingdom oriented heart. Count it all joy. This has to involve a kingdom oriented heart. This is spiritual vs. physical – temporal vs. eternal.

Even though you don't know the reason or the outcome or the situation and even though you don't specifically know what GOD has in mind, *consider* it all joy. You can be certain that He is in

control and it will all work out for your good, your growth and His glory.

We can consider trials with a joyful heart, because trials are God's process of bringing us to a higher level of Christian faith and Christ-like character.

Aligned with God

Considering Trials as joy, has to assume the desires of the heart are aligned with God's intent. The person experiencing trials must be anticipating the trials and considering them by faith to be God's process of deepening their spiritual maturity. My Christian joy must be focused, not on the trial but on the result.

We can only rejoice in trials, if our heart is aligned with God's heart. We can only grow in our maturity if that is genuinely the desire and passion of our own heart. Otherwise, God's purposes will become detestable to us and His trials for forming us into the kind of Child He desires, will become a putrid stench to us.

Last week a woman was telling me what a great week she had just experienced. God was moving in her life and family, some prayers were answered and she was experiencing such joy in her walk with the Lord. She stated, "I'm not crazy about trials, but if that is what I have to go through, in order to experience this level with God and this kind of joy, then it makes my trials manageable."

She was joyful, because she considered the outcome of her situation as joyful blessing, rather than considering the trial itself, as a curse. Considering trials as joy, focuses on the expected result, rather than on the process.

* The key to this promise of Joy is ***Consideration***. We must be able to consider our present, unpleasant circumstances, as a divine means of working toward a very pleasant end.

Act 16:24-25 ESV Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. (25) About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

Act 5:40-42 ESV and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

There are various kinds of trials. Some are due to the fact that we are human. Sickness, diseases, accidents, discouragement, On the other hand, some trials come as a result of being Christians. Persecution, opposition, spiritual attacks from the schemes of the enemy, all may be due to the fact that we are children of God.

If, during that trial we can consider the future result, we can also experience the present joy. All kinds of trials can be considered as joy.

The Key concept here is *Consideration*.

THE PROMISE OF STEADFASTNESS – THE RESULT

The Key Concept here is *Assurance*.

Jas 1:1-4 ESV James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various

kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Question: What is the future intended result of trials?

As Christians, we must be confident of God's promised result. God wants us assured, not only of the process called trials, but also of the outcome called steadfastness or perseverance.

Christ-Like Traits

Be assured that steadfastness or perseverance is a Christ-like character trait. Steadfastness is the promised, intended result of trials for every true believer.

Why? Because difficult trials + joyful faith = perseverance. (v3).

1Cor. 10:12-13 ESV Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (13) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Trials and temptations are not forever. They have an end, when God's purpose is accomplished. Until that End, His purpose is to build steadfastness.

"Perseverance" = does not mean to get out of the situation. It means to "bear up under" – to hold on and to hold out till the end, when the end result is accomplished.

Every trial comes to an end. It has the idea of holding up under intense pressure with great integrity. Failure to give in or give up, is a process of becoming more like our Lord Jesus.

The key concept is Assurance.

Verse 3 begins with the word "knowing". That key to having joy in trials and developing perseverance is knowing the faith developing process and that you are in it. If you are aware of the process, and know that what God is doing is developing perseverance in your life, then it may not make the circumstances any more pleasant, but by faith you can be assured that God is in control and that He is going to get you through it and that you will be stronger and better for it.

Now if you were going to paraphrase v. 2 and 3 in the context of the passage, in the context of faith and trials, it might be paraphrased like this:

"My brothers and sisters, I know that you are undergoing some terribly difficult circumstances in your life and you are facing trials of all kinds; even though you don't know the outcome; even though you don't know what is presently in store for you, remember to trust GOD in your situation and receive with joy the assurance that He is allowing this for the good of your faith, in order that your spiritual growth may be accelerated, with the end result that you will be prepared to endure even greater trials in the future, and ultimately be less troubled with the present ones."

Remember: Trials develop and nourish perseverance or steadfastness of faith. If we fail to realize this truth, we will be eaten alive and consumed with worry. When trials come our way, we may think that God has abandoned us and life is devouring us and possibly even cause us to turn away from GOD. Therefore, assurance in God's purpose in faith building maturity is crucial.

Assurance and Perseverance

Be assured that perseverance can be squelched or nourished according to the human heart.

The Key concept here is *Allow*.

James 1:3-4 ESV (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

“...And let steadfastness have its full effect...” (v4)

We are told to let or “allow” God’s plan, through our trials, to build steadfastness and accomplish its intended purpose in us. It implies we have a say in the matter.

Psalm 23 is a Psalm of highs and lows. Both are normal experiences of life. God allows us to go through the valleys, but He never leaves us there. He eventually brings us to the heights. Psalm 23 is a roller coaster, careening at breakneck speeds, from the heights and joys of God’s blessings, deep into the dark and frightening valley of death.

Perseverance is a highly valuable character trait of a believer, however, perseverance itself is not the end product. Perseverance is a process of life that God uses to bring us to a desired maturity or to bring our spiritual character to completion. It intends to strengthen our faith in GOD so that we be lacking in nothing, especially wisdom, which we might define as simply *experienced understanding*.

2Pet. 1:5-6 ESV For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, (6) and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness...

The key to this promise of perseverance is to value God's purpose for growth in my spiritual maturity. Perhaps our pray should be, "Lord get me through this", rather than "Lord get me out of this". In every circumstance we should pray "Lord teach me", before we pray "Lord, deliver me".

A Life Long Process

Be assured, that while every trial comes to an end, the process of God developing steadfastness in us, is a life-long process.

James 1:4 And let steadfastness have its *full* effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Its won't be over, until God says, "enough". Gods purpose is over and our lesson has been learned.

THE PROMISE OF WISDOM - *The Practice*

Key Concept here is ***Prayer***. Prayer is mentioned several times in James. As you are reading through the book, each time prayer is mentioned, mark it in your Bible with a big "P".

The Interest and Request

The focus here is our own interest and request for a most valuable human commodity, *wisdom*.

2Ch 1:6-10 ESV And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. (7) In that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." (8) And Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place. (9) O LORD God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of

the earth. (10) Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?"

Faith and Prayer

I think faith and prayer, may actually be the main focus of these verses on wisdom, rather than wisdom itself.

James 1:5-8 ESV If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Faith is closely connected to prayer and assurance. The key concept here is ***Prayer***.

How crucial prayer is in our trials. How crucial faith is in our prayers. Both the ***prayer of faith*** and the ***double-minded man*** comes up again in the chapters to come.

The key to this promise of wisdom is to be prayerful. And the key to enduring trials and developing spiritual maturity is faith-filled praying.

OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE

What is your response to trials? ‘Get me out of this’ or ‘Get me through it’? One focuses on relief, or escape. The other focuses on the purpose of God and our growth.

There was an amusement park close to where I grew up and it had a roller coaster called “The Great American Scream Machine”. It lived up to its name, as it induced blood curdling screams throughout the ride.

The roller coaster had one hill which boasted a 60 mph drop. It was clearly designed to induce labor on folks who were not even pregnant. Coming down the hill at 60mph, I can still recall everyone screaming like a maternity ward full of woman who were all giving birth at the same time.

Now, what if, during that 60mph plummet, someone decided.... “Hey, I’m tired of this ride and I’m getting off right now.” What do you think the result would be? Devastating and catastrophic.

Likewise, if any of us, while experiencing a trial of life, decides, “hey, I’m not enjoying this one bit, so I’m calling it quits and getting off the ride.” That could also be devastating and catastrophic, in that it would abbreviate the experience, cut short the lesson and perhaps necessitate that we start all over on another lesson until we learn what God wanted us to learn in the first place. As a result of that, anyone of us may turn bitter, hardened and begin rejecting God and distancing us from Him. What a tragedy that would be.

So, don't dare get off till the ride is over. Don't call it quits on God. Don't say its over, until God says its over. Let Him call the shots and let us hang on, until the ride is over.

Remember... **Every Trial Comes To An End.**

Stay on till the end, until your lesson is learned, God's purpose is accomplished and your faith has been matured and your trial is over.

Your assignment for next week:

- 1) Read the book of James or at least chapter 1 a couple of times.
- 2) Join us for Wednesday night prayer and Bible study, as we go even deeper in James in our small group study format.

----- Thinking Things Through -----

What do we know about the occurrence of trials? How does God intend for trials to affect us? As Christians, how should we view trials?

In closing Peter reminds us that in our suffering as Christians, we are in very good company.

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” --1Peter 4:12-13 ESV

-----Praying It Through-----

Dear Father,

Strengthen me day by day, challenge by challenge. Fill my life with your all sufficient grace for all the trials I face. I trust you for all that may come my way.

In Jesus’ Name,

--Amen!



“Faith That Makes A Difference: “Trials: Their Purpose and Importance”

TEXT: James 1:12

April 28, 2013

Theme: Faith that makes a difference is faith that is growing in depth of obedience and increasing in quality of spiritual maturity

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

-- James 1:12 ESV

Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did.

--Newt Gingrich

INTRODUCTION

Our Christian life is much like a laboratory. In a classroom, we learn content and text book principles, information and “formulamatic” procedures. A laboratory, however is different.

A lab is where we put the classroom info and hypothetical formulas to the test. We mix chemicals, conduct experiments and attempt to prove or disprove our theories and document the results.

Much of life is like a classroom as we take in content. Trials may be much like the lab, which becomes the proving ground for our faith, whereby the level of spiritual depth and quality of our Christian character is proven.

TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH

The promise of trials is that we will be rewarded. We know that steadfastness or perseverance is a reward in itself, as God causes our character to grow. We face trials and allow God to have His perfect work, testing our faith in our spiritual development. But beyond steadfastness *being* a reward, it also *brings* a reward.

James 1:12 ESV (12) Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

The Importance of Steadfastness

Steadfastness is enduring, obeying and trusting until God resolves things. It is a continuation of faith. But not a continuation only, but also an *increase, or advancement of and deepening* of faith.

The Certainty of Testing

(v12) Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for **when** he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

In VoTech welding school, we studied the text books in the classroom. There was much data entry and memorization. But once in the lab, we put our welding skills to the test.

First, there was the visual test. This was what it looked like on the outside. Was the weld neat and uniform?

Then there was the stress test. We took our welded piece, and put it into a press that applied stress and bent the metal right at the weld. The stress test was designed to break the weld if there were any weaknesses in it at all. Everyone knew what had happened when they heard a “ping” of breaking metal, followed by the clanging of the broken pieces hitting the shop floor. Now back to square one.

Finally, there was the X-ray test. If you passed the visual and the stress test, the X-ray was the one to be feared. Even if the stress test didn’t cause a break, it still might be unacceptable. The X-ray would look into the inside of the weld itself, and identify any flaws, imperfections or other effects of improper welding.

All three tests were important. The trials of life, are often the same. Our core content and character can often be observed, simply by what we look like on the outside or how we behave. That is the easy one.

Then there is the stress test. This is the most unpleasant one, where we are pushed to our limit, being squeezed and bent beyond what we think we can endure. The result may be that we are brought to the breaking point. Once the break occurs, it does not mean we have failed, but that our weaknesses have been exposed.

The most invasive is the inside test. What no one else can see and what we ourselves may think can remain undetected, yet God sees the heart, and knows our thoughts. ^[Rom.8:26; Ps.139:23]

“the certainty – not *if* but “..*when* he has stood the test...”

- a. what do others see in us on the outside?
- b. What do we personally experience? What does it take for us to break?

c. What does God see on our inside?

“test...” – this means to be documented or proven to be true and valid. This is a reference to the true and valid Christian faith that is living and active and makes a difference in the lives of the people we come in contact with in life, but also makes a difference for God’s eternal kingdom purposes.

“the result...” When that process is over and done with – this is the result. When steadfastness and perseverance have been developed, and when the level of spiritual maturity has been deepened -- when the quality Christian character has been heightened, and when the purposes of God in our trials have been accomplished – then and only then, there is a promise that awaits us.

The Promise of Life

“Love” is our motivation for endurance in trials and persevering to the end. The promise is that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Trials do not last forever. There is a promise of a great reward when they are over – that is a crown of life. This reward is promised to all who endure, for the love expressed *through* the testings, for the Lord of our Life.

Off the Page and into my life

- 1) View trials as the proving ground of your faith. Trials are common to all people. Take heart in that you are not alone.
- 2) Consider what is being documented regarding the depth and stability of your faith. What is your faith saying to others? What do trials reveal about your depth? What does God see on the inside?
- 3) How am I handling temptation?

4) How am I dealing with sin in my life?

Deal with sin daily

1Jn 1:9 ESV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

----- Thinking Things Through -----

Why are trials undesirable? What are the negative aspects of trials and difficulties? What are some positive things that could result from hardships?

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

-- James 1:12 ESV

----- Praying It Through -----

Dear Father, For the times I cannot understand Your plan or purposes, I thank you that I can certainly trust Your character and love. Help me to remain steadfast and thank you for the promise of life for all who endure.

In Jesus' Name,

-- Amen!



Sub Series: Dangerous Deceptions

“The Dangerous Deception of Sin: “*Its Progression and Penalty*”

TEXT: James 1:12-17

June 2, 2013

Theme: Faith that makes a difference is faith that is growing in depth of obedience and increasing in quality of spiritual maturity.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.
-- James 1:16 ESV

“fair is foul, and foul is fair,
hover through the fog and filthy air”
- Shakespeare, “*MacBeth*”

INTRODUCTION

Today James introduces some Dangerous Deceptions. Our first focus is The Dangerous Deception of Sin: Its Progress and Its Penalty

THE SOURCE AND OUTCOME OF TEMPTATIONS

Here, James helps us understand right from wrong. Practically speaking, James addresses the *Dangerous Deception of Sin*. This involves deception re: God's character and how He works.

James helps us understand where sin originates, and how it grows into a snare of bondage and leads to death. Theologically, if we misunderstand the *character* of God, then we miss altogether the *standard* of God. The standard of God is His Righteous paths, our spiritual maturity and Christian character.

James 1:13-14 (13) Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. (14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Here we see the beginning of the idea of deception – He is correcting a mis-conception or a deception.

God's Part

Again, if we misunderstand the *character* of God, then we miss altogether the *standard* of God. Both are connected and crucial to understand.

God is Righteous and without sin

This is the character of God. He is perfect in all His ways, and unlike His creation. He leads us through paths of righteousness which aligns with His righteous character.

Psa 23:3 ESV He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The way He leads, reflects His nature and character. His character is Righteous, therefore, He leads us in paths of righteousness, not

in temptation. Those paths of righteousness are His standard or His righteous expectations for each of us.

God tests, but does not tempt!

This is the method of operation of God. What God means for a test, our own broken, fallen, human nature can turn into temptation.

What we allow into our lives as temptations, God can use as a trial to build your faith, deepen your spiritual maturity and increase the quality of Christ-like character.

Psalm 119:9-12 ESV . How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. (10) With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! (11) I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (12) Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

God's Holy Word, always leads in His Righteous Paths. And His character reflects His standard.

Psa 119:105 (ESV) Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

“My path”, being His paths of righteousness. This is my direction and manner of testing.

God Provides for an escape from sin.

1Co 10:13 ESV No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Certainty – shared in common or man's propensity toward temptation. -man's sinfulness (v13) -Gods' faithfulness (v13)

None are immune from temptation. But Scripture promises Gods provision to escape sin. (v13) “The way of escape” being an escape from temptation leading to sin.

Uncertainty- our endurance or steadfastness – that we may be able to endure or escape or bear up under it. How we respond or if we endure is uncertain, depending upon our faith and choices. We must not be deceived regarding God’s holy character and His righteous standards for us.

My Part

We must choose God’s path and live according to His righteous standards. God has His responsibilities and we each have our own. Both work together.

Temptation always presents a choice

James 1:14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire

Temptation is not sin. It is, however an opportunity to sin, if we allow our desires to carry us in that direction. Interesting that here, ***James*** doesn’t mention the devil, but attributes sin to man’s broken, fallen sinful nature.

These are terms used in hunting and fishing. Lure and entice are references to attracting and stimulating the animal’s interest. These are baiting the prey. Fish are attracted, not to the hook but the bait which conceals the hook. In this, the reality of the hook is hidden, until the bait is taken, the hook is set and the fish is reeled in.

Even some of our fishing tackle is referred to as a “lure”. That is an item intended to entice and peak interest, and to hook the prey. It’s a deception.

Temptation stimulates our inner nature

This is a stirring up of our natural human desires. Remember, temptation is not sin, but the opportunity to sin. God does not tempt anyone. However, trials from God which are meant to strengthen us, can turn into temptation when our own desires begin to rule our actions.

Jesus was tempted by the devil, but He remained sinless. Likewise, every person is able to be tempted. What might begin as a temptation, God can use as a trial or test to strengthen our faith, deepen our spiritual maturity and increase our quality of Christ-like character. But God Does Not Tempt, Nor Does He Lead Us to Sin!. He leads us in the paths of Righteousness for His name's sake. (Ps.23)

Temptation draws us away from the safety of Biblical obedience and God's protection, into the pleasurable desires of the sinful nature. It looks so appealing, until a person is snagged, hooked and being reeled into addiction or bondage by the trap, lure or bait.

Temptation tests our spiritual maturity

1Jn 2:15-17 ESV Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Interesting that here, ***John*** doesn't mention the devil, but attributes sin to man's broken, fallen sinful nature.

Jas 4:7 ESV Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

We must grow strong enough or surround us with people who are, in order to help keep ourselves from being tempted and snagged by sin. God uses stronger Christians to help the weaker ones. Everyone needs help sometime.

Endurance depends on Gods' part as well as our part. We can be certain about God's part. Our part, however, is an ongoing challenge and testing, designed to make us stronger and draw us deeper in loving dependence upon God in Christ.

THE PROGRESSION AND RESULT OF SIN

Rom 6:23 ESV For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The reward of sin is death. Not merely Gods' reward, but sins reward. Remember: A test or trial which is intended to strengthen our faith, can become a temptation, and a temptation can become a test which God uses to strengthen our faith.

Jas 1:15-16 ESV Then desire when it has ***conceived*** gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

We struggle with evil desires

"...Then lust, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin..." (v15a)
Several years ago I was backpacking with my dog in the Smokey Mountains. She began yelping and when I found her, I realized her leg was caught in an old rusty steel animal trap. It was a strong trap, but I was finally able to free her from its painful and potentially deadly grip.

James describes the progression from temptation to sin, as being baited or lured by dangerous and deceptive trap – *sin*. And in v.15, it says once desire *conceives*, it gives birth to sins. The word translated conceive, goes well with the references to giving birth to death and later, God’s word giving birth to life. However, this word means to be seized or caught. It seems to be more closely intended to be associated with the wildlife terms James has previously used. This word means to be caught, or snagged, much like a fish hook would hook a fish and reel it into the frying pan, or being caught in the steel trap of sin, condemned to die in its imprisonment. That is the power and penalty of sin, and the intent and purpose of the evil one – *to kill, steal and destroy*.

“*Conceived*” actually means to be trapped, seized, capture, caught or hooked, or even to be taken prisoner. Aren’t those great descriptions of what temptation and sin can do. Temptation can hook, ensnare or catch us and like a fish, we are reeled right into the frying pan.

The Inclinations of every human being, becomes the struggle of every true believer. If you are not struggling against sin, you must not be a true believer. Believers are not sin-less, but we must be fighting daily, against the lusts of our human lives and the temptations that can lead to sin.

As Christians, we must struggle against temptation and fight against sin! Desire baits us, and draws us away from God and toward sin. Desire, allowed to progress without fighting against it, will result in sin, if it is not aborted. Abortion is a popular option for many in the human realm. And I believe the Bible teaches that abortion is sin.

But in our Wednesday night Bible study and prayer group, someone stated that the sin process should be *aborted*.

I vehemently oppose abortion, however, in this situation abortion means to stop the process or progression towards an end. We abort lift off, we abort a self-destruct sequence. Too bad it is not such a realistic option in the spiritual realm. Abort the process of temptation, desire, enticement, being hooked and falling into sin. We must abort the process of temptation, before it conceives in sin.

Erring Deception

Jas 1:15-16 (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

“...Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.” (v16)

If we don't abort sin, it will put us to death. This is a dangerous deception. Don't be deceived that God won't care. Don't be deceived that it will not harm or affect you. Don't be deceived that any of us will get away with sin and escape its penalty. We will not!!

Sin and its penalty is indiscriminate. It affects both good and evil people. It traps both men and women and snags both the poor and the rich. No one anywhere can escape its reach and the effects of the penalty of sin.

1Cor. 10:12 (ESV) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

The only way to escape the penalty of sin is to abort the temptation process and escape sin. Remember when A/C was optional equipment? Remember when standard transmission, was standard equipment? For humans, lust, greed, lying, stealing, hatred are all standard equipment for the human heart.

The Deceiver

Gen 3:1-4 ESV Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, (3) but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (4) But the serpent said to the woman, ***"You will not surely die."***

The Devil will lie to us, and will deceive us if we will listen to him. He is a liar and the father of lies^[Jn8:44].

The Tempter

Mat 4:1-3 ESV Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (2) And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (3) And the ***tempter*** came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

The devil will tempt us to doubt God's character and His Word. Scripture even refers to him as, *The Tempter*. This is a title which reflects his character and nature.

The Destroyer

Gen 3:6 ESV So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Now deceived by the deceiver, Adam and Eve are tempted by the tempter. As a result they experience the anticipated intent of the evil one – *destruction*. His purpose is to steal, kill and destroy^[Jn10:10]. It is his method to lie and deceive and tempt us

toward sin. He promises pleasure, blessing, and personal satisfaction. What he keeps from us is the result of what will happen if we follow his lead.

Our Master

Through Jesus Christ, we must not allow the devil to master us. We must allow Christ to be Master over us.

Gen 4:6-7 ESV The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Too often we find ourselves in the situation of Cain. We are tempted to sin, believing it will offer us what we most desire. Once that happens, we are mastered by our sin, experiencing its power and receiving its penalty – *death*.

Oh, if Cain had only heeded God's warning – "*You must rule over it*". How often do we face that same situation, teetering on the edge of sin and God attempting to break through with both His warning, as well as His plan for our escape from that sin. "Trust in Me. Hide in Me. Obey Me. Allow Me to rule over you and over your temptations."

What heart break of misery has been experienced over the centuries by men and women much like Cain, who were on the brink of sin, and took that last step into self-gratification. History is littered with those who experienced the death and destruction from the evil one.

OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE

How can I Abort the sin process?

1) Look at your life Biblically. How am I living? Am I faithfully traveling the path of righteousness?

1Jn 1:8 ESV If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

2) Deal with sin daily. What do I need to confess to God? (It may be helpful to ask those closest to you.)

1Jn 1:9 ESV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3) Read, Study, Learn and Obey God's word.

Psa 119:7-8 ESV I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. (8) I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!

You can read God's word all day, but if you are not obeying it, you are only deceiving yourself and are not traveling the path of righteousness.

4) Pray for God's help, guidance and deliverance.

1Co 10:13 ESV No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Pray for God to help. Look for the way of escape **from sin**.

5) Make No provision for the flesh.

Rom 13:11-14 ESV Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. (12) The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. (13) Let us walk properly as in the daytime,

not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. (14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

If you mean business with God and truly desire your life to change, then you may have to..

- Change your friends,
- Change your hangouts
- Change your daily habits,
- Change the things you watch on TV, read in magazines, and music you listen to. Input / Output

Feed the sinful flesh and your sinful flesh will grow. Starve your sinful flesh, and feed your faith life and your faith will begin to grow in ways you never thought you could.

6) Christian Fellowship

You cannot live the Christian life the way God intended, without regular Christian fellowship and encouragement.

Heb 10:24-25 ESV And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

You cannot lead an obedient Christian life -- pleasing to God, without regularly meeting with other believers and serving Jesus Christ in some area. As victorious Christians, Changes must be made in our lives. Life purifying choices have to be made.

What we believe regarding God will affect our behavior. Faith That Makes A Difference is a faith that is growing to a deeper

level of spiritual maturity, while increasing it its quality of Christian living and character.

----- Thinking Things Through -----

What does my life communicate about who I am? Where I stand and Who it is I represent?

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.”
-- James 1:16 ESV

----- Praying It Through -----

Dear Father, Have mercy on me, a sinner! Please forgive my sins. Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil and along your holy path of righteousness.

In Jesus' Name,
--Amen!

Don't close this booklet yet



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --
Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but
have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still
sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*
- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

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*May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience
and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship
of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit
in His Church and throughout our mission field*

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