

Sermon Series – Faith in Action: The Book of James

November 26

Draw Near to God, Humble Yourself

Scriptures: James 4:6-10; Luke 14:11

1. How would you describe someone who is *humble*?
2. Can you think of an example of humility found in a movie or television show?
3. Can you think of someone in your life who has exemplified humility?
4. In James 4:6, James quotes these words: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” How would you define spiritual *pride*? Why do people often refer to pride as the great sin that leads to other sins?
5. Many throughout Christian history have insisted that humility is one of the key elements of growing faith. Why is humility so important for spiritual growth?
6. Both James and Jesus (see Luke 14:11) teach that God will *exalt* the humble. Do you think a truly humble person can *seek* to be exalted by God, or is this an exaltation that comes only as an unsought byproduct of humility?
7. James also says, “Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you.” God is with us at all times. So how do you understand this passage?
8. Is there a way to measure growth in humility?
9. How does inspirational worship increase our humility?

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November 19

Patience in Prayer, Patience in Suffering

Scriptures: James 5:7-11, 13-18; Luke 18:1

1. When and how did you learn to pray? Did someone teach or model prayer for you?
2. The first-century Christians believed that Jesus was coming in their lifetime. James talks about being patient as they waited for the Lord's coming. How difficult is it to be patient in waiting for God to answer our prayers?
3. What is God doing in our lives as we wait for answers to prayer? How important is patience when it comes to prayer?
4. James 5:13-14 says, "Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord." Is prayer your first or last option when you are in trouble or are experiencing suffering of any kind? How can prayer become your first thought when you're suffering or in trouble?
5. How vital is it that we have fellow Christians pray for us when we experience trouble or suffering of any kind? Do you have someone that you can turn to who would pray for you in your time of need? James says that "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well." What happens when the sick person you or someone else prayed for doesn't get well? How important is it to continue to pray and not give up? (See Luke 18:1.)
6. Healing isn't always physical healing. More often than not, people first need spiritual healing. How important is it that we confess our sin to God? Secondly, James says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. The prayer of

a righteous person is powerful and effective” (vs. 16). Why are Christians often reluctant to confess their sins to each other?

7. One of our church’s core values is “Mindful Prayer.” How do we grow fully into this core value?

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November 12 Riches and Generosity

Scriptures: James 5:1-6; James 2:1-6; Matthew 6:19-20; Luke 12:16-21

1. When you were growing up, how much was money talked about in your home?
2. Can you remember making a poor choice with money when you were a child?
3. Money and wealth is a sensitive subject for many people. Why do you think this is so?
4. Who has been the most generous person you've known? What have you learned from her/him?
5. James 5:1-6 is a strong rebuke of the rich who exploit others (like workers). In what ways are people exploited today?
6. James 2:1-6 speaks against those who show partiality to the rich in the "assembly" and who dishonor the poor. Are there ways that the poor are dishonored by the church today?
7. Read Matthew 6:19-20. How does this teaching from Jesus relate to the words of James? What do you think it means to *treasure* something?
8. Read Luke 12:16-21. What does it mean to be rich toward God? How is storing up earthly treasure for ourselves *foolish*?

9. How are joy and generosity connected?

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November 5

Faith and Works

Scripture: James 2:14-26, Luke 10:25-37, Galatians 5:6b

1. Do you have an early memory of helping a next-door neighbor, a friend, or someone you didn't know with a gift, errand, or a project? How did that make you feel?
2. Tell of a time when Christian faith became more than a concept or a good idea in your life. What inspired you to believe?
3. What is an example of Jesus taking his faith in God and using that faith to lead others to God? (See Luke 18:35-42.)
4. James says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26). Tell how your faith has developed or matured as you have stepped up and served.
5. How might you encourage a brand new Christian to use his/her gifts and talents for God? How might you inspire a fellow Christian who says they believe in God to live their faith out in this world?
6. James considers faith and works as being inseparable (James 2:22). Do you agree? Where might you disagree?
7. Jesus gives us the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37. In this parable, two religious leaders – the priest and the Levite – passed by the injured man. The despised Samaritan saw the injured man and met his needs. Which of the three was justified before God?

8. How can we put our Faith into Action this coming week? How can we make sure that our deeds or works are done in the spirit of love? (See Galatians 5:6b.)

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October 29

Sermon: Controlling the Tongue

Scripture: James 3:1-12; Luke 6:45

1. What is your earliest memory of being corrected about something you said?
2. Were there words that you were not allowed to say growing up? (You do not have to share!)
3. In your opinion, have words lost their power today, with the rise of the internet, texting, and social media, or not? What leads you to this opinion?
4. Today's passage from James uses many metaphors to teach about the power of words. What metaphors can you identify in this passage?
5. Which metaphor stands out to you the most? (For example, "a forest set ablaze by a tiny flame" in verse 5.)
6. Do you tend to remember negative or angry words that were directed to you in the past?
7. Notice verse 10. "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so." Why do you think James writes against being "double tongued"?
8. Do you think people can learn to control their words? If so, how can this be learned?

9. Notice what Jesus teaches in Luke 6:45. How can this teaching give us hope?

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October 22

Sermon: Hearing and Doing the Word

Scripture: James 1:19-27

Synopsis: This letter is often attributed to James, the half-brother of Jesus. Both Luke (Acts) and Paul (Galatians) testify to the prominence of James in the Jerusalem church. The letter is addressed to Jewish Christians outside Palestine, but more presumably to Christians scattered outside Jerusalem. This letter is a “practical treatise” of living out the Christian faith in a world not aligned with Biblical truth.

1. When did you first begin to read the Bible? Did someone encourage you to do so?
2. Is the Bible difficult to understand at times? How do you seek to understand what you read? What or who do you turn to for insight and understanding?
3. How important has it been for you to receive insight into the Scriptures from other Christians?
4. Do you primarily read the Bible for information or transformation? What’s the difference between the two?
5. Tell your group about a time you listened to the Bible and then acted upon what you read. Did it change you? How so?
6. According to the Scripture, we are justified (made right), by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:5). Though we are saved by grace through faith, how important is it to do “good works” in response to receiving God’s grace through faith?

7. How can we encourage one another to be “doers of the word,” and live out our Christian faith in a world that is becoming increasingly secular in nature?

8. How can we know that reading and studying the Scriptures is changing us and making us more like Jesus?