James Introduction

Authorship:
--There are three James in the NT:

--James the brother of John, the sons of Zebedee, both called Sons of Thunder by the Lord. This James was an apostle and early leader in the church. He was martyred in Acts 12:1-2.

--James, one of the apostles, called James the Less in Mark 15:40. We don't know much about him.

--James the brother of the Lord Jesus mentioned in Matthew 13:55. Jesus' mother Mary and his brothers, including James, came to Jesus in Matthew 13 probably because they thought Jesus had lost His mind claiming to be the Messiah.

--Most scholars think the author of James is the brother of the Lord Jesus.
--The James who was killed by Herod in Acts 12 was probably James the brother of John, not the James who wrote the epistle.
--The James killed in Acts 12 probably died before the epistle was written.

--Paul went to Jerusalem and saw "James, the Lord's brother" in Galatians 1:19, calling James an apostle.

--Paul also called James, Peter, and John "pillars" of the church.
--James was enough of a pillar that he would send out delegations to other church leaders (Galatians 2:12)

--According to the historian Eusebius, James spent so much time on his knees in prayer that they called him "camel knees."

--James is mentioned in secular history, which corroborates what we learn from the New Testament:

--James was mentioned outside the Bible by Eusebius, Josephus, and Tertullian.
--James was a real person
--He was a leader of the church in Jerusalem
--James was upright and just

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Date of writing:

--Scholars date the writing of James to around 46 to 49 AD.
--This would be 13 to 16 years after Jesus death and resurrection.
--Support for this early date include:
--It is a very Jewish book and mentions nothing of controversies that came in later with Gentiles.
--It mentions deacons and teachers but nothing of later church offices such as bishops.

Themes in James:

--How Christians should respond to suffering.
--Fair treatment of people
--The application of faith in the world:
--"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (1:22)
--Be swift to hear and slow to speak (1:19)
--Pure and undefiled religion is to visit orphans and widows (1:27)
--Don't give preference to rich people. (Ch.2)
--Treat your neighbor as yourself (2:8)
--How to treat those who are naked or destitute (2:15)
--Show you my faith by my works (2:18)
--Works fulfill faith and make faith complete (2:22-23)

--James includes at least 30 references to examples from the world around us:
--As the sun withers the grass so the rich man will fade away. (1:11)
--If a person is a hearer and not a doer they are like a man looking in a mirror and forgetting what he looks like. (1:23)
--How Rahab's works showed her faith (2:25)
--Bits in horses' mouths and rudders on ships (3:3-4)
--How humans tame every kind of animal but can't tame the tongue (3:7)
--Out of the same mouth comes both blessings and cursings (3:10)
--Springs of water can't produce both fresh and salty water (3:12)
--Fig trees and grape vines (3:12)
--Our lives are like a vapor that vanishes quickly (4:14)

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--Just like the farmer waits for rain, we should wait for the Lord (5:7)

--James talks about God's nature:
--God does not tempt people to sin (1:13)
--God gives good and perfect gifts (1:17)
--God does not change; He has no shadow of turning (1:17)
--God brings forth saved people by His will (1:18)
--People receive the word that God implants (1:21)
--Jesus is the Lord of glory (2:1)
--How God judges people who show no mercy to others (2:13)
--There is only one God (2:19)
--If you are a friend of the world, you are an enemy of God (4:4)
--God's wisdom is pure (3:17)
--God exalts the humble (4:10)
--God is the moral lawgiver (4:12)

--James is very Jewish:
--Twelve tribes (1:1)
--"Abraham our father" (2:21)
--Rahab (2:25)
--Job (5:11)
--Elijah (5:17-18)
--James alludes to passages in 21 OT books.
--All of these Jewish elements are mentioned without explanation; James assumes the reader understands their stories.
--The book is thoroughly Jewish in background.

--The book of James has more parallels to the Sermon on the Mount than any other book in the NT.

--James talks about how to tell true religion from false religion
--James talks about how to tell whether our faith is true.

--James is unique in what it leaves out.
--The other epistles mention things that James never mentions:
--Jesus' incarnation
--Jesus' atoning death on the cross
--Jesus' resurrection
--Future age to come
--Jewish rituals or ceremonies

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--Martin Luther referred to the book of James as a “right strawy epistle.”
--Often the discussion of James is about the phrase “faith without works is dead” (2:20)
--But James is much more complex than that.
--The book does emphasize putting faith into practice, but it also emphasizes a great deal more.

--Also there is no contradiction between James and Paul when it comes to faith and works.
--Both James and Paul say that works are a natural outcome of faith, that Christians are destined for good works.

--James shows us that God is concerned that we do not sit and warm a chair in a church, but rather we were saved by Jesus so that we can get out and be active to help people.

--The book of James shows that Christians were persecuted from the earliest days of the church.

Literary Structure:

--James uses a lot of practical illustrations.
--James has a lot of short, clear sentences that go straight to the point.
--James is very direct.
--James is not complex or ambiguous.
--James is no-nonsense and hits you right between the eyes with clear moral statements about how to live the Christian life.
--Half of the verbs in the book are commands on what to do and how to act.

--James also uses a system of doubling words, using them twice to connect ideas together.

- --v.3 & 4: Endurance
- --v.4: Perfect & complete
- --v.4 & 5: lacking
- --v.5: Give
- --v.5 & 6: Ask
- --v.6: doubting

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--The pattern of repeating words connects together ideas in a complex way.

--The epistle of James shows a familiarity with the teachings of Jesus.
--The things taught by Jesus are repeated in James more than any other book outside of the gospels.

How to Approach the Study of James:
--James is for saved people.
--No one can put faith into works or take joy in suffering unless they are born again.

--Always read the entire book through in one sitting before going back and meditating deeper on each verse.

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James 1

Overview:
--The first chapter talks about three main ideas:
--Take joy in trials
--Resist temptation
--Rest in truth

Read James 1:1

--The word in v.1 translated as servant, slave, or bondservant.
--The idea here is someone who has sold themselves to another and is under a bond.
--When James calls himself a bondservant of God, he means that he has been bought and paid for by God and is in service to the Lord.
--James no longer works for himself.

--The question for us is who are we working for?
--Who owns us?
--God speaks to the church and says "you are not your own, for you have been bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
--Jesus said "No one can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24).
--We are either a servant of Christ, in a bond obligation to Him, or we are serving ourselves.

--v.1: "bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"
--as we pointed out in Colossians, here "God" means "Father" (see Col. 1:2-3; 1:15-17; 3:1)
--James is saying he has one bond: that to God the Father and Jesus Christ.
--Therefore grammatically, God is saying here that James is equally bonded to God the Father and the Lord Jesus, which makes them equal.
--This is yet another support for the deity of Christ.

--v.1: This man was a leader of the church, an apostle.
He calls himself a servant (bondslave)

1. What is a bondslave?
--one under obligation to another or wholly committed to another

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2. Why would he call himself "a servant?" Why would he not refer to himself with an elaborate title?

--Why wouldn't James let us know "Hey, I'm Jesus' half-brother. I grew up with him. I'm also an apostle and leader of the church in Jerusalem."

--the disciples and apostles always put Jesus first and always minimize themselves.

3. v.1c: Who is this epistle written to?

--Jewish believers who are scattered abroad

--He means Jewish people who are outside of Judea or possibly Israel.

--Note: "12 tribes who are scattered abroad." It does not seem like ten tribes are lost.

--Also note: people who put faith in Christ do not stop being their nationality, whether it be Jewish or any other nationality.

Read James 1:2-4

--v.2: speaks of "various trials"

4. What is a trial?

5. Do trials feel good?

6. Are trials useful? What use can a trial be?

--Proving

--Strengthening

--Make sure something works correctly

--"various" trials. So the Christians do not have just one kind of trial, but many, various trials.

--the word here "various" is the same word used in 1 Peter 4:10 "manifold grace of God."

--The word literally means "many colored" or "rainbowed"

--So just like there are many colors and facets to trials, there are many colors and facets to God's grace.

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--Also note he doesn't say "if you encounter trials." He says "when you encounter trials."
--God says it has been granted to us to suffer for Christ's sake (Phil. 1:29)
--In Genesis, Joseph suffers greatly for years at the hands of his brothers and a corrupt system in Egypt.
--Peter talks about rejoicing in the midst of "fiery trials" because we partake in Christ's sufferings.

--But in the end God had a purpose for it.
--Joseph ends up telling his brothers that God meant it for good to save many people alive. (Gen. 50:20)

--God also says we are "appointed to afflictions" (1 Thess. 3:3)

7. v.2: What are we supposed to do when we encounter trials?
--count it all joy

8. How can we "count" something joy when the trial is giving us suffering and pain?

--v.2 gives a command that we are to obey: "Consider it all joy"

9. Is it possible to have internal joy even in situations that do not feel good?

10. He likely does not mean to deny pain. What does he mean by "count it all joy?"
--We can get to a point where we see the fruit that the trial produces, and can see the Lord's hand in making us better, or in using us for a higher good.
--When we recognize the Lord's purposes, we can have joy.
--Trials are not joy but the result of the trial can be joyful.

11. So are painful, troubling circumstances a good thing or a bad thing?

12. When is the time that we are the closes to the Lord?

13. Later on James talks about temptations. What is the difference between a trial and a temptation?
--a trial is not necessarily enticing you to sin

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14. v.3: What does v.3 say about what we can benefit from trials?
--trials test our faith
--trials produce patience (perseverance)
--therefore a trial is to make us better, more like Jesus

--v.3: testing of our faith produces endurance.

--The verb here is an ongoing process: producing endurance.

15. Can trials come from God?
--Yes
--temptations do not come from God
--trials may come from God

--We can take comfort in knowing that God has a purpose that He is working out in our lives.
--However we might not always understand the purpose; God does not always reveal what He is training us for.
--Remember Job suffered greatly and God never told Job why He was allowing the suffering.
--We do know this: One of God's purposes is always to bring glory to Himself.
--When a Christian tells the world that he managed to endure suffering because God gave him the strength, it glorifies God to the worldly people around us.

--We also look forward to the time when we are with Jesus and all our trials are over.

16. Can anyone name a trial that they underwent in the past and what good became of it?

17. Are all painful circumstances a trial from God?
--No
--Sometimes my painful circumstances are because of my sin and rebellion

--v.4: apparently a perfect Christian has patience, and if we don't have it, we are lacking something.
--Enduring trials has a result of completing or perfecting the Christian.

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--James uses a particular literary style.
--An idea at end of one sentence is used at the beginning of the next.

--"Patience" in 3 and 4.
--"lacking" in v. 4 & 5
--"doubting" in v. 5 & 6

--v.4: "let endurance have its perfect result" We are supposed to actively let this process happen which will result in our spiritual completion.
--We are not to fight it.

--v.4: The Christian is to be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."
--Trials produce spiritual maturity and equip the Christian with all that is needed.

Read James 1:5-8

--v.5: "But If any of you lacks wisdom"
--Not all the English translations include the first word "but"
--"But" is a connecting word that is in the original Greek.

1. What did James just talk about in the previous verses?
   --Trials producing endurance.
   --Remember v.3 to 6 has a chain of connecting words and ideas that are linked together.
   --Down to v.12 the chapter is still talking about how to act in trials.

2. So when it says "lack wisdom" what kind of wisdom would it be talking about?
   --Wisdom about trials producing endurance

3. v.5: What should we do if we lack wisdom?
   --Ask

4. v.5: According to this verse, how much does God give?
   --Generously

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5. v.6: When God says to ask in faith without doubting, what is the context of what it says to ask about?
--Ask for wisdom about trials producing endurance.

6. Is this guaranteeing us that God will give us anything we ask for, such as health and wealth?
--No
--It's guaranteeing God will give wisdom about trials.

--v.6: "He must ask in faith without any doubting"
--The word here for "doubt" is translated "wavering" in the KJV.
--The original word means much more than doubt.
--It means to waver between things, to try to decide between different things.
--It is saying that in the context of wisdom about what to do in a painful trial, the person who wavers or tries to decide between God's ways and the worlds ways "is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind."
--Paul says "we should no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine (teaching)." (Ephesians 4:14)
--So James is telling us that when we get to painful decisions, we should ask God for wisdom and He will let us know what we should do.
--If we waver or doubt God's instruction, we are like the sea, tossed by the wind, a double-minded man, unstable.

--To use this passage to claim that God will shower money on you or to say God will always heal you is just false.
Nothing in this passage talks about healing.
--v.5: "if we lack wisdom"
--God gives wisdom generously.

7. Also, what did v.2 just say?
--"when we have trials"

---So if we are going through a series of trials, and we can't understand that God has a greater purpose, then we ask for wisdom and God grants it

8. v.6: So "ask in faith" means to ask about what?
--wisdom about how to act in painful trials

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--v.8: the word “double-minded” is literally “two-souled” as if someone is wavering between the old self and the new self.
--Paul talks several times about “putting off the old self” or “old man”

9. Is it possible for someone to have saving faith and genuinely love Christ, but not follow God’s commandments in daily life?
--Yes, it happens all the time
--Christians’ disobedience is why many of the epistles were written.

--Keep in mind James is talking about believing God in the midst of trials, not saving faith.
--In the midst of a painful trial, do you trust Him?

10. What are some examples of a double-minded person?
--Someone who wonders whether to tell the truth or not

11. v.7: What happens to the person who asks for wisdom while doubting the wisdom that God has already revealed to him?
--He should not expect to get anything

12. How much confidence do we have that God will answer a prayer for wisdom?

--God will not answer any and every prayer asked in faith:
--What if we pray for something sinful?
--What if we pray for something selfish?

--Note: 1 John 5:14: “if we ask anything according to His will He hears us…”
--So we have to ask according to God’s will.
--In James 1, we know it is God’s will to grant us wisdom.
--When we ask for something good, we should not doubt that God will give it to us.

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Read James 1:9-11

1. v.9: What is this verse saying when it says "let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position?"
   --Poor people should glory in the high position they have"

--v.10 then says a rich man should glory in his humiliation.

2. How can a poor man be in glory and a rich man be in humiliation?
   --Spiritual lessons that help us with our relation to God and to our fellow man
   --Riches tend to get in the way of our ability to live biblically.

3. v.9: Who is this verse talking to?
   --brethren
   --church members
   --people who are already Christian

4. What position to Christians have before God?
   --adopted as sons and daughters
   --child of the king
   --heirs to Christ's blessings
   --If you are a Christian, even if you are poor, you have blessings in Christ.
   --God says Christians have "riches of the glory of His inheritance" (Eph. 1:18)

5. Have you ever stopped to think of the blessings we have in Christ?

6. Can any Christian legitimately say "I am just a lowly person and can't accomplish much in the kingdom of God?"
   --No

   --v.10-11: What will happen with riches?
   --they will fade

--Each Christian should ask ourselves what we would do if the money system completely fails, or whether society completely fell apart.

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--This passage is saying that in God's economy, being rich does not help our standing before God. If anything, riches hinder our standing before God.

7. Would you rather have an earthly fortune or a heavenly fortune?

Read James 1:12-15

8. What happens to us when we endure trials?
--receive a crown of life
--Note the crown is given to those who persevere through the trial.

9. What do you think is meant by the "crown of life?"
Is this something now? Or later in heaven?
--Crowns are always heavenly rewards and blessings
--Crowns are future, not today:
--1 Peter 5:4 says "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory."
--When He returns, Jesus will give a crown of righteousness to all those who love Him (2 Tim. 4:8)
--Christians get a crown of rejoicing when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 2:19)
--We get a crown at the end of a competition (1 Cor. 9:25)

--In heaven, the leaders cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus in Rev. 4:10.
--Therefore crowns are always rewards that we get for living an obedient and loving life.
--Crowns are not salvation, which Christians have today.
--The Bible says you can give away or lose a crown.
--We can't give away or lose eternal life, so crowns are not salvation.

--v.13: God cannot be tempted, nor does God tempt people.
--Isn't that comforting?
--No one can bribe God to cheat.
--God doesn't tempt us to cheat.

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--God does not tempt us toward sin but does test us toward proving our strength.

Note:
--13b: God cannot be tempted.
--13c: God does not tempt us.
--God's nature is incapable of sinning or even being tempted to sin.
--It's not that God just does not decide to sin; rather His nature is such that He cannot sin.

--Because God's nature is entirely good, we know pantheism and panentheism are false.
--Both of those systems have evil as part of God in some sense.

--v.14: "carried away and enticed by his own lust"
--Here lust is talking about all kinds of desire, not just sexual lust.
--Carried away and enticed are words of temptation and deception.

10. v.14: So if temptations do not come from God, where do temptations come from?
--a person's own desires

--The words here were used for the bait in an animal trap.
--God does not tempt us to try to trap us in sin.

11. What is a bigger source of temptation, ourselves or the devil?

--v.15: Note that desire conceives then gives birth to sin.
--The desire starts in our hearts then multiplies and results in us taking an action that is sinful.

--v.15c: What does sin lead to?
--death
--death is separation from God

--So the lust inside of us joins with the temptation outside of us and conceives and brings forth sin and death.
--Jesus taught us that the sin starts with the lust in our hearts.
--The answer is to let Him change our hearts.

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--We will always be confronted with temptations, but we do not always have to have the evil desires in our hearts.
--If the desires in our hearts change, then sin will not be conceived.
--If there is no desire in our heart, the temptation will have no effect on us.

Read James 1:16-18
--v.17c: "there is no variation or shifting shadow."
--In an ever-changing world where nothing seems to be stable, we have a God that is firm and steadfast.
--Isn't it comforting to know that God does not change?
--This also means that there is nothing we can do to make God any more compassionate than he already is.
--God will hate sin as much now as he does after he meets us.
--There is nothing I can do to educate God and make Him more loving.
--He does not change.
--God is immutable.

12. v.17: What is the source of all that is good?

13. So if you have anything good, where did it come from?

--God gives gifts that are always good.

--Satan makes bargains that we always end up paying for.

--Note that God is "the Father of lights"
--John says "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5)
--Revelation 21 & 22 say that there will be no night in the new creation. There will be no night because God is there and God is light.
--Jesus said "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness." (John 8:12)

--Paul says to "lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12)

--The world is a very dark place.
--Jesus is a light in a very dark world.
--We all have a choice to walk in the dark or to walk in the light.

--v.18: God brought forth Christians by "an exercise of His will"
--Reaching the world through the church is His choice.

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--He has a plan and He is working His plan.

--Note here this verse speaks of God's will but says nothing of human will one way or the other.
--When we get to passages that talk about humans making a decision for faith, we point that out:
    --Joshua 24:22 says "you have chosen the Lord for yourselves"
    --Deuteronomy 30:19 God tells Israel to choose life that they may live.
    --Ephesians 1:12-13 says the acts of hoping, listening, and believing were acts done by Christian people.

--Then there are passages like this one in James 1:18 that say God exercised His will to bring forth Christians:
    --John 6:37 Jesus says "all that the Father gives me will come to Me"
    --John 15:16 Jesus tells the twelve "you did not choose Me but I chose you"

--The Bible does not present a conflict between God's sovereign choice and human free will.

--James says to his audience that they are a kind of first fruits.
--Remember James is speaking to Jewish people in the early church who have faith in Jesus.
--The gentiles had not yet been brought into the church.
--Therefore the early Jewish Christians were the first fruits.
--First fruits are considered the best.
--We have been made God's best.

Read James 1:19-27

--v.19 says we should be "quick to hear."
--In James' day, people would hear the word of God read aloud.
--People didn't have personal copies to read.
--So "quick to hear" means listen intently to the word of God.
--Jesus would often say "he who has ears to hear, let him hear"

--The previous verse was talking about God bringing us forth by the word.

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14. Why is it hard for many people to be quick to hear and slow to speak?
--We are all weak humans
--We do not memorize scripture to feed our spirit

15. Why do we get in so much trouble with our tongues?

--v.19c-20: "Slow to anger for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God"
--It seems that some Christians are always angry.
--Yes, there is a lot of things in the world to get angry about, but we need to stop and listen to people first.
--We need to be quick to listen and slow to anger.
--If God got angry as quickly as some Christians then we'd all be in trouble.
--v.21 gives an important lesson: Just because we get angry at unrighteousness does not mean we are righteous.

--In James 1, God is giving a sequence:
--v.14: we are tempted
--v.15: lust mates with temptation and brings forth sin and death.
--v.18 By contrast, God brought us forth by His word.
--v.19 we are to hear the word.
--v.21 we are to receive the word.
--v.22 we are to be doers of the word.

--The "bring forth" is the same term as birthing a child.
--Our evil desires births sin while God's righteous choice births righteousness in Christians.

--v.21 gives us the key to living correctly.

16. How much filthiness and wickedness should we put aside? Can I leave just a little filthiness and wickedness?

--The verb here is "receive the word implanted"
--The idea is that God implanted His word in us, then we receive it.
--v.21c: the word of God is able to save our souls

--Again, the context of the chapter is still how we react to painful trials:
--To have wisdom, we must put aside filthiness
--then we must receive the word that God has given us.

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--v.22: once we receive the word, the next step is to "prove yourself doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

--Keep in mind that no where in James does it talk about Jesus death on a cross, his resurrection, or initial salvation.
--James is talking about how to live in the context of Jews who grew up in Judaism and have become followers of Jesus.

--So when it talks about "hearers who delude themselves" it's talking about deluding themselves as to whether they are following God's commands, not whether they are saved.
--James was talking to Jews who had just learned that they did not have to live under the burden of the Mosaic law.
--They needed reminding on how to live.

--If you look at yourself in a mirror then walk away, you forget what you are like.
--But if you "look intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty" then you know what you are like and what you are to do.

--v.25: we are to be an effectual doer not a forgetful hearer.

--v.25: Notice that NT Christians are indeed under a law.
--Not the Mosaic law, but the perfect law, the law of liberty.
--We have to abide by the law of liberty.

--Romans 6 says we are not under law but under grace.
--When we point this out that in the NT Christians are no longer measured by the Mosaic Law, some accuse us of being antinomian which means "without law".
--In the NT we are not under the Mosaic law but we are not antinomian.
--All Christians are under a law, the perfect law of liberty. It's a law of grace:

--Romans 13:10 says "love is the fulfillment of the law."
--Galatians 5:14 says the law is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself.
--James 2:8 says we fulfill the royal law by loving your neighbor as yourself.

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17. If it is a law of liberty, how can it then have requirements to abide by?
--The law of liberty is the law of love
--Jesus criticized the Pharisees because they kept the letter of the law but ignored the larger morals.
--Jesus' law of liberty is based on love:
--"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself."
--We are free in Christ, but not free to do what will hurt God, our neighbor, or ourselves.

--James message is that a true Christian has a changed heart that will result in abiding by the law of liberty and doing good works.
--If a man doesn't do good works, can't bridle his tongue, his religion is worthless.

--v.27 is a great admonition to all of us.
--James is very clear and direct.
--James does not give us room for confusion.

--v.27: If someone does not know what their role is in the church, just go visit some old people.
--Most of them are lonely.

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James 2

Review:
--The first chapter talks about three main ideas:
--Take joy in trials
--Resist temptation
--Rest in truth

Read James 2:1-7

--v.1: Note it calls Jesus "our glorious Lord"
--We learn about God's glory if we cross reference:
--Isaiah 42:8, 48:11,
-- John 17:5,
--We learn that the Father does not share His glory with anyone else, yet Jesus is called the Lord of glory, and has the glory of the Father.
--John 17: Jesus tells the Father about "the glory I had with you before the world was"
--This tells us that Jesus existed prior to when the world was created and shared glory with the Father.

--This shows us that Jesus is God almighty.
--Jesus has the full glory of the father.

--v.2: "If a man comes into your assembly" The word for assembly here is synagogue.
--This speaks to the fact that James is a thoroughly Jewish book, written to people with a Jewish mindset.
--However, James speaks to "brother" and "brethren" 15 times.
--Brother is a Christian term, so James is writing to Christians.
--The fact that this book was written early and to Jewish Christians will become important later in this chapter when he talks about faith and works.

--v.2-4: Speak of not showing partiality
--v.1: "Do not hold your faith" with partiality or personal favoritism.
--The idea is to keep your faith free of any favoritism.
--Leviticus and Deuteronomy both say that followers of God are to not show partiality.
--2 Chron. 19:7 says there is no partiality with God.
--Acts 10:34 Peter says that God shows no partiality.

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1. Do Christians in our day show partiality? How?

2. Do we ever:
   --Put a plaque for whoever gives the most?
   --Recognize people who give large amounts?

--v.4: James calls favoritism toward wealthy people as having evil motives.

3. How can we be sure we are not being partial?

4. Why do people show favoritism to the rich? What motive drives this?

5. Have you ever witnessed favoritism?

--v.5: Some teachers have taken passages like this and created "liberation theology," which says that:
--Poverty is righteous and wealth is evil.
--the poor are automatically righteous
--Rich people are evil
--We know liberation theology is untrue because righteousness only comes from Jesus.
--The main goal of Christianity is to solve human sin problem and give glory to God.
--Solving poverty and social problems are secondary to the gospel.
--But we are hard pressed to find anything positive about rich people in scripture.

--God cares a great deal about poor people:
--The Psalms alone speak of the poor 86 times.
--The New Testament speaks of the poor 133 times
--When Paul went to Jerusalem and met with the leading Jewish apostles the one request they gave Paul was to remember the poor among the Gentiles. (Galatians 2:10)
--God gives goodness to the poor (Psalm 68:10)
--"The Lord hears the poor (Psalm 69:33)
--God says in Isaiah 11:4 that in the end God will finally give the poor a fair deal: "With righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness the afflicted of the earth."

6. v.5: Why would poor people be rich in faith?

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--v.6: Says that rich people drag others into court with lawsuits.

7. Is there a connection between having money and lawsuits?
--Wealthy people
--It would seem that poor people do not sue each other

--This section is on being fair to everyone and not partial.

8. Has God ever shown you how to be fair to someone that you did not like?

Read James 2:8-13

--v.8: speaks of "fulfilling the royal law"
--Literally it's the kingly law or law of the king.

--v.12: "Law of liberty" ("law that gives freedom")
--1:12 James also spoke of the "law of liberty"

9. What is this royal law of liberty that God speaks of here?
--He is referring to the command that Jesus spoke of: "love God with all your heart, soul, mind, & strength, and your neighbor as yourself"
--Such a law frees us from a list of rules that we have to keep, but binds us to a much higher ethic, one of doing what is loving.
--Romans 8:2: "For the law of the spirit of Christ has made us free from the law of sin and death."
--Psalm 119:44-45: "I will always obey your law. I will walk about in freedom."

--The Mosaic Law had over 600 commandments on how to treat other people and live life on a daily basis.
--Yet the strict Jewish leaders found ways to take advantage of innocent people while still keeping the letter of the law.
--Jesus raised the law to a much higher ethic.
--Jesus said that if you call someone a fool you are guilty of murder (Matthew 5:22)
--Jesus said "If you love Me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15)
--Jesus then said "This is My commandment, that you love one another." (John 15:12)
--The royal law was given by the King and rules all the other laws.

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10. Can we be free while keeping the law?
--God is teaching that we don't have to follow a list of commandments but we are still under a law, a royal law of liberty.
--The law of liberty frees us from legalism, which is a list of rules that people impose on top of the law.
--The law of liberty frees us from the penalty of violating the Mosaic Law.
--Peter called the law a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. (Acts 15:10)

--Yet he speaks a lot in this epistle about works.

11. How can James say we have a law of liberty, yet need to do good works?
--James does focus on works, but does not say we have to keep a series of commandments.
--we do works out of love for God and our fellow men and women.
--this is very freeing.

12. v.10: How many of God's laws do we have to break to be a lawbreaker?
--Just one
--If you break one corner of a glass window pane, you've broken the window.
--If a policeman stops you for speeding, will it do any good to say that you have not robbed a bank?

13. How many sins do we have to commit to be separated from God? Why?
--Just one
--God is pure and holy

--v.13: This verse should scare us to death.
--Luke 6:38 says a similar thing: the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

14. Is it scary to be told that if we show no mercy we will be given no mercy?
--we will be judged according to how we judge others
--Does that ever bother you?

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--James 2:13: “Mercy triumphs over judgment”

15. Are God’s mercy and His judgements in competition?

--Not in competition

--God has to be perfectly merciful and yet perfectly punish sin

16. How can mercy triumph over judgment?

--James 2:14-26 are possibly the most misunderstood verses in the NT.

--To understand v.14ff, we must remember the context of the first half of Ch. 2:

--He is speaking to Christians:

--brethren (v.1)

--“into your assembly” (v.2)

--among yourselves (v.4)

--He speaks of Christians who are to be judged for rewards:

--“fulfilling the royal law” (v.8)

--“speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty” (v.12)

--Therefore the context for v.14-26 is:

--James’ audience knew their righteousness was no longer measured by the Mosaic Law.

--The royal law of liberty is a law for people already saved to determine their rewards, not their salvation.

--v.12-13 are speaking to Christians whose works are to be judged according to the royal law of liberty.

--If we say the very next verses, v.14ff, start to talk about sinners being saved, we are wrenching the text from its context.

--We cannot take verses in isolation and build key doctrines around them.

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Read James 2:14-26

--There is a bit of controversy over this passage. Do you know what it is?

- --Figuring out how to align James 2:24 with Galatians 3 and Romans 4.
- --"Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6) is mentioned in:
  - --Romans 4:3
  - --Galatians 3:6
  - --James 2:20

--Romans and Galatians say we are saved by faith.
--Galatians' main purpose is speaking against requiring works for salvation, and Paul uses this very same quote to show that we are saved by faith, not by works.

17. Has this ever bothered anyone?

--Key concepts in this chapter:

- --James is talking to Jews who traditionally thought hey were right with God because of birth and following the Mosaic Law.
- --James is early, prior to the questions Paul encountered with Gentiles
- --James is talking about how to live in the world
- --James never mentions the cross, resurrection, or regeneration.

--By contrast, Paul was writing to churches in Rome and Galatia, both of which had issues of what was required of Gentiles to be saved.

--There are several aspects of the answer:

- --He is not talking about how salvation happens.
- --Key words:
  - --"if a man says (claims)
  - --v.18: "show me" and "I will show you"

--So James is talking to Christians about what people say and how you can show it to others
--this passage is not explaining salvation or the same questions as Paul when he dealt with Gentiles.

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--v.14: This verse says “can <u>that</u> faith (such a faith) save you?”
--The passage is focusing on a particular type of faith, “that faith” or “such faith.” He is not talking about faith in general.
--Also: Save from what? Nowhere in the passage is God talking about saved from sin.
--The context is not talking about saved from sin but being useful (v.14a).
--James 5:15, same book, same author, same word: “the prayer offered in faith will save the sick”
--Saved from what? Saved from the sickness.

--We can’t look at James through the eyes of the doctrinal questions that Paul is answering.

--This passage is saying, “Can this particular faith, this faith without works, can it be of any use to anyone? Can it save anyone from poverty or heal any sick person?
--No, it can’t.
--Remember the background of the audience for James is Jewish people whose sole focus was doing the works of the Mosaic Law but had recently put faith in Jesus.
--In that context, the book is saying works are important.

--v.17: “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”
--We cannot look at just one verse, we must read the context.
--This verse merely says that a person with a dead faith has no works.

--v.18: Here God proposes a hypothetical someone with a statement.
--The Bible commentators are divided in how to interpret this someone.
--It seems that the someone is not making a hypothetical objection but rather just stating something that James would agree with.
--v.20 the foolish person of v. 20 would then not refer to the hypothetical someone in v.18.

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Key passage:
--v.18: James says “Show me”
--v.18 is a key to the passage: the next few verses are telling how you can see faith.
--James wanted to “show me” so he is going to explain how to see the faith.
--What is clear is that the foolish person is separating faith and works.

--v.19: the demons believe and shudder but have no works.
--Demons believe God exists but don’t put their faith in God.

18. How do we know that demons do not put their trust in God?
--They have no good works.

--v.20: Faith without works is useless.
--James is concerned with usefulness on a practical human level.
--He is saying an idle faith has no practical use. It does not accomplish anything on earth.

--v.21-23 talk about Abraham. We must understand Abraham’s timeline in Genesis:
--Gen. 12 & 15: God makes a promise to Abraham.
--Gen. 15:6: Abraham believed God and God counted Abraham righteous even though he had not yet obeyed or done anything.
--Gen. 22: Abraham obeys God and begins to sacrifice his son Isaac as commanded by God.
--Therefore God counted Abraham righteous at the point he believed, 7 chapters before he obeyed.

--James 2:22-23 says when Abraham’s faith worked with the works the accredited righteousness was fulfilled.
--v.23 is talking about what was fulfilled.

--v.22: the key to v.22 is “You see”
--v.18 had said “show me your faith.”
--v.22 says how do you see faith? You see it by the works.

--v.21: “justification” here is not dealing with how sinners are made right to God. It’s saying that when God credited righteousness to Abraham, that righteousness was justified when Abraham obeyed God and offered Isaac.
--v.22c: works result in a faith that is perfected or made complete.

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--v.24: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."
--Too many people ignore the context and turn to this verse and make it sound like it's talking about how sinners are saved.
--How do we see that a man has faith? We see it by works and not by faith alone.
--Again, nowhere in this chapter is James talking about sinners being made right with God.
--The context is 'show me, how do I see it?'

--Paul is talking about the causes prior to salvation and James is talking about what to do after salvation.

Application:

19. v.15-16: If someone needs clothing and food, and we don't help them, what does it say about us and our God?

20. If we do not help people in need, are we any more use to them than demons?

21. Can we look at a person's works and make a decision about their faith?
--Not necessarily
--We tend to be legalists
--But we should expect to see good works from a saved person
--Some unsaved people do good works for a wrong reason.

--John Calvin: "Faith alone saves. But the faith that saves is not alone."

22. If someone says they love you, do their actions produce love, or does the love produce actions?
--Love produces actions
--John 14:15: Jesus says "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

--Ephesians 2:8-10 Lays out the principle.
--We are not saved by works (v.8-9)
--We are saved unto good works (for good works) (v.10)

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23. Has God placed in front of us opportunities to do good works for others?

--v.25: Rahab:

--If you remember the story of Rahab, she believed first, then acted on it:

--Joshua 2:9: Rahab believes the spies

--Joshua 2:15 Rahab then protects the spies

--The belief came first, then the righteous act.

--Summary of Ch. 2:

--Some church members are self-deceived

--Good works are external evidence of an internal reality

--Works naturally follow from salvation; works do not contribute to salvation.

--He says “faith without works is dead” but this means dead toward helping others.

--James is not talking about works causing salvation or that dead faith equals an unsaved person.

--If works alone could save, Jesus did not have to die on the cross.

--Personal question: What evidence could you point to that would demonstrate that you are saved?

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James 3

Review:

--James is very practical
--The first chapter talks about three main ideas:
    --Take joy in trials
    --Resist temptation
    --Rest in truth
--Ch.1: Be doers of the word, not hearers only.
--Ch. 2: Beware of personal favoritism.
--Ch. 2: Show me your faith; faith without works is dead;
--"Faith without works is dead" does not mean a person without works is not saved; it means the faith isn't helping anyone on earth.
--Therefore works flow naturally from faith.
--Works are to be expected from a saved person.

--Ch.3: the damage done by the tongue.

Read James 3:1

1. Why do you think that God warns Christians to not let many become teachers?
   --Handling the word of God is very serious;
   --Teaching it should only be given to those who can handle it well.
   --You wouldn't give your most important possessions to people who are incapable of handling them.

--There are a lot of false teachers around; they can be very deceiving;
--No one under a false teacher is there knowingly.
--Therefore we must all be cautious of what teachers we put ourselves under.
--Always test your teachers against the word of God.

--God will judge teachers more strictly.
--For teachers, this verse is a sober warning.
--All Bible teachers should handle the word of God with care or don't try to teach it.

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--Note: This tells us that God judges people differently.
--This seems to be saying that God will judge those with more responsibility more strictly.
--It would seem that God judges all people fairly, but not equally.
--In Luke 12 Jesus tells a parable of a man who put his servants in charge and goes away.
--When the man returns he finds the servants disobeying.
--The servants are expected to be ready.
--Luke 12:47-48 the man gives different punishments depending on how much was expected of the servants.
--To whom more is given, more is expected.

--Has God given you gifts and talents? Do you know the word of God? Are you connected with a good church?
--Then God will judge you based on how much He can expect you to do.
--Jesus told us to be ready and working diligently because we do not know when He will return.

--Next God tells us about the importance of controlling our tongue.
--This next section James uses very descriptive language.
Read James 3:2-12

--The Bible is wonderful literature. James describes:
--bits in horses mouths
--rudder of a ship
--small flame turns into a forest fire
--all the animals in the world can be tamed, but not the tongue
--It's interesting that the examples he uses are still applicable today.
--It's also interesting that Jesus used a lot of illustrations from nature and here Jesus' half-brother James does also.

--v.2: For we all stumble in many ways"
--James includes himself and the entire church.
--Note that St. James includes himself in this passage.
--Even the apostles "stumbled in many ways"

2. What are other verses that show that all people sin?
--Romans 3:23: "all have sinned"
--Genesis 6:5: "every intent of the thoughts of [mankind's] heart was only evil continually."
--1 Kings 8:46: "There is no one who does not sin"

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3. v2: There have been some Bible teachers over the years that have taught that Christians can reach the point where they do not sin. What is your response? How would you answer this?
--This verse says we all stumble in many things, not just a few things.
--James is speaking to Christians (brethren) (v.1)
--Paul said "I am the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15) not "I was the chief of sinners"

--v.2-12: speak of the lack of ability to control the tongue.

4. Why is it so hard to tame the tongue?

5. Why is it that if we can control our tongue, we can control the whole body?
--If we could obey in one of the most common things we do, such as talk, then we could control in other things also.

-- James gives a couple of illustrations:
--v.3: bits in horses' mouths
--v.4: ships rudder

--v.4: Ships are driven by fierce winds.

6. What kind of fierce winds do we face today?
--If you can control your tongue, you can make it through fierce storms in life.

--v.5: A small fire starts a forest fire.
--v.6c: Our tongues are set on fire by hell.
(our tongues speak of hellish things)

--v.8: "an unruly (restless) evil"
"full of deadly poison"

Read Romans 3:13-14: "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips"; "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";

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Read Matthew 15:11: "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

7. What do these verses teach about the words that we say?

--v.7: "taming every kind of animal"
--We think we are very sophisticated in our day.
--People back in the first century were just as intelligent and accomplished as we are.

--v.9-12: He is saying that a spring cannot put forth both fresh and salt water, nor can a fig tree produce both figs and olives.
--So the human tongue should not produce both blessings and cursings.
--v.10c: "these things should not be so."
--We should not praise God then curse people.

--Isn't it ironic that with the same mouth we praise God and then say evil things to the people we love.

8. Is it true that people will say the ugliest things to the people they love the most? Why?

9. v.8: "no man can tame the tongue." So what are we to do?
--No <u>man</u> can tame it, but God can.

10. How does our speech reflect Christianity to the world?

11. Have you ever seen your words spread like a forest fire?

--Note: in this passage, James merely speaks of the problem. He does not give a solution.
--The closest he gets is v.17 where he speaks of the wisdom which comes from above.
--The next section talks about wisdom. The only way to control the tongue is from the inside, using Godly wisdom.

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Read James 3:13-18

12. v.13: How does a wise person show wisdom and understanding?
--by deeds done in humility

13. v.15-16: How do you know whether you are following earthly wisdom vs. heavenly wisdom?
--Earthly wisdom produces disorder.
--If you have disorder in your life, then the cause is jealousy, selfish ambition, and evil, which are caused by earthly wisdom.

--v.15-16: the wisdom from above produces righteousness, gentleness, no hypocrisy, which results in peace.
--v.15-16 mention peace twice.
--Do you want peace? If so, look to heavenly wisdom.

14. What can make a person wise?
--Read James 1:5:
--God says ask for wisdom and he will provide it.
--Follow Jesus' commands.
--Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24)
--In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (Col. 2:3)
--The Bible is able to make us wise for salvation (2 Tim. 3:15)

15. Think of the difference between a wise person and a very foolish person. What is the difference in how they speak? How do they carry themselves?
--v.13: good behavior
--gentleness
--v.14: not jealous, selfish, arrogant, or lying.

16. Do life experiences bring wisdom?
--In one sense, they don't. Experiences do not bring wisdom.
--Wisdom comes from learning from the experiences
--God's wisdom comes from learning His ways

--The wisdom problem works the other way also: to the world, God's ways are foolishness.
--1 Cor. 2:14: "The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him"

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17. How does a wise person resolve conflict?

18. v.14: What does this verse mean?
--People who boast about themselves never admit that they're sinners

--v.14 lists several things that are the fruit of false wisdom.
--if we see the things in v.14, we know people have been following earthly wisdom:
--Jealousy (envy)
--Selfish ambition
--arrogance (boasting)
--lying (deceit)
--v.16: disorder

--James is contrasting:
--v.15-16: earthly wisdom
--v.17: Wisdom from above.

--v.15 makes a severe statement: earthly wisdom is demonic.

19. How are we to understand this? Is it true that natural earthly wisdom is demonic?
--Yes, because anything not from God is ultimately against God.

--v.17: the person who is following heavenly wisdom is "full of mercy and good fruits"

20. v.18: What does this verse promise to those who make peace?
--Righteousness
--Peace

--Wouldn't you like to have peace?
--Wouldn't you like to be clean and righteous?
--If you don't have peace but do have hypocrisy, God says one reason is because you're following earthly wisdom which is not from above.
--How do we know when we need a different kind of wisdom? When we have envy, strife, jealousy, and selfishness.

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21. v.18: This verse speaks of sowing and reaping:
What are the principles of sowing and reaping?
--You reap what you sow
--You reap more than what you sow
--You ream in a different season than you sow
--The fruit doesn't always resemble the seed

22. v.18: Says that if we sow seeds of peace, we can reap the fruit of righteousness. How does that work?
--We can't have peace without righteousness
--Today we have neither peace nor righteousness
--Wouldn't it be nice to have both peace and righteousness?

23. What is peace?
--It's not just a lack of hostility
--Peace includes a deep-seated rest

24. What are some practical ways to bring peace to:
--Home & family?
--Work?
--Church?
--Neighbors?

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James 4

Review:

--James is very practical
--The first chapter talks about three main ideas:
--Take joy in trials
--Resist temptation
--Rest in truth
--Ch.1: Be doers of the word, not hearers only.
--Be doers of the word, not hearers only. Therefore it is not an option whether we should do kingdom work.
--Ch. 2: Beware of personal favoritism.
--Ch. 2: Show me your faith;
--Ch. 2: God's proclamation of righteousness by faith is proven by the resulting works.
--"Faith without works is dead" does not mean a person without works is not saved; it means the faith isn't helping anyone on earth.
--Therefore works flow naturally from faith.
--Works are to be expected from a saved person.
--We can't look at others and measure their works and tell whether they are saved.
--Ch.3: the damage done by the tongue.
--Controlling a tongue is like controlling the rudder of a ship.

--Ch. 3: We cannot tame the tongue, but God can change our hearts which will change what comes out of our mouths.

--In Ch. 4, we have:
--How to have effective prayer
--Be humble before God
--Do not judge other people
--Do not get overconfident about the future

--James 4 continues from the last part of Ch. 3, which talks about having peace.

Read James 4:1-6

--v.1: Speaks about where wars (quarrels, battles) and fights come from.
--Note that here James does not start with "my brethren" but begins a section where the tone is more blunt and harsh.

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--He does not question whether they exist; he assumes the reader knows that they have quarrels and fights.

1. James is writing to Christians. Do Christians have quarrels and conflicts?

2. According to v.1, where do quarrels and fights come from?
--our pleasures (passions, desires) are at war within us, within our members
--they begin with passions and desires

--The word translated "pleasures" means pleasure in a bad sense; the Greek word is where we get the term hedonism.

--v.1: says pleasures "wage war in your members."
--When the passage says "members" it is talking about two kinds of quarrels:
--within our own selves when we wrestle against sin
--between other church members

--v.1 says there is a war going on.
--The origin of the war is our desires
--The battleground of the war is within us.

--The early church had issues:
--James 4 says they had wars in their members
--The Corinthian church was suing each other (1 Cor. 6)
--The Galatian church was warned not to "bite and devour one another" (Galatians 5:15)
--Paul had to warn the Ephesian church to walk in unity (Eph. 4)
--Two women in the Philippian church were fighting (Phil. 4)
--Many of the churches had false teachers (2 Peter 2, Jude 12)
--Some in the Corinthian church were getting drunk at church meals (1 Cor. 11)

--Pleasures will feed lusts and lusts create strife both within ourselves and within our churches.

3. Where else in the Bible have we heard a similar description of wars within ourselves?
--Romans 7:14-25, esp. v.23

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4. Have you ever had a battle going on inside you?
5. Why is there a battle going on inside of us?
--Because we are born again with the Holy Spirit of God.
--But we still have an old self, an old nature

6. What can we do about this battle?
--Giving in to the desire does not solve the problem because the Holy Spirit will not let you have peace.
--The devil and the old self are still around, prompting the battle.

7. How about quarrels with others? Have you ever been in a quarrel with someone else?

8. In the end, how many times would you have preferred to go back and do it over so that you didn't have the quarrel in the first place?

9. Have you ever seen a war in a church?

10. How many times do church wars have unintended casualties?

--James says there were quarrels between church members in the first century, and we know there are still quarrels in churches today.

--So if giving in to passion does not solve the problem, and we are in the world but trying to not be of the world, what is the answer to our situation?
--He gives us the answer in a few verses.

--v.2: What are the sins that James says are in the church?
--lust (desire). murder, covet, fight, and quarrel (war)
--These are the ideas in James that parallel the Sermon on the Mount

11. In the sermon on the mount, what does Jesus say about lust & murder?
--Matt. 5:21ff, 27ff
--Lust is adultery
--Anger is murder

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12. If it is what is inside us that is the source of the sin, then how do we deal with our desires?
--The Holy Spirit must change us.

--James Ch. 4 gives the three areas that are at war with God.
--Anything that is friendly with God's enemies are at war with God:
--The world (v.4)
--The flesh (v.6)
--The Devil (v.7)

13. v.2c-3a: He gives two reasons why we don't get what we pray for. What are the reasons?
--we do not ask
--when we do ask, we ask for selfish things

--God is good and gracious and sometimes He does give people gifts out of His compassion and love.
--However God's primary interest is not maximizing our pleasure.
--If we ask for things just to increase our pleasure, God usually does not grant these wishes.
--The basic thrust of this section is that we should have self-denial and self-sacrifice.

14. How often do we hear sermons about denying ourselves and denying worldliness?

--v.4: James had been saying "my brethren" but now gets blunt and says "you adulterers."

15. v.4: He refers to people in the church as adulterers. Besides the normal meaning of adultery, what spiritual meaning might he be speaking about?

16. To God, what is spiritual adultery?
--When God's people go after other gods
--or when God's people go after the world
--Christians are called the bride of Christ (Rom. 7:4; Rev. 19:7)
--The Bible says that God is a jealous God; He does not want us going after other idols.

17. What is it about the world that competes with God? Why is it that we cannot be worldly and Godly at the same time?

--v.4: Note the tone of James here: he calls the congregation names; he does not speak softly to them to try to build church attendance.

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--Too many churches are operating like a business: only trying to get more people in the door to give more money.
--Spurgeon asked: "are we feeding sheep or amusing goats?"
--If the church leaders are only trying to get more people in the door, they should step down.

18. Should church leaders and pastors be concerned with offending their congregations?
--Sermons should not be adjusted for fear of losing members of the congregation.
--Pastors should ask themselves why they are in the ministry: to make money or feed the sheep?

--v.4: "Friendship with the world is hostility toward God."

19. Why is it that if we are friends with the world we are hostile toward God?
--Worldly things are focused on self, or pleasure, or sin.
--Worldly things never give God what He rightfully deserves.

--Each of us should ask ourselves whether we care more about being friends with the world or being in fellowship with God.
--Christians should not be too friendly with the world.
--Christians should feel out of place in the world's system because we are citizens of another kingdom.
--Right now we are aliens in a foreign world.
--If you are too comfortable in this world, you should find out what is wrong with your faith.

20. What can we do to focus on God and avoid worldliness?
--Read God's word and learn God's ways.
--The world's ways are always opposite of God's ways.
--One tip: when we pray, watch our pronouns; how many times to I say "I, me, my" and how many times do I mention the good attributes of the Father?
--Getting things that feel good is not necessarily a blessing

--Some Christians focus too often on whether other people are worldly rather than if we ourselves are worldly.
--We should be less concerned with separation of church and state and more concerned with separation of church and the world.

21. Do you think we are good at recognizing worldliness in ourselves?

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--v.5: Note that James gives a sentence here as if it were a quote from the OT.
--No verse exists that use these exact words.
--But plenty of verses exist that talk about the concepts of God's jealousy about His people exclusively worshipping Him.

--v.6 says that God is opposed to the proud.

22. Why is pride given as a great sin?

--"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not of the Father, but is from the world." (1 John 2:16)
--The Bible calls humility a virtue. Jesus said "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12)

Read James 4:7-10

--v.7-11a have nine commands in a row, all short simple commands.
--God is very clear here with what He expects of us.

--v.7: --submit yourselves--this is a command. The Greek here is passive; be subject to.

--The idea is that if we consciously decide to allow God to act upon us, then He will come to us and change us.

--When we submit to God and resist the devil, the devil flees
--If we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.
This is stated as a certainty; not a maybe or a might, but a sure thing.

23. How do we draw near to God? What do we do?

--v.7: Resist the devil;
--Resist means to set yourself against;
--The word here for devil is slanderer or false accuser.
--The devil is a person, not a concept or an idea.
--the devil is not someone to fear, for God is greater. But we also should respect his subtlety.
--It is false to think of resisting the devil as a power struggle. Instead, think of it as a truth struggle. If you align with the truth, then the lies and slander from the devil cannot stand.

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--Who we are in Christ is a truth; if we focus on the fact that children of God are righteous people who act righteously, we will avoid temptation.

--So if we resist the devil and draw near to God, submitting to Him, then God will draw near to us.
When we are near God, He pushes out the sinful desires and gives us grace to help us live righteous lives.

24. v.8: Why does he tell us to wash our hands and purify our heart?
--God is a holy God and He is interested in us being clean and pure.
--Things that are good and pure are of God; things that are impure are rejected by God.

--v.8: "purify" here also means to make chaste.
--Purify and cleanse are contrasted with "you adulterers" in v.4.
--The comparison is clear: if we stay near Christ and avoid sin, we are the pure and holy bride of Christ; if we sin we are adulterers.
--Christianity is a love relationship with Jesus and we need to view it as love.

25. When Christians live righteously, what kind of influence do they have to people around them?
--Right living gives us respect with those around us.
--When we are not living right, the non-Christians do not listen to our message.
--Non-Christians can spot a phony

--Note: Heart in the Bible is like the heart of a tree; it is the center of our being.
--When he says purify your heart, he means purify all of you, down to the very core of yourself.
--Luke 5:22, Mark 2:8 Jesus says "Why are you thinking these things in your heart?"
--The heart is a place you can think; it is all of you, mind, body, and emotions.
--Therefore "purify your heart" includes purifying the mind.
--God is commanding Christians to learn to think Biblically, not worldly nor carnally.

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--v.9: Why is this verse here? What reason would God say this?
--v.9 is still talking to the same people as v.8c: sinners and double-minded.
--Sinners and double-minded people have no joy or peace. -
--They have nothing to laugh about.
--When they realize how much they have offended God with their sin, they will mourn and weep.
--Note that God is speaking to Christians who are sinners and double-minded.
--We should strive for being holy and sinless, but realize that Christians can have sin in our lives.

--v.10: this verse is very similar to 1 Peter 5:6-7.

26. What is our part of this command?

27. What is God's part of this command?

28. What happens to people who do the opposite, and lift themselves up?
--The last will be first and the first will be last.

--Note that v.9 deals with getting rid of sin, then v.10 deals with God exalting us.
--We have to deal with sin first before we can humble ourselves before God before He will then exalt us.
--Our sin problem has to be dealt with first.

Read James 4:11-17

--This section is very practical and clear; it doesn't really need explaining.

--v.11: Don't speak evil or slander

29. v.11: Why would this verse say that that if we judge a brother, we're putting ourselves above the law?
--If we become the judge, then we assume we are arbiters of what the law means.
--we're making ourselves the authority
--God and His law need to be the authority, not us and our judgement.

30. Is there anyone who it is OK to judge?
--Ourselves

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Read James 5:19-20.
--It would seem that in this case, we ought to judge.

31. What's the difference between turning a sinner from the error of his ways (5:19) and not judging a brother (4:11)?
--4:11 is talking more about not condemning someone

James 4:
--v.13-15: Our plans only succeed if God wills.
--In this section, the problem is not planning. Planning is good.
--The problem is that there is no indication that these business people prayed to God and asked for direction.
--They were doing worldly things without God.

32. v.14: What do we have in this life that is permanent?
--Only our souls.

--v.14: "life is a vapor"
--This does not mean that human life is meaningless
--We have value in Christ

33. What does God mean when He says life is a vapor?
--Life is brief
--Life is too short to spend it on hatred and bitterness
--We all need to use our time wisely for the Lord.

34. When you die, how much are you going to leave?
--all of it

35. v.15: How can we live the way this verse commands on a daily basis?

36. How do we know God's will?
--We know God's will is for us to be holy: 1 Thess. 4:3 "This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality"
--"rejoice, pray without ceasing, and give thanks, for this is the will of God." (1 Thess. 5:16-18)
--We should read the Bible, pray, and seek wise counsel for the rest

--If we are unsure of God's will, we should get to work doing something to serve the Lord until His direction is clear.

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--v.17: This verse is clear.

37. How does it fit in with the previous verses?

--v.17 goes back to the royal law, the law of liberty.

--This verse is in the spirit of do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

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James 5

Review:

--James is very practical
--The first chapter talks about three main ideas:
    --Take joy in trials
    --Resist temptation
    --Rest in truth
--Ch.1: Be doers of the word, not hearers only.
--Be doers of the word, not hearers only. Therefore it is not an option whether we should do kingdom work.
--Ch. 2: Beware of personal favoritism.
--Ch. 2: Show me your faith;
--Ch. 2: God's proclamation of righteousness by faith is proven by the resulting works.
--Therefore works flow naturally from faith.
--Ch.3: the damage done by the tongue.
--Controlling a tongue is like controlling the rudder of a ship.

--Ch. 3: We cannot tame the tongue, but God can change our hearts which will change what comes out of our mouths.

--In Ch. 4 tells us to include God in all our daily plans.

--Ch. 5 speaks about treating poor people fairly.

Read James 5:1-6

--Not a very high opinion of rich people
--This has some poetic language, some descriptive language
--God speaks very strong and blunt against people with money.
--The tone here would suggest that these condemnations are aimed at non-Christians.
--Typically people inside the church are not spoken to in such a tone.

1. What do you think of when you read this?

--Remember that in first century Rome, there was no real middle class. There was only the vastly wealthy and the very poor.
--They didn't have the fair labor laws that we have today.

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--Money and wealth are not evil; what is evil is the love of money. (1 Timothy 6:10)

--v.1: speaks about miseries that come upon the wealthy.

2. What kind of problems would rich people have?
--All the same personal problems as poor people
--Plus the problems of keeping track of all the riches that people are trying to steal or might get lost.

--v.2-3: God says the rich put their confidence in their wealth, but the wealth is rotted and moth-eaten.
--He is talking about how the wealthy are in a poor spiritual state.
--Luxury and wealth have a way of corrupting morals.

3. Can money cause us to lose focus on what is important?
--Yes, money can distract us from relations with others and with God.

4. v.3: Why would riches "eat flesh like fire?"
--Note the riches will consume the flesh like fire.
--God is saying riches will destroy people.
--Wealthy nations tend to rot from within.

5. What happens to people when they put all their focus and attention on making money?

--v.3: They put their trust in silver, gold, and fine clothing. These things will not just become worthless but will give evidence against them.

6. What did James say back in Ch. 2 about what to do if a rich person comes into the church?
--treat everyone the same
--do not play favorites with certain people

7. Why can't we put trust in money?
--Money can be stolen
--Monetary systems can make our money worthless
--You can be rich and wake up one morning with a handful of dust

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--Note:
--Money can buy a bed but it can't buy sleep.
--Money will buy a house but it can't buy a home.
--Money will buy doctors but it won't buy health
--Money will buy friends but it won't buy love.
--Money will buy fun but it won't buy lasting contentment.
--Money will buy sex but it won't buy satisfaction.

8. Instead, where should we put our trust?

9. What good does it do to be the richest person in the graveyard?

10. When you die, how much money will you leave?
--all of it.

11. What does God promise about taking care of our needs?
--He will take care of our needs
--"My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory" (Phil. 4:19)

12. Does God say He will supply all our wants and fleshly desires?
--No

13. What does this passage tell us about being fair in our business dealings?

14. Where is God's heart in relation to the poor and downtrodden?

--The Bible does not have much good to say about riches. They create a lot of problems.

--v.3c: "you have laid up treasure in the last days"
--He is saying that the time is short, and we are worrying about making more money.
--This verse says we are in the last days.
--Hebrews 1:2 says: God "in these last days has spoken to us through His Son"
--The Bible says we are in the last days and have been in the last days since Jesus walked the earth.

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15. If you really thought you only had a few days to live, what would you say to those around you?

16. What does Jesus say about laying up treasures?
--Matt. 6:19-21: Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.
--Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"

--Each of us should ask ourselves "Where is my heart?"

--Jesus said to the rich young ruler to sell his possessions and give to the poor.
--Jesus picked the one thing that was most important to the young ruler.
--Jesus also said to "be on your guard against every form of greed" (Luke 12:15)
--If money and material wealth is most important to us, perhaps it is best if God leaves us poor.

--v.4: Speaks to the rich person who has taken advantage of workers that have been hired.

17. Do the rich take advantage of the poor still today?

--v.4b: Notice that the wrong deeds will be "a witness against you (evidence against you)"
--There will be a day of reckoning where our deeds will be displayed.
--Jesus said "Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops" (Luke 12:3)

--God is always interested in being fair and righteous toward everyone.

18. What does the OT law say someone should do if they have stolen money?
--Pay back more than they have stolen
--God cares about keeping people honest and taking care of the poor.

--This section has great descriptive language.
--v.5: "you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter."
--Livestock were fattened before they were slaughtered for food.

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--God is saying that the wealthy are living well and eating well in a day that their lives will be required of them.

--v.6: “you have condemned and put to death the righteous man.”
--There are people in the world who are schemers. They look for ways to take advantage of unsuspecting people.
--This verse says these wealthy people are taking advantage of people so that the innocent aren’t even resisting.
--It seems wealthy people are able to manipulate society to get what they want while poor people cannot.
--We may think we’re just being smart and wise when we con people out of money, but God says it’s as bad as murder.
--God knows what we’re doing and we won’t get away with it.
--We will either treat people fair today or God will make it right in the end.
--God is telling us in these passages He expects us to treat people fairly and not be the person who finds the slyest way to make money from unsuspecting people.

--It seems that many politicians run to get elected by promising to help the poor. The poor never seem to get helped but the politicians all seem to get richer.

--This passage teaches us some things about how we will be judged by God:
- --v.1: miseries “will be coming upon you.”
- --v.3: gold and silver “will be a witness against you.”
- --v.3: there will be a “last days”
- --v.4: when a person does not pay someone what they have earned, the pay will “cry out against you.”
- --v.4: the cries of those who were not treated fairly “will reach the ears of the Lord”
- --v.7: the Lord will return.

--Therefore we can be sure that:
- --There will be a judgement day
- --The Lord knows and is keeping an account of which of our actions are fair or unfair
- --The Lord will make a judgement and mete out rewards and punishments.

--The next section emphasizes the need to be patient while we anxiously wait for the Lord.

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Read James 5:7-11

--v.7: “Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.”
--v.8: Repeats the same idea.
--James returns to talking to brethren, which means he is softening his tone for friends.

--This passage mentions patience and waiting five times in three verses.

19. Do you think he’s trying to remind us?

--This passage says that:
--1) the Lord is coming back
--2) there is a need for patience

20. Are you good at waiting? Why?

21. What happens to us when we are impatient? What do we tend to do when we get impatient?
--We often give up waiting and do something immature.

--v.7c: “early and late rains”
Just like a farmer who has to plant crops and wait for the rain. He can get impatient.
--Years ago there was a movement within Pentecostalism called the Latter Rain Movement. It got its name from v.7.
--The Latter Rain Movement held that there was a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and physical healing. This is not what James is talking about.
--The clear emphasis in the passage is to wait patiently for the return of Jesus.
--Just as the farmer waits and watches the weather so he’ll know when to plant, we should wait and watch the sky for the return of the Lord.

22. Were there other people in the Bible who were impatient and did not wait on the Lord?
--Abraham and the maid that produced Ishmail
--King Saul did not wait on Samuel to do a sacrifice

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--v.8: The coming of the Lord is near
--v.9: The Judge is standing right at the door

23. Who is the judge he is talking about?
--Jesus

24. Do we think of Jesus as a Judge?
--When Jesus comes back, He will be a righteous Judge. He will be in control.
--When Jesus comes back, what will He be like?
--Rev. 19:11ff: Jesus riding on a white horse

--According to these verses, where are we in human history?
--near the end
--What is the next event that we should be looking for?
--The return of Christ
--How should we then be living?

--We should live with a sense of expectancy, knowing that the Lord could return any moment.
--Jesus taught us in parables to expect His return at any time:
--Rev. 3:3: Jesus told the church at Sardis "I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you."
--Luke 12:39 Jesus said "the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

--v.10-11 tells us to look to the OT prophets as an example of suffering and patience.

25. What type of example are the OT prophets?
These were men chosen by God to speak God's words.
What type of life did they live?
--They suffered often.
--They usually did not see the Lord's end result

--James opened the epistle talking about taking joy in suffering.
--Here toward the end he picks up the same theme.
--God here is telling us that we can expect suffering in this life, just like the prophets suffered, and we should have patience through it, for the Lord is coming.

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26. v.11: Who gets counted as blessed?
--Those who endured
--We do not count those who quit as blessed.
--James is saying to keep your eye on the goal, which is the return of Christ.
--Jesus said in Luke 21:26-28 that when we look up and see men's hearts failing them from fear of what they see on the earth then to look up and watch for Jesus is near.
--Paul in 1 Cor. 9:24 compares the Christian life to running a race. He says to run in such a way that you can win the prize at the end.

--We are to go through all the things in life with an expectation that Jesus could return any minute and we do not want Him to find us asleep.

--v.11: Mentions Job.
--Through the book, God never tells Job why God allowed Job to suffer.
--Job never loses his faith in God.

27. Does it trouble you that God does not explain why we go through suffering?

28. Does it trouble you that God allows us to suffer at all?

--v.11: also says God is compassionate and merciful.
29. Has God ever been compassionate and merciful to you?

Read James 5:12

--v.12: Do not swear.
--This is not talking about expletives, such as shouting out a curse word.
--It's also not talking about promising to tell the truth in court or when you sign a legal document.

--Rather, it means to not say things like "by my mother's grave, I'm telling the truth."
Or, "I swear on the stack of bibles."
--The reason: If you're not swearing on your mother's grave or a stack of bibles, does this mean you're not telling the truth?
--Let your yes be yes and your no be no.
--He's just saying to tell the truth every time and you won't need to swear.

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Read James 5:13-15

--v.13: God says that the suffering need to pray and the cheerful are to sing.
--This book is so practical and straightforward.
--Are you cheerful? Then praise the Lord for it.
--Are you in a dark place? Then pray to the Lord and talk to Him.

--v.14: Anointing with oil in the name of the Lord
--This is not the Greek word for ceremonial anointing but a different word that is often used for rubbing on medicine.
--If this is true, James would be saying to go to the doctor.

`--v.7-11 talk about enduring suffering
--v.14-15 talk about God healing us.

30. How does this work? Will we have to endure suffering or will God heal us?
--God does what is best for us in the long run, not what feels good in the moment.
--Sometimes God heals, sometimes not, but He always does what is best.

--v.15: "The prayer offered in faith will restore (save) the one who is sick (will make the sick person well)"

31. Is God guaranteeing healing for every prayer offered in faith?
--Everyone who has claimed guaranteed healing died of their last disease.
--Either this passage is not guaranteeing healing or else every Christian that ever lived never had enough faith because they all died of some disease or injury.
--God is good but He is not our servant. He will do what He wills and what is good for us in the long run.
--We do not give our children everything they ask for because they ask amiss.
--Remember James 4:3: If we ask for things that are just pleasurable to us, then we will not get our request.
--The best advice is to pray for healing and go to the doctor.
--Anyone who claims they can guarantee healing people with faith should go to the nearest hospital and heal everyone there.

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--However, there is a clearer answer regarding the words translated "sick."
--v.14: "Is anyone among you sick? Uses the Greek word *Astheneo* means "to be sick so that you are fatigued."
--v.15: "restore the one who is sick" uses a different Greek word, *kamno* which means "to be weary."
--So God is saying in v.14-15 that if someone is sick, call for the elders to pray for him, give him some medicine, and the prayer offered in faith will deliver the person who is weary.
--It's not a guarantee of physical healing because v.15 uses a different word.
--It's a command for prayer and medical attention and a guarantee of strengthening the weary.

--v.15c: "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."
--God tells us to pray fervently and expect it to accomplish much.

--The rest of the book talks about prayer.
Read James 5:16-20

--If you're suffering:
1. Get others to pray, and pray in confidence
2. Go to the doctor
3. Have patience, for God is merciful and compassionate.

--v.16b: "the effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."
--James knew prayer quite well because he was called "camel knees" because he spent so much time in prayer.

32. Is there a connection between righteousness and answered prayer?
--Possibly, this verse suggests that.
--but we cannot manipulate God by saying "I'll obey and get more of what I want." Prayer does not work that way.
--Nor is it true that bad things happen to people because they have too much sin. Job shows us this is not true.

--v.16-18: Tell the story of Elijah who was one of God's OT prophets. Elijah prayed that it would stop raining, then three years later prayed and it rained again.
--The suggestion in the passage here is that we should pray boldly and with an expectation of God granting our prayers.

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--We should not be presumptuous, but we should pray in faith.
--In the end God does what He wills, but nevertheless the message of the Bible is that we should pray fervently and with an expectation of God acting.

--v.19: Is it possible that a Christian can wander from the truth?
--If so, what should be our reaction?

--v.20: If you turn a sinner toward God, then God will forgive his sins.
--Some people express faith in Jesus and then wander away from the faith.
--We should all feel a need to bring these people back to the church family.
--They should be approached in tenderness and humility with a spirit of trying to restore them to the faith.
--Jesus said that when He has a lost sheep, He will leave the 99 and go find the one.
--Matthew 18:12 says He will “go to the mountains to find it”
--We should have the same passion for restoring a sinning person.

--Each of us should ask himself, “have I turned from my sin to Jesus?
--If so, all your sins will be covered.

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