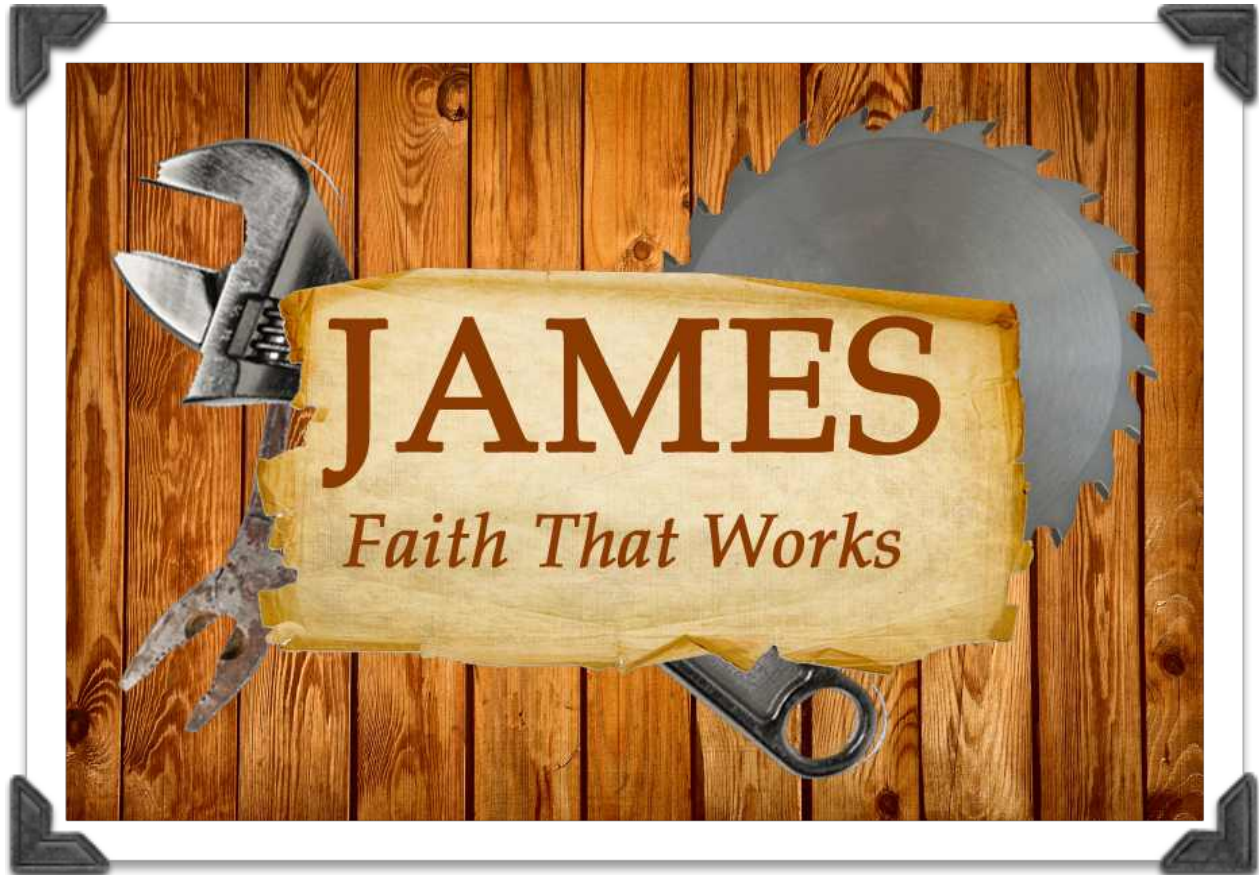


CONN³CT

Small Group Sermon Series Bible Study



CONN³CT

Small Group Bible Study

Sermon: Who Are You? James 1:1

January 16, 2011

James was the brother of Jesus (same mother) and grew up in the same household. What might be some hang-ups and issues that James would have with Jesus from his growing up years?

Look at the greetings in some of the letters
written by:

Paul

Romans 1:1-6, 1 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 1:1, Titus 1:1-3, Philemon 1:1

Peter

2 Peter 1:1

Jude

Jude 1:1

How do the writers introduce themselves?

When you are presenting yourself for the first time, what do you want people to know about you?
How do we normally introduce ourselves to people in our culture, and what can we learn from the writers of the
New Testament?

Read the prayer of Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 2:1-10

What are common identities we build our lives around? (example, I am a mother, I'm an athlete....).

What is the danger in building our identities around these things according to Hannah's prayer?

What is the true identity of a Christian?
2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:4-7,
Colossians 3:3-4

What does it mean to you to find your identity in these truths?

Read and discuss Philippians 1:21. How did James live this out? How can we?

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Small Group Bible Study

Is This Really Necessary James 1:1b-12

January 23, 2011

Can you think of an example in your life where you can say, with sincerity, that suffering was necessary to bring you where you are today?

Read James 1:2-4. What kind of mindset change is required to allow suffering to be viewed as an “opportunity for great joy?”

According to Romans 5:3-7, what happens when we learn to trust God with our suffering? Through what means did God guarantee that He would fulfill this promise?

What does Job 36:15 teach us about suffering?

Do Christians in Canada expect and embrace suffering as something God allows and even desires for the believer?

What do we learn about God’s plan for Paul’s life in Acts 9:13-16 and how did suffering play a part?

What lesson did Paul learn about suffering according to 2 Corinthians 12:9-10?

Read James 1:5-8. Why is trust in God so important when it comes to suffering? See 1 Peter 4:19.

Timothy Keller wrote, "Your problems are only problems because you've hitched your worth and identity to something fleeting, and when it fades, you fade with it." Discuss this quote in light of James 1:9-11

How does Matthew 6:20-21 help you to understand this?

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Small Group Bible Study

Temptation James 1:13-18

January 30, 2011

What is temptation? Begin by discussing common everyday temptations one may face.

v. 13 - And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.

Read Genesis 3:1-12. How does Adam try to place the blame on God for his decision to eat the forbidden fruit?
Can we ever blame God for placing things in our path that tempt us?
What desires motivated Adam & Eve to eat the fruit?

v. 14-15 - Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

What is sin according to Romans 3:23?

How can we know when our decisions are contrary to God's law? 1 John 3:4 & 2 Timothy 3:16-17

When asked what the greatest commandment was, we find Jesus' reply in Mark 12:29-31. Why are these words so convicting?

What is the ultimate consequence of sin according to Isaiah 59:2-3. How is this "death?"

Can we blame God for our inability to follow His law? Romans 7:13-14

v. 16-17 - So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

How does 2 Timothy 1:9 and Hebrews 1:1-3 demonstrate this passage?
Why are we so desperately in need of God's grace? Read Romans 7:21-25

v. 18 - He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.

vi. Read John 1:10-13. What is this new birth, and what does it offer us that we did not have on our own?

How does this teaching open your eyes to the reality of temptation and sin? How will it help you to deal with temptation in the future?

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Small Group Bible Study

The Only Solution James 1:13-18 continued

February 6, 2011

James 1:13-15 NIV - *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

Begin by Reading Romans 7:15-20. How do you identify with this passage?
Why is sin an impossible battle to fight on our own?

Does this in any way take away our personal responsibility regarding sin? Romans 3:19-20

Continue to Romans 7:24-25a. What is our only hope?
(see John 14:6 - Why is this essential to understand?)

How does Ephesians 2:8-10 describe this hope?
Why is v.9 so important in light of what we have learned about temptation and sin?

James 1:16-18 NIV - *Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.*

Read the following descriptions of Jesus, from the Old & New Testaments.
Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1-4, Hebrews 1:8-12

What are the different ways that Jesus is described, and why is each way significant?

The book of Hebrews explains how God fulfilled the promise in James 1:18
Read Hebrews 5:1-3. How was sin dealt with in Old Testament times, and what were the limitations?

Hebrews 7:23-27 How is Jesus different than the High Priests of the past? Why is this so important?
Hebrews 9:15 What is this new covenant, and what does it mean to us?

John 3:18-19 leaves us with a reminder of the motivation for sin and the choice we are given. Read and discuss.

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Small Group Bible Study

Don't Just Listen

James 1:19-27

February 20, 2011

What are some spiritual disciplines that you hold to? Discuss what it means to have a rich prayer & devotional life.

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. What are some principles given for reading & understanding scripture?

James 1:21-22 begins with a strong warning for believers. What is the difference between listening and doing?

Why is the latter so much more difficult? What gets in the way of doing?

James 1:25 instructs you to "look carefully at the perfect law that sets you free."

Read Romans 3:21-27. What is the perfect law that sets us free, and why is it important to understand that it is not based on our own works?

How does Romans 15:7 help you to understand the importance of doing as opposed to just listening?

In his commentary on James, Matthew Henry writes, "When men take more pains to seem religious than really to be so, it is a sign their religion is in vain." Discuss this quote in light of James 1:26.

When asked to name the greatest commandment, we find Jesus' answer in Matthew 22:37-39. How does understanding His answer apply to what we are learning?

What is the mark of true religion according to James 1:27? Is this possible to fulfill on our own?

How does the teaching & promise given in Galatians 5:16 & 22-25 apply to our ability to follow God's law? Why is understanding this essential for a Christian?

Understanding that we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, read and discuss 2 Peter 1:3-7 and how this would look in your life if applied consistently.

Faith → Moral Excellence → Knowledge → Self Control → Patient Endurance →
Godliness → Brotherly Affection → Love

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Small Group Bible Study

Deaf God & Worthless Religion

James 1:27-2:8

March 6, 2011

Read James 2:1-4. Do you ever do this? Often times we do this without thinking - reflect on or discuss the ways that you may favor some people over others.

What are some reasons that we so easily fall into the trap of prejudice or assumptions based on social standing, appearance, etc? What assumptions are we making about ourselves in the process?
What does v. 4 say about our motives, and why is this true?

James 2:5 - *"Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?"*

How does Matthew 5:3 and Matthew 19:23-25 help explain this passage? Why is it "easier" for the poor to realize their need for God? Looking honestly at your own situation and the world around you, where do you fall in?

Read James 2:6-7. How do the rich slander Jesus Christ? Read Malachi 3:5 and Habakkuk 1:4 and discuss this further. Does your own lifestyle ever slander Jesus? (pray for an honest heart as you consider this question)

James 2:8-9 - *Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.*

The book of Isaiah begins with a powerful message. Read Isaiah 1:13-17. How does God view the "sin" mentioned above, and what is the consequence?

What would be some of the most likely prayers of the poor? What are some of your prayers when it comes to finances & security? Does Isaiah 1:15 still apply in any way when we consider our own prayers in relation to the prayers of the poor? Discuss.

How can you be a part of God's answer to the prayers of the poor according to Isaiah 58:6-7? What holds you back?

Go back to Matthew 19:23 but this time continue to v. 26. Why is Jesus' answer so important? Read Isaiah 58:8-11. What promises are given when we step out in obedience and care for those in need?

Throughout scripture God promises that He will care for the poor & oppressed. Take some time to pray about how God is calling you to be a part of His plan and "let your light shine out from the darkness."

CONN³CT

Small Group Bible Study

Seriously? Really? ~ James 2:11-26

March 13, 2011

Read James 2:11

What is your standard for living a “Godly” life? Think deeper about this and discuss:

1. Your ideal standard 2. Your actual standard

Read the following passage and discuss where the Pharisee was setting his standard. Luke 18:9-14

Why did his righteousness fail? See Romans 3:23 & Matthew 5:21-22

Read James 2:12-13. What questions arise as you read this passage?

James 2:14-16 continues by explaining the previous statement. What is James teaching about the “here and now” aspect of our faith in Christ?

Who are some people that you see living out their faith in this way? What kind of sacrifice do you think this involves, and could you do it?

Read James 2:17. What is the key point of this verse? Where does our ability to do good deeds come from?

Reflect on these verses from Galatians 5 together. v.16-17, 22-23, 25

Continue with James 2:18-20.

Read the following examples of belief. Mark 1:23-24 and Acts 8:17-19. How is true faith more than just belief?

How does this challenge you in your walk with Christ?

In James 2:21-24 we are reminded of the story of Abraham and Isaac. Read Genesis 22:1-12 and share your honest thoughts and feelings about this story. How is 22:8 a demonstration of where Abraham truly put his trust?

James continues his examples of faith in 2:25 with the story of Rahab.

Read Joshua 2:8-11 & 15-16. How does Rahab cross the line from belief to faith?

James 2:26 ends with a strong warning to Christians. Do you see evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life? As you consider what it means for faith to produce good works, what is your prayer to God for your own life?

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Small Group Bible Study

Tongue Tester

James 3:1-12

May 1, 2011

An old children's poem states, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?" Is this phrase really true in your experience?

What are some words that have actually hurt you, and why can words carry such power?

Read through James 3:1-12. After reading, share your thoughts on the passage.

James 3:1 - Who are teachers in the church? Why are a teachers words (all words, not just those used in teaching) watched so closely?

What responsibility comes with this sort of leadership, and does this end when the teaching time is over?

James 3:2 - How are our words a reflection of our hearts?

Explain this statement to the best of your understanding - "For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way."

James 3:3-7 - How is the power of the tongue described according to these illustrations?

Think back on the past day. Did you slander someone, gossip about someone, hurt someone with your words?

Whether it's intentional or unintentional, are the consequences any different?

James 3:7-8

Have you ever tried to to control your tongue and been completely successful? Is our problem the tongue itself, or something much deeper?

Reflect on Romans 7:20-23. How does this passage relate to how you use your words?

James 3:9-12

Why is the difference between praising God and cursing those made in His image so profound? When we curse others, who are we trying to justify - God or ourselves? How does Psalm 51:4 speak to this?

If the tongue is uncontrollable, and but a symptom of a deeper problem, what hope do we have? Finish by reading Galatians 5:20-25. Where does our hope come from?

Tongue Tester - Adapted from Jack & Rose Marrie Miller

1. Do Not Complain or Grumble about Anything
2. Do Not Boast about Anything At all
3. Do Gossip
4. Do to Speak negatively about anyone - not even a little bit
5. Do not defend or excuse yourself no matter what
6. Always affirm other people

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Small Group Bible Study

Why Can't We all just Get Along?

James 4:1-9

May 8, 2011

What are some things that spark anger in you? (think about everyday circumstances)

Reflect on James 4:1. In light of the previous question, what does this verse say to you? Where is the line between justifiable anger and sinful anger?

On the other side, can you think of actions you regularly do that cause strife with others? How does Galatians 5:26 speak to this?

James 4:2-3 takes the thought further. Read it and discuss the following:
what makes a desire "evil?" How can we judge our desires according to Matthew 6:19-21?

Read James 4:4. What is the significance of the word "adulterer?"
How do you understand the phrase "friendship with the world?" Read John 3:16-19 and 1 John 1:15-16 and discuss how they help you to understand this passage.

James 4:5 can be a difficult verse to understand. How do the following two alternate translations help you to understand it?

James 4:5 NIV © 1984 - "What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the spirit God has placed within us is filled with envy?"

James 4:5 ESV - "Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'?"

How is God's Jealousy different than ours? See Exodus 13:14 & 2 Corinthians 11:1-3. Why is God's jealousy justified, and what does this have to do with friendship of the world?

Read James 4:6-8. Why is humility the first step in standing against impure motives? What is God's promise to us when we draw close to Him?

How does this all tie back to the quarrels, fights and jealousy that this section of scripture beings with?

James 4:9 ends with a call for somber repentance. What are your first thoughts as you read this?
Why is the recognition of our own sin so essential according to 1 John 1:8-10? What is God's promise when we do so?

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Psalm 51:7-8 "Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice."

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Small Group Bible Study

When I Don't Desire God James 4:4-10

May 15, 2011

What is love?

Has someone you loved turned their back on you, even for a moment? Why can love be painful?

What is love according to John 15:13? How does this relate to God's love for us? See Romans 5:7-9

God's love for His people is written all throughout the Bible. Read the following verses together and reflect on God's love.

Psalms 103:8

Psalms 136:26

Isaiah 63:7

John 3:16-17

Romans 8:38

Ephesians 3:19

Ephesians 2:4-5

1 Thessalonians 1:4

James 4:4 *"You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God."*

What does it mean to be a friend of the world?

Read Romans 1:22-23. What are idols in this passage? What does it mean to worship them as opposed to worshipping God?

Thinking deeper, what are idols in your own life that you put above God?

Thinking back to the verses we read on God's unfailing love, is the term "adulterer" appropriate in describing your heart?

James 4:8-9 *"Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy."*

What is repentance? Read Psalm 51:17 and Joel 2:12. Why is sorrow and mourning justified? What is the difference between this kind of sorrow and worldly sorrow according to 2 Corinthians 7:10?

James 4:10 *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor."*

Why is it so important to understand the scope of God's love for us?

Finish by praying through Psalm 51:7-11 together or on your own.

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Small Group Bible Study

Eye to Eye James 4:10-12

May 29, 2011

What are circumstances that cause you to judge others? What makes you feel justified in passing judgement?

Begin by reading James 4:10. What does it mean to humble yourself before the Lord? Why is humility before God so important in the life of a Christian?

Continue with James 4:11. How have you spoken evil against others? Have there been consequences, to you or to them?

Read the command in Leviticus 19:16a? What is gossip, and why do we so easily do it? How does this relate to the passage we just read in James?

Jesus teaches about this same subject in Luke 6. Read Luke 6:37. What are the apparent consequence of judging others? Can you recall situations where you have seen this proven to be true?

Similarly, why is the same said for condemnation, and what does condemnation have to do with judgement?

The verse ends with "forgive others, and you will be forgiven." Is there a difference between forgiveness and passing judgement?

Why is God alone justified to Judge? See James 4:12

Jesus speaks about this further in Luke 6:41-42. What does the speck in ones eye represent, and what point is Jesus making? Read the passage again trying to visualize the situation. Who's eye is in worse shape?

Are we ever able to completely remove the log from our own eye? Consider Jesus' words to the men preparing to stone a woman caught in adultery in John 8:7. How did the accusers respond? (John 8:9)

We are reminded of our condition before God in Isaiah 59:3 and Romans 3:23. What was our condition? How does God respond to our sin according to John 3:16-18. Discuss this in light of the previous verses.

Why is God's grace so powerful, and why is understanding it so important? Read Ephesians 2:4-10 and discuss.

With all of this in mind, what is the difference between judgment and recognizing sin as sin? When we see behavior that is clearly contrary to the teaching of God's word, how are we to respond?

CONN³CT

Small Group Bible Study

James 5:1-6

June 5, 2011

Read James 5:1-6.

If you're honest, you'll admit that someone came to mind as you read this passage, and it probably wasn't yourself.

Who are the wealthy around you? Now consider the poor in your community- who are the wealthy to them?

Could this passage actually be directed at you?

Why is the idea of another's wealth so dependent on ones own circumstances?

James 5:1-2 "Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags."

What is true wealth according to Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21? How is this wealth so different from earthly treasure?

Discuss or consider the danger of wealth according to Matthew 13:22. How is wealth deceitful?

James 5:3 Your gold and silver have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment.

Read Luke 12:16-21. How did this man's wealth deceive him? When we hoard wealth, to use the NIV translation of verse, how does this affect our dependence on God?

How did the Israelites learn this lesson in Exodus 16:11-26?

James 5:4 For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

Does this verse apply to you? Has it ever? Have you ever cheated, ripped off, or deceived for financial gain?

Have you ever held out until you paid far less than something was actually worth?

Go back to verse 1. What does James say will be the end result?

James 5:5-6 You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.

Read Matthew 19:23-26. Why are we so dependent on God's grace?

How does this passage challenge you to use the wealth that God has granted you?

CONN³CT

Small Group Bible Study

James 5:7-19

June 19, 2011

Begin with James 5:7-9

What are things that make you impatient with the world? Why do we long for Christ's return?
How do Paul's words in Philippians 1:21-26 relate to what is being expressed here?

What does it mean that "the Lord's coming is near (NIV)" considering how long ago the passage was written?
Read Matthew 25:1-13. Why is it important for a Christian to live each day as if Christ was returning the next?

Continue with James 5:10-12

PERSONAL STUDY - Take some time to examine the life of someone who suffered in God's name in the Bible.
Some suggestions include Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, John the Baptist.... How did they suffer? Why did they suffer? What was the result of their suffering?

How did Job persevere? See Job 1:13-22 & 2:1-10. What was the final outcome in Job's life? See Job 42:12-17. Although this is not always the case in regards to suffering, what hope can a Christian cling to regarding the future? see John 14:1-3

Read James 5:13-16

What is prayer? When asked how to pray, Jesus gave the following example in Luke 6:9-13. Besides just asking, what are some other important parts of prayer? How do they relate to the passage in James?

"Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well (NLT)." Read Mark 9:21-25.
How does the father's imperfect faith give you assurance?

Is healing only physical? Read Mark 2:1-12.

How did Jesus demonstrate the importance of spiritual healing over physical healing?

Why is the act of confession between believers so essential to the Christian walk?

What does this show us about our need for others in Christian community?

Read James 5:17-18. Why do you think James felt it necessary to finish his teaching on prayer with this example?
What is his reminder to the church?

The book of James concludes with a strong message to all believers. Read James 5:19-20. How does this encourage you in your daily walk with Jesus?

Take some time to consider what you have learned in this series, and pray for the Spirit's guidance as you apply it to your life.

