



JAMES

keeping it real

ev/church

JAMES: KEEPING IT REAL

Week	Passage	Theme
1	James 1:1-18	Real joy
2	James 1:18-27	Real listeners
3	James 2:1-13	Real love
4	James 2:14-26	Real faith
5	James 3:1-18	Real talk
6	James 4:1-10	A real choice
7	James 4:11-17	Real humility
8	James 5:1-11	Real perspective
9	James 5:12-20	Real life

We want to encourage each other to be on mission to our non-Christian friends, family and contacts.

Who are you on mission to?

Make a list and start praying for them (and yourself).

Pray for three friends, once a week, for one minute (3-1-1).

List the names of your family and friends here:

TERM 4 – 2019

How to use this book:

1. PERSONAL READING

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. GROWTH GROUPS

- Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. CHURCH

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

SIGN UP FOR THESE NOTES AS A DAILY EMAIL AT:

www.evchurch.info/series

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The New Testament teaches us to give generously, regularly and joyfully. Please join with us in bringing to the Coast solid hope in Jesus.

More info on giving and account details:

www.evchurch.info/giving

INTRODUCTION: JAMES

My 18-month-old daughter wanted some of the sparkling water we were drinking. We thought, “This will trick her!” and poured a bit into a cup of normal water. One sip later she was not impressed! She thrust the cup back towards us and pointed at the bottle of pure sparkling water.

It's a great picture of the message of James. If an 18-month-old is not ok with fake sparkling water, or even a crummy mixture, why would we imagine God is cool with fake or inconsistent Christians?

“Don't be fake or inconsistent Christians, my brothers! God wants you to be the real deal, the whole package!” That's how James might summarise his message (see James 1:4, 1:8, 2:14, 3:10, 4:4, 5:12), and it might even be the way he'd say it. He writes like a preacher, showing his deep love for his readers (“my dear brothers and sisters”) by warnings, encouragements, and pleas that are vivid, forceful, and sometimes even blunt.

James' goal is to bring back anyone who might be straying into sin, and so “save them from death” (5:13). He expects that some who “claim to have faith” don't have the real thing and it won't save them eternally (2:14). James urges them to make a clear decision to live for God wholeheartedly.

And for those already trusting in Jesus (2:1), God's goal is that we be “lacking in nothing” (1:4), so James presses Jesus' teachings into every last corner of our lives.

James gets right into punchy application. This emphasis on ‘works’ has been seen by some to be at odds with Paul's writings about salvation by grace through faith alone. But, in fact, James usually gives reasons for his instructions, and if you pay attention to them you'll find a rich understanding of God and His grace, salvation by faith, and much more. So it's not that James doesn't care about theology; he wants us to make sure we go on to actually “do what it says”.

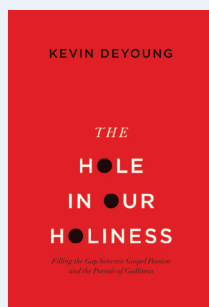
Some have called James “the New Testament book of Proverbs”. It's not a perfect comparison, but there are some similarities, especially James' focus on “wisdom” and the letter's (lack of) structure. Like Proverbs, James jumps around from topic to topic. While we want to look for linking words or arguments, sometimes it might just be a topic change.

Who is James?

The letter tells us nothing about the author other than his name and title of "servant" (1:1). The New Testament tells us about three people called James: Two were disciples from the beginning (Mark 3:16-18) and one is Jesus' biological brother (Matthew 13:55, Galatians 1:19). All three spent more than enough time with Jesus to explain why the letter sounds so much like Jesus' teachings. But the commentaries available in the EV Bookshop give good reasons to think it comes from Jesus' brother, who came to be a "pillar" of the early church (Galatians 2:9, Acts 15:13).

Book recommendation:

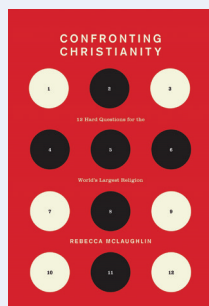
The Hole in our Holiness by Kevin DeYoung



Is it possible we look at personal holiness a bit like some people look at camping? It's fine for other people. You sort of respect those who make their lives harder than they have to be. But it's not really your thing. The hole in our holiness is that we don't really care much about it."

This book calls us to care about holiness as much as God does. It is challenging without being a "guilt trip". Instead, DeYoung brings rich theological truths that will encourage you in the daily fight, as well as plenty of practical wisdom.

Confronting Christianity by Rebecca McLaughlin



Isn't Christianity homophobic? Doesn't the Bible demean women? What about science, or suffering?

Rebecca writes a response to 12 of the biggest questions that are being asked about Christianity. She is a beautiful writer, answering gently, compassionately, and persuasively.

At times, Rebecca draws from her personal experience as a same-sex-attracted woman, which many may find helpful especially in the chapters on those topics. Her book will equip you to better answer your own questions and doubts

as well as those of your friends.

These books are available at the EV Bookshop in the Foyer.

READ THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

Something you might like to use to extend your daily Bible

The Bible is truly an extraordinary book, unique among all other books. It consists of 66 individual books, written by 40 different authors, in three different languages across 1,500 years of history. Yet for all of this diversity it contains a unified message that focuses on the coming of Jesus and the amazing salvation He offers through His death and resurrection!

The Bible contains words written by men in all the richness of literary types making it fun, challenging and enjoyable to dig into. Yet, at the same time, the Bible is also the very words of God given to us by His Spirit (1 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). These are not just words spoken in times past, but words that are alive for us to read today (Hebrews 4:12-13). The God of the universe actually addresses us today clearly in the pages of the Bible – amazing!

Jesus says the entire Bible points us to Him, that He is the focal point of it all. Listen to what He says, “He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44). Or, again Jesus says, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40).

Knowing this is helpful in motivating us to read the Bible regularly, to keep building a bigger understanding of God’s purposes and how they are being fulfilled in Jesus. To help with this, the Daily Reading Notes now include an extra challenge: to read the whole Bible in two years. It’s totally optional, are you up for it?

There is a list of around 15 chapters of additional reading for each week of the term that will help you achieve this challenge. These readings can be done on whatever days work best and in whatever order you prefer to read them. At the end of each term you have a chance to catch up before the next term’s suggested readings begin again. You can also track your readings across the two years right here. Enjoy!

YEAR 1: TERM 1

Week 1	Genesis 1-5; Psalms 1-4; Genesis 5-10; Matthew 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Genesis 11-15; Psalms 5-7; Genesis 16-20; Matthew 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Genesis 21-25; Psalms 8-10; Genesis 26-30; Matthew 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Genesis 31-35; Psalms 11-16; Genesis 36-40; Matthew 7-9	<input type="checkbox"/>

Week 5	Genesis 41-45; Psalms 17-19; Genesis 46-50; Matthew 10-11	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Exodus 1-5; Psalms 20-24; Exodus 6-10; Matthew 12-13	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Exodus 11-15, Psalms 25-27; Exodus 16-20; Matthew 14-15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Exodus 21-25; Psalms 28-31; Exodus 26-30; Matthew 16-17	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Exodus 31-35; Psalms 32-34; Exodus 36-40; Matthew 18-19	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Leviticus 1-5; Psalms 35-37; Leviticus 6-10; Matthew 20-21	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 1: TERM 2

Week 1	Leviticus 11-15; Psalms 38-41; Leviticus 16-20; Matthew 22-24	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Leviticus 21-27; Numbers 1-3; Proverbs 1-3; Matthew 25-26	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Numbers 4-13; Proverbs 4-6; Matthew 27-28	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Numbers 14-23; Proverbs 7-9; Acts 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Numbers 24-33; Psalms 42-44; Acts 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Numbers 34-36; Psalms 45-48; Acts 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Deuteronomy 1-7; Psalms 49-51; Acts 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Deuteronomy 8-17; Psalms 52-54; Acts 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Deuteronomy 18-27; Psalms 55-57; Acts 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Deuteronomy 28-34; Joshua 1-3; Psalms 58-61; Acts 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 1: TERM 3

Week 1	Joshua 4-13; Psalms 62-65; Acts 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Joshua 14-23; Psalms 66-68; Acts 17-18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Joshua 24; Judges 1-9; Psalms 69-71; Acts 19-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Judges 10-19; Psalms 72; Proverbs 10-11; Acts 21-22	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Judges 20-21; Ruth 1-4; 1 Samuel 1-4; Proverbs 12-14; Acts 23-24	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	1 Samuel 5-14; Proverbs 15-17; Acts 25-26	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	1 Samuel 15-24; Proverbs 18-20; Acts 27-28	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	1 Samuel 25-31; 2 Samuel 1-3; Proverbs 21-22; Mark 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	2 Samuel 4-13; Psalms 73-75; Mark 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	2 Samuel 14-24; Psalms 76-77; Mark 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>

READ THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

YEAR 1: TERM 4

Week 1	1 Kings 1-5; Psalms 78-80; 1 Kings 6-10; Mark 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	1 Kings 11-15; Psalms 81-83; 1 Kings 16-20; Mark 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	1 Kings 21-22; 2 Kings 1-8; Psalms 84-86; Mark 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	2 Kings 9-13; Psalms 87-89; 2 Kings 14-18; Mark 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	2 Kings 19-25; 1 Chronicles 1-3; Psalms 90-93; Mark 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	1 Chronicles 4-8; Psalms 94-96; 1 Chronicles 9-13; Romans 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	1 Chronicles 14-18; Psalms 97-101; 1 Chronicles 19-23; Romans 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	1 Chronicles 24-29; Psalms 102-104; Romans 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	2 Chronicles 1-5; Psalms 105-106; 2 Chronicles 6-10; Romans 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	2 Chronicles 11-15; Proverbs 23-25; 2 Chronicles 16-20; Romans 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 1

Week 1	2 Chronicles 21-25; Proverbs 26-28; 2 Chronicles 26-30; Romans 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	2 Chronicles 31-36; Ezra 1-4; Proverbs 29-31; Romans 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Ezra 5-10; Nehemiah 1-4; Psalms 107-109; Romans 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Nehemiah 5-13; Psalms 110-113; 1 Corinthians 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Esther 1-10; Psalms 114-117; 1 Corinthians 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Job 1-5; Psalms 118; Job 6-10; 1 Corinthians 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Job 11-15; Psalms 119:1-48; Job 16-20; 1 Corinthians 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Job 21-25; Psalms 119:49-96; Job 26-30; 1 Corinthians 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Job 31-35; Psalms 119:97-144; Job 36-40; 1 Corinthians 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Job 41-42; Ecclesiastes 1-8; Psalms 119:145-176; 1 Corinthians 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 2

Week 1	Ecclesiastes 9-12; Song of Songs 1-5; Psalms 120-122; 1 Cor 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Songs of Songs 6-8; Isaiah 1-7; Psalms 123-125; Luke 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Isaiah 8-12; Psalms 126-130; Isaiah 13-17; Luke 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Isaiah 18-22; Psalms 131-135; Isaiah 23-27; Luke 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Isaiah 28-32; Psalms 136-138; Isaiah 33-37; Luke 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>

Week 6	Isaiah 38-42; Psalms 139-142; Isaiah 43-47; Luke 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Isaiah 48-52; Psalms 143-145; Isaiah 53-57; Luke 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Isaiah 58-62; Psalms 146-147; Isaiah 63-66; Luke 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Jeremiah 1-5; Psalms 148-150; Jeremiah 6-10; Luke 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Jeremiah 11-15; Luke 17-21; Jeremiah 16-20	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 3

Week 1	Jeremiah 21-25; Luke 21-24; Jeremiah 26-30; 2 Corinthians 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Jeremiah 31-35; 2 Corinthians 2-7; Jeremiah 36-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Jeremiah 41-45; 2 Corinthians 8-13; Jeremiah 46-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Jeremiah 51-52; Lamentations 1-5; Galatians 1-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Ezekiel 1-5; Ephesians 1-6; Ezekiel 6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Ezekiel 11-15; Philippians 1-4; Ezekiel 16-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Ezekiel 21-25; Colossians 1-4; Ezekiel 26-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Ezekiel 31-35; 1 Thessalonians 1-5; Ezekiel 36-40; 2 Thessalonians 1-3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Ezekiel 41-48; 1 Timothy 1-6; 2 Timothy 1-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Daniel 1-10; Titus 1-3, Philemon	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 4

Week 1	Daniel 11-12; Hosea 1-8; Hebrews 1-7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Hosea 9-14; Joel 1-3; Hebrews 8-13	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Amos 1-9; James 1-5; 1 Peter 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Obadiah; Jonah 1-4; 2 Peter 1-3; 1 John 1-6; 2 John; 3 John	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Micah 1-7; Nahum 1-3; Jude; Revelation 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Habakkuk 1-3; Revelation 6-19:10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Zephaniah 1-3; Revelation 19:11-22:21	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Haggai 1-2; John 1-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Zechariah 1-14; John 13-17	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Malachi 1-4; John 18-21	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEEK 1: JAMES 1:1-18

Right out of the gate, we meet James' practical bent and pastor's heart. James dives right into one of the most significant aspects of our life in this fallen world, especially for these early Christians scattered and facing persecution, suffering and temptation. Astoundingly, James thinks there is a way to joy even in the midst of the trial.

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul
(From the hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul")*

DAY 1

Read James 1:1

1. There are good reasons to think "James" is Jesus' brother (see Matthew 13:55, Galatians 1:19). How does James describe his relationship with his brother, and what do you think caused James to describe his own sibling that way? (1 Corinthians 15:7)
2. How might it shape your day to be reminded that even Jesus' own brother was happy to define himself like this?
3. What recipient did James write on the envelope? Using James 2:1 as a clue, do you think he means: (a) the 12 Jewish tribes, or (b) Christians as part of God's people by faith? (Galatians 3:7)
4. As we think about trusting God's goodness in trials this week, how do you think it could help you to see yourself as part of a history of God's people that stretches back centuries in the Old Testament?

Prayer: Thank God that He has called us to be Jesus' servants and His people, keeping His promises to Abraham. Thank Him for His long history of rescuing His people and keeping promises. Ask Him to help you build your identity on being Jesus' servant, and ask for help to show that as you serve Him and others today.

REAL JOY

DAY 2

Read James 1:2-4

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Kings 1-5; Psalms 78-80; 1 Kings 6-10;
Mark 7-8

1. Some promise that the Christian life will be nothing but health and wealth. But what sorts of experiences does James expect a Christian will face?
2. Like fitness training, it seems that these experiences build something in us. What do these experiences do, and how do you think that happens?
3. Verse 4 tells us God's goal in all of this. What sort of people does He want us to become?
4. Think about the most mature Christians you know, and Jesus as the ultimate example – does that sound like an attractive goal to you? How does knowing these things help you to “consider” your trials as “pure joy”?

Prayer: Make a list of the trials you are facing, and ask God to help you to continue persevering. Ask for help to see each trial as something God is using to grow your endurance and maturity, and therefore as a reason for joy. Thank God for Jesus' example, who “endured the cross” for “the joy set before him” (Hebrews 12:2).

WEEK 1: JAMES 1:1-18

DAY 3

Read James 1:5-7

1. Sometimes James links different sections by repeating a word. Compare the end of verse 4 with the start of verse 5. How does this section on wisdom fit with God's goal for us in verse 4?
2. Are there any ways you feel you lack the wisdom needed to please God?
3. What picture of God does James paint in verse 5, and how does this encourage you to ask for wisdom confidently?
4. Look at James' strong words about doubt (verses 6-7). How does seeing God as "the God who loves to give" show us the ugliness of doubting Him when we pray?

For further reflection: Some suggest that the sort of "doubt" mentioned here is the type that comes from having divided loyalties, a bit like James 4:3. If so, the problem is not intellectual questions but a lack of moral commitment to God. They don't really want God or His wisdom. How is the sort of person in verse 8 the exact opposite of verse 4?

A note on doubt: This confronting passage is not all that the Bible says on the topic. You might find it helpful to read a three-page chapter on doubt from the book *Hanging in There* by John Dickson, which you can find at www.evchurch.info/doubt

Prayer: Thank God for being a giving God. Ask Him for the wisdom to see Him like this, and say sorry for the times you may have acted like He is a stingy God. Ask Him to generously give you the wisdom you need to please Him.

REAL JOY

DAY 4

If wisdom is seeing life rightly, then James says we need to see life in light of spiritual realities.

Read James 1:9-12

1. The Christian in verse 9...

What the passage says	What this could refer to
They seem:	Earthly circumstances:
But actually they are:	Spiritually (verse 12)

2. The person in verse 10...

What the passage says	What this could refer to
They seem:	Earthly circumstances:
But actually they are:	Spiritually (verse 12)

3. How would seeing the world like this help you persevere with joy in life's trials?

Prayer: Pray that you might not look at outward appearances, but instead rejoice in the spiritual blessings you have in Christ (Ephesians 1), especially during life's trials.

WEEK 1: JAMES 1:1-18

DAY 5

Read James 1:13-18

1. As a caring pastor, what does James teach his readers about God in this passage?

God is/ does...	God is not/ does not...

2. In the original Greek text, the word “trials” (verses 2 and 12) is the same as the word “temptations” (verses 13 and 14). How is it a comfort to know that God is both sovereign over life’s trials, and, at the same time, never the one tempting you to sin?
3. List some different thoughts we can be tempted to think about God when we face trials. For each, how do these truths about God strengthen us to face them with joy and perseverance?

Prayer: Thank God that He is entirely good, unchangeably good, and the source of all goodness. Ask Him to use this truth to strengthen your trust in Him in trials you are currently facing, and/or those that are coming.

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 2: JAMES 1:18-27

James has a lot to say in coming chapters about how we relate to others. But before worrying about others, James wants you and me to make sure we put on our own oxygen mask first.

This week, James says: take your own pulse. Are you really breathing, spiritually? And the way to find that out is by looking at how you treat God's word.

DAY 1

Read James 1:18-25

1. Circle or underline each time James mentions God's "word". In every era, including ours, there are movements to take the focus away from the Bible towards other things (feelings, rituals, traditions, etc). What role does James think the Bible has in the Christian life?
2. What does God do to us through His word?
Verse 18:

Verse 21:

Verse 25:
3. How do you think God's word gives us "birth"? (John 3:3, Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 1:23-25)

Prayer: Praise God for giving us His word, which is able to save us. Ask for His help to build your life on "humbly accepting" His word (verse 21) today and every day. Praise Him that you do this as a person with new spiritual life from the new birth.

REAL LISTENERS

DAY 2

Read James 1:19-21

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Kings 11-15; Psalms 81-83;
1 Kings 16-20; Mark 9-10

1. What are the three instructions in verse 19? How did Jesus model each?
2. Do you think James means “quick to listen” to other people, or to God’s word (verse 18, 21)? (Or both?)
3. What reason does James give in verse 20? While not all anger is sinful (it says “slow to anger” not “never be angry”), what is it about “human anger” that often leads to sin?
4. Think about the past 24 hours. Were there any times you could have been more like verse 19? How could today look different?

Prayer: Confess any sins in this area that come to mind. Ask for forgiveness and for help to be quick to listen, both to God’s word and to other people. Thank God that our relationship with Him is not based on our perfect performance but on what Jesus did on the cross.
(You may like to make plans to make some apologies if appropriate while they are on your mind.)

WEEK 2: JAMES 1:18-27

DAY 3

Read James 1:22-25

- 1. Yesterday, James told us to not just “listen” to God’s word, but “humbly receive” it (verse 21). From verse 22, what is one sign that we have humbly received God’s word?
- 2. What’s different about the two approaches to the Bible here?

Self-deceived person (v23-24)	Blessed person (v25)
Looks	
Walks away	
Forgets	
Does not act	

- 3. What does the self-deceived person miss out on (verse 25)?
- 4. Let’s apply this.
 - a. Could someone be regularly reading their Bible without achieving anything?
 - b. What obstacles could prevent the word taking root in your life?
 - c. Is there anything in God’s word that you are currently ignoring?
 - d. What changes do you need to make in your habits of Bible reading/hearing/ doing?

Prayer: Ask God to keep you alert to act against these things, that can stop his word impacting our lives.

REAL LISTENERS

DAY 4

Read James 1:26-27

1. What does verse 26 say a half-hearted approach to following Jesus is worth? Can you be wrong about your own spiritual health?
2. What pattern of behaviour is a warning sign (verse 26), and do you place the same emphasis on this area of life?
3. What sort of religion does God the Father love?
 - a. Doing:
 - b. Avoiding:
4. Do you know anyone who is an orphan or widow (or in another sort of distress)? What could you or your Growth Group do to support them? Be concrete.

You might find this article helpful for applying this in modern Australia:
www.challies.com/articles/does-your-church-truly-care-for-true-widows

Prayer: Jeremiah says the heart is deceitful above all things. Ask God to keep you from deceiving yourself about your spiritual health. Thank Him for His Fatherly care for those in distress, and ask that, as His child, you would be like Him in His holiness and care.

WEEK 2: JAMES 1:18-27

DAY 5

The book of James sometimes gets a bad rap for being 'legalistic'. But a closer look shows that it's just the opposite.

Read James 1:22-25

1. James does not think our works can save us. What does verse 21 say can save us?
2. Last week we saw that our evil desires drag us away into temptation and sin (verse 13-15). Where does James think the power to obey God's commands comes from? What has God done to give us new spiritual life? (verse 18)
3. To our sinful nature, God's commands can seem restrictive. But what does verse 25 say God's word brings?
4. Reflect on how this week has grown your appreciation of the role of God's word in the Christian life. Are there any big lessons or changes you want to cement in place? How could you make those lessons/changes stick?

Prayer: Thank God for being the one who gives us salvation, new spiritual power, and freedom.

REAL LISTENERS

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 3: JAMES 2:1-13

Last week, James laid his cards on the table. He heard Jesus talk about those who claim to be Christians only to find out on the last day that it was not real faith (Matthew 7:22-23). So he warned us not to “deceive” ourselves with “worthless” religion (James 1:26).

Chapter 2 continues to unfold what the real thing looks like. What does it mean to truly have “faith in our Lord Jesus” (James 2:1, English Standard Version)?

DAY 1

Read James 2:1-4

1. James jumps from discussing “religion” (James 1:26) to “believing in Jesus” (2:1). What does this tell us about what true religion is?
2. What behaviour does James command us to avoid? Using the example in verses 2-4, what do you think he means?
3. There are many problems with favouritism. What problem does verse 4 emphasise? Why is favouritism so opposed to the truths of the gospel?
4. What is it about wealth and poverty that can distort our attitude towards people? Does someone’s financial situation, social background, etc affect the way you treat them?

Prayer: Ask for forgiveness for the times you have shown undue favouritism. Ask God to make you more like Jesus.

REAL LOVE

DAY 2

Read James 2:5-7

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Kings 21-22; 2 Kings 1-8;
Psalms 84-86; Mark 11-12

1. In James' example of favouritism, people are judged by their appearance (verses 1-4). But what do verses 5-7 reveal about deeper spiritual realities?
2. How do God's choices in saving people show that what He values is different to what the world values? Who are you more like in what you value?
3. How does avoiding favouritism make us more like God? If you have time, the following references may help: 1 Samuel 17:7, Deuteronomy 10:17, Galatians 2:6, and 1 Peter 1:17.

For further reflection: What is the difference between sinful favouritism and giving appropriate respect to people, such as the elderly, your parents, or the Prime Minister (e.g. Romans 13:7, 1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Peter 2:17)?

Prayer: Pray for a heart that sees all people through God's eyes.

WEEK 3: JAMES 2:1-13

DAY 3

Read James 2:8-9

1. James quotes Leviticus 19:18. What does he suggest is at the heart of God's will for us?
2. Where might James have learned this? (See Matthew 22:37-39)
3. How does the 'law of love' summarise everything in verses 1-7, and even push it further?
4. Who in your circles can tend to be overlooked, and what opportunities might you have today to love them as you love yourself?

Prayer: Ask God for opportunities to love your neighbours today, the awareness to recognise these opportunities, and a willingness to act on them.

REAL LOVE

DAY 4

Read James 2:8-11

Favouritism might seem a funny thing for James to dwell on, but he now explains why it is so important to fulfil God's commands even in the seemingly minor areas of life.

1. If you crack a sheet of glass, you have not cracked 'part of the glass'. The whole sheet is now broken. What does James say about God's law, and how is it like this analogy of the glass?
2. How does the unity of God's law flow from the unity of the law-giver? (verse 11)
3. An ancient Jewish text said "breaking the law in small and large matters is the same, for in either case the law is treated in the same way" (4 Maccabees 5:20-21). Would James agree, and, if so, how does this help us understand the seriousness of sin?
4. Can we pick and choose which of the Bible's teachings to apply, and when to apply them?

Prayer: Confess any areas where you resist God's teachings, and ask confidently for forgiveness through Jesus, whose blood washes away all our sins. Ask for a heart that willingly obeys all God's commands.

WEEK 3: JAMES 2:1-13

DAY 5

Read James 2:12-13

1. What future event does James raise to underline the seriousness of obeying God from what he has written about (favouritism)?
2. According to these verses, will our actions in this life matter on Judgment Day?
3. James is not teaching salvation by works. The very next section (James 2:14-17) clarifies that James thinks we are saved by faith in Jesus. However, on Judgment Day our actions will be evidence of whether the faith we claimed to have was real. What will it show if you have not lived a life of love and mercy?
4. How is this teaching similar to Jesus' own teaching? (Matthew 5:7, 18:21-35, 25:31-46)

Prayer: Give thanks for Christ's mercy. Ask for a similar heart of mercy towards others that shows you have received His great love and been changed by it.

REAL LOVE

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 4: JAMES 2:14-26

We know we're saved by trusting in Jesus, not by good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). So the focus on obedience over the past two weeks may have been unsettling. We have seen that the mark of a real Christian is obedience to God's commands (1:22-26), and our actions will be used as evidence on Judgment Day (2:12). It might be starting to sound like James thinks we're saved by what we do!

Lucky for us, James explains how it all fits together in this week's passage. He tackles head-on the question "what sort of faith saves?", and shows why actions are evidence of the state of our faith.

"O it is a living, busy active mighty thing, this faith." (Martin Luther)

DAY 1

Read James 2:14-19

1. What two words appear in almost every verse? What does that tell you about what this passage is about?
2. Some have said this is a passage about works. Looking at verse 14, do you think it's more about works or faith? Why?
3. According to verse 18, how do we show that we have true faith?
4. Is it obvious to others that your trust in Jesus impacts your actions? (Perhaps begin with the example in verses 15-16.)

Prayer: Thank God that faith in Jesus is not dry or theoretical, but truth and relationship that results in action. Ask that this week your faith would be stirred to be active in good works.

REAL FAITH

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

2 Kings 9-13; Psalms 87-89;
2 Kings 14-18; Mark 13-14

DAY 2

Read James 2:14-19

1. James repeats his main point a few times (verses 17, 20, 26). What's his main point?
2. Can you be saved by "faith alone" if it is not changing your actions?
3. How do the demons in verse 19 illustrate this point?
4. To go to heaven, is it enough to believe that God exists? How is "faith in Jesus" (James 2:1) different?

Prayer: Pray for the many people in our world who believe in God but do not know Jesus, that they might trust Jesus for salvation. Ask God to also bring true faith to those in churches who say they trust Jesus but their lives show it is dead faith.

WEEK 4: JAMES 2:14-26

DAY 3

Read James 2:20-24

Have you heard the claim that the Bible contradicts itself? Usually the 'problem' comes from not reading the Bible passage in its context. Some people imagine there was tension between James and Paul, but they are just writing to correct different misunderstandings of the gospel.

1. Compare James 2:24 and Romans 3:28, and describe the apparent contradiction.
2.
 - a. From the context of Romans 3 (e.g. verse 20), what wrong understanding of salvation is Paul correcting?
 - b. From the context of James 2 (e.g. verse 14), what wrong understanding of salvation is James correcting?
3. Do you think Paul and James would agree with this summary: "We are saved by faith (in Jesus) alone, but true saving faith is never alone"? (See Romans 6:1-2)
4. Which aspect of faith do you think you are more prone to forget?

Prayer: Thank God for giving us two different writers to correct two different ways of misunderstanding the gospel. Pray that you won't fall into either trap, but will instead confidently trust Christ for complete salvation, while joyfully serving Him by doing good.

REAL FAITH

DAY 4

We've seen that "we are saved by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone". The examples James uses as "evidence" (verse 20) can help us understand this truth better.

Example 1: Abraham – Read James 2:20-24

1. "Righteous" means to meet God's standards, which enables us to have a relationship with Him. According to verse 23, how did Abraham ultimately receive righteousness? (And what was he called?)
2. God had promised countless descendants through a son (Genesis 15:4-5). Isaac was that son. From James 2:21-22, what did Abraham do, and how does it show his trust in God's promise?
3. How does this example illustrate the way faith leads to actions?
4. In light of what we've read this week, it's probably a good idea to ask yourself, "is there any evidence that I have true faith?"

If you're not sure, you might want to message a friend or Growth Group leader along these lines: "Hey! I'm doing the reading notes and it raised a question for me. Could we meet up to chat about where I stand with God?"

Prayer: Thank God that He has promised salvation to all who call on Him (Romans 10:13). Ask Him to help you trust His promise like Abraham did, rather than trusting in your good deeds, or even in the amount of faith you have. And ask that, like Abraham, you would act in ways that flow from your faith.

WEEK 4: JAMES 2:14-26

DAY 5

Example 2: Rahab – Read James 1:25-26

1. Rahab was a Gentile living in Jericho at the time that God was bringing the Israelites to conquer and inhabit that area. Look at her story in Joshua 2, especially verses 8 and 12-15. What do her actions show that she believed about God's...
 - power?
 - judgment?
 - willingness to rescue her and accept her into His people?
2. Back in James – what was Rahab's occupation? Why do you think James chose a Gentile woman with this reputation to illustrate saving faith?
3. What practical acts (of meeting people's needs) did Rahab do as an expression of her faith?
4. What opportunities might you have this week or weekend to show your faith in actions, especially in meeting people's "physical needs" (James 2:15-16)?

Prayer: Give thanks and praise to God that He accepts anyone who turns to Him in faith, even Gentile sinners like us. Pray that God will reveal opportunities you have to do good for others, especially by meeting their physical needs.

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 5: JAMES 3:1-18

With a topic change so sudden we almost get whiplash, James 3 suddenly moves on to the topic of “our words”. But it’s not totally unrelated to chapter 2’s discussion of faith and works, because as one commentator says, “words are also works.”

The whole letter could be summarised as a war on inconsistency (see James 1:8, 4:4, 4:10, 5:12), and James wants to apply this theme even to one of the smallest parts of life: your tongue (or is it one of the biggest?).

As we struggle to tame the tongue, it becomes increasingly obvious that we conduct our lives in the conflict between two incompatible ways of life. We start to see the impossibility of following both “heavenly wisdom” and also the “demonic” way of this earth (3:15-17).

DAY 1

Read James 3:1-12

1. What features of this passage suggest that God takes this aspect of life much more seriously than our culture does?
2. Does the passage give any clues about why God treats it so seriously?
3. “With great power comes great responsibility” (Spiderman movie). Reflect on the last day or so. How intentional were you about the way you spoke? What does that suggest you believe, deep down, about speech and its power?

Prayer: Thank God for being a speaking God whose true words bring life (James 1:18). Ask that God’s wisdom on the power of words would sink deep into your deepest beliefs and lead you to speak more carefully and more like Him.

REAL TALK

DAY 2

Read James 3:1-8

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

2 Kings 19-25; 1 Chronicles 1-3;
Psalms 90-93; Mark 15-16

1. Compare James 3:2 with James 1:4. How does training our tongue relate to God's overall goal for our lives?
2. If you want to be mature, what makes controlling your tongue a good starting place (verse 2)? And what happens if you don't (verse 6)?
3. What three analogies does James use, and how do they prove his point?
4. How have you been going at controlling your tongue since yesterday?

Prayer: Ask for help to control your tongue today. In light of verses 1-2, you might also want to pray for those in various teaching roles at our church and other churches, especially that they will be faithful to God's word in all that they teach and do.

WEEK 5: JAMES 3:1-18

DAY 3

A false teaching to be aware of is “sinless perfectionism”, which is the idea that a Christian could be so mature in this life that they’ve stopped sinning altogether.

Read James 3:1-8

1. God is always at work growing us towards the goal of maturity. Yet what in this passage shows that “sinless perfection” cannot be obtained in this life?
2. When will we achieve perfection (see Philippians 1:6)? Why is this important to remember once we understand that “faith without works is dead”?
3. How have you stumbled recently (in words or thoughts or deeds)? Have you confessed these to God? Would it help to also confess them to another Christian (James 5:16)?

Prayer: Confess your sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness. Thank Him for Jesus’ blood that washes away all sin. Thank Him for the work of the Holy Spirit who grows us to be more like Jesus. Ask for help to make progress in killing sin today.

REAL TALK

DAY 4

Read James 3:8-12

1. What two behaviours are contrasted in verse 9? Give an example of each you might hear an Aussie Christian say?
2. From verse 9, what feature of humanity makes it so inconsistent to praise God and then verbally denigrate, slander, abuse, or demean a human being?
3. What's the point of the analogies in verses 11-12?
4. Do you need to adjust the way you speak to, or about:
 - People at work?
 - People in traffic?
 - People watching/playing sport?
 - Your kids? Parents? Grandparents? In-laws?
 - Politicians or celebrities?

For further reflection: What do you think the difference is between loving correction (e.g. what James is doing in this passage) and “cursing” someone?

Prayer: Pray that the way you speak to and about people will always glorify the God who made them in His image.

WEEK 5: JAMES 3:1-18

DAY 5

Read James 3:13-18

1. What are the two sorts of wisdom mentioned, and what's the difference between them in practice?

"Wisdom" from...	Wisdom from...
In practice...	In practice...

2. If you had to choose one word to summarise the truly wise behaviours, what would it be? (See ideas in verse 13 or 18)
3. Does your conduct over the past few years show progress in absorbing the right sort of wisdom?
4. Pick one or two signs of true wisdom. For each, think of a time you acted out of "earthly" wisdom. What it could look like to act more wisely next time?

Wise attribute	What I did	Next time
1.		
2.		

Prayer: Pray about the specific areas you identified. Ask God to help you avoid being fooled by ways that seem right to us as fallen humans, but that actually lead to death. Ask that instead your conduct will show that you walk by wisdom from above.

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 6: JAMES 4:1-10

We have reached the emotional climax of this letter. James is not content to simply explain the theology that faith must lead to action. Even after plenty of practical examples, James feels he has not finished his job.

The previous chapter exposed the great divide between two incompatible ways of living – the earthly way and the heavenly way. He knows from Jesus' teaching that there will be people in every church who talk the talk but don't walk the walk. And he knows from Jesus' teaching about the fiery judgment awaiting those whose faith is not the real deal. So with tears in his eyes, he pleads like an evangelistic preacher for true conversion. You cannot have it both ways, one foot in Jesus' boat and another in the world's, James warns. "Choose a side!"

DAY 1

Read James 4:1-4

1. What is the root problem behind the fights in these churches?
2. While some of James' language might be exaggerated for rhetorical effect ("kill"), can you see any similar patterns at play in any of your relationships?
3. What is the root problem behind some unanswered prayers?
4. There may be other factors in unanswered prayer (e.g. 2 Corinthians 12:9), but are there any of your prayers where this could be a factor? What should a person do in this case?

The answer may seem simple: change your desires... but how? We will see that James has a very detailed answer later in the week (verses 7-10).

Prayer: Confess any ways that selfish desires may be plaguing your relationships or prayers, and ask that this week God will use His word in James to change your heart.

A REAL CHOICE

DAY 2

Read James 4:1-7

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Chronicles 4-8; Psalms 94-96; 1
Chronicles 9-13; Romans 1-2

1. What does trying to be “friends with the world” make a person?
2. Jesus was (accurately) called the “friend of sinners”, so James is not restricting whom we can befriend. And Paul says it’s good to enjoy God’s good creation (1 Timothy 4:4). So what do you think it means by “friendship with the world”?
3. How has James 3:13-17 prepared us to understand the total incompatibility between the world’s way of living and God’s way?
4. “Some Christians want to make it into heaven, and also get as much of this world as they can along the way”. Is that your approach to Christianity? What’s the problem with it? Can you have it both ways?

Prayer: Pray that you will not try to serve two masters. Ask for an undivided heart that turns away from the world’s way each day to serve Jesus wholeheartedly.

WEEK 6: JAMES 4:1-10

DAY 3

Read James 4:4-7

1. What strong word does James call those who are trying to be married to God and are in bed with the world?
2. Isaiah 54:5-6 says “your Maker is your husband”. In what ways is God’s relationship with His people like a marriage?
3. What picture of God’s heart for your heart does James 4:5 paint? How does the marriage analogy help us appreciate the goodness of this sort of jealousy?
4. Does your picture of God match James’ portrait of a yearning lover who wants your heart and wants it completely? How might this view of God enrich your relationship with Him?
5. How does it expose the ugliness of sin as more than just breaking rules?

Prayer: Apologise for times when you have ‘cheated on God’ in desires or deeds. Thank Him for His immense love that longs for you to love Him with all your heart. Pray this would define the way you relate to Him, and to worldly temptations.

A REAL CHOICE

DAY 4

Read James 4:6-10

1. What comforting promises are made to the person who repents of spiritual adultery and returns to God?

Verse 6:

Verse 7:

Verse 8:

Verse 10:

2. Tomorrow we will have a closer look at the sort of repentance God is calling for. It would be foolish to imagine we can claim these promises without that response. But assuming that you have turned back to God, how do these promises encourage you as you approach God in prayer today?
3. What could you do to help yourself remember these promises of “more grace” when you need them most?

Prayer: What an incredible God of grace we have! Spend some time drawing near to God in prayer, repenting as you need to, confident that as you draw near to Him, He will draw near to you.

WEEK 6: JAMES 4:1-10

DAY 5

Read James 4:6-10

1. What does genuine repentance look like according to James?

Verse 7:

Verse 8:

Verse 9:

Verse 10:

2. This is not a to-do list but rather a picture. The Christian life begins with true repentance, and then a daily pattern of continuing repentance. Have you ever repented like this, and does it mark the way you continue to react to sin in your life?
3. If your attitude to sin and God is significantly different to the picture in this passage, where does that leave you (verses 4, 6)? What is James calling you to do?
4. We are not saved by repenting perfectly, but by God's grace (verse 6). It's possible you have repented sincerely but have more to learn about the appropriate response to sin. Does this passage add anything to the way you'd like to respond in the future?

Prayer: Turn verses 7-10 into your own prayer to God. E.g. "God, I submit myself to you..."

A REAL CHOICE

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 7: JAMES 4:11-17

Last week, James called for us to humble ourselves towards God. He now explores how humility should shape our speech (returning again to the topic of the tongue from chapter 3). Because the way we speak about our friends and the future very often reveals the pride in our hearts about ourselves and our security.

DAY 1

Read James 4:11-12

1. What does James tell us to avoid in our community?
2. Slander is defined as “making false statements damaging to a person’s reputation”. Which of these examples do you think count as “slander” and “speaking against” another person:
 - a. Bringing up criticisms of another out of genuine concern
 - b. Bringing up criticisms of another because it makes you feel better
 - c. Sharing a rumour
 - d. Privately saying things that damage a person’s reputation
 - e. Challenging an authority figure
3. Leviticus 19:16 says “Do not go about spreading slander”. If we choose to do it, what does James say we are doing to God’s commands? Why is this arrogant?
4. What could you change to be more humble, generous, merciful, wise, and constructive in your speech?

Prayer: Pray that our church community would be marked by this kind of humility towards one another and God’s commands.

REAL HUMILITY

DAY 2

Read James 4:11-12

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Chronicles 14-18; Psalms 97-101;
1 Chronicles 19-23; Romans 3-4

1. What do we learn about the uniqueness of God in verse 12?
2. If we say things about other people that sound like judgments on them, who do we think we are, and why is that so arrogant?
3. What would be a more humble attitude towards God and the behaviour of other people?

For further reflection: What is the difference between evil judging in this passage, and the appropriate judgments we are called to make? (e.g. Matthew 7:15-16, John 7:24, Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 5:12, 1 Corinthians 6:3).

Prayer: Thank God that we can leave the difficult task of judging things rightly to Him who knows all the circumstances. Pray that we will be humble enough to remember that we stand before the throne of the judge, not sit upon it.

WEEK 7: JAMES 4:11-17

DAY 3

Read James 4:13-17

1. What does James say in verse 16 about this seemingly clever business plan?
2. What makes it so arrogant? What fact about God's relationship to the world has been denied?
3. An old-fashioned word that is worth knowing is 'providence'. It means God's continual and often invisible activity of sustaining His universe, supplying the needs of His creatures, and accomplishing His eternal plan. How does a continual recognition of God's providence bring a humble kind of confidence in life?
4. What would humbly acknowledging God's sovereign and providential care look like for you as you make plans and talk about the future?

Prayer: Thank God that you can trust Him with his plans for your life. Pray that He will enable you to trust His providential care, especially with plans or decisions you are struggling with at the moment.

REAL HUMILITY

DAY 4

Read James 4:13-17

1. What are two of the ways you are limited by being human in verse 14, and how is God different?
2. How does this challenge the way our culture views human ability and importance?
3. How could meditating on these human limitations help you, and us as a church, to remain humble before God as verse 10 calls us to be?
4. How could this help us to persevere in trials we don't understand, and obey commands we don't understand?

Prayer: Pray that you would always be humbly aware of the profound difference between you and God, and that you might trust and obey God in your limitations instead of proudly ignoring them.

WEEK 7: JAMES 4:11-17

DAY 5

Read James 4:17

1. Sometimes we can imagine sin is just breaking a rule. What does this verse define as a sin, and is this different to what you'd have said?
2. Which do you think you have committed more of: sins of "commission" (doing what you should not) or sins of "omission" (not doing what you should)?
3. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is an example of how seriously God treats sins of omission. Why do you think He cares? What do these decisions say about our heart toward God and others? (Compare with Romans 14:23)
4. How does recognising this category of "sins of omission" increase your appreciation of God's grace in forgiving you?
5. Is there good you know you should do but haven't been doing?

Prayer: Confess to God not just what you have done, but what you have left undone. Thank Him for His impossible-to-measure grace. Ask that you will rejoice not only in avoiding what is bad but rejoice in doing what is good.

REAL HUMILITY

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 8: JAMES 5:1-11

Psalm 73:3 suggests that God's people have always been tempted to envy the lifestyles of the rich and famous. The antidote, the Psalm goes on to suggest, is comparing their undesirable destiny (Psalm 73:17) to the reward of knowing God and His good gifts forever (Psalm 73:25-26).

James is concerned that His readers may fall into the same trap, and perhaps even give up on Jesus when the going gets tough. So as he nears the end of his letter, James leaves an eternal perspective ringing in our ears.

DAY 1

Read James 5:1-9

1. What time period are we living in according to verse 3?
2. What future events define this time period (especially verses 8-9)?
3. Verses 1-6 are a bit tricky, but what does verse 7 suggest is the main application James wants to drive home to his Christian readers?
4. How would knowing the time we live in, who is coming, and what He is bringing help you to do verse 7?

Prayer: Pray that God will give us everything we need to cope with the pressures of Christian life as we await His return.

REAL PERSPECTIVE

DAY 2

Read James 5:1-7

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Chronicles 24-29; Psalms 102-104;
Romans 5-6

1. What words would you use to describe the vibe of verses 1-6?
2. James aims this intense warning at “you rich people” (verse 1). Being rich by itself is not a sin, because Abraham and Job were both rich and righteous (Genesis 24:35, Job 1:1-3). So what is it about the way these people are treating money that is sinful?
3. People debate whether or not James is targeting people who call themselves Christians. According to verses 1-6, what future awaits them? What does this say about whether they are actually Christians (regardless of what they call themselves)?
4. Are there any ways that you are similar to these people in your attitudes towards money, your use of it, or your efforts to gain it? Any wages unpaid? Any “hoarded wealth”? Any self-indulgence? Feeling the intensity of James’ warnings of the dangers of wealth, what changes in attitude or behaviour do you need to make?

Prayer: Ask the Holy Spirit to constantly guard you against the lurking dangers of wealth. Ask Him to reveal to you whether you are trying to serve two masters, God and money (Matthew 6:24). Ask God to enable you to make whatever changes necessary so that on Judgment Day you are not one of these worldly rich!

WEEK 8: JAMES 5:1-11

DAY 3

Read James 5:1-9

1. Who does James turn to speak to in verses 7-9? What does he call them, and what tone does he use?

2. Unlike the horrors awaiting the self-indulgent, what is the incredibly positive image of what Jesus' coming will mean for believers (verse 7)?

3. Which reward lasts longer: this "precious fruit" (ESV), or earthly wealth (see verse 2)?

4. John Calvin wrote that this passage has two purposes:
 - a. So that after hearing the fate of the worldly rich, believers would not envy them.
 - b. So that believers would be able to calmly and trustingly persevere when suffering wrongs, knowing that God would avenge them.Does this help you to understand how verses 1-6 lead to verse 7? Which of these two lessons do you need to take to heart?

Prayer: Pray that you would not be jealous of those whose life looks so easy despite the way they live for money and themselves. Pray that instead you will be like the farmer, waiting for the tasty and abundant feast of fruit we have ahead of us.

REAL PERSPECTIVE

DAY 4

Read James 5:8-11

1. We have returned to the topic James first raised in his letter (James 1:2). What can we learn from the prophets' examples?
2. How did Job respond when he lost his children, business, and house (Job 1:20-22)? Does that mean he was never upset or never questioned God (Job 3:1, 30:20)? What perspective helped him continue trusting God (Job 19:26-27)? How does his story end? (Job 42:10-12)
3. How would you like to be impacted by these examples, and how might remembering the truths about God in James 5:11 help you to do that?

Prayer: Pray that God will give us everything we need to cope with the pressures of Christian life as we await His return.

WEEK 8: JAMES 5:1-11

DAY 5

Read James 5:8-11

1. What are we told NOT to do in these verses?
2. What pressures might cause you to grumble against other Christians while you wait for Jesus to return, and what could you do to keep this from becoming an issue for you?
3. These are close to James' final words to us. As a loving pastor, what perspective does he want to make sure his readers are left with as they continue on their Christian life?
4. As we approach Christmas and the New Year, some people make new year's resolutions. What New Year's resolutions do you think James would make for you, based on what you've read this week?

Prayer: Ask God for patience as we await His return and for wisdom to live godly lives with one another while we wait.

REAL PERSPECTIVE

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 9: JAMES 5:12-20

How would you finish this letter? As well as being tempted by the pleasures and values of the world, and pounded by persecution, they also face the normal sicknesses, sufferings, and sins common to all humanity.

Listen to James, who ends this letter as he begun – with a discussion of how to respond to the various trials of life. Like in chapter 1, they are not barriers to spiritual maturity but the way to it. Having encouraged us to stand firm patiently, he now unfolds what that will look like in practice.

DAY 1

Read James 5:12

1. What instruction are we given here, and what words does James choose to signal its importance?
2. “Swearing” here is not using filthy language. What behaviour are we to avoid, and why is it arrogant according to Jesus? (Matthew 5:34-37)
3. James keeps coming back to his big theme of “keeping it real” and avoiding inconsistency as a Christian (James 1:7, 2:14, 3:10, 4:4). How does this verse continue (or even summarise) that message?
4. Are your words utterly trustworthy, or are you a bit loose with the truth? Can you be relied on to do what you say?

Prayer: Praise God for being the God of truth. Ask that as you trust Jesus, the way, the truth and the life, your words would be consistent, truthful, and reliable in everything you say and do.

REAL LIFE

DAY 2

Read James 5:13-19

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

2 Chronicles 1-5; Psalms 105-106; 2
Chronicles 6-10; Romans 7-8

1. What does James encourage those who are suffering to do? How many times is it mentioned, and what does that tell you?
2. Many of us struggle with prayer even though we know it is an enormous privilege to talk to Almighty God our Father. Why do you find prayer difficult?
3. What happened when Elijah prayed, and what does this tell us about the power that righteous people's prayers can have to change things in the world? (Was this just because he was a special sort of person?)
4. How would meditating on this energise the way you pray?

Prayer: Pray for the desire to pray, especially when you are suffering and don't feel like it.

WEEK 9: JAMES 5:12-20

DAY 3

Read James 5:13-18

1. What ought a Christian do when feeling happy?
2. How instinctive is this for you, and what does that tell you about the way you view the world?
3. Aussies happily sing at sporting events, when drunk, at live music gigs, and at birthday parties. Why do you think God gave us a command to 'sing' here, not just 'speak praises'?
4. How could you grow this praise-singing instinct? (e.g. playlists for the car or housework, the way you approach singing in church ... other ideas?)

Prayer: Thank God that He rejoices with singing over His people (Zephaniah 3:17). Ask for help to grow your enjoyment of God through remembering to sing His praises when you feel happy.

REAL LIFE

DAY 4

Read James 5:13-20

1. What should we do in sickness, and what should the church do?
2. Jesus is clear that there are times when sickness is not connected with specific sin in a person's life (John 9:2-3). However, what things in this passage suggest that sometimes sickness and sin may be connected?
3. As we read verse 15, we should remember James' tendency to state his points in black and white terms to catch our attention (compare James 3:1 with Hebrews 5:12). He has already warned us not to forget all things are dependent on God's will (James 4:15). We know Paul was not healed (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). So, if a person is not healed, should we automatically assume it is because of a lack of faith?
4. But with that in mind, how is verse 15 a helpful correction for those of us who assume God will not do anything in response to our prayers?

Prayer: Spend some time praying that God would heal those you are aware of who are struggling under the burden of sickness. Ask Him to grow your confidence in His willingness and ability to answer your prayers.

WEEK 9: JAMES 5:12-20

DAY 5

Read James 5:19-20

Typical James, ending his letter with a call to loving action. It is the urgent plea of the pastor who cares for the souls of those in his congregation and wants them to be saved.

1. What should we do for a straying brother or sister, and why is it loving?
2. What are the two areas in which they could be straying?
3. Is this the kind of thing that's on your radar with Christians you know and as you attend church/ Growth Group?
4. Does anyone come to mind who needs this kind of help? What steps could you take to sensitively and appropriately try to help them?

For further reflection: Could this verse reflect what James has been trying to do throughout his letter? What can we learn from James' example in this letter about the various forms this kind of conversation might take?

Prayer: Pray for patience as we await Jesus' return, and for wisdom to live godly lives with one another while we wait.

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

