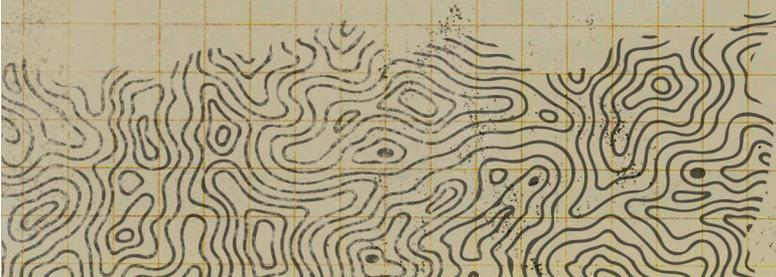




THE BOOK OF JAMES

THE "HOW TO" MANUAL
FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Group Discussion Guide



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THE MARKS OF A SPIRITUALLY MATURE PERSON

SCRIPTURE Overview of the book of James

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you were at church on Sunday, according to James, what are the 5 marks of a Spiritually Mature Person?
 - If you rated yourself in those 5 areas, how are you doing? Be truthful. Which area are you the most mature in? Which area are you the least mature in?
 - How have you grown since you first became a Christian?
 - Of what does your spiritual diet consist?
 - Was there anything enlightening to you as you looked at these 5 areas of your life?
2. Read Hebrews 5:11 - 6:12
 - What was wrong with the group of Hebrew believers originally addressed in this passage? (5:11-14)
 - According to the writer of Hebrews, what are the marks of spiritual maturity? (5:11-14)
 - According to the writer of Hebrews, of what are infant or baby Christians ignorant? (5:13)
 - Read chapter 5, verse 14. What is the benefit of "solid food"?
 - Read chapter 6, verse 1. What challenge did the author give to his readers?
 - According to the writer of Hebrews, what fundamental or basic doctrines form the foundation of our faith? (6:1-2)
 - Based on what the writer of Hebrews says, in the end, what enables us to reach spiritual maturity? (6:3)
 - Look at chapter 6, verses 7. What are maturing, committed Christians like?
 - Read verse 8. What are those who fall away from the faith like?
 - Read verse 12. What danger did the author warn against?
3. Why is it so important to continue to grow up spiritually?
 - How would it disgrace Jesus if you were to lapse back into your old way of life?
4. What can you do to move forward, or become more mature, in your relationship with Jesus a little each day?

PRAYER

Pray for each other...

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

A Psalmist wrote, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you, and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

- **Memory verse for this week:** Hebrews 6:1 "So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding."
- **Look for implications for your life that you could act upon.**

JAMES: HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE

SCRIPTURE James 1:19-27

CONNECT

Read Luke 8:4-15. Jesus compared the Word of God to a seed planted in the “soil” of our hearts. What was the condition of the soil of your heart the first time you heard about Jesus and God’s plan of salvation?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 1:19-27
2. Why is listening such an important skill for Christians? How can being “quick to listen” and “slow to speak” keep our anger from erupting? In what ways can our uncontrolled anger affect our witness of Christ in our lives?
3. Why is it important for us believers to rid ourselves of “all moral filth” and “evil”? What are some practical ways we can do this?
4. What do you think it means to “humbly accept the word?” What word is James referring to and how is it planted in us?
5. James says “Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” If we do not allow the Word of God to change us, we cannot expect to be blessed. Give an example of how your life has been blessed when you put into practice something you learned from studying the Bible. What are some practical ways you can respond to what you’ve learned in this session’s study of God’s Word?
6. According to verses 19-21 how can we prepare to hear God’s Word?
7. List the commands, the “Do’s and Don’ts,” James gives in 1:19-27. Spend a few minutes defining in practical terms what these commands mean. (To gain further insight you may want to look up some of the words in Vine’s Expository Dictionary or Webster’s Dictionary.)
8. Talk about:
 - A time when you were really prepared to hear the Word of God and it changed your life.
 - A time when hearing the truth caused you to become defensive.
 - A time when your heart was hardened to the truth and you missed a lesson that would have protected you from a wrong decision or unpleasant situation.

TONIGHTS ACTIVITY

Break up into 2 groups (guys with guys; and girls with girls). Have each person share one area of their life that needs to be changed by God’s Word. Take a few moments to pray for each other, and to ask God to prepare your hearts for the change He wants to make in your life.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 1:25 “But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”

CIRCLES OF LIFE

FAMILY

[Immediate or
extended]

FELLOWSHIP

[church relationships]

FRIENDS

[neighbors, kids, sports,
school, etc.]

FUN

[gym, hobbies,
hang-outs]

FACTORY /FIRM

[work, professional arenas]

JAMES: HOW TO TREAT PEOPLE RIGHT

SCRIPTURE James 2:1-13

CONNECT

Briefly describe a time when you felt unwelcome in a new environment. What did it feel like and how did you respond?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 2:1-13
 2. What does it mean to show favoritism? Describe some ways in which we in the church show favoritism today.
 3. Why do you think it is so hard for us to discern whether or not we have prejudice or thoughts of partiality in our lives?
 4. Can you describe a time in your life when you realized you had prejudice in your heart towards someone?
 5. Why do you believe James is making a big deal of this issue of favoritism?
 6. What is God's view of favoritism? In what ways is favoritism 'judgment without mercy' (Verse 13) and what kind of judgment will God bring on those who show favoritism?
 7. How does Romans 15:7 relate to this? Why is this so important for us to really get this?
 8. According to James 2:8, what is 'the royal law found in Scripture'? Why is showing favoritism a violation of this law?
 9. What is God nudging you personally to do to become more accepting, appreciative, or affirming of others?
 10. What practical steps can you take to help others feel God's love and acceptance?
 11. Recently 8,600 people from congregations in 39 different denominations were surveyed concerning their "love quotient." In this survey, they discovered that churches that had learned how to love people were growing, while those that hadn't learned how to love people were declining. The amount of love and acceptance people experience when they attend church significantly influences that church's growth or decline.
- Spend a few minutes evaluating how well you are doing as a group in loving and accepting others in your small group and in your church. What specific things can members of your group do to ensure that both new and current group members feel accepted, appreciated, and affirmed when they are with you?

SERVE

If we are to minister to the needs of people in our community, we must be willing to show them unconditional love when they come to our church. If they arrive and no one speaks to them or offers a handshake, they are not likely to return and give us a second chance to ignore them. A friendly face and a word of welcome might be the very thing that encourages them to come back. Do you make it a practice to welcome unfamiliar people to your church? If not, why not? If so, why?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with your whole group. Thank God for not showing favoritism, but for saving you from your sins and giving you new life in Jesus. Ask God to bring new people to your group and to your church. Ask God to give you his heart for people, so that your church will not show favoritism, but will be a place that welcomes everyone, whatever their social status or history.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 2:8-9 "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers."

JAMES: HOW TO HAVE REAL FAITH

SCRIPTURE James 2:14-26

CONNECT

Before you came to know Jesus as your Savior, how did you think people got into heaven?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you attended Sunday's service, what is one thing that really stuck with you?
2. What are the 5 ways that James says you can know that you have REAL faith?
3. Read James 2:14-26 and 1:27. According to James, what is the relationship between faith and deeds.
4. Read Galatians 5:6, 2:16 and Ephesians 2:8-10. According to Paul, what is "genuine faith?"
5. Read 1 John 3:10, 17-19. According to John, what is clear evidence that we "belong to the truth?"
6. Read Matthew 7:15-23, 25:3-46. What did Jesus say about faith and deeds?
7. What harmony do you see between the teachings of Paul, John, Jesus and James on the subject of faith and works?
8. As a group, brainstorm for a few minutes to come up with a clear explanation of how salvation is connected to faith and works.
9. According to Paul, John, Jesus and James, what is the evidence that you are truly a believer?
10. As you think about James' exhortation to do what the Word teaches, what proof do you see in your life that your confession of faith in Jesus is real? If you asked the people closest to you, what evidence of a genuine faith in Jesus would they point to in your life?
11. Paul clearly states in Ephesians 2:8 that we're saved by grace through faith: we're saved simply by accepting in faith God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Our faith is not determined by what we do, it is demonstrated by what we do. So, what are some things we do that shows we are believers?
12. Identify some changes in your life since you accepted Jesus as your Savior. In what ways is your lifestyle different from the unbelievers around you? Be specific.
13. Why is obedience to the command "love your neighbor as yourself" important to helping others come to know Jesus? Tell of a time when someone came to Jesus because Jesus's love was demonstrated in a very practical way.
14. What are some of the next steps in your Christian life that you need to take?

SERVE

Identify someone in your group or church family who has a practical need. Then, discuss what you can do together to meet that need.

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with your whole group.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 2:17 "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

JAMES: HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MOUTH

SCRIPTURE James 3:1-12

CONNECT

Tell about a time when your mouth got you into a bit of trouble (maybe with your parents, your spouse, your boss, or even this group).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you attended Sunday's service, what is one thing that really stuck with you?
2. Read James 3:1-12
3. Why is it so important to watch what we say?
4. What word picture does James use to communicate the tongue's power to do both good and evil?
5. Why do you think James uses so many illustrations? Which word picture do you find most meaningful?
6. James describes the untamed tongue as "a restless evil, full of deadly poison." Describe a time when you have seen the effects of that "deadly poison" in your life or in the life of someone you know.
7. In verse 2, James clearly states that we all stumble and fail to honor God in the things we say. He writes, "if anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man." The Greek word for perfect is "teleos," which means "mature" or "healthy." Who in your life demonstrates the greatest maturity with his or her tongue? Be specific about why you chose that person.
8. Describe a time when you were blessed by the words of someone who mattered to you. Contrast this with a time when you were hurt by another person's thoughtless words. What can you do to develop the habit of encouraging others with your words?
9. In what situations do you struggle most to control your own tongue? In conversations with your children? In hurtful moments with your parents? In disagreements with your spouse? Or some other place? What can this group do to help or support you?
10. Read James 3:11-12. What is the root problem with our tongue? Why is this so important for us to understand? So, what is the key to overcoming our tongue problem?

SHARE

Our speech can have a tremendous impact on the lives of unbelievers. 1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." How do you respond to those who ask you about your faith? What have you learned about the importance of "gentleness and respect"?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with your whole group.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 3:9-10 "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. [10] Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

JAMES: HOW TO RELATE WISELY TO OTHERS

SCRIPTURE James 3:13-18

CONNECT

Tell about a time when you saw someone act wisely towards a person/people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 3:13-18
2. According to James 3:13, how do we know who is wise and understanding?
3. According to verse 14, what characteristics mark the person who is not led by godly wisdom?
4. James states that where there is “envy and selfish ambition,” you will find “disorder and every evil practice” (verse 16). What are some specific outward demonstrations of envy and selfish ambition?
5. Proverbs 8:19 says, “My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.” What are some different things that come out of a life of wisdom?
6. When James described wisdom that comes from God (verse 17), why do you think he listed purity first?
7. The word “pure” means “uncorrupted” or “authentic.” It is the quality of integrity. Proverbs 10:9 states, “The man of integrity walks securely...” What does this verse mean?
8. In James 3:17, the words “impartial” and “sincere” come from 2 Greek words that sound very similar. Both are related to our word, “hypocrite.” In Greek theater, actors held masks in front of their faces to play different roles. The word that gave us “hypocrite” referred to these masks. Why do you think people wear “masks” to hide who they really are?
9. Read Proverbs 4:5-7. Twice in these verses Solomon admonishes us to “get wisdom.” What do these verses suggest about the importance of pursuing wisdom?
10. The word “submissive” (verse 17) means “to be reasonable, willing to listen.” Read Proverbs 12:15. Why do you think so many of us get so defensive when we are criticized? What are some practical things that you can do to keep yourself from reacting defensively when you are criticized? What are some practical things that you can do to not make others become defensive?
11. Of the 6 areas of wisdom in relating to others, in which area do you feel like you are doing well? Why?
12. Of the 6 areas of wisdom in relating to others, which area do you feel like needs the most work? Why?

PRAYER

Share with the group a relationship that needs work. Then spend time praying for each of those people.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 3:13 “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”

JAMES: HOW TO AVOID ARGUMENTS

SCRIPTURE James 4:1-10

CONNECT

Tell about a time when you saw someone act wisely towards a person/people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you attended Sunday's service, what is one thing that really stuck with you?
2. Read James 4:1-10
3. According to Verse 1, what is the root of our conflicts with others? Describe a situation when an issue you've been battling in your heart spilled over into your actions or relationships.
4. Read Isaiah 26:3. What is God's promise here in this verse? What is the condition? According to James 4:2-3, why do we find it difficult to trust God with areas of conflict? How have you seen this play out in your own life?
5. What are the 3 desires that James talks about in these verses that lead to conflict with others? With which of these desires do you struggle with the most? Why?
6. What does James say is the key to defusing conflicts? Describe a situation when you experienced the reality of this.
7. If we know that humility is the key to defusing conflicts, why do you think each of us struggle so much with being humble when it comes to conflicts in relationships? What do you think are some keys to helping you walk in humility with others?
8. James describes 4 major steps to diffusing conflict in relationships in verses 7-8. Describe each of those 4 major steps and what it means to walk out each step? Which of these steps do you think you need to give more attention to? Why?
9. Why do you think James is emphasizing so much the need to avoid arguments and to resolve conflicts? Why is this so important?

PRAYER

Share with the group a relationship that needs work. Then spend time praying for each of those people.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 4:6b "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

JAMES: HOW TO QUIT PLAYING GOD

SCRIPTURE James 4:11-12

CONNECT

Tell about a time when you saw someone act wisely towards a person/people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 4:11-12
2. How does James say that we are to speak to one another?
 - Why do you think so many of us have a hard time with this?
3. When we speak against a fellow believer, what attitude are we having toward God and His law?
 - Does this make sense to you? Why or why not?
 - Read James 2:8
 - Does this understanding of these scriptures help you to watch what comes out of your mouth? Why or why not?
4. Read Luke 6:37-42
 - What specific promises did Jesus make here in these verses?
 - How did Jesus summarize the importance of extending grace, mercy, and help to others?
 - What does Jesus say that God will give to each person?
 - What is the main point of the parable of the plank and the speck of sawdust?
 - Why is it so destructive for a person to fail to see his or her own shortcomings?
 - Based upon what Jesus says here and what James says, when is it easy to judge others?
 - Now let's make the connection between judging, condemning, forgiving and giving. What do these 4 have in common?
5. Now let's get personal:
 - Why do you think it so easy to overlook our own shortcomings?
 - In what area(s) do you find yourself struggling the most with judging others? Why?
 - What is the connection between pride and judging others?
6. Read Revelation 12:10. Based on this scripture, if we slander or accuse our brothers and sisters, whom are we like?
7. Read 1 John 2:1-2
 - What does Jesus do instead?
8. What implications do these truths have for us?

PRAYER

Recall the last time you spoke against another person, especially a Christian. IF you haven't already done so, confess your arrogance to God and ask for the grace to change.

THIS WEEK

This week watch for and write down times when you do speak against or judge people. Try to stop and confess as soon as you can. If possible, apologize to the person you are talking to (slander defiles the hearer as well as the slandered one, and it encourages the hearer to imitate it).

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 4:12 "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?"

JAMES: HOW TO FACE YOUR FUTURE

SCRIPTURE James 4:13-17

CONNECT

Describe a time when God unexpectedly took your life in a different direction than you had planned.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 4:13-17
2. We live in culture that prizes efficient organization and carefully thought-out plans. We might commend the man mentioned in James 4:13, but James does not. What is missing from the plans mentioned in verse 13?
3. Read James 4:14 and Proverbs 27:1. According to these verses, why is it presumptuous to put too much confidence in our plans?
4. James states that life is uncertain and brief. Take turns reading the following verses and note other word pictures the Bible uses to talk about life.
 - Psalm 39:5
 - Psalm 144:4
 - Job 7:7,9
 - Psalm 103:15-16
5. James says that leaving God out of our plans is to arrogantly assume the future is totally in our control. What does James 4:16 say about this kind of boasting? Do you think most Christians regard leaving God out of their plans as “evil”? Why or why not? Why do you think Christian people tend to leave God out of their plans?
6. What are some practical steps that reflect a dependence on and submission to God – that Christians can take when making plans for the future?
7. Why is it so important to say, “If it is the Lord’s will,” as we make our plans?
8. Read Isaiah 40:21-26. What do these verses communicate about God’s power and sovereignty over human affairs? When you think about your life and your future in light of these verses, how do you feel?
9. Explain the relationship between James 4:17 and the four verses that precede it (13-16). What is the “good” that recipients of James’ letter should have been doing?
10. All of us are just one heartbeat away from eternity. If you lived your life in light of that reality, in what ways would your life be different this week? Have you been putting off doing something you know you should do? Share one example.
11. Read Proverbs 3:27-28. This passage encourages us to help our neighbor today. Is there something you can do as group to help someone in need? Talk about an outreach that your group can do together.

PRAYER

Pray for each other and the concerns that each person has in regards to the future.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 4:6b “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

JAMES: HOW TO BE WISE WITH YOUR WEALTH

SCRIPTURE James 5:1-6

CONNECT

Who handled the finances in your home when you were growing up? What attitudes toward money did you see in your parents?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you attended Sunday's service, what is one thing that really stuck with you?
2. Read James 5:1-6
3. What is the key point of James 5:2-3? What is the difference between saving and hoarding?
4. Take turn reading the following verses aloud:
 - Leviticus 19:13
 - Deuteronomy 25:15-16
 - Jeremiah 22:13
 - Amos 8:4-7
 - James 5:4
5. What do these verses teach us about God's view of ethics in business?
6. Have you ever felt pressure to participate in unethical business practices? If so, what did you do? What did you learn from that experience? Even if you haven't felt that kind of pressure yet, what are some things you can do to stand strong against that kind of pressure if it does come?
7. Why does James compare a luxurious and self-indulgent lifestyle to being "fattened...in the day of slaughter"?
8. Read the following verses aloud. What does each say about the benefits of a strong work ethic?
 - Proverbs 12:27
 - Proverbs 14:23
 - Ephesians 6:5-8
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12
9. How can a strong work ethic cross the line into "workaholicism"?
10. As you think about your financial life, what is one area you feel good about? What is one area in which you need to grow?
11. Over and over in scripture, God describes to us the importance of giving generously. Why do you think giving generously is such an important aspect for our lives? When we give generously, what aspects in our lives does it address?
12. Four misuses of money are:
 - An unhealthy accumulation of possessions
 - Cutting ethical corners in business practices
 - Careless spending
 - Using money to manipulate others
13. Have any of these been a struggle for you? Why? How can your group members pray for you and support you?

PRAYER

Hand out a sheet a paper and a pencil/pen for each person. Ask each person to honestly examine to what degree they are controlled by a desire for more wealth and possessions. Then have them write out a prayer asking God to give them contentment and to free them from the bondage to material things, and then acknowledge God as Owner of all they possess.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

JAMES: HOW TO DEVELOP PATIENCE

SCRIPTURE James 5:7-12

CONNECT

Some people are able to be patient with any person, any problem, and any circumstance in their lives. Other people are quite the opposite. Rate your patience level on a scale of 1-10 (1=everything happens too slowly – low patience; 10=easy come, easy go – high patience)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 5:7-12
2. What does the illustration of the farmer in verse 7 say about patience?
3. The prophets of the Bible were patient with people who were unwilling or even uninterested in changing. Tell of someone in your past who offered you that same kind of patience.
4. Our memory verse for this week is: James 5:8 "You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near." Why is this truth an encouragement to be more patient whatever the circumstances of your life? Has this particular verse ever been an encouragement to you in the past?
5. The story of Job has been called the "Super Bowl of Suffering." This faithful man of God lost his family, friends, and finances suddenly and unexpectedly. Few of us will ever come close to experiencing such loss. Yet Job never challenged or cursed God, even though he was thoroughly confused about what God was doing in his life. According to Verse 11, what did Job believe about God that enabled him to persevere without cursing God?
6. What are some lessons from Job's experience that you can apply to your own life?
7. When do you struggle most to be patient with God? Why?
8. What makes it hard to wait on God's timing?
9. With whom in your life do you struggle most to be patient? Why?
10. How do you think that God uses others to build patience in our own lives?
11. James says that when we are irritated, when we're tense, when we're under pressure, when things aren't going our way and things aren't under our control, there are 2 things we need to avoid doing. What are those 2 things? Why do you think it is so important for us to avoid those 2 things?

PRAYER

With what situation or problem can you ask God for help and patience this week?

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 5:8 "You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

HOW TO PRAY EFFECTUAL, FERVENT PRAYERS

SCRIPTURE James 5:13-20

CONNECT

Share a situation where you have personally seen the power of prayer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 5:7-12
2. What are the different ways that James mentions here in these verses, that we are supposed to pray?
 - When in trouble?
 - When we are happy?
 - When we are sick?
 - When we are dealing with sin issues?
3. Why do you think we are supposed to pray in these different ways for these different issues?
4. Have you seen the impact of these different ways of praying in your own life? How?
5. Why do you think prayer is one of those things that most Christians struggle with?
6. What do you think are different things that hinders Christians from praying with confidence?
7. What is one thing that would help you pray more?
8. Why do you think most Christians struggle with confessing their sins to one another?
9. If we confess our sins to God, why should anyone else have to know about it?
10. Why do you think confessing our sins to one another is such a powerful thing in our lives?
11. Go around the circle and ask each person in the group to complete the following sentence:
"I would like more faith so I could..."
 - Hand out a sheet of paper so that each person writes down what the group shares.
 - Then discuss: "How do we tend to see faith? What do we expect our faith in God to accomplish?"
 - Then have each person write down the following list of the "problems for faith."
 - o Taming the tongue (James 3:1-12)
 - o Subduing the self (James 3:13-4:10)
 - o Judging the judge (James 4:11-12)
 - o Humbling the haughty (James 4:13-17)
 - Divide into 2 teams, each of which is to examine two of these areas. Have each team define just what problem we human beings have with that area, and how faith leads us to approach it.
 - o Then have each team share their results with the entire group.
 - Once each group has shared, send the 2 groups back to discuss the final "problem for faith." Have each team define what that problem is, how this relates to prayer and how faith leads us to approach it.
 - o Staying self-sufficient

Then have each team share their results with the entire group.

PRAYER

Take time to pray for things that concern each person in the group.

MEMORIZING & MEDITATING

Memory verse for this week: James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

