



Adulting

Accept

Snooze

Expositional study on the book of James.

*The #1 catalyst for spiritual growth is reading and reflecting on the Bible.
Use these questions for personal study or as part of a community group experience.*

WEEK 1 OF 7

09/17/2017

Note to Leaders: For the first meeting pay particular attention to each of the four tips below that will help your group get started well. In each discussion guide, there will be sermon series questions, discussion questions, some commentary and a guide for concluding with prayer.

Goal: To get to know those in your group in a way that helps them feel comfortable discussing the content and application of the sermon series. The Adulting series will discuss the book of James, which is a practical book on spiritual maturity and integrity. Keep people thinking about the practical application of the message to their faith, life, and relationships.

Connect: Make sure that you are available and ready to welcome people as they arrive. Take some time at the beginning to talk and connect before beginning the discussion.

Facilitate: To best use this guide, as a leader, first read through it on your own and answer the questions prior to the group meeting. This will allow you to have an understanding of the direction the conversation might go. Additionally, it will allow you to create flow in the conversation rather than simply reading question after question. You don't have to go through all the questions.

Finishing Strong: Number one complaint of group members, is not ending on time. You don't have to kick people out, but close with prayer on time. This gives them the freedom to leave or hang out.

Sermon Questions

1. Out of John's overview of the Adulting series, what seems most exciting to you? What are you hoping to get out of this series?
2. What from Sunday's message stood out to you most? Why?
3. How does faith and practical instruction exist together? Which one might you lean more closely to or value more?
4. Re-read James 1:1-12. What themes do you see in these verses? Why do you think James is writing this letter?

Discussion Questions

1. Have you seen someone face trials with joy? What did it look like? What did it not look like?
2. Where does this joy come from? And how can someone have it in hardships and trials? (James 1:2, 12; cf. Matthew 5:11-12)
3. What is the intended effect of trials on the Christian and the Christian community? (1 Peter 1:6-7, 13)
4. One obstacle to persevering or enduring through trials is what James calls being “double-minded”. How would you define being double-minded? What are the practical outcomes?
5. Why do you think James further describes a doubter as being “double-minded”? What do they have in common or how might they be different in your understanding?
6. Have you seen elements of “double-mindedness” in your life, past or present? (James 1:6-8)
7. How have times of doubt or being double-minded in your relationship with Christ inhibited your perseverance or joy during a trial?
8. Can you think of a difficult experience that has increased your perseverance and maturity? What helped during that time? Is there anything that you could have done to more fully rely on the grace and joy of Jesus during that time? (try to be specific)
9. Ephesians 4:14-15 reads, “¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ...” (New Living Translation).

Considering the challenge of James 1:1-12 and Ephesians 4:14-15 to grow into maturity and reflecting Jesus in your life, what areas of growth is God calling you to?

Background Comments

James, likely the brother of Jesus, is the self-identified author of this letter. His letter was likely written in the mid-40s to those following Jesus in the “dispersion” or “diaspora” (essentially, ethnically Jewish Christians not in Jerusalem). This is important, because those in the diaspora during this period faced severe economic crisis (including a severe famine in 46 A.D.) and the beginning of several social-political-religious upheavals that would culminate in the Jewish war of rebellion in 66 A.D. (leading to the destruction of the Temple). Outside of Jerusalem, especially, new Christians faced daily pressure to

concede to the customs and religions of the Romans who mixed their worship of Greek/Romans gods with emperor-worship.

In this context, James challenges the Christian community to grow into the likeness of Jesus through endurance, trust, and joy. At its heart, this letter is about spiritual maturity or wholeness. Through growing faith, endurance and final reward of restoration are possible (James 1:12; cf. 2 Timothy 2:10-13). Trials often reveal the depth of one's trust or the genuineness of their faith. They humble us; wean us from our dependence on self; calls us to a more secure anchor and heavenly hope; reveal what we truly love; and, point us toward Christ's suffering and victory.

Since trials reveal the sincerity of our trust in God, doubt reflects a lack of trust in God as the one in control—King, Lord, and Ruler. James qualifies “doubters” as those who are “double-minded”. Doubt, being “double-minded”, then refers to one's loyalty being split between two diametrically opposed things. A division within the believer that brings an inconsistency of attitude and action. Saying they have faith in or allegiance to God, but them living, thinking, and acting as if God is not the one in control. However, when one endures a trial with joy and relies on the victorious promise of God to restore and reward those who are faithful, then the follower grows in maturity, wisdom, and Christ-likeness. To illustrate this maturity of faith James proceeds through the rest of the letter in very practical terms. Throughout, he confronts the Christian with several questions, “Is your life oriented on Jesus? Is it focused on the goal of becoming more like Christ? And, not simply giving lip service to his name?”

Prayer Requests

Take a few minutes to go around the room and ask if anyone has something they would like prayer for. Write these down as they are being shared.

Additionally, challenge people to begin praying about the step of maturity God may be calling them to during this series.

Finally, pray together. You can pray the prayer below or your own prayer that incorporates the requests represented in the group.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I thank you for the encouragement and promise of Scripture. You promise hope, healing, and reward if I find my joy and endurance in you. I ask that you would grant me strength to overcome the trials that I face. Fill me with hope so that I might find peace and joy in the midst of the storm. May I commit myself to you and your process of transformation, choosing a single-minded approach that builds maturity and makes me more like you. In Jesus name I pray, amen.