

Greetings Hopewell M.B. Church Family,

The Deacon and Deaconess Board members pray that you and your loved ones are doing well and staying safe during these times of uncertainty.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has "leveled" the playing field for all humanity. Its effects show no discrimination, but have extended beyond all racial, ethnic, national, cultural, gender, economic, educational, religious, and political barriers. It has touched all aspects of humanity physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually; creating the "perfect storm": people being isolated from their support systems, families in financial crises, and individuals unsure of what the future holds.

Everyone has experienced its effects either through their employment, social interactions, or a simple trip to buy groceries. To add to the stress caused by this pandemic, social and racial unrest appears to be heightened. With no foreseeable end in sight, all this has left people wondering what to do or where to turn for relief.

God's word admonishes us to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, The Deacon/Deaconess Family Ministry has chosen to make changes in how we present the lessons for this year's Focus On Family. It is our intent that all families remain safe during this time. However, since the purpose of Focus On Family is to bring all families together during the month of August, we are faced with a conundrum in how to bridge our intent to remain safe with our desire to ensure that families are staying connected and receiving the word of God.

Therefore, the following lessons and activities have been provided for individuals and families to study at home and yet remain connected to the church family during this period of "social distancing". We pray that each individual and family will take time to review the materials. We also pray that you will join us as we connect via our weekly on-line discussions of the lessons as well.

If you have not had an opportunity to join us via Zoom, you may find the instructions on how to log-in posted in the church's weekly enews.

A study guide of lessons, review questions, and activities are included. As you study the lessons, we pray that you will utilize the various activities included as well. Please feel free to record and share your experiences with us.

We look forward to connecting with you!

Yours In Christ,
Hopewell M.B. Church
Deacon/Deaconess Family Ministry

FOCUS ON FAMILY 2020

Participants' Study Guide



Family Matters: Steadfast Faith To Weather the Storms of Life

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

Study Guide: The Book of James; Real Faith for the Real World

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Perseverance:** Pressing Your Way Through in the Midst of the Storm (James 1:1-18)
- Hearing and Responding:** Who Do You Listen and Respond to When You're In A Storm? (James 1:19-2:26)
- Words That Heal, Words That Hurt:** How Words Can Impact the Outcome of Your Storm (James 3:1-12)
- Two Kinds of Smart Living:** Considering Others Needs Before Your Own (James 3:13-4:12)
- Planning vs Patience:** Remaining Steadfast In the Midst of Everyday Life (James 4:13-5:20)

INTRODUCTION

In light of all that we are facing in our lives recently, this study has been developed to help us understand how God's Word tells us Christians should respond when we are facing trials.

Each week we will attempt to address a different aspect from the book of James to help us combat our current circumstances.

GOAL FOR THIS STUDY: The overall goal for this study is to determine:

- How individuals/families weather the storm?**
- What to do when you have reached your limit?**
- How to bounce back after crises?**
- How the church can help families in crises?**
- What is the work of the Lord concerning individuals, families, the church, and the community?**

All **Focus Questions** (as indicated) have been taken from the study guide: **James; Real Faith For The Real World**, by Tim Stafford. Participants are encouraged to read each passage of scripture and answer the questions prior to class-time in order to actively share in the discussions. ***Additional questions have been added (highlighted) to provide a personal application of the study.**

Suggestions for Individual study:

1. Begin each study with prayer. Ask God to help you understand the passage and to apply it to your life.
2. A modern translation will give you the most help. **Questions in this guide are based on the New International Version.**
3. Read and reread the passage(s). You must know what the passage says before you can understand what it means and how it applies to you.
4. Write your answers in the spaces provided. This will help you to express clearly your understanding of the passage.
5. Keep a Bible dictionary handy. Use it to look up unfamiliar words, names, or places.

Suggestions for Group Study:

1. Come to the study prepared.
2. Be willing to join in the discussion.
3. Stick to the passage being studied
4. Try to be sensitive to the other members of the group
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion

Between Studies activities are included for a deeper reflection of the lesson

Focus Activities (Family Challenges) have also been included for you (and your household) to complete as a way of enhancing the lessons. Please feel free to record and/or share the results of your challenges with the rest of the group.

Children/Youth Background Studies are included for households with children under 18 years old. We suggest using a children's bible to help them better understand the lessons

BACKGROUND INFO

On

The Book Of James

(Taken from: Jensen's Survey of the New Testament)

The book of James was written to instruct Christians on how to walk with God in this life

When was the book of James written?: It was written around the year A.D. 60 (a year or so before James' death)

Who was James?: He was the half-brother of Jesus
a praying man (Acts 1:14) historians record that James' knees were calloused due to all his praying

pure	persistent
powerful	humble
practical	honest
plain	single-minded
upright	just

What was the occasion/purpose of the book of James?: Addressed the persecution of the Christians
-unchristian conduct (in speech)
-erroneous views on doctrine as faith and sin
-To correct evils and to teach right Christian behavior

***The book of James is considered "A Practical Guide to Christian Life And Conduct". From beginning to end the thrust of James' epistle is application.**

"James says less about the Master than any other writer in the New Testament, but his speech is more like that of the Master than the speech of any of them"

SUPERFICIAL

[,soopər'fiSHəl]

ADJECTIVE

1. existing or occurring at or on the surface.

"the building suffered only superficial damage"

synonyms:

[surface](#) · [exterior](#) · [external](#) · [outer](#) · [outside](#) · [outermost](#) · [peripheral](#) · [slight](#)

- situated or occurring on the skin or immediately beneath it.
"the superficial muscle groups"
- appearing to be true or real only until examined more closely.
"the resemblance between the breeds is superficial"

synonyms:

apparent · specious · seeming · outward · ostensible · cosmetic · slight

not thorough, deep, or complete; cursory.

"he had only the most superficial knowledge of foreign countries"

synonyms:

cursory · perfunctory · casual · sketchy · desultory · unconsidered · token · slapdash · slipshod · offhand · inadequate · imperfect · slight · rushed · hasty · hurried · rapid · fleeting · passing

not having or showing any depth of character or understanding.

"perhaps I was a superficial person"

synonyms:

shallow · surface · on the surface · skin-

deep · minimal · artificial · insignificant · unimportant · empty · hollow · meaningless · facile · glib · flippant · thoughtless · empty-headed · trivial · frivolous · silly · inane · without depth · fatuous

GENUINE

[ˈjɛnyooən]

ADJECTIVE

genuine (adjective)

truly what something is said to be; authentic.

"each book is bound in genuine leather"

synonyms:

authentic · real · actual · original · bona

fide · true · veritable · unfeigned · unadulterated · unalloyed · sterling · attested · undisputed · rightful · legitimate · lawful · legal · valid · sound · echt · the real McCoy · the genuine article · the real thing · your

actual · kosher · honest-to-goodness · pukka · dinkum · simon-pure

antonyms:

bogus

(of a person, emotion, or action) sincere.

"a genuine attempt to delegate authority" · "she had no doubts as to whether Tom was genuine"

synonyms:

sincere · honest · truthful · unhypocritical · meaning what one

says · straightforward · direct · frank · candid · open · artless · natural · unaffected · guileless · ingenuous · straight · upfront · on the level · on the up and up · dinkum

PERSEVERANCE

Pressing Your Way Through in the Midst of the Storm

(James 1:1-18)

It begins as a sneaking suspicion when things don't go well. As troubles continue, a sense of doom or resignation can develop, "I must be doing it wrong," we think. "This is too hard. Surely God did not mean life to be such a struggle."

James takes a different point of view. Life is indeed a struggle, he writes, and for a good purpose. Through difficulties we learn perseverance, the art of "hanging in there".

Christian growth, as James sees it, is a process for which there are no shortcuts. It takes time for God to teach us how to be mature people.

- (1) What was the hardest year of your life? How did that year affect your character?
 - *identify trials in your life/what do you perceive was the purpose for each?
 - *what helped you to persevere through trials?
 - *what is the outcome in persevering?

- (2) Read James 1:1-18. In your own words, how would you define maturity (v.4)?
 - *what keeps people from becoming wise/mature?

- (3) What does James say is the role of trials in developing maturity?

- (4) Verses 9-11 imply that trials of life erase superficial distinctions between the rich and the poor. Why would that be true?

- (5) Sometimes people put the blame on God for their failings. How does James describe the true origin of temptation (v. 13-15)?
 - *what is the true origin of temptation?

- (6) Some people regard temptation itself as sin, but the Bible indicates that is not the case. How do we keep from crossing the line from temptation to sin? Think of an occasion when you did/did not cross the line. What were the results in your life? In others' lives?

- (7) If we know God as the changeless "Father of the heavenly lights" (v.17), how will that knowledge of his character affect the way we deal with trials and temptations?

- (8) Verse 18 says God intends Christians to be "a kind of firstfruits," which is the first crop a farmer harvests. What does this image add to your idea of maturity?

****Between Studies:** It is a good idea to “count your blessings,” but we often apply that only in the most obvious sense. James encourages us to see God’s blessings in periods of trial. During this week, draw up a list of various trials you have undergone in the course of your life. For each one, think about how you personally were affected. What aspects of your character were “completed” during that period?

TRIALS	CHARACTER DEVELOPED
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

Children/Youth Background Study: Elijah and the Widow’s Son (I Kings 17:8-24)

Review Questions: Use the follow questions to review the story.

- 1. Why was the widow in the story upset?** The widow was upset because her son was dead and she did not yet know that Elijah would be able to heal him.
- 2. Why did the widow think that her son was ill?** Because of sins that she had done in the past.
- 3. Is God capable and willing to forgive the widow’s sins and our sins?** Yes.
- 4. Who died as a perfect sacrifice for our sins?** Jesus.
- 5. What did Elijah do when he saw that the widow’s son had died?** He prayed that God would heal the boy.
- 6. How did Elijah persevere to receive healing for the widow’s son?** He cried out to God three times

7. Did God heal the widow's son? Yes.
8. Would Elijah have been able to heal the widow's son without help from God? No.
9. Does God often use ordinary people like you and me to bring about his purposes? Yes.

FOCUS ACTIVITIES (Faith-Building, Fun, Family Challenges)

-MUSCLE BUILDING

-Purpose: Stress the importance of spiritual training in order to build our spiritual Muscles; demonstrate how trials help us to develop our spiritual muscles

-What You Need: Light Weight exercises using can goods or household items

-What You Do: Perform a series of simple weight lifting exercises as you talk about building Muscles. Compare how weights help us build physical muscles to how trials help us to build spiritual muscles

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

One of the key characteristics of a rubber band is that it is stretched. In fact, a rubber band isn't much use unless it is stretched.

- What are some things that we use rubber bands for?
- Why are the rubber bands ideal for such tasks?
- What happens to a rubber band after it is stretched many times?

MAKE IT SPIRITUAL

Just as a rubber band becomes more useful when stretched, God also stretches us to make us more effective and use us more fully for his glory. When stretched you expand your usefulness to God. See the scripture section below for verses that talk about us being stretched in the Christian walk. Stretching means trusting God in moments of stress, tension, pressure, and discomfort. Sometimes it is painful and sometimes merely uncomfortable.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

There is going to be a tug-of-war in our spiritual life because God is always in the process of transforming us. Change causes tension and we are stretched. But in these times God is moving us forward into the likeness of Christ. When God stretches us, He is not making us somebody we do not want to be. He is actually stretching us to be the person He created us to be.

- When a muscle is regularly stretched it becomes more flexible, versatile, efficient, strong, and growing. What difference would it make in your Christian walk if these characteristics were also true of your spiritual life?
- Consider also the opposites of those qualities. How would your spiritual life be different if it was characterized by inflexible, limited, ineffective, atrophied, weak and brittle?
- When a muscle is not regularly stretched it atrophies or shrinks. How does this relate to spiritually exercising our faith?
- There is always a purpose to being stretched. How do we cooperate with God and grow in the stretch?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

- How is God growing and stretching you right now?
- Do you tend to cooperate and hear what God is doing, or pull away when you are being stretched?
- How can you personally cooperate with God when he is stretching you?

SCRIPTURES

- Philippians 3:14 – "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."
- Isaiah 54:2 – "Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes."
- Philippians 3:13 and 14 – "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

- Matthew 12:13 – “Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.”
- James 1:2-4 – “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 – “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”
- Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

Stretched by God – Games and an Object Lesson

★★★★☆ (20 votes, average: **3.85** out of 5)

There is going to be a tug-of-war in our spiritual life because God is always in the process of transforming us. Change causes tension and we are stretched. This week's lesson uses rubber bands as an object lesson on the topic of being stretched by God.

HEARING AND RESPONDING: **Who Do You Listen and Respond to** **When You're In A Storm?** (James 1:19-2:26)

Modern life is overrun with stimuli. In the car we listen to music or news or talk shows. At home the TV is often on whether or not we really like the program. The telephone brings people into our lives whom we might otherwise seldom encounter. We hardly have a quiet moment.

Yet we are bombarded with so many stimuli that we also become adept at tuning things out. Most of us become good at hearing but not responding. We can't, after all, intensely feel with every crisis we hear on the news. We can't respond to every opportunity that is offered us.

The trouble begins when we apply the same distance to God. We hear his Word, but its urgency is lost on us. We don't answer. That, according to James, is a disastrous way to live.

- (1) How do we “turn off” various stimuli in modern life?
- (2) -Who do we listen and respond to in times of trial?
 - *Who is the first person you turn to when you're in a crisis?
 - *How do we determine who/what to listen to/advice to take?
 - *Do you only listen to those who agree with what you have already decided or do you consider all advice you receive?
 - *How can we stay focused?
- (3) Read James 1:19-2:13. What practical responses does James say a Christian must take? What responses, practically speaking, must a Christian avoid
- (4) We have been taught that it is normal and natural to be angry and that we should express feelings openly regardless of the consequences. How do James' words on anger in verses 19-20 support or oppose this idea?
- (5) James does not condemn human anger, but he describes it as limited; it “does not bring about the righteous life God desires.” According to verse 21, what does bring about this kind of life?
- (6) If a person listens to God's Word but doesn't act on it, what happens?
- (7) Twice in this section (1:25; 2:12) James refers to the “law that gives freedom.” Laws are usually seen as restricting freedom. Why do you think James describes God's Word as giving freedom?

- (8) Read James 2:14-26. Why do you think James feels it necessary to emphasize that “faith without works is dead” (v. 2:17, 26)?
- (9) How does James’ assertion about works compare with Paul’s assertion that we are saved by faith alone (Romans 4:13)? How can both statements be true?
- (10) James backs up his argument that “faith without works is dead” by referring to the evidence of Abraham and Rahab. They represent two extremes of the family of faith: one was the famous father of Israel, and the other a foreign prostitute. What point is James making by referring to these two people?
- *How do we view others going through trials?
 - *Should we help them? If so, how can we help them?
 - *How do we know when to step in and when not to?
- (11) What steps can we take personally to improve our “listening” in response to this passage?

****Between Studies:** As noted in our study, Abraham was cited by the apostle Paul as an example of salvation by faith. James, making a related point, cites Abraham as an example of faith that results in action. This week, study the life of Abraham in Genesis 12-22. **Make a list with three columns, (1) what Abraham heard from God, (2) actions Abraham took in response to God, (3) how is faith was involved in his response. (Note that not everything that God said to Abraham demanded action in response. Many of God’s words were promises Abraham could only believe).**

Message From God	Abraham’s Response	How Abraham’s Faith Was Involved in His Response

Children/Youth Background Study: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3)

Review Questions: Use the follow questions to review the story.

- (1) **What did Nebuchadnezzar do?** He had an image made out of gold and he commanded all the people to bow down and worship it.
- (2) **How did Nebuchadnezzar find out that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego disobeyed him?** Some Chaldeans told the king

- (3) **Why didn't the three boys bow to the idol?** They did not worship the idol, they worshipped the only true God in heaven
- (4) **What was their punishment for disobeying the king?** They were put in a furnace to burn
- (5) **What did the king see when he looked inside the fiery furnace?** He saw four men walking around in the fire
- (6) **Who should we listen and respond to in difficult situations?** God, our parents, those looking out for us
- (7) **How do we know that God will stand up with us when we stand for him?** God has promised in his word (the bible) that he will always be with us

FOCUS ACTIVITIES (Faith-Building, Fun, Family Challenges)

-BLINDFOLD OBSTACLE COURSE EXERCISE

Purpose: to show how God works in our lives as we hear his Word and respond to it.

What You Need: Teams of two people, 1 blindfold for each team, obstacle course

What You Do: One team member leads the blindfolded team member through the obstacle course by giving simple directions (left, right, straight ahead, stop, etc.)

-SIMON SAYS

What You Need: A series of commands for participants to follow

What You Do: Choose one person to be "Simon" who gives commands; the others must do what "Simon" says.

Discuss the importance of following the right voice

Lego Instructions for the Christian Life

They are a great metaphor for each of us in the body of Christ. And if we follow God's instruction we can be used to create and do incredible things.

www.CreativeYouthIdeas.com



LEGOs are one of those toys that are universally loved around the world by all ages. They are simple building blocks in a variety of shapes and colors, but with a little creativity and imagination they can be put together in unlimited combinations to create masterpieces. They are a great metaphor for each of us in the body of Christ. And if we follow God's instruction we can be used to create and do incredible things.

Games using LEGOs

- **Blind Builder** – A player is blindfolded and must construct the item solely from verbal directions from the team. First team to complete it wins.
- **Blind LEGO Construction** – Blindfold each team and ask them to build a Lego sculpture using a pile of Lego pieces in front of them. Give awards for the most like a real object, funniest, tallest, longest, most creative, etc
- **Fast As You Can** – In this game you call out a simple object that can be created from LEGO's. Each team has three minutes to make one as fast as they can. At the end of the three minutes have a judge decide who sculpture most resembles the object. Play a couple of rounds so there are more chances for winners.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Debrief

- What do we need that will help us turn a pile of pieces into a specific shape?
- Do you have to build exactly what is on the LEGO box or in the instructions?
- Can we use the pieces to build other good things as well?
- (If it has step by step instructions) Do you have to follow the instructions?
- What is the advantage of instructions?
- How does a photo, an example or instructions help?
- What could have happened if we didn't follow the manual?
- How did the groups go about assembling their Lego project? How did each person participate?
- What was frustrating about this activity?
- Why was it difficult/easy to communicate instructions?
- What are other situations that happen in your life where you have to rely on others to communicate information or instructions to you?
- How do you make sure that you understand them completely? What can you do as the person with the information to get your message across to others?
- How do you know where a brick belongs and how it fits into the overall plan?
- Is it sometimes possible for more than one brick to fit in the same?

MAKE IT SPIRITUAL

- What spiritual lessons can we learn from LEGOS?
- What could happen if you don't follow the instructions?
- How is this like the choices we have in life?
- Were you created with a purpose?
- What other projects or things have you done that require an instruction manual?
- Are there instructions for us to follow in life? As a Christian?
- What are some of the world's instructions? Those from the Bible?
- How is a lego set like the body of Christ?
- How is the Bible like an instruction manual?
- How is Christ a model for us to follow? (1 Corinthians 11:1)

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

A LEGO manual shows how each piece fits together to form the completed shape and the order or sequence. How is a lego set like the body of Christ? the youth group?

1. made up of many parts.
2. Christ is the cornerstone
3. The parts fit together to make a whole
4. if one part is missing, the whole suffers – to be complete they need each other
5. no piece, is more important than the others.
6. some relationships are closer than others
7. together they form a picture / object
8. they didn't have the instructions or a picture on a box so it was sometimes difficult to know what they were forming
9. different people acted as leaders to help them form the picture
10. The pieces support each other
11. there are different connections – shapes – that connect each

12. each piece is different/ unique
13. Each piece is identified by where it fits into the whole
14. Some pieces are easily identified but not more important

MAKE IT PERSONAL

- How can we learn where we belong in the church and the role we each should fill?
- After this activity, ask each youth to take back their LEGO piece as a reminder of the lessons.

SCRIPTURE

- **1 Corinthians 3:11-15** – “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”
- **1 Peter 2:4** – “As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
- **Ephesians 2:19-22** “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

WORDS THAT HEAL, WORDS THAT HURT:

How Words Can Impact the Outcome of Your Storm

(James 3:1-12)

Speech, some say, is what distinguishes humans from animals. The ability to think and to communicate those thoughts to others sets humanity apart from all other creatures. Words help us express our feelings and our ideas. They can build others up, encourage them, teach them. Or, words can wound, deceive, discourage. James reminds us of the powerful way that words affect our relationships. More than that, James charts a link between the way we speak and the kind of people we become. Learning to control our tongues, James suggests, is a key to Christian maturity.

- (1) Think of a teacher who played a big role in your life. What made that person so helpful? Which had the greater impact—the material taught, or how it was communicated?
- (2) Read James 3:1-12. Verse 2 introduces the startling idea that a person with faultless speech will be fully mature.
Based on your experience, how would you describe the link between the way a person talks and his or her character?
- (3) How do you think a person learns to say the right thing at all times?
- (4) Verses 3-4 compare our lives to horses and ships. What do they have in common?
- (5) What skills are required to keep a spirited horse under control with a bit?

What skills are required to direct a ship with a rudder even in a strong wind?

Can you apply these same skills to directing your life through your speech?
- (6) If you would like to move your life in a more positive direction, what kinds of speech do you think are most likely to get you there?

How can you adopt these positive kinds of speech into your everyday life?
- (7) Verses 5-8 use more negative imagery: a forest fire, an untamed animal, a deadly poison. Cite an experience or event when out-of-control talking was as destructive as these images imply.
- (8) In the same way that verse 2 asserts a connection between faultless speech and mature character, verse 6 connects the wrong kind of speech with a corrupt life “set on fire by hell.” How can mere talk have this kind of impact on a person’s life?

- (9) James says that very contradictory words come out of our mouths-especially our praise for God and our curses toward other human beings (vv. 9-12). What does this contradiction say about our inner lives, the source of our words?
- (10) James speaks of not only the potential destructiveness of ill-chosen words, but also the way that good words lead to maturity. If you were to become more thoughtful and skilled in your speech, in what ways could that affect your life?
- (11) What was the result of words spoken in anger or out of hurt?
- (12) What type of response do you receive when you say something nice to someone who may be having a difficult day? How did someone else's word affect you when you were having a difficult day?
- (13) Have you ever said something in anger and had to go back and apologize for what was said? Have you ever had someone to come back and apologize to you for what they said in anger? How did that affect your relationship?
- (14) Does James mean that we should not say anything negative to people (point out what they may be doing wrong or the consequences of their actions)?
- (15) How do we practice Ephesians 4:26?

****Between Studies:** This week take inventory of the way you talk. One approach is to focus on a particular relationship-with a spouse, a parent, a child, a neighbor or a co-worker-take note of everything you talk about with that person in the course of three or four days. Keep a notebook with you, and write down the topic (and the actual words, where possible) of every exchange. When the time period is fulfilled, look over your records and evaluate the interaction. Were hurtful words said? Did your words encourage, instruct, admonish? How can you become a more effective conversationalist, more pleasing to God?

Children/Youth Background Study: Job and His Friends (Job (see below))

Review Questions: Use the follow questions to review the story.

- (1) **What happened to Job?** He lost all of his children, cattle, his servants, and he was cursed with sores all over his body (Job 1:15-2:7)
- (2) **How long did Job's friends visit with him?** They visited seven days and seven nights? (Job 2:13)
- (3) **How did Job's friends respond when they saw Job?** At first they didn't recognize him, they didn't speak for seven days, then they blamed Job for his situation (Job 2:12; 4:7-9; 8:1-6; 11:1-6)
- (4) **How did Job respond to what his friends said?** Job was upset, confused, and discouraged. Then Job repented and began to pray to God (Job 6:21-28; 16:1-4; 32:3; 42:10)

(5) What happened to Job after that? God gave Job twice as much as he had before

(6) Have you ever had a situation where someone said something very hurtful to you? You said something very hurtful to someone? How did you feel? How do you suppose the other person felt? How did it affect your relationship?

FOCUS ACTIVITIES **(Faith-Building, Fun, Family Challenges)**

-BRIDLE/TAMING THE TONGUE

Purpose: Be mindful of what you say; God calls us to honor Him by what we say

What You Need: Tube of toothpaste, paper plate

What You Do: Squeeze toothpaste into a plate; try to put it back in the tube. Discuss how trying to put toothpaste back in the tube is just as difficult as trying to take back hurtful words; once it comes out, it can't go back.

EXPLOSIVE WORDS

Drop Mentos into a bottle of Diet Coke and see explosive results. The experiment helps them understand how the tongue is small, but can cause a huge mess.

BANANA SPLIT BONANZA – Create a giant Banana split using a rain gutter; be sure to clean it with soap and water or line it with plastic wrap first (or use a very large bowl instead).

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

For added spiritual application you can prepare one or more of the following props. These can each represent a possible spiritual condition as indicated in the parenthesis. Keep it simple for younger age groups, or expand it for those who are more mature.

1. Place a banana in the fridge for a couple days, the skin will turn black, but it will still be fine inside. (Outside it looks a mess, but inside it is still wholesome.)
2. Just before your meeting, carefully squeeze and bruise a banana so that the inside is bruised and mushy, but the outside skin is still whole and unbroken. (Outside looks fine but inside it has been bruised)
3. Add a plastic or fake banana (It's fake)
4. Let one banana rot (Rotten both outside and inside)
5. Green Banana (Fruit is not fully expressed yet... it is still growing)
6. Ripe banana that is perfect for eating (Sweet and enjoyable)
7. Banana that which was used in the games and is now quite a mess. (Abused, injured, bruised by others)
8. Label from some other fruit on a banana (Labels, name calling, not true)
9. Before the lesson, get a banana & a sewing needle. You insert the sewing needle into several spots through the banana skin and sort of "swish" it back & forth, so that you cut the banana into pieces inside its skin. (Looks fine on the outside, but is all cut up on the inside.)

MAKE IT SPIRITUAL

- What was the key ingredient of the games?
- What is a banana?
- What are some characteristics of a banana?
- In what ways could what happened to the bananas, be similar to what can happen to people?
- Have you ever been hurt or injured by someone? Even if it was just a game, can people still be bruised and hurt?
- What does this tell us about how we treat people?
- Scripture says that Christians are known by their fruit. (Matthew 7:20) How do we evaluate whether fruit is good or bad?
- How can these Banana's (refer to props) represent spirit conditions of a person?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

- What are the first things that come to mind when you consider the question: “How is your spiritual life going these days?”
- What are some of the things that people use to determine the quality of a person’s spiritual life?
- How do you know if a person is a Christian or not?
- What are some of the things that people use to evaluate if a person is a Christian? Of the things that you have listed, which are actions, words, thoughts, values?
- Are the things in the list mostly internal or external things?
- What are some of the fruits of a Christian’s life? (see Galatians 5:22-23)
- Are these internal or external, or both? Explain.
- Which traits of the fruit of the Spirit are easiest for you?
- Which ones are the biggest areas of growth for you?
- The list in Galatians was not meant to be the total list as other qualities are also mentioned in scripture like holiness, humility, compassion, generosity, contentment, thankfulness, mercy, grace, sincerity, and perseverance. Which trait(s) on this “expanded” list of the fruit of the Spirit come easiest and hardest for you?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

- Take time to discuss ways youth have shown the fruits of the spirit or have experienced them. Also, discuss experiences that have bruised us and hurt us. How did each of these experiences make us feel? What can we learn from them? How does it affect you or others?
- Which of fruits are lacking in your life? why?
- What do you need to do to grow and become more fruitful?
- What can you learn from this lesson in how you personally treat others?

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM BANANAS

Be Careful How We Treat Others

Bananas are really fragile fruits that need careful handling and preparation. You have to handle bananas gently so you don’t bruise them. The same holds true for the way we treat others. Our words and actions towards others can leave bruises upon their hearts just like bruises on a banana that has not been handled with care. Sometimes, a person who has been treated unkindly for a while can become angry and bitter inside. He starts to decay from the inside. But even if the fruit becomes rotten, the seeds can be planted in good soil and new and wonderful can grow out of it. God has the power to come into our lives, to give us new life, and the opportunity to abide in him and produce good fruit.

Don’t Judge by the External

Unfortunately there are also those who try to fake the fruit of the spirit in their lives. Fruit is a natural product of drawing from the source (John 15) You don’t force fruit. It is the outflow of abiding in Christ. Some people pretend that they are loving, kind people, but they are really angry bitter people on the inside. Some people try to pretend that they have joy because of material things, but really they are unhappy miserable people. You can’t always tell the quality of fruit by it’s outside. What you look like on the outside is not what is important to God. What your heart and life look like on the inside is what is important to God. How do we know if a banana is good? First we look at what we can see. Then we open it up and look at the inside. How do we know if a person is a Christian? We look at their lives that we can see, but that doesn’t always tell us accurately. As Christians we should not only have good outsides, but we should have good insides. People we are around look at what they can see so we need to be sure we are acting the way Jesus wants us to. God looks at the inside so we need to make sure that we are acting the way Jesus wants us to!

SCRIPTURE VERSES

- **Psalms 34:8** – “O taste and see that the Lord is good! How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him”
- **1 Samuel 16:7** – “But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
- **Galatians 5:22-23** – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”
- **John 15**

[Bruised Bananas – Object Lessons From a Banana](#)

Bananas are enjoyed all around the world. They are full of goodness, but they are easily bruised and can quickly turn to mush. Like many fruits, they can be extremely sweet and a delight. But they can also be easily bruised and turn rotten. They make a great object lessons on how we look at the outside to judge the inside and also on how we treat one another, how we express the fruits of the spirit to others, or we cause hurt to others.

TWO KINDS OF SMART LIVING: **Considering Others' Needs Before Your Own** (James 3:13-4:12)

Sometimes Christianity is portrayed as a matter of acting in self-interest. The “health-and-wealth” gospel, which (in its crassest version) promises a Mercedes to those who ask God for it, portrays self-interest as a cardinal principal of faith.

James has a different version of the gospel. No doubt following God is good for people, but it follows a very different pathway from that of looking out for ourselves. The smart living of James' gospel involves humility before God. It means trusting him and putting others before ourselves.

- (1) Who is a role model for you? What makes his or her style of life admirable to you?
- (2) Read James 3:13-18. James contrasts two kinds of wisdom: one that is from heaven, and one that is from the devil. What are the characteristics of a person who has the devil's wisdom?
- (3) How can someone think of envy and selfish ambition as “wisdom?” Why would anybody boast about having these qualities?
- (4) Consider each of the characteristics of godly wisdom (v. 3:17; see also 1:5-8). How can you cultivate these qualities?
- (5) Is it wrong to desire nice things? Why/Why not?
- (6) How does Mark 8:34-36 compare to “considering others' needs before your own”?
- (7) If you were to put the message of James 4:4-5 into one sentence of modern English, what would you say?
- (8) Why is mourning a necessary part of submitting humbly to God (v. 9)?
- (9) James promises that if you humble yourself before God, “he will lift you up” (v. 10). What does it mean for God to lift us up? Why does it not mean that we will always get what we want (v. 2)?
- (10) In verses 11-12 James connects slandering other Christians with judging-condemning, or pronouncing judgement on- them. What attitude will a truly humble person have toward other Christians whom he sees acting questionably?

****Between Studies:** In Luke 6:32-35 Jesus says. “if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?. . . But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

The best way to turn from self-oriented worldly wisdom toward the humility of heavenly wisdom is to serve others who cannot repay you. This week, do at least one act of kindness for someone outside your ordinary circle: visit an elderly shut-in, for example, or help serve a meal at a soup kitchen.

Children/Youth Background Study: Joseph and his Brothers (Genesis 37:1-28; 39:1-4; 42:1-3; 45:1-5)

Review Questions: Use the follow questions to review the story.

- (1) **What did Joseph’s brothers do to him?** They sold him into slavery
- (2) **How did God use Joseph’s situation?** God used Pharaoh to put Joseph in charge of all the food in Egypt (Genesis 41:38-57)
- (3) **What were the brothers’ attitudes toward Joseph when they realized who he was?** They were afraid at first, then they were sorry for what they had done and thankful that he forgave them.
- (4) **In Joseph’s story, what are ways we see God using for good what people planned for evil?** Joseph was sold into slavery and put in prison, but God put him in a position of power to save Egypt and Israel from starvation.
- (5) **How did Joseph put his brothers before himself?** Joseph forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery. He provided them with the food they needed.

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

(Faith-Building, Fun, Family Challenges)

-FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Purpose: Know what you are filling up on

What You Need: Container of sand, large rocks, small gravel, wide-mouth jar

What You Do: -Talk about the different textures, which one feels better (sand or rocks)?

-Try filling the jar with the sand first and then add the rocks

-Next reverse the process; fill the jar with the rocks first, then add the sand.

-What happened in each situation?

-Compare that to filling ourselves with worldly pleasures before the Holy Spirit



Managing Priorities

A while back I was reading about an expert on the subject of time management. One day this expert was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, he used an illustration I'm sure those students will never forget:

As this man stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he **pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Next he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?"**

He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered.

"Good!" he replied. **And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel.** Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted.

Once again he said, "Good!" **Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim.** Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!"

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: **If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.**"

What are the big rocks in your life? A project that YOU want to accomplish? Time with your loved ones? Your faith, your education, your finances? A cause? Teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first or you'll never get them in at all.

PLANNING VS PATIENCE: **Remaining Steadfast In the Midst of Everyday Life** (James 4:13-5:20)

The book of James begins with the radical affirmation that we should take joy in trials, because life's difficulties help us gain maturity. The book concludes by returning to some of the same themes.

What resources enable us to withstand trials? The self-sufficiency of the successful businessman of the wealthy landowner is mistaken, James says. In a second, ones' assets can be wiped out. More profitable is a bank account full of patience and prayer, because we trust that God will triumph in the end.

But when will the end come? The Lord's coming is near, James affirms. Yet Christ's return can seem to take a long time. In everyday life-which in biblical times as often as not meant farming-patience is essential. God's people have always shown patience, as we see in Scripture. Why, then, should patience be any less necessary today?

- (1) What makes you most impatient? Congested traffic? A long line at the grocery store? Meetings that go long? How do you act when you feel impatient?
- (2) Read James 4:13-17. On the surface it could appear that James is advising not to make plans. What is his concern?
 - *Which is better planning or patience?
 - *How do you balance planning with patience?
 - *How can you know if your plans line up with God's word?
 - *What do you do when your plans don't line up with God's word?
 - *What do you do while you are waiting on God to answer your prayer?
- (3) Read James 5:1-12. From your experience, are rich people more likely to be self-confident, or humble? Why?
- (4) What is James' view of the personal security money can bring? How do people rich or poor seek security in money?
- (5) What do you think James would regard as the basis of real security?
- (6) Farmers, James says, provide a good example of patience. What enables a farmer to be patient?
- (7) James says "the Lord's coming is near," and "The judge is standing at the door." Since these words were written nearly two thousand years ago, what should we understand them to mean?
- (8) Read James 5:13-20. How should a humble and patient Christian respond to unexpected circumstances?

(9) James believes in the power of prayer. Experience shows, however, that not every sick person is healed. What do you think James would say about that?

(10) In view of verses 19-20, it is clear that Christians are mutually responsible to keep each other on the path to maturity. How can we help each other without being meddlers?

****Between Studies:** Elijah, whom James refers to as a model of effective prayer, spent his whole ministry contending with an unfaithful nation led by an idolatrous royal family. His success was limited, and his frustrations great. This week, study I Kings 16:29-19:18. Notice how often Elijah had to respond to unexpected events. Note also that he sometimes incorrectly evaluated a situation. What do you see sustaining Elijah in such times? Where do you see him modeling patience and trust in God? Where do you see impatience and mistrust?

Children/Youth Background Study: Parable of The Two Builders (Matthew 7:24-27)

Review Questions: Use the follow questions to review the story.

1. **What did the wise man build his house upon?** The Rock
2. **What did the foolish man build his house upon?** The Sand
3. **In our lives, who is really the Rock?** Jesus
4. **What happens when we build our life upon the rock?** We stand on the knowledge of Jesus and He will help us to stand firm and not fall down.
5. **What happens when we build our life upon the sand?** When life gets hard we will fall.
6. **What is wisdom? (Answers may vary)** Wisdom is doing what is right in the sight of the Lord.
7. **What are some of the things that we can do to gain wisdom?** Read our Bibles, pray, attend Church, listen to our parents and teachers, etc.
8. **How did each one of the builders demonstrate planning? Patience?**
9. **Will you build your life on the rock or on the sand? Answers will vary. Use this as a discussion question, more than a question with a right or wrong answer.**

FOCUS ACTIVITIES **(Faith-Building, Fun, Family Challenges)**

WALKING BY FAITH -Begin by having the right footwear

Purpose: identify the right shoes for the job; determine what is needed to prepare for each job in order to achieve a successful outcome

What You Need: Pictures of different shoes (Construction boots, ballerina shoes, cleats, high-top sneakers, flippers, hiking boots, deck shoes, running shoes, loafers, ice-skates, tap shoes, hip-boots, bowling shoes, house shoes, sandals), list of careers (Construction Worker, Fisherman, Basketball Player, Businessman, Figure Skater, Life Guard, Baseball Player, Ballerina, Professional Bowler, Hiker, Diver, Runner, Dancer, Housewife

MINEFIELD – Divide into two teams and mark off an area to be the minefield. Everyone randomly toss shoes into the minefield area. Teams line up on opposite sides of the minefield and using words only must guide a blindfolded member of their team from one side of the minefield to the opposite side faster than the opposing team. Once the person makes the trip, the blindfold is removed and another team member can wear the blindfold and cross the minefield. First team to get everyone successfully across wins. Only one blindfolded person is allowed in the field at any time. If the blindfolded player touches a land mine, a 10-second penalty is assessed to that team.

WISE GUY POSTER: Have all of the students work together to make a “Wise Guy” Poster. At the top of a poster board write, “How to Become a Wise Guy for Jesus” and let the children decorate the poster with drawings. Direct the children to draw things that will help them become wise. They might draw a person going to church, reading a Bible, listening to a teacher or parent, Praying, telling others about Jesus, playing in Sunday School, etc. Possibilities are endless here; You may want to let them decorate the poster with stickers or glitter or whatever you have laying around your classroom.

A SOLID FOUNDATION: Set up two different centers for your children to play at. At one center, have the children play and build with rocks. While children are building with the rocks emphasize that when we build our life around Jesus we are building our life on the rock. This is what Jesus wants us to do. At the other station have a bucket of sand ready for the kids to play with. Remind the children that sand is always moving and that without Christ we will easily fall. This would be a great summer outdoor activity to help alleviate the mess from the sand.

BUILD THE MEMORY VERSE: There are two different ways to play this game, one way for older kids and one way for younger kids.

For Older Kids: Write one word from the Memory Verse, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24” on a block. Challenge the children to use the blocks to build a tower that states the memory verse. When they are finished building the tower you should be able to read the Bible Verse off of the blocks.

For Younger Kids: Have the children build a tower quickly. Every time a new block is placed on the tower say one word of the memory verse. The idea here is to say the verse with the motion of building the tower. Repeat building a tower and saying the verse several times so that they here the verse several times.

THE SOLID ROCK: (Matthew 7:24-27) We all know the story about building your house on solid ground. Ask a child to sit in a chair and give him several blocks to build a house with. He can't build on the floor or the chair but only his lap! Kids will see that their lap does not make a good foundation for building anything. Relate this object lesson to building your life. We can build on Jesus Christ or take a risk and build on the sand.

Have fun with these exciting building blocks object lessons.

LEGO IDENTITY – Give each group an assortment of pieces with the instructions to build something that represents them as a group.



Standards

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Introduction

Life is filled with standards. We have standards of measurement for time, weight, size, length, distance, etc. Standards make life easier by providing a commonly agreed upon reference for measurement.

Description

By looking at some common standards of measurement in this object lesson, youth will consider the standards we use to measure the life we live.

Materials

Bathroom scale, food scale, measuring cup, ruler, yard stick, tape measure, thermometer, barometric pressure gauge, clock, dictionary, calendar, a teaspoon & tablespoon, a chalk line, a plumb line, a level, One dollar bill, a Bible, etc.

Preparation

1. Gather as many common "standards" as you can find.
2. Standards can be pulled from a bag, laid out on display, or incorporated into a game so that the youth identify what each standard is used to measure.
3. You could add items to the standards that are unusual or maybe don't even fit at all. Some unusual ones might be a battery (voltage), ring (ring size), t-shirt (small, med large), an egg, a dozen, a street sign, a law book, light bulb, radio (volume), etc.
4. Make sure a Bible is included among the items.

Demonstration

You can use a variety of methods for this object lesson:

- Have youth identify which standard of measurement they would use to measure a particular item.

- Have youth identify what units each standard uses.
- Have you identify what things can be measured with each standard.
- Have students identify which items are standards of measurement from a group of items.
- 5. Reveal and discuss each standard of measurement.

Discussion

- What are the advantages of having standards?
- Why are standards necessary?
- How are standards decided?
- Who decides the standard?
- Are there different standards in different countries? Why?
- Do standards allow you to cheat? (As an example, how can one cheat while using a scale to measure weight?)
- How do you measure a person's life? What are some standards people use to evaluate their lives?
- In what ways is the Bible a standard?
- What do we measure with the Bible?

Closing Application

When there are no standards everybody thinks they are right and there can be a lot of misunderstanding and arguments. Its hard to compare anything unless you have a standard of comparison. The Bible is a standard to evaluate a person's life. We can compare ourselves with God's law, with God, and with Christ. When we look at God's standard we realize that none of us measure up. None of us can meet his standards. We learn what is right and wrong and because we can compare ourselves to God's standard we know we have done things that are wrong. The Bible is a standard for living, for life. But no matter how far we fall short, Jesus has already bridged the gap between where we are and the standard of God. He has filled the difference so that God can accept us according to his standard of righteousness.

Application

We need to know God's Word, his standard, so that we can live our lives accordingly. We need to look to Christ, seeking forgiveness for our shortfall, so that he will bridge the gap for us.

Song: The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock

*"The wise man built his house upon the rock
The wise man built his house upon the rock
The wise man built his house upon the rock
And the rain came tumbling down
Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the wise man's house stood firm.
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
And the rain came tumbling down
Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the foolish man's house went "splat!" [clap hands once]
So, build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
And the blessings will come down
Oh, the blessings come down
As your prayers go up
The blessings come down
As your prayers go up
The blessings come down
As your prayer go up
So build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ."*

WRAP-UP

Spiritual Sponges

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Tags: [God's Word](#), [hardened heart](#), [heart](#), [pressure](#), [receptive heart](#), [soften heart](#), [sponge](#)



The main purpose of a sponge is to soak things up. When you squeeze a sponge, whatever is inside comes out. Both of these characteristics of a sponge provide metaphors for our hearts. Some of us have hard hearts and unlike a sponge, things just stay on the surface and never affect us while other have receptive hearts to God. When we are under pressure, we truly get to see what is in a person's heart. These games are great for a little wet time during the hot summer and provide a nice illustration for the condition of our hearts.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

MAKE IT SPIRITUAL

- What is the purpose of a sponge?
- What are some things sponges are used for?
- What comes out of a sponge when it's squeezed?
- How is a sponge different from a rock?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

- Do we ever get "squeezed" in life? If so, how?

- In what ways are our minds and hearts like a sponge?
- What are some negative things / positive things we may be soaking up?
- When you get “squeezed”, what comes out?
- How can we soak up what is good and so that we are full good things and less likely to soak up what’s bad?
- In what ways can our minds and hearts be like a rock, what the Bible calls a hardened heart?
- If we have a hardened heart, how can we become more receptive to God?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

- What comes out of me when the “squeeze” is on – clean, pure thoughts & actions that please God or something not so clean & pure?
- How can I soften my heart toward God this week?
- How can I fill my heart with the things of God this week so when the pressure comes, I spill good things over into the lives of others?

Finish the lesson by giving each youth a sponge to take with them and to place somewhere they will see it so that it will remind them of the need to not have a hardened heart, but to allow God’s Word to fill them.

SCRIPTURE

- **Romans 5:1-5 (NIV)** – “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”
- **Psalms 119:11** – “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”
- **Philippians 1:9-11** – “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

LEADER'S NOTES

In addition to Leader's Notes on the following pages, the tips listed below have been provided to assist you in facilitating the lesson.

- Not all questions from the study guide are included in the Leader's Notes**
- Only the questions that are circled in the Leader's Notes are included in the participant's study guide; therefore, participants may not be prepared to answer those questions that are not circled. However, if you feel led to include those questions as an added discussion, please feel free to do so.**
- The Leader's Notes are suggested responses to the study guide questions and may not address all aspects of the questions nor your groups current needs (allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you study and facilitate each lesson)**