

James

Faith Lived Out: “I will show you my faith
by what I do.”



Pastor Dennis Hadley
Evergreen Valley Church



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***All scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version**

Introduction: Welcome to the study of James, “Faith Lived Out.”

Before you begin this study I would like to give you some insight into what we value at EVC and why we think this study is so important.

Evergreen Valley Church Vision Statement: Developing eternal relationships with God, His Word, and people. What this means to us is that we want to see each person pursue eternal relationships.

Eternal Relationship with God: The most important relationship any of us could ever seek after is that personal love relationship with Jesus Christ our God. We are invited into a personal love relationship with God without cost or condition by simply trusting and believing in Jesus Christ as our redeemer. But we must believe with all our heart that He is the one and only Son of God and that He died to remove the guilt and punishment of our sins. Because of His sacrifice on our behalf, we now have peace with God and can come to Him in a close, uninhibited, genuine love relationship. Nothing you could ever do could buy more of His love or somehow make up for your sins. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8.

If you have never trusted Jesus to forgive your sins because of His sacrifice on the cross and invited Him into your heart as your Lord and Savior; before you begin this study, I invite you to do that right now. In prayer, simply tell Him you love Him, tell Him you believe and trust Him to save you from your sins and that you desire to follow Him all of your days. If you pray this you are saved from your sins and given the promise of a new and eternal life. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will come to you and stay with you and teach you from the Word of God.

Developing our love relationship towards God is an ongoing process and it means we are growing closer to Him daily as we come to know Him more and more.

Eternal Relationship with His Word: It is through His living and active Word and our time with Him in prayer, that we grow in faith and fall deeper in love with Jesus.

This study is designed to help you spend time each day with God through His Word and prayer for the next 90 Days. Following along with Pastor Tim’s Sunday sermon series from the book of James; this guide will provide you with an opportunity to interact with God’s Word through a daily scripture reading, meditational thought and personal prayer. These daily devotions will help you dig deeper into the Word of God and begin to obey and live out your faith. I suggest you keep a Bible and journal handy so you can write down your thoughts and prayers each day.

Eternal Relationship with People: Our love relationship with God and His Word moves us into eternal relationships with people. That means we pursue developing real and personal relationships that are transparent, honest, and caring toward one another.

You will meet weekly with a small group of people to intentionally grow in the word, pray together, fellowship together, and join in ministry together. At the end of each section, you will find a small group study. Discuss the questions found at the end of each week’s section with your group. Share with your small group, how God is teaching you through the study of His Word and what He is leading you to pray about. As you open up and share, you will grow much closer together and in doing so you will be developing eternal relationships with God, His Word, and people. Therefore, helping to fulfill the vision of our Church.

Discipleship

We are called to "go and make disciples of all nations." People can make following Jesus seem really complicated and complex at times but it doesn't have to be that way.

Followers of Jesus Christ are called Disciples.

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

A disciple's life of following Jesus can be summed up in the disciples cross illustration to the right. In this illustration, there are five essential principles of the disciple's life; Christ, the Word, prayer, fellowship, and witness.

Obeing each principle will lead the follower of Jesus to put into practice the ministries of a disciple. Faith lived out means we put our faith into action.

James 2:18 says, "I will show you my faith by what I do." This teaches us that faith in God is lived out in our lives.

The Disciples Cross

1. Christ in the Center

The first principle of the disciples cross is found in the center. Christ must always be at the center of the life and ministry of the disciple.

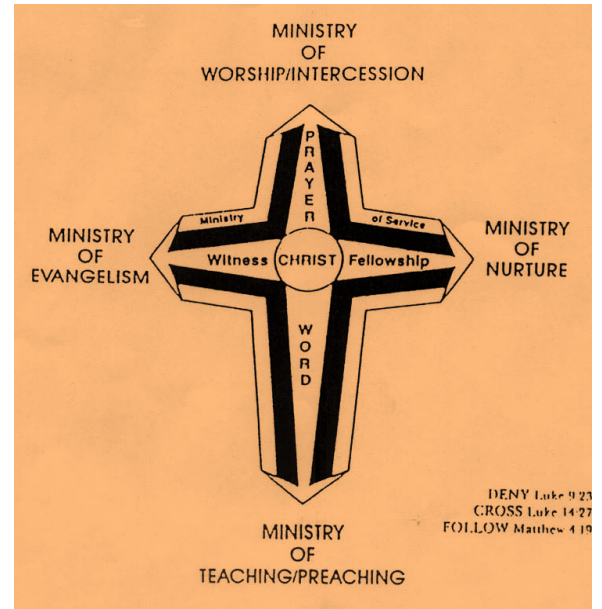
- John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."
- Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Our Vertical Relationship with God

2. The Word

When Christ is in my life, He leads me to His truth. It is through study of the Word of God, we come to know, love and obey God. Through obedience to the Word, we do His will.

- John 8:31-32, To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- Joshua 1:8, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."



3. Prayer

When I have faith in God, I will trust and depend on Him for every need. Prayer is an essential part of my walk with Christ. I will be led to worship Him and I will long to communicate and fellowship with my Lord and Savior in prayer.

- John 15:7, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."
- Jeremiah 33:3, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."
- Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Our Horizontal Relationship with People

4. Fellowship

An obedient love relationship with Jesus will always lead me into love relationships with people. I will long to fellowship with brothers and sisters whom I can trust; who will build me up in the faith and pray for me. I will also be led to minister to them in the same way.

- John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- 1 John 1:3, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."
- Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

5. Witness

The disciple of Christ will be led by God to be a witness to the world. God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, and now he sends us, His disciples, out with His message.

- John 15:8, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."
- Matthew 4:19, "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."
- John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
- Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

It is my hope and prayer that through your daily devotional time in the word and prayer, combined with the fellowship, encouragement and edification you share with your brothers and sisters in small group each week; you will be moved to live your faith out loud so much that the world might witness the love of Jesus through your life and through the love of His Church.

Pastor Dennis

Study for week of 9/13

James 1:1-11 - Faith & Trials

Introduction

Early church leaders like James, faced a constant threat of persecution and violence. The Jewish leaders considered Christians blasphemers and a threat to their religious traditions. The Romans just considered them trouble makers. But in the midst of all of this James reminds God's people that there is a very real purpose and benefit to facing hardship and trials. James reminds us that we are to trust God, even in the difficult times. Too often we allow the trials of life get us down and depressed. But God wants His people to find joy in the midst of every trial we face so that we may be transformed to His image and allow Him to be revealed through our lives.

Day 1 Discovering Truth about Faith

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. James 1:2

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 2 Devotion

James 1:1-11

¹James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

Meditation: How can a Christian consider facing a trial with pure joy? According to James it is because we have faith that God is working for our good in all things. Paul writes, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose," Romans 8:28. James goes on to instruct us that if we lack wisdom we should ask God who gives generously to all. During the course of this study I want to encourage you to pray this prayer regularly and believing in faith that God will answer!

Prayer: Father God, strengthen me in faith. Help me face the trials of today with the certainty of hope that you are working in all things to strengthen me so I might stand the test of my faith. Give me wisdom that comes only from You so that I might stand strong in my faith and be used as a testimony of your grace. Amen

Day 3 Devotion

Romans 5:1-5

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Meditation: It is because we have peace with God, through faith that we can stand and rejoice in sufferings. Paul reminds us that we know that God uses our sufferings to produce perseverance, character, and hope. Hope can help us withstand all trials.

Prayer: Thank you God for the peace you have given me in Jesus Christ my Lord. You have poured out the hope of salvation so that today I can rejoice in all suffering knowing you love me and have sealed me with your grace. Amen

Day 4 Devotion

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So

we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Meditation: Paul reminds us that we fix our eyes on the things of God, the things that will not pass away but last forever. As he states here, they vastly outweigh the trials and troubles of this world. A Christian is called to look at everything, through faith, with divine wisdom from an eternal perspective. As the old hymn says, "So turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

Prayer: Jesus, I look to you for my hope and my strength. On this day will you help me keep my eyes fixed on you and on the eternal promises you have poured out on us. Amen

Day 5 Devotion

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

³We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. ⁴Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Meditation: The life of disciple of Jesus Christ in the Church should be demonstrated in the way that our faith in God is "growing more and more and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing." As our faith and love increase, so will our perseverance in all circumstances because our priorities and trust changes.

Prayer: Father, increase my faith, increase my love, draw me into your loving presence and keep me close to you. I ask this in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen

*Day 6 Devotion***1 Peter 1:3-9**

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Meditation: Peter reminds us that we have been given a new birth (new life) into a living hope. This is a promise not just for tomorrow but for today. My new life, my new hope is a living hope. A hope I can stand in today. And through our faith, God's power shields us from attacks. Sure, Peter reminds us we will suffer and face trials but that just serves to prove our faith genuine as we stand up under it with an inexpressible joy. I recently read a sign that said, “Instead of waiting for the storm to pass, learn to dance in the rain.”

Prayer: Today, write out a prayer to God in response to what He has been revealing to you in His Word.

Day 7 Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. What did God teach you through your personal study this week?
3. How does James 1:2-5 instruct people to respond to trials? Why?
4. Have the trials of life ever prompted you to seek God?
5. How has God brought good into your life through trials?
6. How has your relationship with God changed as He has carried you through trials and difficult situations?
7. According to James 1:5, how can we gain wisdom for dealing with problems in life?
8. Describe a time when God gave you the wisdom to take you through a circumstance.

Study for week of 9/20

James 1:12-18 – Faith & Temptation

Introduction

God has given us every good and perfect gift from above! So why then would we walk away from the good gifts of God and instead take hold of the evil temptations of our own desires? The Bible teaches us that it is our faith that strengthens us to overcome temptation and not give in. God has something wonderful in store for every believer, we should never let our sinful desires take us away from experiencing His blessings.

Day 8 Discovering Truth about Faith

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 9 Devotion

James 1:12-18

¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.

¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

Meditation: What tempts you? Lust, pride, wealth, fame, anger, jealousy, addiction, obsession, depression, fear, or doubt? None of these are character traits of God. God is transforming you into His own likeness; therefore He will not use evil to make you good. He has promised to those who love Him the crown of life, for standing up and passing the test. Jesus taught us to pray that God would lead us away from temptation and deliver us from evil. He will do this if we simply ask in faith.

Prayer: Father God, give me the wisdom and strength to avoid all temptation. I know that it is from my own evil desire that I pursue sin and this is not from you. Please remove every thought and desire in me that is not from you. Amen

*Day 10 Devotion***Romans 8:1-17**

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹²Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not

receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Meditation: Paul writes that we who belong to God are led by the Spirit of God and set our minds on the things that the Spirit desires. God's Spirit is a Spirit of Sonship; therefore we know we are God's children. Because we belong to God, we no longer submit to the power of sin and evil but to the power of God and His Spirit alone.

Prayer: God, help me to be led by your Spirit and desire the things that you desire. I know you love me. I know I was bought with a price, the blood of your Son. Now I belong to you. Lord I give you my life, purify my heart, lead me and use me for your glory. Amen

*Day 11 Devotion***1 Corinthians 10:12-13**

¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 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 stand up under it.

Meditation: Don't get too confident. The flesh of man and his desire is never far from our heart and our mind. If we remain committed to God and following Him alone, He promises that we will not be tempted beyond what we have the ability to resist. The question is will we remember that we want to resist sin?

Prayer: Father, help me overcome every temptation by keeping my promise of Lordship and obedience to you. Amen

*Day 12 Devotion***Ephesians 6:10-18**

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Meditation: Be strong in the Lord! Put on His armor! We know that we are in a battle. We know attacks will come. We also know that in Christ we have victory and we can stand strong in that truth with His power as our fortress.

Prayer: Lord I know that the enemy will still attack but I also know that if you are for me then who can be against me? I trust in you and your mighty strength for protection. Prepare me to be victorious in You. God help me to put on Your Spiritual armor for battle knowing I am already victorious. You have won the fight. We go to battle in victory not in fear of defeat. Amen

*Day 13 Devotion***Hebrews 4:12-16**

¹²For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Meditation: Jesus understands temptation. He understands our weakness. He gives us strength, through faith to overcome temptation just as He overcame and was without sin. If we come to Him, He will give us the grace and mercy we need to carry us through life and temptations.

Prayer: Jesus Christ my Lord, have mercy on me. Pour out your grace upon me. Forgive my sins. Purify my heart. Give me the power of your Holy Spirit to lead me and guide me through this life so that I might honor you in all circumstances and be a shining light to this world. Amen

Study for week of 9/27

James 1:19-25 – Faith & Character

Introduction

James challenges us to not just listen to the Word but to do what it says. Obedience is an essential part following Jesus. God's Word is not without affect. We should listen to the Word and experience a change in our character as a result of action. Those around us should also be able to see the transformation of character that happens in the life of the believer as he listens to and obeys the word of God.

Day 15 Discovering Truth about Faith

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:22

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 16 Devotion

James 1:19-25

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. ²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But 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.

Meditation: James tells us when we listen to the Word but fail to do what it says it is like we forgot who we are. That is exactly right. We are the adopted children of God. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Righteous in the eyes of our creator. How can we even consider switching back to our old life. Faith in Christ transforms who we are. We must listen to the word, embrace who we are and follow His commands. James teaches us that through obedience we experience true freedom and blessing.

Prayer: God, help me remember who I am each day. Let your word of truth change me and renew me every day in both my thoughts and my actions. Amen

Day 17 Devotion

Ephesians 4:17-32

¹⁷So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ²⁰You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. ²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Meditation: Paul reminds us that we are to put off our old self and put on a new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. What a big request! We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and His power and truth give us just what we need to listen, obey, and be transformed to His likeness. Ephesians 5:1-2 goes on to say, "Be imitators of God therefore as dearly loved

children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Prayer: Jesus, I want to live for you. I want to be clothed in your righteousness and grace. I want to love you and serve you in obedience. Change me, transform me, and develop my character to match yours. I come to you in faith believing you will finish the work you have begun in me. Amen

Day 18 Devotion

Romans 6

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because

you are not under law, but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Meditation: What an interesting question Paul asks, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Of course we know the answer, "by no means!" Yet as Christians we seem to be complacent in our disobedience. We are too comfortable with God's grace and forgiveness. We are too lazy, since change is too hard. And we are much too happy enjoying our continuation of sin. Paul reminds us that we have been set free and that freedom makes us a slave to righteousness, not sin.

Prayer: Lord, put in my heart a desire for righteousness that overwhelms my soul to seek after you and your righteousness above all things and to put off all sin in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Day 19 Devotion

Titus 3:1-8

¹Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ²to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. ³At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Meditation: Be ready to do whatever is good! That is the call of the Christian. We are called to live a life of peace and humility. Jesus said, "All men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another." There is an eternal purpose on earth for transformation of our character through faith.

Prayer: God, let your word transform me and use me for your kingdom purpose. I want to be used by you to do the good and loving things you would have me do in obedience to your Word to bring you glory. Amen

*Day 20 Devotion***1 Peter 1:13-16**

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Meditation: Be prepared! Prepare your mind for action. Peter teaches us that we need to be ready and we cannot be ready if we are not listening and obeying the word of God which transforms our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Father God, reveal your word of truth to my heart. Search me and reveal everything in me that is not of you. Help me to hear your word and willingly obey through your power at work within me. Move in me to honor you and obey you in love and humility for the grace you have poured out for me in your Son Jesus Christ. Prepare me for action so that I may bring you glory. Amen

Prayer Reflection:

Take a moment and write down in the form of a prayer, just what God has been impressing upon your heart during the first few weeks of this study of faith lived out.

Day 21 Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. How do people deceive themselves from being obedient to God?
3. What is the benefit according to James 1 to obeying God's Word?
4. What does Romans chapter 6 teach us about living an obedient life?
5. How does obedience in faith develop Godly character?
6. What are some very practical ways you can put your faith in action to protect yourself against the lure of disobedience?

Study for week of 10/4

James 1:26-27 - Faith & Motive

Introduction

This week we begin to see how God calls the Church to be pure in love. Our faith in God leads us to want to do His will. Much like Jesus, we learn His will is to love and care for others. James teaches us that religion that the Father accepts is to look after the orphans and widows in their distress. EVC has been called as a church to do just that. During the coming days you will be given opportunities to learn and see how EVC is reaching out to help those in need in a very practical and loving way and to spread the good news of salvation. We hope this will inspire and lead you to become involved in what God is doing through His church. The Church needs people to pray, to give, to serve and to go.

Evergreen Valley Church reaches out both locally and throughout the world to bring hope to the hopeless and to meet the deepest needs of people. Each day, in addition to a devotional reading, we will tell you about one of the ways EVC is reaching out to those in need through missions like James 1:27 instructs the Church to do.

Day 22 Discovering Truth about Faith

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27.

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 23 Devotion

James 1:26-27

²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Meditation: Jesus Christ was always alert to hurting people and quick to respond in love. So it is no wonder why James would instruct the church to do the same. The Greek word *thrēskeia* translated here as, "religion" could also be understood as worship ceremony. We literally are worshipping God with a pure motive when we reach out to help the orphans and widows in distress. Did you know that you can worship God with action, as you give, pray and share unconditional love with those who can't pay you back?

Prayer: Jesus, change me to love with a pure heart like you love. And let that love be demonstrated in what I do. Help me Lord to have a heart for the hurting and those in the deepest need. Make me willing and ready to give, pray and share love. Amen

Mission Highlight:

Ethiopia could be described as poverty stricken, extreme hunger, lacking clean water, and suffering from sickness and death. HIV is rampant as is Malaria and many other diseases. Orphaned children have become quite common in Ethiopia. **Hope Enterprises** led by Dr. Minas Hiruy and Zenebe Ayele, ministers to the poorest of the poor and EVC supports them to provide an education through the Hope School in Dessie, Ethiopia. Our church provides 900 children with breakfast each day. We also help Hope Enterprises provide these students with health care through the Hope clinic. Many of these students are orphans and none of them would be able to get an education, health care, or much food to eat without the support they get through Hope Enterprises. Your generous giving provides so we can meet this need. The greatest need is always prayer. Please pray for these 900 students and the staff of Hope Enterprises in Dessie, Ethiopia. Pray that God would provide for every need of these children and for Hope Enterprises.

Prayer for the Children: I pray specifically for those children in Dessie, Ethiopia that you would let your grace overflow in their lives. Protect them, provide for them, feed those that are hungry, heal those that are sick, teach them your truth and use them for your purpose. Let them experience real joy and peace that comes from you. God provide in every way that EVC may provide the resources to continue to feed and care for these children. Amen

Globe Collection: Each year EVC distributes globe banks to take home and collect money to support these children through Hope Enterprises Dessie. Pick up your globe at the

church, fill it with checks, dollar bills, and coins and then return it to EVC before Christmas. This is a great way to get children involved in God's mission work.

*Day 24 Devotion***Romans 12:1-2**

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Meditation: Our motive for living for God is in view of His mercy. It is because of what He has already done for us that we respond by worshipping Him not only with our words and song but with our very lives. We worship Jesus with everything we got.

Prayer: God, help my worship and action always to be motivated by your mercy. Let my life bring you glory because you and you alone are worthy. Change me from following after the self gratifying nature of this world and transform me to seek after you and your glory with my life. I love you Lord. May your love be shown in my life. Amen

Mission Highlight:

India people groups still suffer from the caste system. The Dalit people of India are considered the "untouchables" and are at the lowest possible group of the caste. **The Dalit Freedom Network** is working to change that one child at a time by providing



them food, clothing, and most importantly education that they would otherwise never have access to. The Dalit Freedom Network helps the students understand how God sees them, loves them and values them. DFN builds up the student's perception of themselves as valuable and worthwhile. EVC sponsors the following students and corresponds regularly with them: Ankur Kumar, Aditya Khatana, Levish Kumar Verma, Mohammed Tanvir, Shoaib Ikram, Amrish Singh, Amit Rajesh Sharma, Shavan Rajender Kasyup, Gurdoyal Singh, Amit Kumar Sharma. If you or your group would be willing to sponsor and dialog with one of these students from India please contact Pastor Dennis.

Prayer for the Children: Father we pray specifically for these students with the Dalit Freedom Network, that you would reveal to them how much you love them. Cast away the lies the world around them has pounded them with and instead let them know that you have a plan and purpose for their lives. Thank you God, for touching the lives of these children through the ministry and this church. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Day 25 Devotion

1 Chronicles 28:9

"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever."

Meditation: In this passage we learn that God wants a complete devotion and willingness to serve Him. Reflecting back on James 1:27 I see that everything I do should be examined for motive. God wants us to be motivated by His mercy and He wants us to be moved by His grace. And He wants us to

share His message with those who are seeking mercy and grace most desperately.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27.

Mission Highlight:



Reaching out to HIV+ Women in Africa, our EVC Women's Ministry has been invited to partner with the **Horn of Africa Mission** to reach out to HIV+ women and their children living in extreme poverty in Addis Abba, Ethiopia to bring the hope of the gospel and training to change their lives forever. By partnering with HOAM, the women of EVC have the opportunity to make a direct and personal impact on the lives of these women.

Prayer for the Widows: Father God, use our women at EVC to reach out to those HIV+ women in Ethiopia who are cast aside, suffering from sickness, hunger, unable to work and finding it impossible to care for their children. Put in our hearts a love and commitment to bless them and reach them as we partner with the Horn of Africa Mission. God, lead those people you would have be a part of this ministry, to step out in faith. Amen

Day 26 Devotion

Micah 6:6-8

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of

my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Meditation: Don't get confused, you cannot give enough or sacrifice enough to make God love you more or to make God happy. God loves you so much that He gave His one and only Son that we might have eternal life in His presence. Our worship and service is not to somehow gain approval but rather to honor God and demonstrate our love for Him. This is why motive is most important. We can't fool God. He knows our heart. But the one who loves God from the heart will want to please Him and worship Him with his life. Micah show us how; to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. God wants us to act on what is right. He wants us to reach out and show mercy to others in humility and honor of Him.

Prayer: God show me how to walk with you in complete and honest humility. Show me how to demonstrate your mercy and justice through my life. Amen



Mission Highlight:



Cambodia was hit hard by civil war and genocide leaving behind a war torn country and people stricken by poverty. As a result, sex slave trade is rapid and children as young as five years old are sold into slavery.

Transform Asia, led by Setan & Randa Lee (both victims themselves of the Khmer Rouge atrocities) now works to reach Cambodia with the gospel of Jesus Christ sharing the hope of His love and mercy.

Cambodia has lost its fathers, mothers and grandparents to the "killing fields" leaving large numbers of very vulnerable and poverty stricken children. Over 42% of the population is under 15 years old. It has become common to sell young girls and boys to brothels where they are first 'broken down' and then abused horribly by many 'customers' each day. A small portion of their meager earnings are sent back to support their families. One of the ministries of Transform Asia is to rescue young children from the sex slave trade and provide training to them so they can get jobs that provide for their physical needs.

Prayer for the Hurting: God I pray specifically for the people of Cambodia. For those who have suffered so much losing their loved ones and surviving through hunger, torture and persecution. I pray that you would cover them with your love and mercy. I pray for these children who even now, are suffering in the sex slave trade. Rescue them. Heal them. Protect and provide for them. And Lord, as hard as it is to pray, I ask you to forgive those who are harming these children. Forgive those who have done evil and turn them from their wicked ways. Lead them into a relationship with you Jesus. God, use Transform Asia to demonstrate your mercy to the people of Cambodia. In Jesus' name. Amen

Day 27 Devotion

Daniel 9:17-19

¹⁷ "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸ Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. ¹⁹ O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

Prayer: God, give me a heart to help. Give me a willingness to love and let that love show in my actions. Lord, whatever need you want to meet through my life; I pray that you will give me the willingness and alertness to see and do as you would do. Amen



Mission Highlight:

Brazil is a rich nation but most people, especially the many children living on the streets, live well below poverty level. The culture has cast them aside as a nuisance. Over the years, many children have been killed on the streets simply to get rid of them. With no parents, no hope and no money, they often turn to illegal means to make a living. **Hope Unlimited for Children** led by Phillip Smith in Brazil is an orphanage which rescues these street children, rehabilitates and educates them to prepare them to lead productive, God fearing lives. Most of these kids would otherwise end up dead or in prison. Hope Unlimited has done a remarkable job of letting these orphans know that God loves them and he uses his chosen people to demonstrate that love. Your offerings help support Hope in continuing to take in more and more children.

Prayer for the Children: Lord, watch over these children in Brazil to lead them to real life and love that comes from you. Protect them, provide for them, and change them forever with your love. Use Hope Unlimited to be your hands and feet in Brazil and provide for them in every way in Jesus' name I pray. Amen



Day 28 Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?

2. Why do you think our motive is so important to God?

3. Have you ever thought of your reaching out to others as worship?

4. The world is filled with poor and lonely people. How can you practice your religious faith as pure and faultless and look after those who are in perhaps the greatest need in our world, the widows and orphans?

5. What scripture reading this week impacted you the most? Why?

Prayer Request: Pray together as a group for the many missionaries EVC supports. Ask God to provide in every way as He uses these missions to reach out to those in need with the love of Jesus Christ. Pray that God will lead each person in your group to join God in His work as He leads to bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ.

Study for week of 10/11

James 2:1-13 - Faith & Mercy

Introduction

The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is to demonstrate unconditional love. A love that is generated for God and seeks to imitate God. The Church of Jesus Christ, in faith, knows the Father has chosen mercy over judgment and we now seek to do the same. As you go through this week's devotion, ask God to help you see how you can demonstrate mercy and to reveal within your heart anything that may be judgmental or prejudice.

Continuing with our mission highlights this week we will share more with you of how EVC is partnering in mission work to break down barriers and reach out to those people who might otherwise be left out of the church of Jesus Christ both locally and globally.

Day 29 Discovering Truth about Faith

Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!
James 2:13

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 30 Devotion

James 2:1-13

¹My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

⁶But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

¹⁴For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹⁵Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹⁶because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

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Meditation: Jesus Christ has shown us the mercy in the most perfect way, in that he laid down his life for his friends. And we are his friends. Now we are called to do the same in love and mercy. How is God calling you to show mercy to those whom the world would cast aside?

Prayer: Father God, remove every prejudice thought and judgmental attitude from my mind. Help me to show mercy over judgment. Give me your eyes to see people just the way you do. Give me your heart to love them unconditionally. Give me the wisdom to give and to serve those in need as you lead me.

Mission Highlight:
Homeless Ministry



We don't have to travel across the ocean to find people who are in desperation. Homelessness has become a serious problem in America and especially right here in the Bay Area, where we experience great numbers of homeless people. EVC has a thriving ministry at **InnVision** in downtown San Jose. Each week the team provides food and serves dinner to about 150



homeless people. Following dinner we hold a Bible Study and prayer time. Additionally, on Sunday evening we hold worship services each week. Many homeless people believe they are not accepted in the church and would say, "I could never go into your church." They feel this way because somewhere along the road, in the name of Jesus Christ, judgment was shown over mercy in the church. It is my prayer that God will lead each of us to show mercy over judgment.

Prayer for the Homeless: Lord provide for those who are homeless. Let them experience peace and grace that comes through faith in the name of Jesus. Use the ministry at the homeless shelter to touch the lives of your chosen people and allow them to sense inclusion within the Kingdom of God and be used by you to reach out to others. Amen

Day 31 Devotion

Matthew 5:1-12

¹Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them saying:

- ³Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Meditation: Jesus taught that it is the meek, and the lowly, the poor in spirit who will be blessed by God eternally. And it is those who are merciful and pure in heart who will be shown mercy in the presence of God. This reminds me of two things. First, never look down on anyone as God will lift them up in love. Second, imitate God in mercy, purity and peace for God has a reward to those who do such.

Prayer: God, help me to be merciful and loving. Help me to be pure in heart and motive and to seek peace and grace on others.



Mission Highlight: Sammy & Shannon
Mureithi – One Challenge International

Kenya is an amazing and beautiful African country known widely for its diverse wildlife and tribal villages. Yet Kenya is a country that still experiences tribal fighting and division. Even more common is the severe poverty, extreme hunger, and ramped sickness (especially Aids) that makes Kenya a country with great needs. Sammy & Shannon are reaching out to those who are suffering and helping to meet real needs. They are involved in training church leaders and church planters to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ.



Prayer for Kenya: Father we pray specifically for the people in need of hope in Kenya. Use Sammy and Shannon to spread your gospel of mercy. Use them to touch the lives of the Kenyan people. Provide for them and lead them in every way. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Day 32 Devotion

Luke 6:20-26

²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²²Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. ²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

Meditation: Americans have been given many riches. It is said that if you live in the U.S., you are among the 10% wealthiest people on earth. Yet many of us forget that and seek to satisfy our own needs over the needs of others. God is calling his people to show mercy and reach out in love. Jesus gives a promise to those who are poor, hungry, weeping, hated because the best is yet to come. Let us never find content in the things of the world but always pursue the things of God.

Prayer: Father God, help each of those people who are hurting in this world find hope in faith through you. God, you and you only are the source of hope and peace in this life. Help me Father to embrace and believe your truth and let it overshadow the pain and suffering of the world.

Mission Highlight: Tijuana – Carey Ministries

You only have to go over the border a couple miles from San Diego to Tijuana to realize how amazingly great we have it in America. Literally within a couple miles of



we come to expect, like safe water and sewers.

the border you will begin to see poverty and a lack of human services



Crime in Mexico, especially Tijuana, is as bad as it has even been. Drug abuse and drug traffickers, theft, alcoholism and prostitution are everywhere. In the past few years, EVC has partnered with Carey Ministries on projects that are working to expand church planting in Mexico. We send teams down to Tijuana to do construction, offer children's outreach ministries that support the new church and participate in evangelism and prayer walks in church plant neighborhoods.

Prayer for Tijuana: Father use EVC to reach out to our neighbors in Tijuana. Use our teams to build up this ministry and use your missionaries throughout Mexico to reach those who do not know you as Lord and Savior. Amen

Day 33 Devotion

Luke 6:27-42

²⁷"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bleed those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you. ³²If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵But 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. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Meditation: Jesus teaches us to love, even our enemies. To do good to those who have done wrong to us. Jesus reminds us to look at every situation as the Father does in mercy and love. Who do you have a hard time being merciful towards? Ask God to transform your heart and give you His heart for people, especially those who have wronged you or done something you find difficult to forgive.

Prayer: God give me a heart to forgive. Give me a heart to love. Give me a heart to reach out unconditionally to those who need you in their lives.

Mission Highlight:



Prison Sports Ministry, led by Don Smith, goes into California prisons and uses sports ministry

to reach out and share the gospel of grace to prisoners. Those who have broken the law, often through violent crimes, do not always experience mercy from the church. Prison Sports brings mercy and grace directly to them.

Prayer for the Prisoners: God I pray specifically for the prisoners. Many of these people have done dreadful things and all have sinned against you. But you dear God are full of grace and mercy. Pour out your grace on these prisoners and restore them completely. Bring them into a forgiving love relationship with you. Use Prison Sports to reach out to the very people you are working on and give them the open door to share your gospel. In the name of Jesus we ask. Amen

Day 34 Devotion

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a

shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' ⁴¹Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' ⁴⁴They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' ⁴⁶Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Meditation: In this passage Jesus shows us clearly that when we reach out in love to others in His name we are reaching out in love to Him. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Jesus wants us and expects us to reach out in love to others. To give them drink and food. To cloth them and welcome

them into our homes or visit them in their own homes. And most importantly, to share the grace that God has given to them in Jesus Christ. This is the life and purpose that Jesus asks us to live in faith.

Prayer: God, give me a heart to help. Give me a willingness to love and let that love show in my actions. Lord, whatever need you want to meet through my life; I pray that you will give me the willingness and alertness to see and do as you would do.

Mission Highlight:

God is doing amazing things in the Horn of Africa. Each day nearly six churches are being planted in these eight countries; Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Uganda. Most of these churches are being planted among Muslim people. While much of the western world has harbored hatred toward Muslims, God and His people in the Horn of Africa are reaching out in mercy toward them. And Muslims are responding to the gospel by the multitudes.



Pray for the many church planters throughout the Horn of Africa. Pray for their protection, provision, and impact as God sends them out. Thank God and pray specifically for work of church planting by Dave Hunt, Aychiluhm Beyene, and Aila Tasse, each of whom EVC supports in church planting.

Prayer for the Horn of Africa Mission:

Father, I pray specifically for the Muslim followers of Jesus in Africa. I pray that you would use the Horn of Africa to reach many more tribes and countries. Prepare and send out your people and work in miraculous ways. Be glorified as more and more people come to worship and serve Jesus as Lord. Amen

Conclusion: Consider getting personally involved in missions by taking a short term trip to Tijuana, Africa, or somewhere God is already working or join in on a local ministry like Prison Sports, InnVision or perhaps Kids Club or our ministry at the senior living centers. Maybe God is calling you or your group to begin your own personal ministry. There are many ways for each of us to get involved, but we must put our faith in action to live it out.

Prayer: This week write out a specific prayer responding to whatever God is laying on your heart about getting engaged in his work to show mercy to those who are hurting in this world.

Day 35 Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?

2. Who do you think might feel uncomfortable or even unwelcome in our church?

3. How can you and your group begin to reach out and welcome those who may feel looked down upon and make them feel welcomed and comfortable in your midst?

4. Have you ever experienced favoritism or prejudice? How did it make you feel?

5. How should God's people see those who are poor and in low positions and show mercy?



Beyond the Walls of Church



Get Personally Involved!

Operation Christmas Child collects gifts for children worldwide. These children live in poverty and war stricken communities. These children would not otherwise experience the joy of Christmas and the message it brings.

EVC is an Operation Christmas Child collection site for our area.

We're asking you to consider picking up a brochure, purchasing gifts, packing a box, praying for a child that receives the gift and give the gift of love to a child.



Study for week of 10/18

James 2:14-26 – Faith & Works

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. James 2:26.

Introduction

Is James preaching salvation by works? No! But he is teaching an important message. That faith changes our actions. The follower of Jesus has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and out of love and submission to God we are transformed into His likeness and our faith moves us into action. This week as you meditate on God’s word, consider how God wants to use your life.

Day 36 Discovering Truth about Faith

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. James 2:26.

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 37 Devotion

James 2:14-26

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸But

someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Meditation: These are perhaps some of the most difficult verses in the Bible to understand. Yet, they seem rather consistent with the teachings of Jesus. Jesus talked about trusting God completely and loving people with our actions. Having real faith means that I trust and submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It means I seek to serve Him and conform to His likeness. Many years ago a catch phrase in the Christian circle was “WWJD” or “what would Jesus do”. If Jesus really is my Lord, then this is not just a cute phrase but a life direction. Not just asking but doing what Jesus would do is the call of the Christian life. It takes faith to honor and follow God, to deny self, and to take up our cross and follow Him.

Prayer: God, help me understand your Word. Teach me what you are trying to help me understand about my faith and trust in you. Lead me to seek you and do your will. God, you created me for your purpose. Help me be obedient to your leading. Amen

*Day 38 Devotion***2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**

¹¹With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. ¹²We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Meditation: Are we worthy of His calling? What does it mean to be worthy of His calling? I certainly know from the Word of God and by experience that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So what then does it take to be worthy of His calling? Paul writes that it is by his power that we fulfill every good purpose and that we will act as we are prompted by faith. Always acting for the sole purpose of glorifying the name of our Lord Jesus. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." To be worthy of His calling I believe is to will or desire and to act in faith as God leads us to do His good works.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I always seek to follow you and serve you in a way that brings glory to your name. Lord work in me to desire your will and act on your leading. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

*Day 39 Devotion***Hebrews 6:7-12**

⁷Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. ⁹Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. ¹⁰God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and

the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. ¹¹We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. ¹²We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Meditation: Things that accompany salvation are works and love directed to God as we help people. You see, our faith in action is a love offering to God. God does not need our works. He desires that we do the good things He has prepared for us to do. We do not work for salvation but salvation works in us. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by graces you have been saved – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Prayer: Father God work in me, because of your great salvation, to fulfill the plans you have for me to do. Let me do your work in love for you. Let every good thing I do, be for you, and through you, and to you. Amen

*Day 40 Devotion***John 15:16-17**

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

Meditation: Jesus had you in His sites long before you knew Him. He saw you, He loved you, and He had a plan for you. He still does. The great thing about God is that He can produce more fruit from your life in just a few days than you could ever hope to produce in a lifetime on your own. In fact, Jesus says, "I am the Vine, you are the

branches, if a man remains in me and I in Him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing." The fruit Jesus cares about is fruit that will last, eternal fruit. God wants to use your life to bring about a good harvest. Will you stay connected to the Vine? Will you submit, honor and respond to the Vine? Will you completely depend on the Vine to work in and through your life?

Prayer: Jesus, you chose me. I struggle with that truth that you saw me, loved me, and claimed me. Now Jesus you are calling me to bear eternal fruit for your glory. May it be as you desire. In your love I pray, Amen.

Day 41 Devotion

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Meditation: Jesus teaches us a truth with these words. He tells us that faith in Jesus is something to be excited about. It is something to use for good and to share. In verse 16 he says we are to shine before men and let them see our good deeds, why? So that the Father in heaven may be praised. We are here for a reason. Faith drives the follower of Jesus to be salt of the earth and light to everyone because we know the love God has shown us in Jesus Christ. God has placed us in the Church to do good works and shine the light of Jesus to the world. Something very special occurs when God's

people working together in unity and love reach out together and reach the world around them with love and good deeds.

Prayer: Almighty God, may our church be the salt of Evergreen Valley. Let us shine brightly among the people throughout the Evergreen community. Use us to show your love through our good deeds so that you may be glorified in this community. Amen

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. James 2:18

Day 42 Small Group Questions:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. How would you explain the meaning of James 2:18?
3. Why is faith without deeds dead?
4. How is a living faith demonstrated?
5. How could your group be used by God to shine the light of Jesus to our community?
6. How do you sense that God wants to use your life?

Pray for one another individually and as a group about how God would lead you to respond in faith to be used for His good purpose. Pray that God will be high and lifted up in your lives.

Study for week of 10/25

James 3:1-12 – Faith & Words

Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.
James 3:10

Introduction

James challenges our faith. Is it possible that God's chosen people who come to church on Sunday morning to praise Him can go away and with the same tongue curse others? Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? During your private study this week, ask God to reveal to you, the ways in which He desires for you to change your words to match your call as a follower of Jesus.

Day 43 Discovering Truth about Faith

Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.
James 3:10

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 44 Devotion

James 3:1-12

¹Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ²We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Meditation: In this passage James challenges us with the use of our words. The tongue of the believer is made to praise and bless. As a result God is lifted up and glorified in our lives. When we allow our tongues to be out

of control our words begin to curse and cause damage. Our tongues can push people away from God. His glory is deflected from site by our very actions. We can literally push people away from the church with our words.

Prayer: Father, tame my tongue. Teach me to use my words to praise you with honor and glory and to bless and encourage others in love. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Day 45 Devotion

Colossians 3:12-17

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Meditation: Paul tells us to cloth ourselves in the attributes of God so that we will reflect God in our lives and in our relationships. We are called to let God work blessings in the lives of others as we submit to Him and follow His lead. We have been called into relationships so that we may be of a benefit to one another and build each other up for the glory of the Father.

Prayer: Father God, pour out your Holy Spirit in my life and cloth me with your perfect attributes. Fill me with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Give me wisdom and love to teach, admonish, and edify the body of Christ. Amen

Day 46 Devotion

1 Peter 3:8-12

⁸Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Meditation: Peter tells us to live in harmony with one another. Sympathy, love, compassion, and humility will never lead me to use my words for harm. Instead my words will be directed toward building up, encouraging, helping, and expressing concern for others. Humility allows me to take the attitude of Jesus and not feel a need to repay evil with evil but rather we seek to do good and pursue peace. What a great lesson for all of us.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, give me a humble, willing and wise heart filled with love and compassion that seeks to do and say the good things you would have me say. God keep my words from harming. Keep my life from pursuing evil but rather guide me toward peace and understanding. Amen

*Day 47 Devotion***Psalm 34**

- ¹ I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.
- ² My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
- ³ Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.
- ⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.
- ⁶ This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.
- ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.
- ⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
- ⁹ Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.
- ¹⁰ The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- ¹² Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,
- ¹³ keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.
- ¹⁴ Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.

Meditation: "Tasted and see that the Lord is good." What a beautiful verse. God is good. We want the Lord to be shown to a world who so deeply needs to taste His grace.

People need to come to know our God who has saved us from all troubles. Our Lord doesn't keep any good thing from those who seek Him. God blesses those who listen to His word and obey Him. Verse 13 is clear

that we are to keep our tongue from evil and lies. Just like in 1 Peter 3:11 God again tells us in verse 14 we are to turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Prayer: God, I am getting the message loud and clear. Help me to turn my words, thoughts and actions from evil and help me to do good, seek peace and pursue it for the glory of Your name and your blessing on my life. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen

*Day 48 Devotion***Proverb 13**

- ¹ A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.
- ² From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things, but the unfaithful have a craving for violence.
- ³ He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.
- ⁴ The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.
- ⁵ The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked bring shame and disgrace.
- ⁶ Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Meditation: A wise son heeds his father's instruction. It seems clear we are being told by our Father in His Holy Word to guard our words. God wants us to speak truth, speak blessings and speak peace in all things.

Prayer: Father God, Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen (*Psalm 19:13-14 NLT*)

Study for week of 11/1

James 3:13-17 – Faith & Wisdom

Introduction:

There are two kinds of wisdom. There is the wisdom that comes through faith in God from Heaven and there is a wisdom that comes from pursuit of the world that has been corrupted by evil. In this text James makes it clear how we can detect where wisdom is coming from by looking at our attitude and the fruit of our wisdom.

Day 50 Discovering Truth about Faith

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. James 3:17

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 51 Devotion

James 3:13-17

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast

about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Meditation: James points out that as followers of Jesus we are to allow the wisdom of God to transform our very lives. Wisdom is a gift of God and when we seek after and conform to His wisdom we are changed into His likeness.

Think a moment about the life of the American business executive. Most have found worldly success by being manipulative, confrontational, overpowering, hard hearted, self serving, competitive, sometime even deceitful. Yet God calls our wisdom to be pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. These words describe the wise follower of God and they run contrary to the successful life of the world.

Prayer: Father God, I admit that I often let the wisdom of this world rule my heart and I pursue envy and selfish ambition. Let me find your wisdom that would bring me to pursue peace. Transform me to your image so that I might be pure in heart and filled with the good things that come from your wisdom. Let my life reflect your grace to all those around me. Amen

Day 52 Devotion

John 14:23-27

²³Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you

hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Meditation: Jesus lets us know that we are to obey His teachings and that the Holy Spirit is our teacher. We do not need to rely on our own intellect, but rather look to the Spirit to lead us into truth. And one more thing, with truth comes peace.

Prayer: Holy Spirit lead me to your truth. Guide me in all wisdom. Help me to hear your word, receive it, and obey it. Let peace rule in my heart and in my life. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Day 53 Devotion

Proverbs 2

¹ My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, ⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. ⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. ¹¹ Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of

wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, ¹³ who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, ¹⁴ who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. ¹⁶ It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, ¹⁷ who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. ¹⁸ For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. ¹⁹ None who go to her return or attain the paths of life. ²⁰ Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. ²¹ For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; ²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it.

Meditation: The book of Proverbs is the book of Wisdom. Verse 6 says that the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth we receive knowledge and understanding. These come with great benefit. On the other hand, when men turn to their own means for wisdom the consequences are great.

Prayer: Father God, give me the wisdom to walk in your ways. Lead me to your word of wisdom and devote my life to following you in faith knowing that you have more to offer than this world could ever imagine. Amen

Day 54 Devotion

Proverbs 3

¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, ² for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. ³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your

paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. ⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. ¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. ¹³ Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, ¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed. ¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; ²⁰ by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew. ²¹ My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; ²² they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. ²³ Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble; ²⁴ when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, ²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared. ²⁷ Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. ²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"—when you now have it with you. ²⁹ Do not plot harm against your neighbor, who lives trustfully near you. ³⁰ Do not accuse a man for no reason—when he has done you no harm. ³¹ Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways, ³² for the LORD detests a perverse man but takes the upright into his confidence. ³³ The

LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous.

³⁴ He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble. ³⁵ The wise inherit honor, but fools he holds up to shame.

Meditation: I am blessed when I find the wisdom of God. King Solomon requested wisdom rather than wealth and power and God granted the request and gave him more because he asked for wisdom from God. God wants you to seek His wisdom. And He will bless the life of the person who finds His wisdom.

Prayer: Lord, lead me. Lead me to your wisdom. Lead me to your word. Lead me into obedience. Lead me into your presence. Place in my heart a desire for you and you alone. Amen

Day 55 Devotion

Proverbs 4

¹ Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. ² I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. ³ When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, ⁴ he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. ⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. ⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. ⁷ Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. ⁸ Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. ⁹ She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor." ¹⁰ Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. ¹¹ I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it

well, for it is your life. ¹⁴ Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. ¹⁶ For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall. ¹⁷ They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. ²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. ²¹ Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; ²² for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. ²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. ²⁴ Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. ²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. ²⁶ Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

Meditation: God's Word references wisdom as a person we learn to love and grow into a personal relationship with. That is the beauty of our Lord. That He is real and personal in every way. Even in expressing wisdom to us. He will abide with us and lead us in the way that we should go. We need to learn to love wisdom from God's Word.

Prayer: Create in me a love for your word. Let me cling to your wisdom as I would to the one I love. God you are the Word, you are the wisdom that has come down from heaven. In faith let me pursue you with an uncontrollable passion. Amen

Day 56 Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. How would you describe worldly wisdom?
3. How does James describe wisdom that comes from faith in God?
4. How does a wise person deal with conflict?
5. What do you think it means in James 3:18, "Peacemakers, who sow in peace raise up a harvest of righteousness?"
6. How does this passage challenge you in how you deal with conflicts in certain relationships?
7. List some ways in which you might be able to bring peace into a conflicted relationship you are facing.

Ask your small group to pray specifically for any area of your life that you need God's wisdom in dealing with others.

Study for week of 11/8

James 4:1-10 – Faith & Submission

Introduction:

Last week we looked at wisdom that comes from God. Continuing on, James now zeros in on the cause of most of our problems between people and in our relationship with God. It is selfish desire and pride. James gets right to the point in verse 10 and hits us between the eyes with the truth. We must learn to humble ourselves before the Lord. Nothing demonstrates faith more than the act of submission to His Lordship with our lives.

Day 57 Discovering Truth about Faith

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

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 58 Devotion

James 4:1-10

¹What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that

battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Meditation: "But He gives us more grace," James 4:6. Aren't those the most beautiful six words you can imagine? We pursue the ways of the world and become enemies of God. But when we humble ourselves before Him, He pours out grace. All the grace we will ever need.

As you pray today, if you don't normally, bow before the Father in humble submission.

Prayer: Father God, I humble myself before you today. Forgive my pride. Forgive my selfishness. Forgive my pursuit of the things of this world and it's evil ways. I turn my life back towards you. Pour out your grace on my life. Take me, mold me, and make my life pleasing and acceptable to you Lord. I am yours. Amen

*Day 59 Devotion***Psalm 143**

¹ O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. ² Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

³ The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead. ⁴ So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed. ⁵ I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. ⁶ I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah ⁷ Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit. ⁸ Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. ⁹ Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you. ¹⁰ Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. ¹¹ For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble. ¹² In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

Meditation: David cries out to God to deliver His people from the enemy. Don't we all need that? Our enemy, the devil is trying to defeat us by luring us away from God our Protector and our Savior. James 4:9 tells us to grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. That is kind of what is happening in Psalm 143. David is learning to humble himself before the Lord knowing and trusting that God will lift him up from the grips of sin, death, and the devil. When we resist the Devil He will flee from us. The way God wants us to win the battle is much different than the way we would try. David says, "Teach me to do your will... lead me

on level ground... preserve my life in your righteousness... bring me out of trouble... silence my enemies." That is the way God defeats our enemy.

Prayer: Father God, protect my life. Lead me in your Word to walk in your ways of righteousness. Lord give me strength to draw near to you, resist the devil and his evil plots and know that you are my strength and my protection. "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." I claim this truth from your Word in Jesus name. Amen

*Day 60 Devotion***Isaiah 25:1-9**

¹ O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago. ² You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin, the foreigners' stronghold a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. ³ Therefore strong peoples will honor you; cities of ruthless nations will revere you. ⁴ You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall ⁵ and like the heat of the desert. You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled. ⁶ On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸ he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has

spoken. ⁹ In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

Meditation: Those who trust in the Lord will rejoice and be glad. Faith and trust go hand in hand. You cannot claim to have faith and yet not put your trust in the Lord. In fact, placing trust in myself rather than in God is an indication of pride. Pride is a sin. Having faith in God means that I place all my trust in Him alone. I submit my entire life to God. I entrust Him with leadership and provision over my life, my family, my health, my protection, my job, my money, my ministry, my desires and my pursuits. I know that He has a great plan and purpose for my life and a great reward awaiting me in heaven.

Prayer: God, I put my trust in you. Take the things I cling to and make them your own. Give me a willing heart to trust you above all things and to rely on you for every provision and protection. Help me submit to Your Lordship over my life. Amen

Day 61 Devotion

Psalm 62

¹ My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. ² He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. ³ How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down— this leaning wall, this tottering fence? ⁴ They fully intend to topple him from his lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse. Selah ⁵ Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. ⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. ⁷ My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah ⁹ Lowborn men are but a

breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath. ¹⁰ Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them. ¹¹ One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, ¹² and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

Meditation: In this Psalm we hear clearly that it is in God alone we find rest, salvation, strength and protection. Yet the world will continue to lure our pride to find those things in wealth, success and power. But only God is strong. Only God is loving. And only through faith in Jesus, will our lives be pleasing to Him. Hebrews 11 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see... ⁶and without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

Prayer: Lord, increase my faith. Help me to believe in you and trust in you with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my strength, and with all my mind. Amen

Day 62 Devotion

Romans 10:8-15

⁸But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the

Lord will be saved." ¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Meditation: Romans 10 expresses the most important truth in life. That God is waiting for you. He wants you to believe and call out to Him. Perhaps God has been working on your heart and drawing you nearer to Himself. James says to come near to God and He will come near to you. If you have drifted in your walk with God, call out to Him. If you have never before taken the step of coming to God and calling out to Him and proclaiming that you believe in Him as your Lord and your Savior and that you submit to Him your life to His Lordship then today is the day. He has a promise for those who confess Jesus as Lord with their mouth and believe in their heart that He has risen. That promise is for our salvation and His eternal presence in our lives.

Prayer: Father God, I call out to you today because I need you. I acknowledge that I have tried to long to live this life on my own and I have messed up in so many ways. I have sinned against you and disappointed you and so many others. But God, I know you love me. And I believe you sent your one and only Son to the cross to remove my guilt. And I believe Jesus rose again and has been high and lifted up as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Today, Jesus, I cry out to you to take my life and let it be for your glory and for your honor. Come into my heart and be with me forever. I want to follow you and be with you always. Thank you for your promise of salvation and lead me the rest of my life, my Lord and my Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Conclusion: If you prayed that prayer and believe it in your heart, you are saved. Welcome to the family of God! Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will come into your heart and He will lead you into all truth. And God has promised, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Tell someone about your prayer. Call one of the elders or tell your small group leader. We want to pray for you and encourage you in the absolute truth of God's promise for you.

Day 63 Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. List ways you can stand strong against the devil.
3. What does God promise to those who humble themselves before Him and submit to His Lordship?
4. Why do you think we resist submitting to God?
5. List the areas of your life that you find difficult to turn over to God.
6. James says, "Come near to God, and He will come near to you." Share a time when you felt the presence of God near you and how that helped you through a time in your life.
7. What steps can you take starting today to draw near to God?

Study for week of 11/15

James 4:11-17 – Faith & Will

Introduction:

Faith and trust in the Father will lead us to seek and do His will. During our studies this week we will explore what God has to say about discovering His will and obeying His directions for our life. One thing is certain, we live in a world where we set the goals, make the plans, and take the steps to achieve success. But with God's leadership, it is never that way. Instead He tells us that in faith we take the step that He leads us to take. Sure we make goals and plans but we should never do that apart from His leading and we should always keep our pride and our will in check.

In the book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers wrote, "Living a life in faith means never knowing where you are being led. But it does mean knowing and loving the one who is leading."

Day 64 Discovering Truth about Faith

Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

James 4:15

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 65 Devotion

James 4:11-17

¹¹Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Meditation: It is impossible to submit to the will of God while holding onto our own will. James says, "anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." You mean failing to obey what God tells me to do is sin? Yes, we not only sin when we break the commandments of God but we sin when we fail to do His will.

Prayer: Father God will you show me your will and lead me to obey. I ask that you remove from my heart every will of my own so that your will would be done in and through my life. Amen

Day 66 Devotion

Romans 12:1-3

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Meditation: Paul gives one of the most important messages to followers of Jesus Christ in Romans 12. We are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. A living sacrifice leads us to understand that we submit completely everything in our life and give up our own rights to freedom and will. And we do it in view of God mercy. It is a reasonable act of worship in our lives to give up everything to God since He gave up His Son for us. Only after we submit will we receive the divine understanding of God perfect will.

Prayer: Jesus, I offer myself to you. Take my life and let it be a living and pleasing sacrifice to you and for the glory of your name. Take my mind and remove my own selfish thoughts and replace those thoughts with a passion for your will. Amen

Day 67 Devotion

1 Peter 5:5-11

⁵Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰And the God of all

grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

Meditation: Peter echoes James message that we need to eliminate sin and pride which weakens us in our stand against the devil. It is through faith that we stand firm and that we are lifted up by the Lord. When we are firm in faith God reveals His truth and His will to us.

Prayer: God, help me to stand firm in my faith. I am done allowing the devil to deceive me and desire to follow hard after you. Lift me up above my enemy, restore me and make me strong, firm and steadfast. Let me do your will in obedience to your Word. Amen

Day 68 Devotion

1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Meditation: Do not love the world but love God and His will. That is the message to the saints in 1 John. Which is a better investment? To seek the will of God which will last forever or the things of this world which war against the will of God and someday will perish? It is very obvious that seeking and doing the will of God is the path of the followers of Jesus. Which path are you on?

Prayer: Father God, help me to love your will. Give me a passion for your ways. Let me pursue your purpose. All for your glory, forever and ever in Christ Jesus. Amen

Day 69 Devotion

Romans 8:26-28

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Meditation: Even the Spirit of God intercedes for us in accordance with God's will. Submitting to the will of God requires that we be led by the Spirit in all things including how we pray. We do not always know what to pray but in faith we call out to the Holy Spirit to lead us and intercede for us.

Take a moment to let the Holy Spirit intercede for you. Without a will of your own, ask Him to lead you in your prayer.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, show me what I need to lay before the throne of God today. Reveal to me the truth that I must believe in faith and the changes God wants in my life. Amen

Day 70 Small Group Study

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?

2. How can planning and setting goals turn into boastful pride?

3. What attitude does God want you to have about the future?

4. How does God reveal His will?

5. What is my role in discovering the will of God?

6. What does James teach us about knowing and not doing the will of God?

Prayer: Take a moment to write down in the form of a prayer, just what God has been impressing upon your heart during this study of faith lived out.

Study for week of 11/22

James 5:1-6 – Faith & Contentment

Introduction:

Having wealth is seen as a great desire by the world but James presents it in a much different way. He makes it sound like a misery. In fact as we look around us many with great wealth also carry great burden.

Money however is not the root of all evil. It is the love of money. In Matthew 19:23-24, Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." But having wealth does not need to be your misery. In fact, wealth can be a blessing God wants to use in your life. Perhaps God wants your faith to be lived out in how you view and use your wealth.

One other thing to remember; you do not have to be wealthy to allow the love of money to be your misery. Coveting is a sin and has no place in the lives of God's people. The Word of God teaches us to find satisfaction and contentment in what we have. Knowing that whatever we are given is a gift of God to be used for His glory.

Day 71 Discovering Truth about Faith

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

1 Timothy 6:17

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 72 Devotion

James 5:1-6

¹Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

Meditation: James presents a strong message to those who are greedy. That the Lord hears the cries of those who have been cheated and been taken advantage of. Living in luxury and self-indulgence it never the way God intended His people to live. As followers of Christ we should choose to live our lives in contentment and satisfaction with God. We will only find peace and joy in life when God is the object of our pursuit.

Prayer: Father God, bring upon me complete contentment in my pursuit of you. Take away the desires of this world and place in me a desire for you and you alone. Amen

*Day 73 Devotion***1 Timothy 6:6-10**

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Meditation: Paul reminds us that we brought nothing into the world. Because everything we receive has been given by God we should be content with simply having our daily essential needs met. Whenever I decide I want more I am saying to God, you are not enough. Is God enough for you?

Prayer: God, you are enough. You are my all in all. God, if everything I have is stripped away, as long as I have you I will find peace. Let my life reflect my faith in you as I demonstrate contentment in every way.

*Day 74 Devotion***1 Timothy 6:17-19**

¹⁷Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Meditation: If only we can learn and obey putting our hope in God. He provides for us everything. And He wants us to do good deeds with what He has given to us. When

we do this, Paul tells us we will reap a benefit in the coming age.

Prayer: Jesus, show me what you would have me do with my wealth and my possessions. Let me do the good you have prepared for me to do. Let the life I live in the body be used by you to prepare me for the eternal life I live in your presence. Amen

*Day 75 Devotion***Proverbs 11:24-30**

²⁴ One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. ²⁵ A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. ²⁶ People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell. ²⁷ He who seeks good finds goodwill, but evil comes to him who searches for it. ²⁸ Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf. ²⁹ He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise. ³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

Meditation: This Proverb certainly expresses God's math, that when we give up we gain more and when we withhold giving we end up with less. Jesus, said it best, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lost or forfeit his very self?"

Prayer: Father God, your word says when I give freely I gain even more. Increase my faith and trust in you. Give me a sacrificial heart of thanksgiving. Give me a heart that leads me to be more generous. Give me a heart that leads me to spread your goodwill. Give me a heart that wants to use my wealth to win souls for you. Use my life and my possessions for your Kingdom and Glory. Amen

*Day 76 Devotion***Ecclesiastes 5:8-20**

⁸ If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. ¹¹ As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? ¹² The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. ¹³ I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, ¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

¹⁵ Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. ¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? ¹⁷ All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.

¹⁸ Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. ¹⁹ Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

Meditation:

When God gives we should enjoy and accept the gift of God. God has blessed us and He wants us to be filled with thanksgiving. When we are pre-occupied with gladness and thanksgiving, then our heart is right with God and He can use our wealth and possessions for His glory.

Prayer: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His mercy endures forever. God, you are a good God. You have blessed me in so many ways. I thank you and acknowledge your goodness and mercy. May my life bless you as I walk with you in faith. Amen

Day 77 Small Group Study

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. What can be the negative effects of wealth?
3. What is the result of self-indulgence?
4. How content are you with what you have?
5. How can money keep you from doing God's work?
6. How can you use your wealth and possessions for God's glory?

Study for week of 11/29

James 5:7-12 Faith & Perseverance

Introduction:

Patience is one of those godly virtues that most of us are lacking. God calls His people to have patience. Having patience is perhaps the greatest way we demonstrate our faith in God. When we trust God we know He will have His way and His will in our lives. And we wait in faith on the Lord even during times of silence.

Day 78 Discovering Truth about Faith

You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. James 5:8

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 79 Devotion

James 5:7-11

⁷Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble

against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Meditation: James reveals how the prophets, even when facing persecution or suffering, persevered as a demonstration of faith in God and chose to speak trust and dependence in the Lord. Job, who was not patient, still persevered in the face of a great trials. Because of this he saw the Lord's deliverance and restoration. In the same way we are called to persevere even though today we face all kinds of trials and challenges in life yet we know that Jesus is returning someday and so we wait with a patient great expectation.

Prayer: Jesus, you are full of compassion and mercy so hear my prayer. I wait on you Lord. I trust in you Lord. I know you are coming back and you will fulfill all your promises. Give me a divine strength until that day, to endure and preserve for your name sake. Amen.

Day 80 Devotion

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who

promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Meditation: Hold on to the hope you profess. What does that mean to you? To me it means that my faith will be lived out in the certainty of God's promise. He has promised entrance into His Holy presence through the blood of His one and only Son. He has promised a love relationship with us through faith in Jesus. And so I hold onto that hope and I encourage my brothers and sisters on in that hope. The very reason we meet together for worship every Sunday and in small groups throughout the week is to encourage one another in the faith. We meet to spur one another on in love and good deeds. And we meet to help one another persevere to the end of the race.

Prayer: God, let my life be a benefit to those around me. Give me an added measure of faith so that I might speak encouragement and truth into the lives of my brothers and sisters in Christ. And Lord, surround me with hope and truth so that I may stand strong in my faith and persevere to the end. Amen

Day 81 Devotion

Hebrews 10:32-35

³²Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

³⁵So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

Meditation: Standing strong with perseverance in the midst of suffering, doubters, mockers and even persecution, will bring about an eternal reward from our Father in Heaven. When we stand strong in His promises we can find joy in the midst of all circumstances. Paul says it like this, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Prayer: God, fill my heart with joy in all circumstances. Help me stand strong in faith when I feel attacked in this world. Remind me that my reward is awaiting me in heaven. I trust in you Jesus. Amen

Day 82 Devotion

Hebrews 11

¹Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. ⁴By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹By faith he made his home in the

promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹²And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. ¹³All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ¹⁹Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. ²⁰By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. ²¹By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. ²³By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵He chose to be

mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. ²⁶He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. ²⁹By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. ³¹By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. ³²And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. ³⁷They were stoned^[a]; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. ³⁹These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Meditation: Hebrews 11 is the great faith chapter. I find it so very inspiring, and yet challenging to remember how our fathers in the faith demonstrated their faith in God. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. God calls me to persevere in faith because we trust Him and His promises. So we step out in faith and we obey what He says blindly in trust of God and His Word without knowing into what or where he is taking us. It takes faith to trust God. It takes obedience to demonstrate trust. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

Prayer: Father God, increase my faith. Like our father Abraham give me a willing heart to hear your voice and obey. Give me willing feet to go where you send me. Give me willing hands to offer up whatever you command. Increase my faith Father, in the precious name of your son, Jesus. Amen

Day 83 Devotion

James 5:12

¹²Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

Meditation: It takes faith to be honest. But God wants us to simplify the truth. Our yes should be yes. Our no is no. I believe James is simply saying you do not need to swear to tell the truth. You should always tell the truth. Jesus said it like this, "Simply let your Yes be Yes and your No, No; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." In other words, always speak the truth.

Prayer: Jesus, cleanse my life from lies, manipulation, dishonesty, and excuses. Let my words proclaim the truth in all circumstances and allow my faith to assure me that you will work good in all circumstances for those who love you. Amen

Day 84 Small Group Study

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. How does the illustration of the farmer in James 5 show the importance of patience?
3. What situation in life have you found it difficult to persevere through?
4. How can this small group help you persevere?
5. How does knowing Jesus will return someday give you hope for today?

Read the following passage together:

Hebrews 12:1-2

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

This week pray for everyone in your small group by name. Pray that God will increase their faith individually. Pray that God will help them fix their eyes on Jesus and persevere through the toughest times in life as they hold on to the hope they profess.

Study for week of 12/6

James 5:13-20 Faith & Prayer

Introduction:

As we come to the end of James and our study on "*Faith Lived Out*" we also come to the climax of faith demonstrated. Faith in God is demonstrated through our prayer life. Do you believe that God answers prayer? Do you believe that God has power to heal? Do you believe He is merciful to forgive? Do you believe He does miracles? How is your prayer life? Do you have faith in God?

Day 85 Discovering Truth about Faith

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. James 5:16

Today, write this passage out in your own words.

What is God telling you about your faith in this passage?

How could you begin to obey this passage?

Day 86 Devotion

James 5:13-20

¹³Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over

him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore 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.

¹⁷Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. ¹⁹My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Meditation: Elijah held nothing back in his faith. He prayed earnestly and God answered his prayers. But Elijah prayed, as you and I should, in the Spirit according to the will of God.

James challenges us. If we are in trouble, pray. If we are happy, we should still pray a concert of praise. If we are sick we should pray. And ask those who shepherd us to pray over us. At EVC, we believe in the healing power of prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. We encourage you to ask the Elders to pray over you if you are sick. James says if we have sinned our sins are forgiven when we call out to God in prayer. And he reminds us that we need to connect with close friends (maybe someone in your small group or a mentor) and confess sin and ask for prayer of healing over sickness, addiction and sin.

Prayer: God, increase my faith so that when I come to you in prayer I know in faith you are real and you answer the honest cries of your people. Help me believe that you heal, that you forgive, and that you still do

amazing miracles. When I doubt, cast it out of my mind because doubt never comes from you. I believe that you are all knowing, you are all present, you are all loving, and you are all powerful. Amen

Day 87 Devotion

2 Chronicles 7:12-16

¹² the LORD appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. ¹³ "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. ¹⁶ I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

Meditation: God promises that if we will humble ourselves and come before him in prayer, he will listen and respond. Both James and again in 2 Chronicles, we see that God expects us to turn to him in prayer with a repentant heart. God wants humility and honesty. He already knows our sin, but we must confess our sin and turn from our wicked ways. His promise is irrevocable. He will meet us right where we are. Deuteronomy 4:7 says, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?" Have you turned to Him in prayer?

Prayer: Father God, search my heart today. I confess my sins against you and your will. Father God, forgive me, cleanse me from my sins, lead me into a right relationship with you. Hear my prayer O'Lord. You are such a good God. You promise to answer me whenever I turn to you. Hear my prayer this day. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Day 88 Devotion

Matthew 6:7-11

⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray:

" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

Meditation: Jesus taught us a model for our prayer life. Jesus said, "this is how you should pray" not, this is what you should pray. Knowing that Jesus was teaching me a model for prayer, I believe that understanding the model is even more important than memorizing the prayer. Perhaps the most simplistic way I have come to understand the model for how Jesus was teaching us to pray is this:

- Our Father in heaven: indicates a **Relationship** that we come to the Father knowing we are His children.
- Hallowed be your name: indicates **Worship** as a key aspect of coming to God in prayer. I always start with praise.
- Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven: indicates **Lordship** over your life. That we choose to follow Jesus and want to see God to do His will in our life and all around us. He is our Lord and our master.
- Give us this day our daily bread: indicates **Sonship** or dependence on God. We acknowledge that everything comes from Him and so we choose to trust in Him rather than ourselves.
- Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Indicates

Fellowship with God and with people. Sin creates a barrier in relationships. Forgiveness removes the barriers and restores the relationship with God and people. God wants us to confess and turn to Him. And He wants us to forgive those who have sinned against us.

- And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Indicates a willingness to submit to the **Leadership** of the Holy Spirit and desire to do the will of God and allow the transformation of your heart and mind.

Prayer: Father, thank you for calling me your child. Thank you for adopting me into your family by sending your only son Jesus to redeem me from sin and death and restore our relationship. God, you and you alone are worthy of praise. You are the creator and sustainer of life. May your will be done in my life and may your glory be shown on earth. This day I declare you as Lord over my life. I belong to you Jesus. I know you love me and will provide for my every need. I trust you with everything Lord. Forgive my sins and place in my heart a spirit of repentance and forgiveness. Lead me so that I may walk in your ways and bring honor to your name. Amen.

Day 89 Devotion

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Be joyful always; ¹⁷pray continually; ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Meditation: Seems simple enough. Be joyful always. No, it is not simple, being joyful always takes faith in the midst of trial. Pray continually. No, praying in every situation takes faith to believe that God not only hears my prayers but He loves me enough to respond. And I must believe He has the power enough to do miraculous things in my life in response to my prayer in faith. Give thanks in all circumstances. That's right,

give thanks. When my boss yells at me? When my car breaks down on the freeway? When I lose my job? When my children are sick? When someone close to me dies? When very dear relationships are suddenly broken? Why would I give thanks in those circumstances? I give thanks because God loves me and He cares for me. I give thanks because God is in control and He has provided everything right up to this moment and He promises to be with me always and He will continue to bless me forever. That's why I give thanks. That is why I pray.

Prayer: God, help me to hold on to my faith in you. I trust you and I long to worship you and enjoy fellowship in your presence. Give me an undivided heart for you God. Amen

Day 90 Devotion

Philippians 4:4-9

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Meditation: Paul brings us home in this study with one of my favorite passages in the Bible. That when I go to God in prayer with a heart of thankfulness He gives me a peace that will guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus. And Paul even says it is beyond our understanding. Most of us have experienced firsthand how God pours out

peace over us when we go to him in prayer of faith. Faith is like a shield for the believer. In Ephesians 6:16 Paul says, "Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." It is my prayer that your faith will grow more and more everyday as you seek the Lord and trust in Him.

Prayer: Father God, pour out your grace and peace in my life. Guard my heart and my mind in the love of Jesus Christ.

May you use my life and let my faith be lived out in such an amazing way that to those I come in contact with in this world, they will be so drawn to you and that their world will be turned upside down. Let me live out my faith in a way that leads others to come to you and learn to trust in you and fall in deeply love with you as Lord and King. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Final Small Group Study:

1. Based on what you have read this week, how does God want you to live out your faith?
2. Would you say that you pray in faith trusting God will act or do you pray more as a routine or religious act?
3. What should James 5:16-18 convince you of in regards to your prayer life? In regards to your faith?
4. What keeps you from turning to God in prayer?

5. How can you develop more discipline for your prayer life?
6. How could remaining a part of a small group help you in your prayer life?

It is my hope that this journey of discovering how your faith is lived out has been a joyful yet challenging one.

It is my hope and prayer that your small group has been a blessing to this journey and that you will continue to meet together going forward following this study.

Please join me in praying this prayer for our entire church body at EVC.

Father God, you have blessed EVC in so many ways that we cannot even begin to thank you enough.

Will you take your Church and use it for your glory and your honor. Lead us to serve our community in love and compassion. Provide for your Church and give us hearts that desire to reach out and share with others. Use us to touch the lives of the poor and the sick around us and throughout the world. Use us to reach out to the lost and desperate people around us and throughout the world. Use us to bless and encourage one another in the faith.

Let your truth be proclaimed always. May our worship be pure and pleasing in your sight. We are your people Lord, we trust in you alone. You are our God. We love you Jesus. Be glorified in our Church.

And all God's people said, Amen

Martin Luther's Definition of Faith:

Faith is not what some people think it is. Their human dream is a delusion. Because they observe that faith is not followed by good works or a better life, they fall into error, even though they speak and hear much about faith. "Faith is not enough," they say, "You must do good works, you must be pious to be saved." They think that, when you hear the gospel, you start working, creating by your own strength a thankful heart which says, "I believe." That is what they think true faith is. But, because this is a human idea, a dream, the heart never learns anything from it, so it does nothing and reform doesn't come from this 'faith,' either.

Instead, faith is God's work in us, that changes us and gives new birth from God. (John 1:13). It kills the Old Adam and makes us completely different people. It changes our hearts, our spirits, our thoughts and all our powers. It brings the Holy Spirit with it. Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing. Anyone who does not do good works in this manner is an unbeliever. He stumbles around and looks for faith and good works, even though he does not know what faith or good works are. Yet he gossips and chatters about faith and good works with many words.

Faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain of God's favor that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith. Because of it, you freely, willingly and joyfully do good to everyone, serve everyone, suffer all kinds of things, love and praise the God who has shown you such grace. Thus, it is just as impossible to separate faith and works as it is to separate heat and light from fire! Therefore, watch out for your own false ideas and guard against good-for-nothing gossips, who think they're smart enough to define faith and works, but really are the greatest of fools. Ask God to work faith in you, or you will remain forever without faith, no matter what you wish, say or can do.

Luther's German Bible of 1522
By Martin Luther, 1483-1546
Translated by Rev. Robert E. Smith

"We are justified by faith alone, but not a faith that is alone."

“Faith Lived Out”

Faith lived out means I know, trust and obey the one who leads my life. I don't always know or understand where God is taking me or for what purpose I am being led, but I always know the one who is leading me. And I trust He knows what is best.

Living a life of faith leads me into life changing encounters with God and dramatic changes in my character. I learn to embrace the presence of God in my life, not just in those rare mountain top experiences, but in my day to day life encounters.

Faith is so beautifully demonstrated in the life of Abraham. He listened to God's voice and obeyed knowing and trusting God completely and in full abandonment.

Genesis 12:1-4, ¹ The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

² "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

⁴ So Abram left, as the LORD had told him;

Hebrews 11:8 says, "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

Even though the Lord did not show Abraham where He was taking him, He promised His blessing and Abraham trusted God and obeyed. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "We live by faith and not by sight." Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass. Sight is the opposite of faith.

Faith is more than believing in God, it's believing God! Trusting and obeying the one who we believe, is "faith lived out."

May God bless you and keep you and may He increase your faith and use your life to bring Him Glory as you obey His Holy Word,

Pastor Dennis Hadley