

PART 2

# CONNECT GUIDE

Church	9 AM   Prepare Project Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice Bible Study	12 PM   Project Due Soccer Practice	3 AM   Church	6 PM   Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice	8 PM   GOSPEL Dinner with the Gaslins	9 AM   GOSPEL	
11	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	13	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	16	GOSPEL
Going to the Beach	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	13	Church	6 PM   Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice	7 PM   Pool Party	8 PM   Kim's B-Day Party
Church	9 AM	12 PM	3 AM	6 PM	8 PM	9 AM	
GOSPEL	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	
Church	9 AM   Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice Bible Study	12 PM   Soccer Practice	3 AM   Church	6 PM   Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice	8 PM   Soccer Practice Pool Party	9 PM   Soccer Practice Pool Party	
25	GOSPEL	GOSPEL	27	GOSPEL	28	29	30
Church	9 AM   Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice Bible Study	12 PM   Soccer Practice	3 AM   Church	6 PM   Soccer Practice Twins B-ball Practice	8 PM   Soccer Practice Pool Party	9 PM   Soccer Practice Pool Party	9 PM   Soccer Practice Pool Party
Smokies Game	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM
Aug 1	2	3	4	5	6		

 **EVERYDAY GOSPEL**

## WALLACE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Composed By: Chase Campbell  
Designed By: Jarred Morgan

# AS WE BEGIN

## A READING PLAN

### WEEK 5

- Day 1: James 1
- Day 2: James 2
- Day 3: James 3
- Day 4: James 4
- Day 5: James 5

### WEEK 7

- Day 1: Hebrews 5:11-14
- Day 2: Ephesians 4:11-15
- Day 3: 1 Corinthians 13
- Day 4: Philippians 3:12-15
- Day 5: Colossians 1:23-29

### WEEK 6

- Day 1: Matthew 6:24
- Day 2: 1 Timothy 6:7-10
- Day 3: Matthew 19:16-30
- Day 4: Luke 12:15
- Day 5: Acts 2:44-45

### WEEK 8

- Day 1: Matthew 12:33-37
- Day 2: Luke 6:45
- Day 3: Ephesians 4:25-32
- Day 4: Colossians 4:2-6
- Day 5: Matthew 5:33-37

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# WEEK FIVE

## DAY 1: JAMES 1

UUPG Prayer Focus: Tagale in Sudan / Moroccan Arabs in Germany

What are you investing your time in? There's this underlying, but consistent pressure in our culture to "get ahead." We're constantly hearing stories praising those who work overtime. Those who participate in the "hustle," or "grind." People who take on vocation as an identity so they can get ahead financially. It's the idea that says "trade your time and capability in for a little extra money and you'll be happy. You'll finally have enough." We even tolerate this idea from people who claim to be Christians. They just use fancy words like "stewardship" to justify their wealth centered material lifestyle.

Is it wrong to save? To prepare? To be responsible? Of course not. However, when we let the pursuit of wealth become our driving force we are abandoning the eternal in the name of the fleeting and temporary. James 1:11 tells us that the rich person will wither like grass on a hot day while they pursue "just a little more." Don't let our culture define what you pursue. Let's put down the ads, step away from our tasks, and spend time investing in the relationships, acts of service, and wisdom that will last us for all eternity.

Today's focus verse: James 1:11

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 2: JAMES 2**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Pangans in India / Ende in Indonesia

J"Whoever keeps the entire law and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all." Did you know that this is one of the most unique and controversial messages of Christianity? Most religions and philosophies in this world are eventually boiled down to checklists. Do the proper actions and rituals, and you can judge yourself comparatively with others who do less or more than you. Christianity, however, says that the only viable standard is perfection. If we break one law, have one stray thought, decide to be selfish one time, and that is it. From that point on we are under judgment, and no amount of good deeds can ever make up for what we've already done.

Lucky for us, another unique point of Christianity is grace. Because we embraced sin, and even for a moment thought ourselves a better judge than God, we deserve to be eternally punished, but Jesus decided to take that punishment for us.

That in itself would be enough, but then He also decided to give us everything He earned and deserved with His perfection. We don't have to perform rites, rituals, or ceremonies to make it happen. He simply offers this to us for believing that He actually did it. If you're hearing this for the first time, then I have great news: all you have to do is believe! For those of you who have grown up in the church, you might be saying "yeah... I know all this..." That's great! Who have you shared this good news with recently? If your answer is "no one," you may want to reevaluate whether or not you actually believe it's true.

Today's focus verse: James 2:10

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 3: JAMES 3**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Yata in India / Arabized Blacks in Libya

"Not many should become teacher's brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, also able to control the whole body." Have you

ever had the opportunity to teach someone about the Bible? It can be really exciting, and we're actually told that it's good to seek after this. On the other hand, James does make sure we understand the cost. The person who is simply living as a believer will be accountable for their conduct, their thoughts, their intentions, but the person who also wants to teach then becomes accountable for the actions of every single person that follows those teachings.

That's right. You're accountable for every word you tell someone else about who God is, and what His character is like. This is why we take it very seriously when someone asks to be a connect leader, or a kid's worship leader, or even someone who wants to teach an institute class. It's not just in a formal setting though, you're also accountable when you tell a friend what the Bible says. You're also accountable when you post or repost something on your social media. Am I telling you to stop teaching people about Jesus? ABSOLUTELY NOT! I am asking you to spend more time studying so you can be accurate. I am asking that you not follow up your sermon quote with a political rant. I'm asking you to consider that every word you say about God is vitally important and needs to be accurate.

Today's focus verse: James 3:1

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## DAY 4: JAMES 4

UUPG Prayer Focus: Cippollu in India / Berar in India

What's the difference between judgment and accountability? In most cases, it's the intention and the attitude of the person who is doing this. James 4 tells us that we defame and judge another believer when we openly criticize them. This type of correction is all about making the critic feel better, and the person in struggle gets nothing but discouragement. Judgment is a selfish motivation that harkens back to the weird desire to be "comparatively better" than someone else.

Accountability, on the other hand, comes from care and compassion. When we see another person in error, or struggle, or even in rebellion and we confront them in order that they might be restored to the church and on the right path then we do them a great service. In this instance we're saying, "I care about you so much that I'm willing to risk offense for your good." It's also directly to that person, not a discussion about them with another group of people. So, when you see someone in error (because you will) stop and check your motivation before you act. Make sure that any confrontation or discussion is for that person's good and not your own misplaced desire to feel comparatively better.

Today's focus verse: James 4:11

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 5: JAMES 5**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Gibe in Ethiopia / Hausa in Ethiopia

In chapter 5 James tells us to let our yes be yes, and our no be no so that we won't fall into judgment. This seems incredibly straightforward, and yet we struggle with it. We struggle to fulfill our commitments. We struggle to come through. We struggle to tell the simple straightforward truth. Why though? Well in many cases it's because we're still too focused on ourselves and our own desires. We say we'll show up for someone, but then we're tired so we bail. We say we'll pray about it, but we get distracted and forget. Our yesses and nos become fluid and ever changing, based on our mood and current set of desires. How can anyone trust us if we're only looking out for ourselves?

If you've followed the argument in James, you'll notice that he often condemns selfish living and self-seeking direction. He tells us that maturity is following Jesus and looking more like Him. Jesus left every comfort in heaven and did exactly what He said He would do, even though it cost Him everything. So how can we share Jesus in our day to day lives? We can be so honest and dependable that no one questions the integrity of our word, but to do that we have to move beyond the self-centered thinking of our human nature and embrace the compassion that only Jesus has to offer.

Today's focus verse: James 4:11

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

# DISCUSSION GUIDE: JULY 12, 2026

## WEEK FIVE: JAMES 3:1-12

This week in our devotions we went through each chapter of James and looked at small nuggets of wisdom that we can find in each chapter. Unlike many of Paul's letters that we are used to, James switches quickly from topic to topic to show how they are intertwined and work together. It's only through seeing how all the small pieces come together as a whole that we can make sense of James as an entire book. This week your campus pastor will focus specifically on taming the tongue. Pay special attention to how we can guard our speech to make sure the Gospel message is heard.

### ACTION STEP

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How will I live out the action step this week?

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# CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 5

- Most of us can think back to a time where someone made a statement, used a phrase, or even made an off handed comment that affected us deeply. Was it wisdom? Was it a compliment? Was it an offense? Why were those words so powerful for you at that moment?
- At the beginning of this passage, James says that many should not become teachers because taming the tongue is hard. Why would teachers receive a stricter judgment for their words? Does this only apply to the words while they are teaching or does it apply to everything a teacher says? Why or why not?
- In our culture people often say horrible demeaning things, but then try to excuse those statements as "free speech." Why do God's commandments supersede any national law? Why do people believe that saying something is a lesser offense than doing something?
- In verse 10 James says that blessing and cursing cannot come out of the same mouth. Is he just talking about profanity, or is he also referring to how we treat people? Why are people often able to say contradictory things and not feel convicted? Why do you think that double talk and hypocrisy like this are often more tolerated on the internet and social media?
- What is one way you plan on changing how you speak this week?

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# WEEK 6

## DAY 1: MATTHEW 6:24

UUPG Prayer Focus: Jains in India / Borgu Fulbe in Togo

Day 1: (Matthew 6:24) For the next 3 weeks of our study we are going to focus on the main themes of James and how they are consistent with the rest of the New Testament. In previous devotions we've already discussed James' thoughts on the pursuit of wealth. James is somewhat radical in condemning the rich, not for simply having resources, but for the misalignment of their priorities. Today, we see that Jesus says the exact same thing in the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus tells us that we cannot serve both God and money. Why? Because when we try to serve two masters we will love one and hate the other. Neither James, nor Jesus are telling you to dump out your bank account and just sit there, but they are telling you that you can't compromise on your allegiance. It's very possible to live in a way where we focus on eternity, invest in relationships, and even give generously, but we can't do that if wealth accumulation is our focus. No, you won't start giving when you have "enough" because when it comes to that attitude you'll never have enough. So today, consider the words of Jesus very carefully, and ask yourself: Which master am I following? God or the pursuit of ever expanding wealth?

Today's focus verse: Matthew 6:24

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 2: 1 TIMOTHY 6:7-10**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Syrian Arabs in Sudan / Lakin in Iraq

Yesterday we learned that James' radical stance against the pursuit of wealth echoes what Jesus told us in the Gospels. Today we get to see that other New Testament leaders also agreed with him. Paul actually takes this idea so seriously that he made sure to instruct his protege Timothy on the subject... an instruction that we often misquote. You've probably heard someone say "The love of money is the root of all evil." That statement, however, isn't found anywhere in the Bible. Instead Paul tells Timothy: "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

So no, the love of money is not the root of “all” evil. There are plenty of evils that have nothing to do with money. Once again, just like Jesus and James, Paul is warning the reader that the pursuit of wealth is a slippery slope and a danger to the believer. Paul makes it clear that we need to work, clothe ourselves, and be generous, but the desire to be “rich” is a journey that will take us to places where we can no longer give our allegiance to Jesus. The constant desire for more is like a disease we don’t even know we have until it’s too late, and it will ask things of us that we’d never have imagined before we got on this path. So let’s follow Paul’s advice, meet your needs, care for your family, and be content.

Today’s focus verse: 1 Timothy 6:10

This is how I’m going to live this verse out today:

This is who I’m going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 3: MATTHEW 19:16-30**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Dar Fur Daju in Sudan / Tai Pong in China

Sometimes, the things you own end up owning you. This is what happened with the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. He was on the right track, he came to Jesus, he asked the right

questions, but he wasn't willing to rearrange his priorities. He wanted to live for the kingdom, but he liked his stuff way more. Jesus told His disciples that wealth and excess make people comfortable. Their possessions and their houses make people feel safe. When you live in that kind of comfort and security it's hard to understand how much you need God. That's why it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

This is also why James says that poor people in this world have been chosen to receive the gift of Faith. When you don't have comforts, security, or even basic needs you have to learn to trust, to live day to day, to always be searching. In chapter 5, James isn't as subtle as Jesus. He warns those who are rich to abandon their comforts and distractions. James sees their priorities and knows they are focused on their temporary wealth. He warns them that they are "fattening their hearts in the day of slaughter." We should take his warning seriously. We should be wary of putting our trust in our savings accounts and 401ks. When comfort and stuff becomes a distraction from our mission we should walk away from it. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to convict us when we fall into materialism and distraction, so that we can rearrange our priorities, and put our focus on kingdom life.

Today's focus verse: James 2:5, James 5:1-6

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 4: LUKE 12:13-21**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Ontaris in India / Banik Bania in India

You can't take it with you. We've all heard that before, but I don't know if many of us really understand the depth of that statement. It's not just that we can't take our stuff with us when we die, it's that by focusing on our possessions, our savings, and our temporary assets here on Earth, we're missing opportunities to invest in the eternal. That is the point of Jesus' warning and His parable in Luke 12. He tells us to be "on guard against all greed." He reminds us that our future plans and our stockpiles don't really mean anything if we're not here to use them. The rich man in Jesus' parable chose "business growth" over generosity and kingdom investment. Jesus reminds us that not honoring God first with our money is a terrible mistake.

James gives us a similar warning at the end of chapter 4. James somewhat disdainfully dismisses the idea of future certainty. He reminds us that our lives are a vapor, and our best laid plans mean nothing if God wants something different. Once again, Jesus and James are both warning us that the pursuit of and trust in wealth will skew our priorities and lead us away from God. So if you happen to be successful, wealthy,

or just lucky with money remember: Be generous first. Give abundantly. Don't put your trust in that wealth or your plans for it. We're better off being broke and depending on God than rich and headed for ruin.

Today's focus verse: Luke 12:15

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 5: ACTS 2:44-45**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Fula Jalon in Mali / Massalat in Chad

In the very first description of the New Testament church we read that they had "all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need." Can you imagine if this was a requirement for joining a church today? Don't worry, we're not going to ask you to do that. I would like you to consider the idea though. Would you be willing to distribute your assets to a fellow church member if they were in need? It's that type of sacrificial generosity that marked the early church.

This is why James, Paul, Jesus and many others speak so much about our priorities when it comes to money. They know that wealth, excess, and materialism are addictive, contagious, and ravenous. If we allow our culture to dictate our view on wealth then we too will be seduced into the neverending pursuit of "more." When we devote ourselves to the pursuit of wealth, that's where we'll also put our hope and security. All the things God deserves from us are also the very things the pursuit of wealth will try to steal.

Let's not be stingy, greedy, or selfish. Let's reject our economically based materialist culture of consumerism, and put God first instead. Let's realign our priorities and put the needs of others before our comfort. Let's remember that God gave us everything we have, and we're just holding it for the moment.

Today's focus verse: Acts 2:44-45

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

# DISCUSSION GUIDE: JULY 19, 2026

## WEEK SIX: JAMES 3:13-18

This week in our devotions we took a thematic look at how James takes about wealth and Christianity. Although the combination of these worlds can often make us uncomfortable it's important to see what James and the rest of the New Testament have to say about this so we can think and guide ourselves according to Scripture. Today, your campus pastor will focus on how we ask and receive wisdom from God. Listen carefully to understand the process of divine wisdom and what it means for us.

ACTION STEP \_\_\_\_\_

How will I live out the action step this week?

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# CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 6

- Who do you think of when you think of wisdom? Is it a grandparent? A former teacher? Master Oogway from Kung Fu Panda? The owl from the Tootsie Pop commercial? What about their words or demeanor communicated that they were wise?
- In verses 13 and 14 James says that a person's actions determine the value of their wisdom. Why can't it just be words alone? IF we know the right answer, but don't act, is that still wisdom?
- James makes a distinction about 2 different types of wisdom in this passage. Make a list of exactly how he describes each one. What are some real life examples of each type of wisdom? Do you think one is often confused for the other in our culture?
- How are you going to seek wisdom this week? Who are you receiving wisdom from on a weekly or daily basis?

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# WEEK SEVEN

## DAY 1: HEBREWS 5:11-14

UUPG Prayer Focus: Mocha in Ethiopia / Sankaran in Guinea

One of James' most prevalent themes throughout the book is that of maturity. In our language and culture this word has a very broad range of meaning. Some people use it to simply mean age. Others use it as a measure of experience. A strange number of people also use it to refer to types of cheese, but we won't be acknowledging them. Both James and the author of Hebrews, however, are talking about someone who has understood, applied, and lived out the biblical definition of what it looks like to follow Jesus. They aren't simply referring to those who have experience, but those who have applied wisdom to that experience. James actually tells us to rejoice in trials because those trials produce the experience we can reflect on with the Holy Spirit and become mature.

The author of Hebrews is less gentle. He is actually expressing frustration with his audience. His claim is that they are too lazy, and it is therefore difficult to guide them as believers. He is openly irritated because he can't give them more in depth in instruction because they are still stuck on the basic fundamentals. He even compares them to infants, saying they still need "milk" as teaching. Are we any different though? Based on all the research, most people who claim to be followers of Jesus will NEVER lead someone else to faith. Have

we become complacent with our maturity? As we study this concept over the next few days, I'd like to invite you to take an honest self evaluation. Are you walking towards maturity or settling for milk?

Today's focus verse: Hebrews 5:11-14

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 2: EPHESIANS 4:11-32**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Kumhar in India / Bangi in Congo

In our search to understand what Christian maturity looks like, the book of Ephesians is an excellent guide. Paul very succinctly tells us the what, why and how of being a mature believer in just a few verses. First, he says that there are numerous people who have been given gifts that allow them to teach, lead, and train people. This means we don't go to church to have an emotional experience, for the programs, or to see if we agree. We must walk into the church ready to be trained for living out the Gospel mission.

The next part is a verse we should all memorize, because

Paul tells us exactly what Christian maturity looks like: stable consistency. Paul tells us that the mature believer won't be swayed or confused by every new teaching they hear, because they know the Scripture, and they've felt what it's like to live that out. It's also very important to add that Paul never addresses this to the individual, he says that maturity only occurs as "the body" meaning the whole church in unity together.

Finally, he gives us a list of what that looks like on a day to day basis. If you are committed to reaching maturity, then this list is a great place to start analyzing your own behavior to see if your life looks like that of a mature believer.

Today's focus verse: Ephesians 4:14

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 3: 1 CORINTHIANS 13**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Jula in Mali / Jains in India

WYou've probably heard this passage most often at weddings, where it's read completely out of context. These verses aren't

about romantic love, they are about the brotherly love of the church becoming a reflection of the fatherly love of God. Paul is explaining that eloquence, giftings, spirituality, or even miracles are pointless unless they are the result of us reflecting God's love toward each other in the church. You see, the Corinthians all wanted to be the most notable believer. Each person wanted to "out-Christian" the person beside them so they would seem more interesting and important.

This isn't a sentimental passage about two people in love. It's the Apostle Paul scolding the church for making Christianity about their own personal pride. For the Corinthians this was all about speaking in tongues, or prophesying. It looks different in 21st century America, but the problem still remains. If we strut about flexing our moral credentials then we are arrogant. If we spend our time trying to harass and demean those who don't yet believe we've missed the point. If we think Christianity is about making a moral stand, "winning the culture war," or preserving tradition, then we need to listen to Paul and James. We need to grow up, and put these childish ideas away.

Today's focus verse: 1 Corinthians 13:11

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## DAY 4: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-15

UUPG Prayer Focus: Druze in Syria / Dompago in Benin

Paul and James often harp on the same idea. We can't put our hope in this world and in Jesus at the same time. James says that friendship with the world is enmity with the Kingdom of God. Paul tells us to count everything we've accomplished so that we can focus on the growth that is ahead of us. We can't put our hope in governments, or economies, or science, or personal growth, or self expression. We can't have Christianity as an afterlife policy, while we make the most of the world while we are here. If we try and do this then Paul makes it very clear: We don't really believe and we're actually enemies of the cross.

In the same way, another vital act of maturity is being willing to admit you're not perfect. I don't know about you, but when I read the New Testament I'm repeatedly amazed by Paul and everything he's willing to sacrifice for the Gospel. I know I'm nowhere near his level of maturity, and yet he openly says in this passage right here, that he's not yet reached the goal. Understanding that following Jesus is a lifelong daily pursuit is one of the first steps on the path to real Christian maturity.

Today's focus verse: Philippians 3:12

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 5: COLOSSIANS 1:23-29**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Nafana Senufo in Cote d'Ivoire / Kono in Guinea

All of us. Every single one of us was once an enemy of God. It started in our hearts, we wanted to be our own judge. It moved to our minds, we used mental gymnastics to justify our rebellion. It was realized in our actions, We did whatever we wanted regardless of God. What did God do in response? He abandoned paradise, lived with us, gave up his life, and rose from the dead just to save us. Maturity is realizing that serving God with everything we have is the least we can do.

James tells us to abandon the world, rejoice in our suffering, and reject worldly success so we can be all in with the kingdom. In this passage Paul tells us that we should ground every intention, every thought, and every action in this reality. The reality that all we offered God was rebellion, rejection, and

spite, but He gave up everything to save us anyway. Maturity is letting go of the thought that we can weigh our options and have and ride the fence. Maturity is grabbing that cross and carrying it one more day, so we can tell one more person what Jesus did for them too.

Today's focus verse: Colossians 1:21-23

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

# DISCUSSION GUIDE: JULY 26, 2026

## WEEK SEVEN: JAMES 4:1-12

This week in our devotions we talked about the theme of "maturity," in the book of James. He directly associates maturity with experiencing trials and learning to trust God through the difficulty. He also associated maturity with the ability to see God's will through the chaos of life. Today your campus pastor will help you understand what postures of pride and humility look like as we live out the Christian life. Take special note of action steps on how to live humbly.

### *ACTION STEP*

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*How will I live out the action step this week?*

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# CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 7

- Have you ever had to choose sides in a debate? Maybe it was in a family argument or a dispute at work? Are you more of a person who wants to remain neutral until the conflict is over? Why can we not always approve of both sides in a disagreement?
- In this passage James tells us that “friendship with the world is hostility with God.” How can we live, operate, and work in the world, while not becoming hostile to God? How do we remain faithful and not compromise when we have to interact with the world?
- In verses 1-3 James says that we do not receive what we ask for in prayer because our motivations are wrong. By what process can we reshape and change our motivations? How will our motivations change our prayers?
- At the end of this passage, James says that we should not criticise our fellow believers and church members. What is the difference between criticising someone and holding them accountable for their actions? Can we correct someone without criticising?
- What are you going to do this week to align yourself with God instead of the world? Be specific.

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# WEEK EIGHT

## DAY 1: MATTHEW 12:33-37

UUPG Prayer Focus: Kwangali in Namibia / Ahiska Turks in Kazakhstan

Humans have been speaking since we were created in the Garden. Anyone who is rational will tell you that our words carry great weight, and sometimes great power. The Bible often warns us that we will be accountable for our words in the end, and that we may have immediate consequences for what we say in this life. Yet, for some reason we keep developing little excuses to dismiss the responsibility of our speech. "They're just words." "I'm just sayin." "Well, it's for freedom of speech." None of these ideas can supersede the fact that we are accountable to God for every word we say.

James makes control of the tongue his focal point for the center of his letter because this one discipline reveals how seriously we are taking our own spiritual maturity. We also see that Jesus says the same thing, in a much more poignant way. Jesus tells us that we can't speak good things when our hearts are evil. He tells us that every word we say is "the overflow of our hearts," and that our speech is revealing our character and painting a picture of what we believe every time we open our mouth. So as we study this week, let's consider our words. Are we using our ability to speak so we can paint a better picture of God for the world, or are we simply revealing our

hypocrisy and “seeing what we can get away with?”

Today's focus verse: Matthew 12:34

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 2: LUKE 6:45**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Deaf Jordanians in Jordan / Nagavamsam in India

Apparently this idea was pretty important to Jesus. We now see that two different Gospel authors included the same statement from Him about our speech and what it implies. Jesus couples His statement here with the same metaphor as well. A good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. The product is determined by the quality of the source. It's not a little bit of mixing around, a little bit of corruption spoils the whole thing.

That's why we always need to be analyzing our words. As followers of Jesus we are called to analyze our hearts by the actions they produce. If it wasn't already clear, our hearts are the trees which make our words and actions the fruit in this metaphor. James says that a believer is mature if they

can control their words. He says this because it takes both maturity and courage to consistently analyze our own words and seek out that conviction from the Holy Spirit. It takes a supernatural love to break us from the selfishness of wanting to speak without consequence. So toast let's be a little dangerous and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us when our words reveal that our hearts are tolerating evil.

Today's focus verse: Luke 6:43

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 3: EPHESIANS 4:25-32**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Georgians in Russian Federation / Akha in Laos

As always, we get to hear Paul expound on and further articulate the same concepts as other New Testament writers. In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells us much the same advice as James does. He is explaining how the Jewish church members and the Gentile church members should sacrifice their own selfish desires so they can get along and be unified

in the mission of Christ. We should notice that Paul focuses on two things. First he tells us that we should always be truthful in our speech. We don't need to hedge, dodge, spin, or outright lie. We need to be people who are so associated with the truth that it's just expected every time we speak. There is a warning here though, oftentimes people try to excuse a lack of kindness or outright aggression by saying "I was just telling the truth!" This isn't a loophole for us to be jerks, if we can't speak the truth without love, kindness, and care for the other person then it's better for us to remain silent.

The other thing Paul focuses on here is the idea of anger and slander. Quite simply, we need to get out of our way. Living in community is difficult, and there will always be disagreements even among those who love each other. We make it so much harder when we can't get over our anger and weaponize our words to attack our own people. So let's take Paul seriously today and set aside our selfish desire to release our anger. Let's give up our own preferences so we can build each other up as believers.

Today's focus verse: Ephesians 4:29-31

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## DAY 4: COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

UUPG Prayer Focus: Nakhasa in India / Bania in India

In today's reading we get one of the more pragmatic statements we'll find in the New Testament about speech. It reminds us that our words often define our reputation with others. Paul is telling us that our words always need to reflect the change that Jesus is making in us, because those same words will be the source of your credibility when sharing the Gospel message. Many of us often pray for an opportunity to share the Gospel, but what if that opportunity comes with a neighbor you recently chewed out over parking issues? What if that opportunity comes with your most annoying co-worker? What if that opportunity comes from the customer service rep the week after Christmas? In those cases our words may have already shattered our credibility about the Gospel.

As Christians we bear the responsibility of waking up every day and conforming ourselves to the character of Jesus. Jesus didn't chew out the doubters for being weak, He gave them proof. Jesus didn't dismiss the sinner as unlovable, He ate dinner with them. Jesus didn't berate the tax collectors for their greed, He changed their hearts so they could be generous instead. He did however speak boldly against the Pharisees and religious elites who tried to gatekeep access to God and push away those who wanted to worship Him. Jesus showed patience, compassion, and a lot of tolerance

to those who came to Him. He had no time for anyone who chose to stand between people and God. Paul's words should remind us of this distinction and we go through our everyday interactions.

Today's focus verse: Colossians 4:6

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

## **DAY 5: MATTHEW 5:33-37**

UUPG Prayer Focus: Kattiakaran in India / Nai in India

So in the end, if we take James' advice, then what does it look like on a day to day basis? Well, if we are generous, mature, and careful with our words then we become trustworthy, helpful people. You've probably known someone in your life that exemplifies these characteristics. They are the person you go to when you need advice because you know they'll actually listen and respond in a helpful way. You know that advice will have your best in mind, and not a selfish agenda of their own. They are the type of person you want to take advice from because you admire them enough to follow their path. Their

character and their words gave them the credibility to be a role model for you and others.

As the church let's devote ourselves to this type of personal/spiritual growth that James, Paul, and Jesus stress so often. It's this pursuit of maturity that brings us closer to God, and allows us to develop the credibility to share the Gospel. It often takes years or even decades to forge this kind of reputation and only seconds of thoughtless speech to ruin it. Let's be the type of people whose yes and no can be trusted without hesitation. Let's be the people that our community wants to turn to in tough situations because we have proven to have their best outcomes as our goal. Let's be people who act and speak in a way that makes the name of Jesus great to anyone who will listen.

Today's focus verse: Matthew 5:37

This is how I'm going to live this verse out today:

This is who I'm going to share this lesson with:

# DISCUSSION GUIDE: AUGUST 7, 2026

## WEEK EIGHT: JAMES 4:13-17

This week in our devotions we studied how our words reveal the content of our hearts. We also learned how our words can have serious consequences in life and in our eventual judgment. James actually tells us that we can judge our maturity based on how well we can control our words. This week your campus pastor will speak further about how we can learn to wait on and follow the will of God in our daily lives. Pay special attention to what your campus pastor says about how we discern what is and is not God's will.

### ACTION STEP

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How will I live out the action step this week?

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## CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 8

- Have you ever had to cancel plans because something totally unexpected happened? Were you disappointed or relieved? Did you have a backup plan? Why do our plans rarely proceed as we intend? How can you become a better planner? Why is GOd always going to be better at planning than us?
- Read Luke 12:13-21. Just like James' example, the person in this parable made plans for personal profit. According to the parable and Jesus, what should this man have done instead?
- Reread James 4:15-17. Does this mean that we should never plan anything? How can we honor God when we make plans? How can we avoid being arrogant?
- Based on what you've learned today, are you gaping to change anything about your plans for the week?

