



A Faith that Works

**Christ Redeemer Church
Sermon Series Study Guide
Winter 2020**

Special thanks to Anna-Kaye Schulte for the sermon series artwork!

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INTRODUCTION

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

~James 1:22-25 (ESV)

The Letter of James: An Introduction

What is genuine Christianity? What are the marks of true faith and how can you tell when you’ve really got it?

Many Christians and non-Christians alike have become disillusioned with much of what they see in Christianity and the Church. James, the writer of the New Testament letter that bears his name, would suggest that the reason for this cynicism may be due an imitation faith. A “gospel” that looks like Jesus but doesn’t live and love like Jesus.

Genuine faith is not smug and self-confident, resting on its supposed successes. Rather, it is broken, believing and obedient. Genuine faith changes us because it recreates us by the power of God’s word. It produces in us a new life that works itself out in a new way of living.

Genuine faith in Christ is alive. It is a faith that works—a faith that works through trial and temptation; a faith that tames one’s tongue; a faith that shares one’s treasure; and a faith that bears the fruit of love, impartially. It is a faith that fulfills in us the law of God—to love God with all our being and love our neighbor as our self.

There is no doubt that James is one of the New Testament’s more pointed and challenging books. My prayer for us as a church is that the message of James would jar us from our lethargy and tacit unbelief, driving us to the joy of greater obedience to the “law of liberty.”

The Purpose of this Study Guide

This study guide is intended to be a simple and basic way for us to engage in the sermon passages on a week by week basis. Our hope is to work together on our daily discipline of pursuing God in Scripture and prayer. The daily discipline that this study guide represents will be a tangible way to allow the “word of Christ [to] dwell among us richly” (Colossians 3:16), by enhancing our engagement with the sermon passages and directing us in shared prayer.

How to Use the Study Guide

A word about how to use this study guide: The date at the top of each page notes the Sunday for the respective the week. The Scripture verse listed under each

heading is a suggested memory verse for that week. Below that you will find a passage of Scripture, followed by “*Reflection Questions*.” In general, these readings will allow you to reflect on the previous sermon or prepare you to hear the sermon for that upcoming week. We estimate that each day’s “lesson” should require no more than 15 minutes.

In addition to the Scripture reading and prayer suggestions, there is also a suggested reading each week from the book *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn. The subjects of each chapter are not intended to directly correspond to the subject matter of each respective sermon passage. Rather, it is intended to be an engagement of similar subjects in the book of James, thus, giving a sort of “cross-pollination” effect to our study. These books will be available for free over the next few Sunday on the “Connect Table.” Supplies are limited.

To be clear, this guide is not intended to be a “legalistic” requirement. Not at all! Rather, it is a way for us as a congregation to walk together as we explore God’s Word. And to what end? Our prayer is that as we grow in our understanding and practice of daily prayer and meditation, we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and so grow in our love for Him and one another.

A Word about Walking with Christ

Walking with Christ is a work that God is doing in you. This does not mean that we are not also required to do the work of walking with Him. Indeed, we are! We are to be “doers of the Word!” This will require us to be intentional—to strive and sacrifice to know Christ and to obey all that He has commanded! Nonetheless, our confidence is that it is not dependent upon the perfection of our striving, but on the perfection of our Savior. Our striving does not secure his saving power. Actually, it is the exact opposite. “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth” (1:18). And, as we receive this “implanted word,” it has the power “to save our souls” (1:21). This is HIS promise!!! In light of this promise, we must make it our intention not be self-deceived. Rather, we must cling to his word and let it freely work in us obedience (James 1:25).

It is for this reason we are encouraging everyone at CRC to be in the word of God personally. That is the point of this guide.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory,

Don Willeman
January 2020
Hanover, NH

WEEK OF JANUARY 12, 2020

Memory Verse:

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

~James 1:12 (ESV)

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:1-12

Reflection Questions:

- What words and themes are repeated in this passage?
- What picture is James painting of the Christian life? What is the Christian life marked by? How does a Christian respond to/approach life's circumstances? Challenges? People?
- How is perseverance important to/in the Christian faith?

Prayer:

- Pray for our time in James over the next few months. That the good news of Jesus Christ would transform our hearts as we read, study, and hear the Word of God preached.
- Pray that God would use this very practical letter to shape our understanding and reorient our hearts.

WEDNESDAY

Scripture Reading: James 1:5-8; Matthew 18:19, 21:22; John 15:7, 16

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to be double-minded? How does James describe doubt? What is doubt contrasted with? Is there a "remedy"?

- How does God view those who trust Him and ask? What is His response?

Prayer:

- Pray for God's help to grow in your trust and dependence on Him. Pray that the posture of your heart would be going to Him with a confident and expectant hope in His faithfulness and promises.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:9-12; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Isaiah 40:6-8

Reflection Questions:

- What should the lowly brother do? What should the rich brother be glad about? Why is that? What do you think about that?

- What passes away? What last forever? How do these biblical facts inform the way the Christian thinks and operates?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would grow your understanding and appreciation of His permanence and the fleeting nature of this world (impermanence).

SATURDAY:

Prayer:

- Pray for our time of gathered worship tomorrow. Pray that God would use the preaching of His Word to speak to the needs of our hearts.

WEEK OF JANUARY 19, 2020

Memory Verse:

"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

~James 1:16-18 (NIV)

The Treasure Principle: Chapter 1

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:12-15, Hebrews 4:14-16

Reflection Questions:

- How does it change the way you think about hard life circumstances to see them not as temptations but as tests that are confirming and developing you as a citizen of God's eternal kingdom?
- How does it help you when you face trials and tests to know that you are not alone, but have a high priest who knows what you are facing and can enable you to persevere in any and every situation?
- What is an area in your life where you may have given up hope that God can enable you to persevere in His will, perhaps believing the lie that God is tempting you to sin, instead of training you to persevere?

Prayer:

- Pray that Jesus would help you in living out His persevering grace in your family, workplace, and other community activities.
- Spend some time praising God for being a merciful high priest, whose throne of grace is available to us in whatever trial we may be facing.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:16-18, Hebrews 13:8, 1 Peter 1:23-25

Reflection Questions:

- Why do you think we are so easily deceived into thinking that God changes and that He's holding out on us (Genesis 3:1-6)?

- How does God's word of truth bring about new birth? Who in your life might need to hear His word right now?

Prayer:

- Confess any ways that pulled away from the Lord as a result of not believing that all good things come from Him. Ask for faith to see God as He truly is—a God of unchanging, eternal, pure good.
- Pray that God would be opening doors for His word of truth (Colossians 4:3-4) for specific people in your life, and giving you gracious boldness to declare it with wise love.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:1-27

Reflection Questions:

- If you had to give one theme for the first chapter of James, what would it be? Why do you think he highlighted this for the early persecuted church? How does what he says speak to our current cultural moment?

- How does James address his listeners? What kind of language does he use? How might this shape the way that you interact with other brothers and sisters in the church?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would help you grow in sacrificial, persevering love for the body of Christ
- Pray that God would be causing His “word of truth” and “perfect law that brings freedom” to flourish in the Upper Valley and around the world.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:12-18

Prayer:

- Pray for those coming to church who might feel like outsiders. Pray that they would feel welcomed and loved, and would become more deeply connected to the body of Christ.
- Pray that God would bring His word of truth tomorrow with power and conviction as it is preached. Pray that He would birth and deepen faith in Jesus Christ both for yourself and everyone else present.

WEEK OF January 26, 2020

Memory Verse:

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

~James 1:19-20 (ESV)

The Treasure Principle: Chapter 2

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:16-18

Reflection Questions:

- In what sense are you the “firstfruits” of creation? What does James mean by this? In what way(s) is this theologically significant? In other words, what does this tell us about God and how He relates with us?
- What does being the firstfruits of creation mean for your life?

Prayer:

- Pray with thanks that God is a God in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change! He is faithful and constant, and He is the giver of good gifts!

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:19-25; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5; Mark 7:20-23

Reflection Questions:

- In what ways do you struggle with anger? With whom? In what situations?
- How have you seen this affect your relationships?
- Why doesn't our anger accomplish God's purpose and righteousness?

- How does God's implanted word rescue us?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would show you areas of anger, bitterness, and an unwillingness to forgive. Confess and repent. God is gracious to forgive!
- Pray that God would you show people you need to forgive and/or those you have sinned against.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:26-27

Reflection Questions:

- Why is tongue control so important in the Christian faith?

- How does this connect with the word of truth?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would help you communicate with grace, wisdom, love and truth speaking to the need of the moment and to the need of the hearts of those around you.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 1:16-27

Prayer:

- Pray that God would bring His word of truth tomorrow with power and conviction as it is preached. Pray that He would birth and deepen faith in Jesus Christ both for yourself and everyone else present.
- Pray too that God would help us to grow in our love and affection for Him, toward His body, and our community.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 9, 2020

Memory Verse:

"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism."

~James 2:1 (NIV)

The Treasure Principle: Chapter 3

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:1-4

Reflection Questions:

- Who are the privileged people in our cultural situation? How does our community show deference and partiality toward them? Who tends to be overlooked or disregarded in our community?
- In what ways or in what situations do you find yourself showing favoritism or being partial? Be specific. Why do you think you tend toward this way of thinking or seeing others? How is the Gospel actually informing you in these situations?

Prayer:

- Ask God to help you identify ways in which your way of thinking and seeing others are not in line with His way of thinking and seeing others.
- Pray for our congregations to become increasingly unified in the singular vision and mindset of the Gospel of God's Grace to us in Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:1-7 & Matthew 5:3

Reflection Questions:

- When Peter refers to "those who are poor in the eyes of the world" (v. 5), what might he have in mind? Compare v. 5 with Matthew 5:3.

- Verses 5-7 show God inverting human preferences and values. Why does He favor the poor, and condemn the rich? How is this meant to influence your perspective and actions?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would give you a spirit that recognizes its own poverty.
- Pray for our congregations, that God would enrich our faith in “our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1).

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:1-11

Reflection Questions:

- Why do you think James compares these people to judges with evil thoughts (v. 4)? Consider verses 8-11 as you try to answer that question?
- How is the partiality described in verses 9-11 a contradiction to the “royal law” of verse 8?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would make us those who rightly judge our own evil thoughts, rather than those who judge others with evil thoughts.
- Pray that by His Spirit, God would empower us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:1

Prayer:

- Pray that we could each have the perspective and the capacity to warmly welcome and honor all among us at our shared worship services tomorrow morning.
- Pray that all those who join us for our worship services would sense and experience an equality of hospitality among us.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 16, 2020

Memory Verse:

"Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment".

~James 2:12-13 (NIV)

The Treasure Principle: Chapter 4

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:1-4 & 2 Corinthians 8:9

Reflection Questions:

- In v. 1, James refers to Jesus as being "glorious." 2 Corinthians 8:9 also discusses Jesus' condescension to us and to our situation. Why is this described as glorious?
- What does this say about God's glory? How might this view of Jesus alter our view of others?

Prayer:

- Take some time to consider the riches that are offered to us in Christ.
- Take some time to thank God for the grace that is shown to us in Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:8-13 & Galatians 3:23-26

Reflection Questions:

- What is the main point that James makes in 2:8-11?

- How does the Galatians passage offer us new insight into the “law of liberty” that James is referring to in 2:12?

Prayer:

- Our hearts are far more prone to “lawbreaking” than we realize. Pray that God would help us to recognize just how desperate we are in the face of His law.
- Jesus has fulfilled both the heart and the requirement of the law on our behalf. Pray that God would help us to recognize just how secure we are in the face of His love.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:1-13; Romans 8:1-2 & Titus 3:3-7

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think it means to “speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom?” Reflect on Wednesday’s devotion as you consider this.

- Considering Titus 3, how does the grace of God allow us to live in freedom? What might inhibit this freedom for us?

Prayer:

- Pray for the freedom of the Gospel to impact our words and actions.
- Pray that we might be a people who are marked by mercy rather than judgement.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:12-13

Prayer:

- Pray that the freedom of the Gospel might be clearly proclaimed and understood at our services on Sunday.
- Pray that many would in turn be transformed by the freedom of that Gospel.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 23, 2020

Memory Verse:

"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

~James 2:26 (ESV)

The Treasure Principle: Chapter 5

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:14-18, Romans 3:27-28

Reflection Questions:

- Why is James concerned about some kinds of "faith?" What does it look like to have "faith" apart from "works?"

- What kind of relationship does James see between faith and works?

Prayer:

- Pray that you would not only know the truth of God's grace, but also live it out.
- Pray that the church would show the compassion and love of genuine faith.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:18-22, Ephesians 2:8-10

Reflection Questions:

- What are some possible meanings for the word "justified?" What are some differences in the way that James and Paul use this word? What is each writer concerned about when they talk about faith and works?

- What would James say to a Christian who claims to have faith, but does not produce good works? What would Paul say?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would cause your faith to grow, to be fruitful, and clearly seen in your life and actions.
- Pray that the church would likewise produce faith-fueled works.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:23-26, Romans 4:1-8

Reflection Questions:

- In what sense are Abraham and Rahab justified by their works? What is revealed or indicated by their actions?

- Does a person's work contribute to their salvation? If so, why can't they boast about it? If not, why do people like Abraham and Rahab do good works?

Prayer:

- Pray that you would be motivated and empowered by God's grace to live a godly and loving life in the church and in the broader community.
- Pray that our broader community would also know God's grace in a powerful and compelling way.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 2:26, Matthew 5:16

Prayer:

- Pray that our neighbors would see God at work in and through us to such a degree that they come to praise him as the God of abundant grace.
- Pray that the preaching of the gospel tomorrow would be powerful and vital, evident to all in our fellowship and worship together.

WEEK OF MARCH 1, 2020

Memory Verse:

"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark."

~James 3:5b (NIV)

The Treasure Principle: Chapter 6

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 3:1-2

Reflection Questions:

- In what ways do you feel you currently stumble with your speech?

- What responsibility do you have as a believer to teach others?

Prayer:

- Lord, reveal in my life where my words are not glorifying you and give me the strength to submit them to you.
- Lord, give me the courage to teach others, and get to know your word more closely, so that I may be confident in you.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 3: 3-6

Reflection Questions:

- Can you remember a time when you or someone else in your life was corrupted by their speech?

- What were the consequences of corrupt speech? How might these consequences have been avoided if the one speaking had reflected on the potential of blessings and curses that can come from our speech?

Prayer:

- Lord, forgive me for areas where I may still gossip, have idle talk, or have spoken hurtful words.
- Lord, let me be aware of how to take positive perspectives with my words to bless others, and build them up.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 3:7-10

Reflection Questions:

- When was the first time you realized how much power your words carried?

- How do you feel knowing that we have used our words to curse the very creation that God made in his likeness?

Prayer:

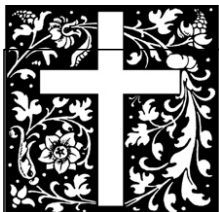
- Lord, thank you for creating us in your likeness, and giving us value.
- Lord, help me see the value that you have given to each one of us, and use that same respect when speaking to others.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: James 3:11-12

Prayer:

- Lord, thank you for teaching me, and giving me an understanding of how powerful our words are, and to be aware of using them to bless others.
- Lord, give me strength to boldly share your word, in confidence to others.



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