

# Relational Wisdom

Growing wiser in our Relationships through the book of James



## Home Group Leader's Guide

February to May 2022

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW Relational Wisdom Home Group Series.....	3
SESSION 1 Partiality.....	7
SESSION 10 Words .....	10
SESSION 3 Proudful Selfishness.....	13
SESSION 4 Boastings & Warnings .....	16
SESSION 5 Patience & Suffering.....	19
APPENDIX 1 .....	22

# OVERVIEW

## Relational Wisdom Home Group Series

### SERIES PASSAGE

*"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom" James 3:13*

### A. THE "RELATIONAL WISDOM" SERIES

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*In this series, James provides practical insights for growing wiser in our relationships*

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For the year 2022, FGA Melbourne will focus on Wisdom. While we will look at the more traditional wisdom literature (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Hosea) later in the year, but our first Home Group series will study the book of James. James is a highly practical letter and provides various godly counsel for testing times.

"It's more an art than a science" is what's often said about relationships. People are not machines and we can't use google to figure out what is going on between the people we love. This series takes a practical look through the New Testament wisdom book written by Jesus' brother James. In it, we will discover wisdom from God that, when implemented, leads to a transformed life with others. We study scripture and discover 5 keys to wiser relationships that are pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. This series will position us well to nurture our faith and live more sincere Christ-centered lives in challenging times.

### B. OVERVIEW OF JAMES

In his letter to the scattered Jewish believers, James focuses on core elements of discipleship which are outlined in Chapter 1 and expanded on throughout the book. In short, we can joyfully anticipate personal growth (1:2 – 25) and development (1:26 - 5:6) as we go through trials (1:2-8) and temptations (1:12 -18), hearing, receiving and obeying His Word (1:19-25).

For a more comprehensive overview of James please refer to:

- Bible Project [video on James](#) (9 mins).
- A single page overview of James by Chuck Swindoll [here](#).
- [Introduction & Outline to James](#) from Blue Letter Bible.

Specifically, the following areas of Relational Wisdom will be covered in this series:

1. Partiality and personal bias (2:1 - 7)
2. Word and how we speak (3:1 - 12)
3. Prideful Selfishness (3:12 - 4:6)
4. Boasting and Warning (4:11 - 5:6)
5. Patience and Suffering (5:7 - 20)

## C. BACKGROUND AND GENRE

The “Epistle of James” is a letter written by Jesus' half-brother James ([Gal 1:19](#)), who was also known as Jacob. James, a bishop in the Jerusalem Church, was writing to the messianic believers scattered in other countries and therefore away from the discipleship influences of the mother church. James felt compelled to write and explain how a life of genuine faith should be lived out, and providing God’s perspective for common situations.

The wisdom presented in the book has been influenced by Jesus’ teaching (especially the sermon on the mount, [Matt 5-7](#)) as well as Proverbs. At that time the letter was written, there had been a famine that led to great poverty and many of the Jewish believers were being persecuted and suffering various injustices. Consequently the letter focuses on wisdom for persevering in the faith, even in the midst of severe trials.

The letter was written in about AD 48-50 and may have been the first New Testament book to be written. James was martyred in 62 AD.

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*James contains wisdom drawn from the teachings of Jesus and Proverbs, written to Jewish believers who were suffering due to poverty and persecution.*

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## D. ABOUT THE DISCOVERY BIBLE SESSIONS

As part of nurturing genuine faith and discipleship, we need to know how to study and interpret the Bible. Our last series on Galatians used the tools Context, Content and Consider to dig deep into the scripture. This series contains more practical wisdom than theological concepts, is therefore more easily interpreted for our times.

The aims of this home group series are:

1. Read all of James
2. Practice receiving and applying personal insights from Bible
3. Apply wisdom of James in our relationships
4. Discuss how to live out wisdom
5. Encourage one another in pursuing genuine faith

The following table outlines the key points of each Session:

SESSION	TITLE	PASSAGE	MAIN POINT
Session 1	Partiality	Jam 1:1-2:16	What is our attitude towards people? What are we seeking from others?
Session 2	Words	Jam 2:17-3:12	Our words matter
Session 3	Prideful selfishness	Jam 3:13-4:10	The fruit of wisdom
Session 4	Boastings & Warnings	Jam 4:11-5:6	Seek humility
Session 5	Patience & Suffering	Jam 5:7-20	The steadfast are blessed

## SESSION STRUCTURE

We will read all of James over five sessions. The discovery steps for relational wisdom for each session will be:

SESSION ACTIVITY	TIME
Worship / Opening Prayer	5-15 mins
Welcome and Session Introduction	5 mins
<b>Read Scripture</b> (session passage)	10 mins
Watch video	10 mins
<b>Explore Scripture</b>	20 mins
<b>Live Out Wisdom Discussion</b>	10 mins
Consider Application & Pray	10 mins
TOTAL TIME	70-90 mins

## E. PREPARING FOR THE SESSIONS

As this is a Bible Study series, preparation by the facilitator before the session will significantly impact how well the session will run. We recommend the facilitators allow the time to take good preparation for each session they lead.

**If the home group leader is not the facilitator, we recommend that the leader assists the facilitator in the preparation and delivery of session.** This will help our leaders to be disciplined and trained to lead more open bible discovery groups.

As a guide for preparing for each session we recommend the facilitator to:

1. Read the entire book of James
2. Read the Leaders Notes for the session (including supplementary answer guide)
3. Watch the session video guide.
4. Read the scripture passage for the session. Re-read key scripture.
5. Go through the Discussion Questions and answer them for yourself
6. Discuss with the home group leader (if the facilitator is not the HG leader)
7. Pray

## SESSION VIDEOS

There are 5 session videos, recorded by Ps Quentin Loke, Jerusha Lee and Megan Griffith. The Session video should be viewed by the leader prior to the Home Group session, but it is optional to show to the whole group. The video will provide the relational lens which is particularly pertinent to the second discussion question.

## F. RESOURCES

The Leader's Guide and Session Videos provide key emphasise the key relational learnings that people should be able to discover for themselves in each session.

Should you need further assistance when preparing for the Home Group session or have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to reach out to our pastoral staff, Ps. Quentin Loke ([quentin.loke@fgam.org.au](mailto:quentin.loke@fgam.org.au)) or Ps. YC Goh ([yc.goh@fgam.org.au](mailto:yc.goh@fgam.org.au)).

The "Relational Wisdom" copies of the Leader's Guide and Member's Notes are available for download at <http://fgam.org.au/media/homegroup-materials>.

If you are unable to access the files or need any assistance, please contact Ps. YC Goh on 0425 799 576 or [yc.goh@fgam.org.au](mailto:yc.goh@fgam.org.au).

The Sunday preaching series "Relationally Wise will run from Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Messages will be made available at <https://fgam.org.au/media>.

**Keywords:** *James • Bible Interpretation • Authentic Faith • Practical Wisdom for Living*

*F.A.I.T.H. emphasis: T - Teachable in Discipleship*

# SESSION 1

## Partiality

### What is our attitude towards people?

**Key Verse:** James 2:1

*My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. (NKJV)*

*My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. (NIV)*

## A. INTRODUCTION

### SERIES INTRODUCTION

Reading the Bible is excellent, but studying the Bible is even better. That way we get to know more deeply about the character of God, our human nature and how we can live a more powerful and fruitful life of faith.

Over the next five sessions we will be reading the entire book of James. This letter was written by James to Jewish Christians living outside of the main Christian community aimed to encourage them with practical advice for living. We will be reading the entire book over the course of 5 sessions, and focussing on how to apply the teachings in our relationships.

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*This series will help us to differentiate between the world's culture and God's culture (James 2:5)*

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### SESSION INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 of James introduces the key themes that are expanded on through the rest of the letter. Chapter 2 introduces the first point in relational wisdom – partiality. We tend to show favour to people who are like us or can benefit us in some way. Conversely, we tend to neglect, judge or dismiss the ones who can't, usually because they are needy. While this is our fallen human nature, Christ calls us to a higher standard—to love others as we love ourselves. Fulfilling this command is genuine faith.

James' directness shows favouritism is the big issue. Simply put, James says favouritism is a sin as it breaks the law of God – “you shall love your neighbour as yourself.” Favouritism is sinful based on selfish and worldly considerations. We may not display the kind of outright favouritism described in the book of James (i.e. favouring the rich over the poor), but all of us have unconscious or implicit biases that affect all aspects of our lives and our interactions with others. It is subtle attitudes that affect our decisions and actions often subconsciously which are in direct conflict with how we are called to live as followers of Christ.

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*It is important we recognise our own biases and the first step is to be willing to admit we all have biases.*

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To prepare to lead the session, the facilitator should refer to the how to [prepare for the Sessions](#) section. See [Appendix 1](#) for more explanation.

## B. WATCH INTRODUCTION VIDEO WATCH SESSION VIDEO

This Introduction video outlines the purpose of the “Relational Wisdom” teaching series and presents the importance of digging deeper into scripture to help us live wisely.

The session video highlights the relational aspect for focus in Session 1, partiality.

## C. READ SCRIPTURE: [James 1:1 - 2:16](#), re-read [James 2:1](#)

## D. DISCOVER & DISCUSS

- 1. When reading the Bible we allow God to speak to us. Something new can be highlighted or maybe it is something specific to your current circumstances. What is your personal revelation or point of interest from reading [James 1:1-2:16](#)?**

*Answer Guide: The aim of the question is to help each member to read the Bible with intention and engagement. This is for personal learning and growth and to allow God to speak through scripture.*

*Allow the group to share personal insights from anywhere in the passage. This many include the key verse (topic of favouritism) or it may be from a different part of scripture.*

- 2. We all have personal bias. Who do you tend to favour and who do you especially dislike or look down on?**

*Answer Guide: This question is asked in order to explore the session topic and key verse about our tongue and the use of our words.*

*If they are having trouble thinking of a time where they demonstrated personal bias, perhaps ask them “What is something you find hard to relate to in another person?” “Do you tend to treat a person differently because they have this character trait?”*

**Supplementary questions** related to exposition of the Key Verse [James 2:1](#) can include:

- What Context does this apply in?
- What does the Content of the verse (which part) reveal?
- What things do you need to Consider in its application?

### **3. LIVE OUT WISDOM**

**Must we never have partiality? What is at the root of James’ instruction?**

*Answer Guide: Wisdom topics are not commandments that are applied regardless of context. Dig deeper in the discussion on partiality. Will your home group NEVER be partial? What if they are choosing the next Home Group leader, a business partner or life partner? There must be some traits that are preferable to others, and some people that are preferred for particular roles.*

*The key is that we must not be partial or play favourites according to the WORLD’s standards (of outward appearance and things that aren’t important to God). We must learn to differentiate between the world’s culture and God’s culture (James 2:5).*

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*We must not be partial or play favourites according to the WORLD’s standards*

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## **E. APPLICATION & PRAYER**

The leader should emphasise practical wisdom from James who challenges us to live authentically. Spend time reflecting on personal application from the insights shared.

Close in prayer and pray for needs.

## **F. LOOKING FORWARD**

In Session 2, we will look at [James 2:17-3:12](#) under the theme of our Words.

# SESSION 2

## Words

### Our Words Matter

**Key Verse:** “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity” James 3:6a (NKJV)

#### A. INTRODUCTION

In this second session we will look at the power of words. Words, more than anything else in human experience, form impressions that stick. Words can hurt and can heal (Prov 18:21).

The scripture says that the tongue is beyond our control is because of what it is: the outflow of our hearts. We can say things before thinking or in the heat of the moment.

We will explore some of the types of ways we use our tongue, both positive and negative e.g. praise or gossip. James wants us to grasp the inner drivers of this powerful faculty, so we can learn to bring it under submission and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

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*We can't tame the tongue IF our heart is bad.*

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To prepare to lead the session, the facilitator should refer to the how to [prepare for the Sessions](#) section. See [Appendix 1](#) for more explanation.

#### B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

*This session video outlines the relational aspect of the bible passage. The facilitator should watch the video prior to leading the session.*

C. READ SCRIPTURE: [James 2:17-3:12](#), re-read [James 3:6](#)

#### D. DISCOVER & DISCUSS

1. When reading the Bible we allow God to speak to us. Something new can be highlighted or maybe it is something specific to your current circumstances. What is your personal revelation or point of interest from reading [James 2:17-3:12](#)?

*Answer Guide: The aim of the question is to help each member to read the Bible with intention and engagement. This is for personal learning and growth and to allow God to speak through scripture.*

*Allow the group to share personal insights from anywhere in the passage. This many include the key verse (topic of words or our tongue) or it may be from a different part of scripture. Allow the group to share personal insights from the reading.*

**2. Think about what discussions with people recently. Do your words build people up or tear them down (refer [Luke 6:45](#))?**

*Answer Guide: This question is asked in order to explore the session topic and key verse about our tongue and the use of our words.*

**Supplementary questions** related to exposition of the Key Verse [James 3:6](#). We need to be careful that we don't just say "we must be careful with our words" perhaps ask instead:

- What Context does this apply in?
- What does the Content of the verse (which part) reveal?
- What things do you need to Consider in its application?

*Allow time for people to reflect. If further prompting questions are required the facilitator could ask "Can you think of a time recently when you were frustrated and you spoke negatively about that person to someone else?" or "If you said things you regretted, what do you think stopped you from handling that differently?". These examples should demonstrate that what is in our heart is the main driver of what comes out of our mouths.*

**3. LIVE OUT WISDOM**

**Must we never say bad things to people? What is at the root of James' instruction?**

*Answer Guide: Wisdom topics are not commandments that are applied regardless of context. Dig deeper in the discussion. Will your home group NEVER say negative things? What if they need to bring criticism, correction or complaint to someone? Surely, it's not wise to always just keep blessing people.*

*The key is: James actually points to the fact that we must look deeper than the words we say. We must look into the HEART behind the words we say. We can't tame the tongue IF our heart is bad. You can say "bad" things to people if your heart is "good" e.g. [James 3:14](#) -- you don't have "bitter jealousy, selfish ambition in your heart" etc...*

## E. APPLICATION & PRAYER

The leader should emphasise practical wisdom from James who challenges us to live authentically. Spend time reflecting on personal application from the insights shared.

Close in prayer and pray for needs.

## F. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 3, we will look at [James 3:13-4:10](#) under the theme of Prideful Selfishness.

# SESSION 3

## Prideful Selfishness

### Two types of wisdom

**Key Passage:** " *The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*" James 3:17 (ESV)

#### A. INTRODUCTION

In this third session of Relational Wisdom, we will look at the two kinds of wisdom and how they impact how we resolve conflict in relationships. The key verse for this session invites us to express our wisdom in the form of meekness. This is an expression of godly wisdom. Worldly wisdom, on the other hand, is often expressed in actions resulting from pride. This is where we seek to better ourselves over the other person. One is seeking their best, the other is for ourselves.

Jesus set the example of meekness for us to follow, as described in [1 Peter 2:22-23](#). "When they heaped abuse on Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats, but entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly." The challenge to us is which type of wisdom will we choose, godly wisdom or worldly wisdom?

To prepare to lead the session, the facilitator should refer to the how to [prepare for the Sessions](#) section.

#### B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

This session video outlines the challenges and benefits of using godly wisdom to resolve conflict.

#### C. READ SCRIPTURE: [James 3:13-4:10](#), re-read [James 3:17](#)

#### D. DISCOVER & DISCUSS

- 1. When reading the Bible we allow God to speak to us. Something new can be highlighted or maybe it is something specific to your current circumstances. What is your personal revelation or point of interest from reading [James 3:13-4:10](#).**

*Answer Guide: The aim of the question is to help each member to read the Bible with intention and engagement. This is for personal learning and growth and to allow God*

to speak through scripture.

Allow the group to share personal insights from anywhere in the passage. This may include the key verse (topic of prideful selfishness) or it may be from a different part of scripture. Allow the group to share personal insights from the reading.

## 2. Share of a time when you chose meekness to resolve conflict.

*Answer Guide: This question is asked so that we can explore the session topic and the key verse about source of wisdom.*

**Supplementary Question** related to the key verse [James 3:17](#). Another way of expounding scripture, is not to say “Don’t be selfish”, instead perhaps ask:

- What Context does this apply in?
- What does the Content of the verse (which part) reveal?
- What things do you need to Consider in its application?

*If people are reluctant to share you could rephrase the question to say when did you use the “win at all costs” approach in resolving a conflict or disagreement. Ask “how did that go in the end? What do you think could have happened if you used a different approach?”*

## 3. LIVE OUT WISDOM

**Must we never be selfish or worldly ? What is at the root of James’ instruction?**

*Answer Guide: Wisdom topics are not commandments that are applied regardless of context. Dig deeper in the discussion. Will your home group NEVER have any passions or look out for themselves? What if you are just wanting things you’re passionate about...*

*The key is: James is emphasising the order of priority. We are obviously all somewhat selfish (that’s why every one of us has been in an argument before), however, James encourages us to put God above our selfishness ([James 4:7](#)). We must examine what takes the forefront, prime position place in our life. Selfishness cannot be at the top.*

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*We must examine what motive takes the prime position  
in our life. Selfishness cannot be at the top.*

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## E. APPLICATION & PRAYER

The leader should emphasise practical wisdom from James who challenges us to live authentically. Spend time reflecting on personal application from the insights shared.

Close in prayer and pray for needs.

## F. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 4, we will look at [James 4:11-5:6](#) under the theme of Boastings and Warnings.

# SESSION 4

## Boastings & Warning

### Seek humility

**Key Verse:** *Come on now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; .... Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" James 4:13-16 (NKJV)*

*"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!" James 5:1 (NKJV)*

#### A. INTRODUCTION

In this fourth session, James writes to the believers to warn them about their conduct and attitudes in life that may ignore the grace and plan of God.

James ([4:13-17](#)) speaks about Christians acting presumptuously. Attitudes are the focus, in particular that by which we make dispositions for the future in complete assurance that everything will go according to our plan and work out in the way we want. Rather, we need to humble ourselves and recognise that we are not privy to His will for the specifics of our tomorrows and be ready to change our plans according to His leading as ([Proverbs 19:21](#)).

These verses contrast the worldly spirit of arrogance and presumption which are temporary and destined for destruction, with that of true submission to the Lord born from an intimate relationship with Him. Godly relational wisdom starts with intimate relationship with God before relationship with others.

*To prepare to lead the session, the facilitator should refer to the how to [prepare for the Sessions](#) section. See [Appendix 1](#) for more explanation.*

#### B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

*This session video outlines the relational aspect of the bible passage. The facilitator should watch the video prior to leading the session.*

C. READ SCRIPTURE: [James 4:11-5:6](#), re-read [James 5:1](#)

## D. DISCOVER & DISCUSS

1. **When reading the Bible we allow God to speak to us. Something new can be highlighted or maybe it is something specific to your current circumstances. What is your personal revelation or point of interest from reading [James 4:11-5:6](#).**

*Answer Guide: The aim of the question is to help each member to read the Bible with intention and engagement. This is for personal learning and growth and to allow God to speak through scripture.*

*Allow the group to share personal insights from anywhere in the passage. This may include the key verse (topic of boasting) or it may be from a different part of scripture. Allow the group to share personal insights from the reading.*

2. **How can we relate to others wisely so that we are not boastful in our actions whether in words or in deed? Discuss how we can sometimes come off as boasting when we don't intend to boast.**

*Answer Guide: We may not be the negligent landowners, as these people evidently were, but this still hits home. In our aspiration to acquire more wealth or climb the corporate ladder, does it cause us to be careless and insensitive to the needs of others or our responsibility to others? Do we have an ungodly attitude that sees ourselves as the centre of everything and others as a stepping-stone to achieve our goal?*

**Supplementary Question** related to the key verse [James 4:13-16](#). When interpreting scripture we should just say "Don't boast", instead it is better ask:

- What Context does this apply in?
- What does the Content of the verse (which part) reveal?
- What things do you need to Consider in its application?

## 3. LIVE OUT WISDOM

**Must we never boast? What is at the root of James' instruction?**

*Answer Guide: Wisdom topics are not commandments that are applied regardless of context. Dig deeper in the discussion. Will your home group NEVER have any talk about their achievements or have "praise points" for things that are going well? What if you are just planning for the future...*

*The key is: James highlights the role of arrogance. We must hold the things we*

*“boast” about loosely. They don’t define us, they are temporary and subject to destruction. We must not communicate or think that they make us “better” people, and above all we must not use our blessings for self-indulgence. Instead, we “boast” well when we communicate truth (e.g. [Ps 34:2](#), [1 Cor 1:31](#)), highlight things that are important to God and when we place the “boasting” in its proper place (i.e. it may not be as important as it might appear).*

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*James highlights the role of arrogance. The things we boast about don’t define us, they are temporary and subject to destruction.*

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## E. APPLICATION & PRAYER

The leader should emphasise practical wisdom from James who challenges us to live authentically. Spend time reflecting on personal application from the insights shared.

Close in prayer and pray for needs.

## F. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 5, we will look at [James 5:7-20](#) under the theme of Patience and Suffering.

# SESSION 5

## Patience & Suffering

### The Steadfast are Blessed

**Key Passage** *"Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful."* James 5:11 (ESV)

#### A. INTRODUCTION

This is the final session in this series on Relational Wisdom. As you have been going through the book of James you will recall each of our sessions.

The first session challenged our personal biases. James referred to this as favouritism. While often we are not consciously aware, God calls us out and challenges our natural tendencies to favour one person over another .

In the second session we reflected on the words we speak and what we say about or to one another. The challenge came as we often say we love God, but is that fully reflected in what we say about others? Our speech often reveals the inner workings of our heart and motives.

Our third Session looked at Proudful Selfishness. Wisdom that comes from God is seen in meekness. The opposite of this is proudful or worldly wisdom which seeks to be right and get what we want.

In Session four, Ps Quentin spoke on the list of Boastings and Warnings particularly those who take their life for granted or are complacent in their wealth. We were reminded to take heed of the heavenly perspective of our daily reality.

In this final session we are looking at a final list of wisdom sayings of James to encourage us to be patient and steadfast in the midst of all kinds of trials. If we stay the course we will be blessed.

*To prepare to lead the session, the facilitator should refer to the how to [prepare for the Sessions](#) section.*

#### B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

*This session video outlines the relational aspect of the bible passage. The facilitator should watch the video prior to leading the session.*

C. READ SCRIPTURE: [James 5:7-20](#), re-read [James 5:11](#)

#### D. DISCOVER & DISCUSS

1. **When reading the Bible we allow God to speak to us. Something new can be highlighted or maybe it is something specific to your current circumstances. What is your personal revelation or point of interest from reading [James 5:7-20](#).**

*Answer Guide: The aim of the question is to help each member to read the Bible with intention and engagement. This is for personal learning and growth and to allow God to speak through scripture.*

*Allow the group to share personal insights from anywhere in the passage. This many include the key verse (topic of perseverance in suffering) or it may be from a different part of scripture. Allow the group to share personal insights from the reading.*

**Supplementary Question** for the passage or the key verse [James 5:11](#)? To explore the scripture further, don't just answer "Pray" or "Be patient", instead perhaps ask:

- What Context does this apply in?
- What does the Content of the verse (which part) reveal?
- What things do you need to Consider in its application?

2. **Pick one of the wisdom tips in the passage [James 5:7-20](#), and talk about how you can apply it in your life.**

Answer guide: This question helps us to apply the various wise advice James provides. A follow up question is "how would that produce good fruit?". "What are some of the barriers that may prevent you from acting wisely?"

3. **LIVE OUT WISDOM**

**How can we go astray if we just say "Be Patient" or "Just pray about it" all the time to people? What is at the root of James' instruction?**

Answer Guide: Wisdom topics are not commandments that are applied regardless of context. Dig deeper in the discussion. A lot of damage has been done in churches where an application of a Biblical principle hasn't been done with Wisdom.

The key is: James is correct in urging us to be patient and to bring things to God in

prayer! However, HOW we do it, WHEN we do it, WHY we do it... are all important things to discuss.

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*Wisdom topics are not commandments that are applied regardless of context. A lot of damage has been done in churches where an application of a Biblical principle hasn't been done with Wisdom.*

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## E. APPLICATION & PRAYER

The leader should emphasise practical wisdom from James who challenges us to live authentically. Spend time reflecting on personal application from the insights shared.

Close in prayer and pray for needs.

We would value feedback from the group as to how the series went. What were the best parts and what was the most challenging.

# APPENDIX

## Additional Session Notes

These notes provide some more background for Sessions 1, 2 and 4.

### SESSION 1

Our English translations cannot adequately convey the intensity of the original Greek of the above verse. Normal English sentence structure, the phrase rendered “don’t show favouritism” is put last in our Bible versions whereas in the Greek text it comes at the beginning – in the place of greatest emphasis. The text reads, literally, “My brothers, not with favouritism hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the glory.”

The “faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the glory” is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the glorious one who is the root of all spiritual life and of all the good works that are pleasing in the sight of God. Favouritism is wholly inconsistent with the discipleship to the Lord.

James’ directness shows favouritism is the big issue among his readers. The kind of favouritism James is talking about reflects a particular attitude we can all have to people, and the example he has given us is just one expression of it. If this issue was a danger for Christians in his day, we can be sure very sure it’s danger in our day too. Circumstances may have change in all sorts of ways since James wrote his letter, but human nature is still very much the same.

James’ point is simple one: favouritism is profoundly un-Christian and in verse 9, James says it is a sin as it breaks the law of God – “you shall love your neighbour as yourself.” Favouritism is not justified on the grounds that you were “loving your rich neighbour” while the other (poor) fellow was just an unfortunate omission due to lack of time or real opportunity. It is sinful based on selfish and worldly considerations.

We may not display the kind of out right favouritism described in the book of James but all of us has unconscious or implicit biases that affect all aspects of our lives and the lives of others with whom we interact. It is the attitudes that affect our understanding, decisions and actions in an unconscious manner and it so not necessarily align with our own declared beliefs either.

It could stem from attributes that we like or aspire to have or people who benefit our goals

It is important we recognise our own biases and the first step is to be willing to admit we all have biases.

## SESSION 2

When it comes to our words and its impact, we all, without exception know how destructive the tongue can be. Certainly, all sensitive and serious Christians can recall with shame times when their untamed tongues shattered relationships with other people, even their one-time friends.

Two illustrations serve to demonstrate just how the controlling power of the tongue can be: first, the bridle and the horse, and secondly, the rudder and the ship (3:3-4).

James uses the bits and rudder to make his point that a large and potentially unruly force or large object can be redirected by a relatively small piece of equipment. A car steering wheel might be the modern equivalent – with power-assisted steering; the slightest touch can turn the whole vehicle. So it is, says James, the tongue controls the direction of our lives. This is not just in reference to our lives but also in the lives of others.

At some point in our lives, we have experienced the effects of other people's words. Nothing encourages us more than sincere and heart-felt expressions of love and kind words. Nothing hurts as much as hard words of bitter criticism and reproach. Hurtful words can go deeper and last longer than any knife and for some, it impacts the direction of their lives.

James expounded further the destructive potential of the tongue in verses 5-6 where he likens it as a fire. When fire is out of control, it can spread rapidly and burned thousands of acres of forest. In Australia, we all understand the destructive effect of a bushfire out of control. Slandorous rumours or negative words can have devastating consequences in people lives.

James also focusses on the inconsistencies of the tongue (3:9 -10) where we can praise God in one instance and cursed other the next (verse 9) and he admonish us this should not be the case. He highlighted the reality of man's untameable tongue and leave him without the slightest doubt that the only way to control the tongue is to bring it under submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

## SESSION 4

### **Boasting about our future (4:13-17)**

Verse 4:13-17 speaks about Christian acting presumptuously when they plan their future move. "Come on now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit". This clearly refers to businessmen in James' own day, although the application is just as clearly to all planning in every age. It goes without saying that planning as such is not the problem.

Attitudes are the point, in particular the attitude by which we make dispositions for the future in complete assurance that everything will go according to plan and work out in the way we want. The problem arises when the will of God is left out of all consideration, and lay aside both the element of dependence on the Lord.

Before we boast about what we are going to do in the future, we need to humble ourselves and recognize that we are not privy to His will for the specifics of our tomorrows and be ready to change our plans according to His leading as Proverbs 19:21 state "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel – that will stand."

These verses contrast the spirit of worldliness with that of true submission to the Lord born from an intimate relationship with Him. Relational wisdom starts with intimate relationship with God before relationship with others.

### **Warning to the wicked rich (James 5:1-6)**

After James addresses the problem of empty confidence about the future, he pronounces the dire warning of God's impending wrath against "the wicked rich." (5:1-6)

James is writing to Hebrew Christians and it is generally assumed among commentators that had in mind here the wealthy class among the Jews that exploited the poor - robbed workers of their wages (5:4) & murdered the just (5:6).

Nowhere does the Bible condemn wealth in itself, but it everywhere warns against its abuse. Scripture is clear that wealth is to be put to work for God's work and the relief of the needy (see 2 Cor 8:1-5), not sunk into the trappings of ever increasing "standard of living." The prevailing ambiguity of many Christians today towards the acquisition of wealth finds a timely corrective warning in James' words here.

We may not be the negligent landowners, as these people evidently were but this still hit home. In our aspiration to acquire more wealth or climb the corporate ladder, does it cause us to be careless and insensitive to the needs of others or our responsibility to others? Do we have an ungodly attitude that sees ourselves as the centre of everything and others as a stepping-stone to achieve our goal?