

Relational Wisdom

Growing wiser in our Relationships through the book of James



Home Group Member Notes

February to May 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW Relational Wisdom Home Group Series.....	3
SESSION 1 Partiality.....	6
SESSION 9 Words	9
SESSION 3 Proudful Selfishness.....	11
SESSION 4 Boastings & Warnings	13
SESSION 5 Patience & Suffering.....	15
APPENDIX 1	23

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

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

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.

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

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

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 favouritism. (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.

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

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.

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

**B. WATCH INTRODUCTION VIDEO
WATCH SESSION VIDEO**

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](#)?

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

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?

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

E. 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.

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

B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

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](#)?**

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

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?

3. LIVE OUT WISDOM

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

E. 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?

B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

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](#).

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

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?

3. LIVE OUT WISDOM

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

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

E. 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.

B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

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](#).
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.

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?

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

E. 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 Prideful Selfishness. Wisdom that comes from God is seen in meekness. The opposite of this is prideful 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.

B. WATCH SESSION VIDEO

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](#).

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.

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?

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.

Thank you, we hoped you enjoyed this series. If you would like to provide feedback please contact Ps. Quentin at quentin.loke@fgam.org.au