

James

Bible Study with Questions
A nine-week small group curriculum in the book of James

Written by Rob Fischer
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James – Discussion Questions

Week One – An opportunity for joy! (1:1-18)

1. Read the whole book of James this week asking God to reveal himself to you.
2. Read 1:1-18 through several times and meditate on it.
3. What is faith? (*Trusting in, relying on, depending on God.*)
4. Why is testing our faith necessary to produce perseverance? Why is perseverance necessary for maturity? (*Perseverance in trial is the way we demonstrate the genuineness of our faith in God. If we're not persevering, we're not trusting. Persevering is saying, "God is sufficient." "God will get me through this." "I don't understand what's happening, but I'm leaning on God who loves me and only gives me what's best for me and what will bring him glory."*)
5. Where does this joy come from? Is the joy always tied to the outcome (e.g., perseverance and maturity)? (*Although it may help sometimes to know that my trials produce a positive outcome, looking at the outcome is not the best approach for experiencing joy. There are some trials that are so severe or that seem so pointless that no positive outcome is in view. In these and in all circumstances we must find our joy in God. He is sufficient. He is all we need. Psalm 73:25.*)
6. What does trusting God have to do with his character? And what is the correlation between his character and ours? (*Faith is trusting in the character of God. It is trust in his good character that builds our character.*)
7. What does it mean to be mature or complete? (*Mature = integrity, virtue, godly character; complete = freedom from sin; becoming Christlike. For other passages where "mature" is used see Mat 5:48; Rom 12:2; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15. "Complete" is used in 1 Thes 5:23.*) Why would we want to strive for maturity?
8. How is asking for wisdom tied to persevering under trials? (*We need wisdom to discern how to react rightly in the situation.*)
9. What does it mean to be double-minded? How does James pick up this subject in the rest of this letter? (*Don't view this as an issue of evaluating the sincerity of your prayers. Based on the rest of this letter, double-mindedness has at least three applications: 1) Believe and don't doubt that God will answer when you pray – see Heb 11:6; 2) Believe that God is good and will give you good things – Heb 11:6; 3) Do not waiver about obeying God when he tells you what to do – see James 1:22-25.*)
10. How do verses 9-11 offer wisdom to us regarding our economic status? Is economic status a trial? (*James applies wisdom to give us perspective regarding our economic status. Things are not always as they seem. We may feel*

"underprivileged" because we can't afford a new car. In another part of the world, "underprivileged" means one can't afford shoes. Don't assume your economic status is a trial. Thank God for what he has given you and worship him.)

11. Verse 12 indicates an eternal perspective on trials.
12. Why is temptation not a "trial" in the same sense as that described earlier in this chapter? What insights does this passage give us in terms of resisting temptation? *(James uses temptation differently here than many of us use it. He's not talking about something that comes to us from outside of us as a surprise. He's is dealing with our core desires and the subtle ways we seek to arrange our circumstances so we can satisfy those secret desires. He gives further counsel on how to deal with these desires in chapter 4:1-10.)*
13. Meditate on verses 16-18. *(See Mat 7:11; Rom 8:32; and Heb 11:6. Note how James 1:17 comes back to what we said earlier about a double-minded person who does not believe God will give him/her what is good. This issue must be a core element of our trust in God. If we do not believe he is good and has our best interests at heart, we will never be able to fully trust him!)*

What good and perfect gifts has God given you? (One of the greatest demonstrations of God's love for us is listed in verse 18, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth." See also Rom 5:8. The concept of "first-fruits" has to do with what one treasures or values most. In the OT, the Jews were to bring of their first-fruits to offer these to God. Here, the tables are turned and God tells us that he values you and me as the first-fruits of his creation. We are most valued among his creation!

Keep in mind that for these early first century readers the "word of truth" was simply the good news of Jesus Christ: That he had died for our sins, was buried and then rose again from the dead. And that he lives to give us new life in him! "Word" is Grk. logos, the same word that is used in John 4:39 and 17:20.)

14. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you? How will you put this into practice?

Week Two – Be quick to listen and obey! (1:19-27)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 1:19-27 through several times and meditate on it.
3. Can you think of a time when you wish you had been “quick to listen and slow to speak”? How do you train yourself to do this?
4. Note verse 20, “Man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” (*Our anger neither brings about God’s righteous life in others or in us!*) Where does anger come from? Or what is it that this emotion expresses? (*We get angry when things don’t go our way; or when we feel one of our ‘rights’ has been violated.*)

What about when someone else’s rights are violated? Is it possible for us to entertain a ‘righteous indignation’? (*See Num 20:2-12; Prov 15:1; 29:11*)

5. In what way does verse 21 provide an antidote for anger? (*To a great extent, moral filth and evil vent themselves in anger (4:1-3). Practicing humility and letting the Word of God grow in our hearts combats the evil and replaces it with a love response instead of anger.*)
6. Why is “merely listening to the word” a self-deception? (*We deceive ourselves when we think that reading the Bible daily pleases God. We must do what it says! Aligning our lives with God’s word is what pleases him.*)
7. What is meant by, “the perfect law that gives freedom”? (*James uses the word “law” in several ways. Here he is not referring to the Law of Moses; or the law from which Christ set us free; or the law, which brings death. This law of which he speaks brings freedom. Freedom to serve God and others without restriction – Gal 5:22-23. See 2:8-13.*)
8. “Religious” here means simply God-fearing or a worshiper of God. This is the third time in this passage James has mentioned the possibility of our being self-deceived. A great litmus test for the genuineness of our faith is a controlled tongue! The Pharisees taught that orphans, widows, the poor, crippled, blind, etc. were merely receiving in themselves their just reward for a life of sin – if not their own, then their parents. Consequently the Pharisees despised these people. God, on the other hand, accepts them and loves them and encourages us to do the same. Again the genuineness of our faith will express itself in acts of love toward others.
9. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?

Week Three – Two kinds of law (2:1-13)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 2:1-13 through several times and meditate on it.
3. In what way is showing favoritism an example of how we become “polluted by the world” (1:27)? *(When we show favoritism we become judges with evil thoughts because Jesus said, “a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” – Luke 12:15. But by showing favoritism we judge a person’s worth by their income, status, achievements, etc. This is not God’s standard but the world’s – see 2:5, “in the eyes of the world.” God is no respecter of persons. “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” – 1 Samuel 16:7.*

Also, point out from verse 1, that as “believers in” or “to have faith in” Jesus Christ always demonstrates itself in right-valued living = godliness or Christlikeness.)

4. In verses 2:5-7, how does James explain further that showing favoritism doesn’t make sense? What is the opposite of showing favoritism?

(Note: James is not promoting “reverse discrimination” here. He is not suggesting that we favor the poor over the rich to compensate for past injustices! To favor either over the other would be wrong. So the opposite of favoritism is not a compensatory favoritism, but love toward all.)

5. In verses 2:8-13, James introduces two “laws”: the Law (i.e., the Law of Moses) and the “royal law of love”. How does he contrast these two laws? How does a person think and act differently based on which law they follow?

(Keeping the Law actually promotes favoritism and elitism, because a law attitude reasons: “I don’t commit murder or adultery or other big sins, so it’s OK that I err in some small way (like showing favoritism). My restraint in other areas compensates for my failings in other areas.” – This is compartmentalization and again represents double-mindedness. A law attitude focuses on avoidance from evil practices and considers avoidance of these practices as fulfillment of one’s obligation. One who keeps (or tries to keep) the law asks, “How little must I do to fulfill my duty and meet God’s demands?” The law mentality is hemmed in by rigid rules, protocols, and distinctions. When one lives by the law, one also judges others by that law and typically shows no mercy. Ironically, however, one often rationalizes shortcomings in one’s own life while holding others to the strictest standards. When one lives by the law, one is focused on not committing murder or adultery and doesn’t even recognize that he/she is showing favoritism or failing in other significant ways.

One who keeps the royal law of love looks beyond a person’s wealth, status, or station in life and simply loves them. One who loves asks, “How much can I do

to please God and demonstrate his love and mercy to others?" There is much freedom and joy in this. One is not hemmed in and concerned about what others are or aren't doing. Love does not merely focus on avoidance of evil, but actively and aggressively pursues the other person on God's behalf. Living a life of love does not compartmentalize, but recognizes that all of life is integrated and my choices in one area of life affect all other areas of my life. Love demonstrates much mercy, because it recognizes that it has received much mercy. Thank God that he lavished us with his love and mercy and that Christ received judgment on our behalf!)

6. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?
7. How will you put this into practice?

Week Four – Two kinds of faith (2:14-26)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 2:14-26 through several times and meditate on it.
3. What is faith? What does James mean by “faith” in this passage.

(Faith is synonymous with trusting God, relying on him, depending on him, following him. Don't think of faith as adherence to a code of beliefs. Faith is highly relational in this context.)

4. In this passage, James describes two kinds of faith. What are they?

(The two kinds of faith are a dead faith and a living faith. The one is a faith that claims relationship with Christ but bears no evidence—fruit or life-change—that faith is phony. The other faith is one that demonstrates intimacy with Christ based on visible, tangible evidence of Christlike character born out in actions and deeds.)

5. In verse 14 James says, “If a man claims to have faith but has no deeds, can such faith save him?” And in verse 24 he says, “You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” The clear teaching of Scripture is that we are not justified before God by works: Romans 3:20-24; 4:1-8; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-6. Assuming God does not contradict himself, what does James mean in this passage? How is this relevant for us today?

(To the casual reader it may seem like James is contradicting Scripture and saying that works, in addition to faith, play an important role in our salvation. But on closer inspection (in context) what James argues is that a faith based on claims alone, but demonstrating no life change is a sham, a hoax, and an imposter. It's not real faith, so he argues that this kind of faith cannot save. This makes total sense, because it is a dead faith.

So James urges us to apply the “deeds test” to our faith to determine the genuineness of our faith. This is the same thing as the “illusion of intimacy” that we often talk about. “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” – James 2:19.

This topic is relevant for us today because many think that if they have the right doctrine; the right set of beliefs; and can give the “right answers”, then they're “in” with God. They equate faith with the right doctrine.

Others think that as long they have “received Christ as Savior” it really doesn't matter how they live their lives. They're now children of God. He loves them and will make it all good in the end. Right? They equate faith with right confession.

James challenges us to evaluate our faith: that unless our lives bear evidence of

Christ's work in the way we live, talk and think, we may only think we're saved. Our faith may be dead—worthless.

Christlike deeds or godly behavior and actions result from and are the litmus test for genuine faith. This is why we stress the importance of having a "story that is fresh".

Ask: What is God doing in your life right now? In what areas are you winning as you trust him. In what areas are you struggling? How can we pray for you?)

6. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?
7. How will you put this into practice?

Week Five – Taming of the tongue! (3:1-12)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 3:1-12 through several times and meditate on it.
3. What is the point or the meaning behind verse 1? (*See The Message. Rob's paraphrase: "Don't be too quick or flippant about wanting to be everyone else's teacher! Don't be over anxious to instruct others! The more you open your mouth, the greater the likelihood that you'll stumble. The question is, how great an audience do you want when you blow it"?* See also Prov 10:19-21.)
4. In what way is our tongue a gauge or indicator of our walk with God? (*See "perfect man" and relate back to 1:4 "mature" in that verse is the same Grk. word as "perfect" in 3:2. Jesus said in Mat 12:34, "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." [See also Luke 6:45.] So what we say springs from our heart – our desires, our thoughts, our will. When we speak something, we generally become what we speak. E.g., we "stand" behind or back our words. That's why it is significant to "confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord" – Rom 10:9. We typically do what we say to protect our egos and image. So, James argues that if we can control what we say, we will in essence be able to control our whole body, or the rest of our behavior.*)
5. What do a horse's bridle and a ship's rudder have in common with the tongue? (*In verses 3-4, James gives us to analogies for what he's saying about the tongue: a horse's bridle and a ship's rudder. Even though either of those items is small and insignificant in terms of the size of the object they steer, the bridle and rudder are extremely effective. In the same way, the tongue effectively steers the rest of the body. Ask someone for an example of what this looks like practically, or provide one yourself.*

Here is an opportunity to give the "reigns" of our tongue to God and to give him the control of our "rudder". This is not just a one-time issue of surrender, but a daily, moment-by-moment series of choices to surrender control to God instead of grabbing it back for ourselves. See Luke 9:23.)
6. How does James illustrate the extent of the impact of our words in verses 5-6? (*James is not saying the tongue is not capable of good. Nor is he saying that if we cut our tongues out we would be the better for it! He is merely emphasizing very strongly the far-reaching effects of the tongue! See Isa 6:1-5. Note also that it was through words that the evil one tempted Adam and Eve.*)
7. Read vs. 7-12. What conclusions does James bring us to regarding the tongue? What dangers? What hope? (*This is a picture of a double-minded person again. Link this passage back to Jesus' words again in Luke 6:45. See also Eph 4:20-32 and notice all the references to our words.*)

8. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?
9. How will you put this into practice?

Week Six – Two kinds of wisdom (3:13-18)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 3:13-18 through several times and meditate on it.
3. What is *wisdom* and what's the difference between *wisdom* and *knowledge*? (*Wisdom is "applied knowledge". According to The American Heritage Dictionary, wisdom is: 1) the ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight. 2) Common sense; good judgment.*)
4. Much the same way that James contrasted two kinds of faith in chapter 2; here he contrasts two kinds of wisdom. What are the characteristics of wisdom that comes from God? What are the characteristics of wisdom that is earthly? (*Note that as with living faith, godly wisdom results in godly character and godly actions.*)
5. What do "bitter envy and self ambition" have to do with the subject of wisdom? (*Wisdom, like faith, must be expressed or exercised in order to be visible and detectible. Wisdom or faith kept to oneself is not wisdom or faith. Wisdom is not wisdom until expressed and recognized as such by others. So, whether James is talking about the royal law of love, living faith, the tongue, and now wisdom, a common thread is that they all express themselves in relationship with others. This fact is especially made clear in The Message version of this passage (read).*)
6. Why do envy and selfish ambition breed disorder and every evil practice? (*Here again, one is tempted to compartmentalization. We rationalize that envy or selfish ambition are internal emotions and "don't hurt anybody". God sees it differently—as it actually plays out. For when we are envious of others or selfishly ambitious, these internal emotions play themselves out in favoritism, lashing out with the tongue, fights and quarrels, and even violent acts (4:1-3). The fact is that sin—regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant—breeds sin. Sin has no evolution. Sin makes quantum leaps.*)
7. Reread James 1:5. Tie that verse in with what we read about wisdom in 3:13-18. (*We are encouraged to ask God for wisdom and that he gives generously to all that ask. See also Proverbs 2:6. We also find here that there is a counterfeit wisdom of the world that is boastful and deceitful. True wisdom from God is God-dependent and therefore humble. A humble person always remembers who they are and what they could be apart from God. Notice again, that the characteristics and actions of God's wisdom reflect God's character.*)
8. What does verse 18 mean? (*See the New Living Translation or The Message for help. Notice that just as sin breeds sin, so right-living breeds righteousness!*)
9. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?

10. How will you put this into practice?

Week Seven – How to get ahead in life (4:1-10)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 4:1-10 through several times and meditate on it.
3. According to James 4:1 what is the cause of fights and quarrels among us?

(The word "desires" is the Greek word for "hedonism" = living a life focused on satisfying one's pleasures. "Desires" in vs. 1 is the same word as "pleasures" in vs. 3. Cross reference this passage with Romans 6:11-14.)

Why does living for our own desires/pleasures result in friction and discord between others and us?

4. Look at James 4:2-3 and relate it back to James 2:1-13. What is the correlation between these two passages? (I.e., under which type of law is the person in 4:2 living?) Is this passage merely speaking about a lust for stuff?

(James 4:2-3 portrays a person living under the law. Again, because this person covets another's belongings, wealth, status, fame, etc.; we're reminded again that to break the law in one point is to have broken it in all points (e.g., murder as well).

5. In James 4:4-6, what does James mean by "friendship with the world"?

(This can be very tricky, because James is dealing here with more than just a desire for stuff. He is talking about a mindset and a lifestyle intimately entangled in the world system. Again, he speaks of the double-mindedness of an individual who longs and lusts for all the world promises him, while hoping to buddy-up with God too. In fact, James uses the metaphor of marriage, arguing that our hedonism (pursuit of pleasure) puts us in bed with the world, thus breaking our pledge of union with God. As The Message puts it, "God is a jealous husband." Note also that while pride is a telltale sign of one's abandonment to the world system, humility is the hallmark of the friend of God.

Also, notice that friendship of the world equates to hatred toward God and being an enemy of God. In this truth we realize that our "fights and quarrels" resulting from our hedonistic desires are ultimately fights and quarrels with God. We are not satisfied with him or in what he has given us or is doing in our lives.)

What is grace? (We often say that grace is unmerited favor and it is. But in this context as well as others, grace is God-given power or strength to do what pleases him. Therefore, as we humble ourselves before God, he gives us grace to overcome the world, the devil, and our lust for what they promise.)

6. Read James 4:7-10. How does James tell us to approach God in view of our double-mindedness toward the world? What does it mean to submit ourselves to

God? And what will be the outcome of our right relationship with God?

(In humility, we are to submit ourselves to God. To submit to him is to obey him, desire him, find our satisfaction in him, and align our lives with him. We are to draw near to him. He wants our company and our fellowship/partnership and he will never push us away. He invites us to wash our hands and purify our hearts (See Psalm 24:4). While he tells us to do these things, we recognize that only God's grace can cleanse our dirty hands and hearts.

Exchanging our laughter for mourning and joy to gloom are expressions of contrition, repentance and humility. James is not suggesting that we go about in mourning and gloom until Christ's return! God's promise to us is to "lift us up". (See Psalm 3:3; 40:2; and 145:13-15.)

7. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?
8. How will you put this into practice?

Week Eight – How not to get ahead in life (4:11-5:6)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 4:11-5:6 through several times and meditate on it.
3. In this portion of James, he introduces three examples of how many people live a life of pride instead of humbling themselves before God (4:10). Reread 4:11-12. In what way does this behavior exhibit pride? *(When we slander, speak evil of or judge someone, we are in essence stepping away from the royal law of love and are placing ourselves under a law mentality and economy. James has already argued that when we do that, we ourselves are guilty because we don't and can't keep the very law that we hold others accountable to. In this way, we are very proud judging someone else by a standard we don't and can't keep.)*

Also, relate this passage back to what James introduced as the "royal law of love" in 2:8-13. What does it mean in this context to "judge" someone? Why does James conclude that if we speak against a brother or sister that we are speaking against the law and judging it? *(By judging someone against a law that we don't keep ourselves, we set ourselves up as the lawgiver and judge. We judge the law in that we hold others to a strict standard, while excusing ourselves from the same standard. We decide what's important and not important and bend the law to meet our desires. But the role of lawgiver and judge is not ours for the taking! This puts us in direct conflict with God, because we are usurping his authority. In this respect we are very prideful in our attempt to play God's role in the lives of others.)*

4. Read James 4:13-17. In what way is this behavior prideful? *(Note that James is not speaking against initiative, industriousness, or making money. The issue is that this person has left God out of the equation. This person proceeds through life as though God doesn't exist or as though he is disinterested in our daily affairs. This is a subtle but deadly form of pride. It is a boasting about one's own dreams, plans or achievements without thought for or giving credit to God. Pride is a life lived independent from God. The humble draw near to God and align their lives with him and his desires. The humble submit to God's sovereign rule. See 1 Chronicles 29:10-16 and James 1:17. Also, if we conduct our lives independent from God, we pursue a worldly focus, goals and mindset. In so doing, we will miss all that God has for us – things our puny minds could not conceive – Ephesians 3:20. Comment again on the dangers of compartmentalization in this context.)*
5. Read James 5:1-6. How is this a prideful lifestyle? What's the message here for you? *(Again, don't miss the fact that the issue here is not "the rich". Ask the participants to identify the specific behaviors of these people that grieve God so. E.g., they have hoarded wealth; withheld wages from their workers; lived a life of self-indulgence; and condemned and murdered innocent people who stood in their way.*

The message here that hits all of us between the eyes is that pride is a life lived in self-indulgence. Each of the three types of people James features here: the slanderer, the schemer and the self-indulgent are living a life independent from God. In fact they cry out, "I am God!" Notice that anytime we supplant God's leadership in our lives and refuse to humble ourselves before him, sin becomes rampant. It is uncontrollable. What began as a harsh word, a boasting, or self-indulgence is a short step to stealing and murder. This again speaks of the dangers of compartmentalization.)

6. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?
7. How will you put this into practice?

Week Nine – Anticipate the Lord’s return! (5:7-20)

1. Review the passages that precede and follow this passage for context.
2. Read 5:7-20 through several times and meditate on it.
3. Look at James 5:7-12. James makes a connection between what he just wrote about the self-indulgent who take advantage of others and our need to be patient until the Lord’s return. This would suggest that his hearers have been the victims of those described in 5:1-6.

Focus on 5:7-12. Discuss the metaphor of the farmer here and what we can learn from his patience in waiting for the crops. Also, how can the Scripture claim that the “Lord’s coming is near”? And why does James again warn them (us) not to grumble against each other? *(The metaphor of the farmer is fitting because the farmer can only do so much. With God’s strength and provision, he can prepare the ground for sowing, he can sow good seed, and he can fertilize. But beyond that, the farmer is utterly dependent on God to provide rain, sunshine, and warmth for his crops to grow. As James puts it, the farmer must patiently wait. We too must do what God has given us to do and to do it in his strength and provision and then wait patiently for him to return.)*

With respect to the nearness of the Lord’s return, we struggle. We are so time focused and time oriented that minutes waiting at a traffic light or seconds waiting for our computer to respond can become major irritants triggering even anger and harsh words or actions. Peter gives us some insight into this issue in 2 Peter 3:3-15. Also, James has already reminded us to view life from God’s perspective not ours. In 4:14, he likens our life to a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. From God’s eternal perspective, he tells us that his return is near. From our finite perspective, we don’t know whether that means tonight or after we’re gone. Don’t focus on the timing of his return; focus on him! See also Matthew 24:48 with regard to verse 9.

In verses 10-11, James reminds us to find comfort in the way God has worked in the lives of others. Go to the OT prophets and be comforted when you are under attack. Trust God! He is full of compassion and mercy!

What’s the significance of verse 12? Why does he say, “Above all”? *(The practice in that day of swearing on this or that created a hierarchy of truth. The greater the object upon which one swore, the more likely he would follow through with his promise. Conversely, they rationalized that a word spoken without an oath was not binding. This reveals a duplicity or double-mindedness, which James has already condemned. The reason James says, “above all” here refers back to what he’s established earlier. Namely, “If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check” – 3:2. And, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” – 1:8. And, “be quick to listen and slow to speak” – 1:19. Then, let what you say be truthful, kind and fitting for the*

moment. When you say "yes", follow through with what you committed to.)

4. Read James 5:13-20 from the standpoint that this is God's will for us as we humble ourselves before him and wait patiently for his return. What are some things we learn about prayer here? What is the connection between godly living and effective prayer? *(Though it's implied here, prayer to God is a humble activity. We come to him from a stance of need and dependence. Remember, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." – John Piper. Prayer is turning our focus and attention off our circumstances and lifting them to God who is eternal, all-powerful, and full of compassion and mercy. From this text we see that prayer is always appropriate in any and every situation. God also promises to respond to our prayers. He clearly indicates here that things will happen as a result of prayer that would not have happened otherwise!*

He also links effectiveness and power in prayer to godly living. This makes sense, since the one who is not aligned with God can't even know or suspect what God wants to do in a given situation. Whereas, the one who is walking with God and has his life aligned with him and listens to his voice, knows the mind and heart of God and asks for things in faith and according to God's will. When this happens God delights in answering our prayers – see James 1:5-6; John 14:13-14; and 1 John 5:14.

James 5:19-20 is a great reminder that instead of judging, slandering and condemning a brother or sister, our desire should be their restoration!

5. How is God speaking to you personally in this passage? What does he want to change in you?
6. How will you put this into practice?