



Week 1 Small Group: Genuine Faith

OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, even as people of faith our lives can be messy and difficult. We have come together to collectively devote ourselves to holy living, through the care and support of this community. May our time together help us to live out what it means to be a committed follower of Jesus. Amen.

Quote:

"Keep an even pace, rooted in the faith once delivered to the saints, and grounded in love, in true catholic love, till you are swallowed up in love for ever and ever!" John Wesley

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What was the worst style choice you ever made?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read James 2:1-7;14-17

- What are the questions that the author asks?
- What is the good news in this passage? What effect do the questions have on the reader?
- What do you think faith is based on in this passage?

NEXT STEPS:

- What is God saying to you through this passage?
- Do you ever find yourself judging people by their outward appearances or opinion of their circumstances?
- The Book of James is written to a specific religious community. James lifts up some real concerns and dissensions. What are some of the underlying ethics in this passage? This might be something to consider this week.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious God, as we close out our time together, we thank you for our time together. Allow what we have discussed to bear fruit in our lives. We lift the needs of all those who are a part of this group as well as our congregation and community. May we go forth in a way that leads to new life and a deeper faith, not just for us but for all we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Week 2 Small Group: Do No Harm

OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, as we gather today in your name, may the words of the scriptures fill our hearts, minds and souls. May the conversation around this table guide us, correct us and transform us to live more like you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Quote:

"I continue to dream and pray about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfill God's creational intentions." John Wesley

BREAKING THE ICE:

- Are you a listener or a talker?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read James 3:1-12

- Make a list of all the images in this passage. Does any particular image stand out to you? Why?
- What is the analogy between the teacher and the tongue? Why might there be stricter rules for the teachers?
- According to James, how can the tongue cause harm?

NEXT STEPS:

- The Book of James is less about personal piety and more about communal living. How could this passage affect life in a community today?
- What are some ways you have hurt people with your speech? Ask yourself, "What might I need to confess in light of what this teaches me?"
- How might this scripture be twisted to silence people? How can we avoid this?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious God, as we close out our time together, we thank you for our time together. Allow what we have discussed to bear fruit in our lives. We lift the needs of all those who are a part of this group as well as our congregation and community. May we go forth in a way that leads to new life and a deeper faith, not just for us but for all we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Week 3 Small Group: Do Good



OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, we thank you for this time to gather and to learn your ways. Increase our wisdom and our faith. Allow our conversation to spark us to seek to do good in your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Quote:

"Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." John Wesley

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What is the best advice you have been given?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read James 3:13-18; 4:1-3

- Circle all the words that are opposite or contrasting. How does this tension (such as selfish and helpful) point to the idea of "doing good"?
- What would James say is evidence of wisdom?
- This passage in James has some similar characteristics to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5:3-10). Name some of the similarities.

NEXT STEPS:

- What life experiences increase our wisdom? Are there experiences that detract from wisdom? How can you use the traits James lists to test the wisdom you give or receive?
- How might this text be misused? To keep people voiceless? To distort the role of prayer?
- Are there ways that you can "fight" for good that are pure, gentle, sensible, kind, helpful, genuine, and sincere?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious God, as we close out our time together, we thank you for our time together. Allow what we have discussed to bear fruit in our lives. We lift the needs of all those who are a part of this group as well as our congregation and community. May we go forth in a way that leads to new life and a deeper faith, not just for us but for all we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Week 4 Small Group: Stay in Love with God

OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, help us to study and learn how to apply your holy word to our lives. Place in us the desire to become more like you and to worship you in all we do. May we grow in this time in love with you and each other. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Quote:

"God is the first object of our love." John Wesley

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What's got your attention today, and why?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read James 5:13-20

- What are some of the acts of faith (staying in love with God) that James points to?
- What is James saying about sin?
- Consider what Jesus says about those who have wandered and strayed (Luke 15). How might you apply these practices alongside the directives in this passage?

NEXT STEPS:

- James points to the prophet Elijah and the power of prayer. (Read Kings 18:30-46). What were some of the characteristics of Elijah's prayers that James may have admired?
- There will be times when our prayers are not answered. How do you deal with the disappointment and stay in love with God?
- Considering all your readings in the past few weeks, what might have been happening in James' community that led to his writing this letter? How might some of the same things be occurring in our churches/communities today? Name one lesson that you learned from this study that you could apply to that circumstance.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious God, as we close out our time together, we thank you for our time together. Allow what we have discussed to bear fruit in our lives. We lift the needs of all those who are a part of this group as well as our congregation and community. May we go forth in a way that leads to new life and a deeper faith, not just for us but for all we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.