

foundations[®] for Middle School



20 Day Devotional for STUDENTS

The Book of James



SOUTHLAND
CHURCH

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

Welcome to...

**foundations[®]
for Middle School**

Dear Student,

This eBook is a tool that we hope will help you to get into the habit of doing regular devotions with Jesus. Now what are devotions? Devotions are simply a time you set aside to spend time with Jesus one-on-one! When you do devotions you pray, read your Bible and listen to God's voice for encouragement and direction in your life. You may already do this, or maybe you don't know where to start. This eBook is a GREAT place to start! Each time you do devotions you will want your Bible, a journal (like a notebook) and a pen!

Each eBook has 20 days of ideas for your devotion time. Don't worry if you miss a day, just skip it and if you have time go back and do it on the weekend.

If you have any questions about this eBook or how to do devotions please ask Pastor Amy or Kyle – of course you can email me directly as well! I trust you will grow closer and closer to Jesus this year!

In Him,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thom Dick', with a stylized, cursive script.

Thom Dick
Pastor of Resource Development
Southland Church

We welcome any ideas you have to make *Foundations for Middle School* better. If you want to offer some feedback or have questions about how to use *Foundations* more effectively talk to the pastor in your ministry area or email Pastor Thom at thom@mysouthland.com.

Foundations for Middle School is also available for download at www.therenewedfamily.com.

foundations[®]
for Middle School

Memory Verses

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

James 1:5 (NLT)

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

James 1:19 (NLT)

In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire.

James 3:5 (NLT)

Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.

James 4:8 (NLT)

DAY ONE: Read James 1:1

THINK ON IT!

You're going to love the book of James. For one thing, it's not hard to understand at all and there is TONS of practical stuff for everyday life – including the life of a student. Plus, James uses great word pictures to describe what he is talking about. When he is talking about watching our words he says the tongue is like a fire! Oh yes, there is a lot of stuff here to learn from James!

No one is 100% certain which James wrote this book. The Bible talks about four James, but the most important one and the one who likely wrote this book is James, the brother of Jesus! (Ok first of all, just imagine how much it would have sucked having a perfect brother like Jesus!)

James, the brother of Jesus, didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah while he was alive (John 7:2-5). But later in 1 Corinthians 15:7 and Acts 1:14 we read that Jesus appeared to His mother and his brothers. After this James became a very important leader in the Church.

This book is a little bit like the book of Proverbs, lots of advice broken down into neat little sections. It could be that it is actually a collection of his sermon notes! He wrote it to "the 12 tribes in the Dispersion" which means he was probably writing it for Jewish Christians who lived outside of Jerusalem – the Jews who had been *dispersed* or scattered throughout the world.

I hope you learn lots by spending time in the book of James! I know that if you read carefully and prayerfully, God will change your heart!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Ask Jesus to give you a picture of what He wants you to learn this month as you read the book of James.
2. Spend some time thinking about wise people in your life. Who are they? What have they taught you?
3. Thank God for the wisdom in the Bible, especially in the book of James.

HIDE IT!!

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. **James 1:5 (NLT)***

DAY TWO: Read James 1:2-11

THINK ON IT!!

The first part of James 1 talks about trials and wisdom. In fact, crazy old James even says that we should find joy in the trials that we face. Now that may seem insane, but really when you think about it, doesn't it make sense? Have you ever worked really hard for something? Maybe if you're a guy you decided to start doing sit-ups to get that six-pack. Maybe if you're a girl you think that guy is ridiculous. But then again maybe the guy thinks you're ridiculous for the amount of time you spend reading!

Reading, working out, studying, practicing an instrument...so many things in life take time and energy to get an amazing result – but is the end worth it? That feeling of accomplishment is GREAT!

Now why would being a Christian be any different? Of course it is hard work! But think about the payoff! A close relationship with the God of the universe. Now this is the thing: when you are working on whatever you want to get good at, very often you don't know what to do next, so you ask someone who knows more than you. Well, spiritual trials can produce good results, but you might need to ask God to know how to move forward. So you see, trials always go together with wisdom!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Do you do something that takes a lot of work or practice? What is it?
2. Why do you spend so much time with that hobby or sport or whatever? What will the result be if you stick with it?
3. Ask Jesus to show you whether you have been sticking with your faith in Him. If you haven't ask Him to help you! And even if you and Jesus are doing super good right now, ask Him what you could do next to take your relationship with Him to another level.

HIDE IT!!

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. **James 1:5 (NLT)***

DAY THREE: Read James 1:12-18

THINK ON IT!!

These verses talk about sin in a really unusual way. They say that there is a sort of process that goes on when we fall into sin. First of all, don't you dare accuse God of tempting you...that's nonsense, He doesn't tempt you, you get into enough trouble all on your own! And why is that?

Because you have desires. Now many of your desires are good! In fact one of your desires might even be to BE good! Nothing wrong with that. But then there are these desires that aren't good. In fact, I remember clearly when I was in grade four and I desired to be *bad*. Why would anyone want that? Maybe it was because I wasn't a popular kid and it seemed like the bad kids got all the attention.

Desire is like a thought that pops into your head. "Steal the cookie!" it says to you. But at this point it's just a desire, no big deal, it is what you DO with that desire that is a big deal. Do you obey the desire or do you obey the Truth? Do you think through what the consequences of your actions might be or do you just act? Because if you just act, then what happens is that the desire turns into sin, and that's *not good*. Sin is a trap and just like a fly caught in a spider's web, the more you mess around with sin, the more you will get stuck in it, until that sin kills you. Say what?

No it's true! Romans 3:23 says that the wages of sin is death! So you mess with sin long enough and it will kill you! So watch out, kid! There's danger up ahead. Don't follow desire, deal with it as soon as it pops into your head.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Are there things in your heart that you want but that you know will lead you into sin? What are they? Write them down in your journal.
2. Now ask God for a strategy to say no to those desires! What will you do the next time you are tempted? Pray? Go for a jog? Listen to worship music? Talk to your parents or a friend? Write down your plan.
3. Finally, ask God if sin is starting to grow in your life. If it is confess it and ask Jesus to help you to deal with it before it leads to death.

HIDE IT!!

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. James 1:5 (NLT)

DAY FOUR: Read James 1:19-25

THINK ON IT!!

Do you ever find yourself speaking before you think? Wow, can that ever get you into trouble! Do you ever find that you have what might be called a short fuse? Is the distance from you being annoyed to you being REALLY RIPPING MAD a short trip? Or do you find that it is easy to listen first and keep your cool? Well, James says “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” And then he goes on to say that anger is a serious problem that God has trouble working with.

But how do we deal with anger? By reading God’s word and by actually doing it. Really? That’s it? Actually it is. **Isaiah 26:3** says *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!* How do you fix your thoughts on something? By doing something. It’s like this: If you love hockey, you might read a book about a great hockey player or watch a movie about hockey and you would definitely watch hockey on TV, but does that mean you’re thinking about hockey *all the time*? No because, you might be watching hockey and then your mom brings in some sweet fresh cookies, I promise you for a least a bit you’ll start thinking about those warm, sweet, soft and chewy chocolate chip cookies. Kind of like you’re thinking about them right now. And you are feeling hungry.

BUT if you are *playing* hockey that is entirely different! When you play hockey, when you’re right in the game you can’t do anything BUT think about hockey. It’s like that with God! When you are actually DOING Christianity, DOING what it says in the Bible, then you will be thinking a lot about God, your thoughts will be fixed on Him and He’ll keep you in peace.

Peace comes when we not only hear what we are supposed to do, but we do it.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Is there something you feel like God is telling you to do that you haven’t been? What is it? Write it down.
2. Now make a plan. When are you going to DO the thing He is telling you?

HIDE IT!!

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. James 1:5 (NLT)

DAY FIVE: Read James 1:26-27

THINK ON IT!!

Today's reading was short, just two verses, but boy oh boy it is ever packed with stuff. And these verses are *exactly* why I like James so much. He's like "so you think you're pretty sweet stuff eh? A pretty good student? A pretty good Christian? THEN WHY DO YOU ALWAYS RUNNING YOUR MOUTH OFF LIKE THAT?" Punch in the gut...that's why I like James.

When it comes to being a Christian it can be really hard to find the balance between feeling rotten all the time because you are frustrated with sin in your life and feeling really awesome because things are good and easy and the worship was loud and you feel great. But somewhere in the middle James tells us that, look there is a way to tell how good you are doing: 1) Do you run your mouth off all the time? Because if you do, you're heart isn't right. And 2) Do you care for people who are in need? James calls them the orphan and the widow.

An orphan is someone who doesn't have parents and a widow is someone whose husband has died. It may be that God wants you to care for literal orphans and widows, but in James' time orphans and widows *were* the most needy people...so really the message James has is, are you caring for the most needy people in your life?

We need to learn to control our tongues, stop talking a big game, and actually help those who need helping!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Is there someone in your class who needs you? Maybe to be a friend? Maybe to buy them lunch? Maybe to write them a card? Maybe to just pray for them? Maybe to pick up some groceries for them with your parents? Who is it and what does God want you to do to help them?

HIDE IT!!

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. James 1:5 (NLT)

DAY SIX: Read James 2:1-7

THINK ON IT!!

Ok this passage makes some statements about favouritism, rich people and poor people. In the time of James and Jesus the gap between the rich and the poor was enormous. Basically if you were born poor you would die poor and being poor in those days meant you were *really poor*. With such an impossible situation you might be tempted to treat someone different just because they had money. Maybe you would think they would be generous to you if they got to know you, help you out of being poor, lend you a bit of money, talk to their other rich friends about you. But that, James says, is favouritism and has no place in the life of a Christian!

That isn't exactly how things look today, at least not as obvious. You may try to hang out with rich friends because their parents have a pool, or dirt bikes, or they give sick birthday presents, but there are many other types of favouritism as well.

What about only inviting your Christian friends over to your house and not the kid who doesn't believe what you do? What about hanging out with the new kid from a different country who doesn't speak English well? When it's time for a group project, or a team event, do you stack the team? Do you dread working or playing with someone?

James says this attitude is a problem and that you should check your heart before God if you think this way!

ACT ON IT!!

1. The Bible tells us that only God can know our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7), in fact, He knows our hearts better than we do (Jeremiah 17:9), so it is a good idea to let Him do a sort of spiritual check-up – a scan – of your heart. Ask the Lord to show you any place where you play favourites and confess that to Him as sin, asking for His forgiveness.

HIDE IT!!

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19 (NLT)

DAY SEVEN: Read James 2:8-13

THINK ON IT!!

Today we are going to zero in on one verse, **James 2:10 (NLT)** *For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.*

There aren't many things that are all or nothing in life. Like in car racing, the first person gets the most points in the division, but most of the cars get at least a few points even if they came in 15th. It would be a little unusual on a spelling test for your teacher to say, "Uh oh, you spelled this word wrong I guess that means you fail the test." No that's silly.

However, with God there are some all or nothing situations; sin is one of them. In God's eyes you being a liar is just as sinful as being a murderer. Now it is definitely true that different sins have different consequences *on earth*. You will go to jail for murdering someone, but you won't likely go to jail for lying about something. In heaven though, every sin falls under one great big category: *rebellion*. And when you rebel against the King, there are serious consequences.

Fortunately though, God is all or nothing in another way as well, His forgiveness for our sins. And if you are serious about being a Christian, God really does forgive ALL of your sins. He doesn't just forgive the least ones that don't really matter, He forgives them *all*. And THAT is really good news.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Think about some of the sins you have done in your life. The list is pretty long and not pretty right? But now ask yourself a question, have you confessed every single little sin that you have ever committed? No of course not, you don't even remember some of the sins you commit. But God forgives them all when you come and ask Him to be the Lord of your life! This is GREAT NEWS!
2. Spend some time thanking God for this. That even though you are guilty of breaking all of His laws (if you have broken one), that He has paid for them all so that we can be free of them!

HIDE IT!!

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19 (NLT)

DAY EIGHT: Read James 2:14-19

THINK ON IT!!

In this section James writes about having faith and having works. What is faith? Faith is believing in what is not seen and hoping for what hasn't happened yet. Faith is believing that God is who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do! Faith is very important, in fact, the Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

But this is the thing, just because you have faith doesn't mean much unless there are some actions to back it up. Now the big lie that everyone thinks of right here is that you have to do stuff to earn God's favour or get into heaven, nope that's poppycock (a British word for "nonsense"). The Bible is clear when it says that you can't earn your way to heaven (Ephesian 2:8-9). *However* when you *do* believe in God, you *will* behave differently and you will do different things than if you did not believe in God.

This is a very important point so let me say it again: There is nothing you can do to earn God's love and get to heaven, BUT when you ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life, it will SHOW!

That "showing" is what James calls "works". Works prove, in a sense, that you are actually a Christian. In fact if nothing "shows" up in your life and you say you're a Christian, there's a chance you are fooling yourself!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Think about when you gave your heart to Jesus. Why did you do it? How old were you? Who helped you? (By the way, if you have never given your heart to Jesus you can definitely talk to your leader about that!)
2. Did your life change because you gave your heart to Jesus? In what way? Chances are good that it didn't change a lot at first, but if you were to think of what would be different NOW if you weren't a Christian, can you see there is a difference? Ask God to show you what your life would be like without Him.

HIDE IT!!

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19 (NLT)

DAY NINE: Read James 2:20-26

THINK ON IT!!

The Bible is full of people who believed in God and their faith was proved by what they did. James just mentions two people in this passage, Abraham and Rahab, but they are just a few among tons of examples.

What I love about the examples James chooses though is that they are about as opposite as you can get. Abraham was a man, Rahab was a woman. Abraham was rich, Rahab was likely poor. Abraham became the leader of a large family and was very well respected, Rahab appears to have been a sinful woman who let men do things to her body for money; not exactly respectable.

But both of them were faithful to God and their actions proved it! Both of them took HUGE risks for God and were rewarded! Their lives show us what it means to have faith and works.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Who are some other examples of heroes in the Bible, who believed in God and lived like it? Write down their names and what they did.
2. Now ask Jesus what is the evidence in YOUR life that you believe in Him. Ask Him to show you times when you make a good choice because you are a Christian.
3. Isn't it amazing to think that no matter who you are, whether you are big or small, God rewards those who live for Him?

HIDE IT!!

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19 (NLT)

DAY TEN: Read James 3:1-6

THINK ON IT!!

If you ever felt small and that you can't make much of a difference because of it, you just need to read what James has to say about a small tongue! James seems to think that this small part of the body is capable of doing some pretty big damage.

Now James isn't actually talking about your tongue he is talking about your *words*. Your words are very, very powerful. If anyone has ever said they hated you or wished you were dead you will know how powerful they are. I have met people who were told they were fat when they were in middle school and they still believe it when they are adults. Words are a serious thing!

Proverbs 18:21 says that even the power of life and death are in the tongue. That simply means that your words can give people life or they can tear people down. It's a bit terrifying to think that the words you speak right now to the people around you actually have the power to change their lives. But that IS what James is saying and we had better pay attention.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Do you run your mouth a lot? Are your words mean? Everyone can be mean from time to time with their words. Write down specific times in your journal. Confess any times that you have been careless or hurtful with your words.
2. Now pray the opposite words over the people you were mean to. What that means is if you told them they were stupid, ask God to show them that they are smart. If you told them they were ugly, ask God to help them believe that they are beautiful.
3. The amazing thing is that although words are powerful, so is prayer and so is God!

HIDE IT!!

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19 (NLT)

DAY ELEVEN: Read James 3:7-12

THINK ON IT!!

Back to that tongue of yours.

Do you ever catch yourself swearing when you hurt yourself or mess up in sports, or do you ever use dirty language to tell jokes? James tells us that this is a serious problem.

It's amazing that we can be so careless with our words and then go to church and sing and pray and thank God with our words! You know what this makes us? Hypocrites! A hypocrite is someone who acts one way and then the opposite way, or who says that you should do "this" but really doesn't do what he tells others is important.

And God says the reality is, only one kind of words can come from a person, they are either good or bad, wholesome or dirty, pure or impure. So even if you *think* that you can worship God and turn around and insult your sister, God says, nuh-uh, no way, that doesn't work. If we want God to accept our praises, and to answer our prayers, we had better clean up the language we use *all* the time.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Do you have a problem with swearing or cursing? Confess it if you do.
2. Ask God to show you whether you ever say things that you don't yourself do. Confess that you are a hypocrite sometimes.
3. Ask God to help you to clean up your language so that when you praise Him, He will find it acceptable and beautiful!

HIDE IT!!

In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. James 3:5 (NLT)

DAY TWELVE: Read James 3:13-18

THINK ON IT!!

This passage today might be a bit confusing when you read it the first time, so I would suggest you read it several times and see if you can make sense of it.

Essentially what James is saying is this, you can tell the difference between good, godly wisdom (wisdom from above) and human, earthly wisdom (what he calls demonic). And what is the test for where the wisdom comes from? The fruit it produces. This means that if the results of the wisdom is good then it is good wisdom. Kind of like what Jesus said in Matthew 12 about a tree being known by its fruit. No one goes up to an orange tree and says, "Look at this amazing pine tree." Or walks up to a coconut tree and says, "Look at this tree with its funny hairy apples!" That's just weirdness.

So also with wisdom. If someone gives you advice and the result (or the fruit) is that your friends are mad at you or you fail an exam, then their advice was BAD! If on the other hand the result of their advice is you do well on your test, build friendship, act respectfully etc. the advice was GOOD!

James says it this way, **James 3:17 (HCSB)** *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy.* If you are looking for wisdom and advice and the results are found on this list, you have found some great wisdom to live by!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Have you ever taken someone's advice and things did NOT work out well?
2. What about have you taken someone's advice and things worked out awesome?
3. What was the difference between the people giving advice?
4. Ask God to help you to be the source of good wisdom! Ask Him to make you wise so that you can judge between what is good "wisdom from above" and bad wisdom.

HIDE IT!!

In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. James 3:5 (NLT)

DAY THIRTEEN: Read James 4:1-5

THINK ON IT!!

Oh boy James is up to it again; using strong language to point out what is wrong with the world...and us. Here he says inside of us are cravings that are at war. It makes sense that if you are at school and you want to play dolls (haha yeah right) and your friend wants to play with My Little Ponies (snicker snicker) that you are going to have a girl fight on your hands. There are two different desires at work. One will have to give in to the other!

But James says, that's obvious, but what isn't so obvious is that there is actually war going on *inside* of each person! This is what Paul talked about in Romans 7 when he says that he keeps doing the very thing he doesn't want to do! There's a war. One side is in agreement with Jesus and one side is in agreement with the sinful part of us and it affects a lot of our lives. In fact this is one of the reasons our prayers sometimes don't work!

All James is saying here is that if you think that you can have it both ways, God's way and sin's way, you are really mistaken! It's God's way or no way. James says it this way, "Don't you know that anyone who wants to be friends with the world [sin] is an enemy of God?" Don't be fooled into a bad friendship! God's ways are better ways, and you want to be on His side!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Sometimes we choose to do things that "feed" the sinful part of us. We watch movies that aren't "really" bad. Or we convince ourselves that we need to practice sports instead of spending time with Jesus. Do you do anything that has been feeding the sinful part of you? Ask the Lord to show you.
2. Now ask God how you can STARVE the sinful part of you! What are the things you can do that cut out the sin in your life? What is ONE thing you can do *today* to starve that part out?

HIDE IT!!

In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. James 3:5 (NLT)

DAY FOURTEEN: Read James 4:6-12

THINK ON IT!!

It can be pretty embarrassing to look at how bad we can be. Everyone has regrets about things they have done in their past, maybe even in the things they said this morning. Doesn't it just feel impossible to be good sometimes? That is actually a good place to be, you know why? Because it means that you are being honest! And hopefully by being honest you will go to Jesus for help.

James tells us that when we are honest with ourselves that is called humility and humility makes ALL the difference. Humility means that you are willing to learn from others and from God. It means that you realize you don't have what it takes alone. It means that you are truly sorry for the things you have done wrong and are willing to do whatever it takes to make them right.

When you feel like this, kind of like a kid who knows they have done wrong and can't look their mom and dad in the eyes because they feel so bad, then God says, "Awesome, now finally we can get somewhere!" When you come to God with this attitude, then *He* comes near to *you*. You know one of the major reasons that God doesn't feel close sometimes is that we are proud and don't think we need Him. How can He help you if you don't think you need His help? Ah! But when your heart is soft, and you feeling truly sorry, then God comes very close, pulls you into His arms, and says, "Son or daughter, let's work on this together, shall we?"

ACT ON IT!!

1. Do you have trouble admitting when you are wrong? Do you have trouble accepting advice? Everyone does from time to time, ask God to help you to be humble in these things.
2. Does God feel far away or close. If He feels distant, ask Him what you can do to feel closer to Him and if He feels close, ask Him what He wants to whisper into your ear. I'll bet it's going to be something amazing!
3. Write down whatever God shows you.

HIDE IT!!

In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. James 3:5 (NLT)

DAY FIFTEEN: Read James 4:13-17

THINK ON IT!!

We can sure make grand plans can't we? I know that when I was a kid I would daydream for hours (especially when I was doing boring chores like mowing the lawn). Sometimes we can think up adventures and stories so amazing and so grand that when we come back to real life it feels a bit disappointing.

God isn't upset when we plan for the future, He isn't even upset when we dream up grand adventures. But God wants to be a part of that planning and dreaming. When we give our dreams to God and say, "God if this is Your plan I'll do it" that shows that we are humble and our hearts are ready to do what God wants first.

And you know what God wants first? To simply do the things you know are right, right now. I think sometimes we get so caught up in our dreaming and planning that we forget that God has something for us to do right now – even if that is simply being kind. So can you plan and dream? Of course! But don't forget to give those plans and dreams to God and don't forget that you have a job to do right now!

ACT ON IT!!

1. What is a dream you have for the future? What would you like to be someday when you are an adult? Have you ever asked God what HE would like you to be or what HIS dream is for your life? Why not ask Him right now and write down what He shows you. This isn't something that is going to happen right away, but who knows maybe one day you will think back to *this journal entry* and remember what He told you!

HIDE IT!!

In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. James 3:5 (NLT)

DAY SIXTEEN: Read 5:1-6

THINK ON IT!

Umm...eek. Did you just read James 5:1-6? Wow, it doesn't seem like being rich is a really good idea does it? Ok so what do we do with this?

First of all, money isn't bad, and working hard to make money also isn't bad... but...money is one of those things that is a bottomless pit, you always think, ok if I just had a bit more *money* I would be happy. But nope! The truth is you wouldn't be, not likely. Money is absolutely NOT related to happiness, that is money's big lie.

So what James is saying here is that life is actually more complicated for those who have lots of money. There are more decisions to be made and it is harder to be generous. Everyone always thinks that if they won the lottery that they would give a bunch of it away (isn't that what we tell God when we are asking for Him to make us rich?), but the truth is we don't know how we would behave if we suddenly got a whack load of moolah. But it might not be as we suspect. And let me tell you, I would rather be dirt poor here on earth and rich in heaven, than rich on earth and miss out on heaven!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Do you think a lot about money? Do you daydream about having more stuff? If you do, you probably aren't thinking about money in a way that honours God. Confess that your attitude towards money isn't always healthy and ask God to help you to think about money the way He does.
2. Also ask God to show you how to be generous. Is there a way you can be generous with money *today*?

HIDE IT!!

Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. James 4:8 (NLT)

DAY SEVENTEEN: Read James 5:7-11

THINK ON IT!!

Ever planted a garden? If you have then you know how exciting it is to wait for it to grow. But oh it can take a long time until there is something to eat, right? And then it seems like there is TOO much food all of a sudden, more than you could possibly eat and the waiting was worth it.

Christians have a deep longing in their hearts and it is for Jesus to come back and make things right on earth. We *need* Jesus to return and sometimes we can even be impatient. But God has promised that He is returning and God *never lies* and I promise you that when He comes back there will suddenly be more food than you could eat! It is worth waiting for.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Daydream a bit about how amazing it is going to be when Jesus is the King of the world! What do you think it will be like? Write down a few of your ideas.
2. Ask Jesus to help your heart to long for His return. Ask Him to show you what you should be doing as we wait for Him.

HIDE IT!!

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DAY EIGHTEEN: Read James 5:12

THINK ON IT!!

Well that was a quick read today wasn't it? And what does it mean? Well you don't have to be a rocket scientist to catch this one; don't lie.

When you tell a friend you will meet them at recess, meet them at recess.

When you tell your mom you will do the dishes after school, do the dishes after school.

When you tell God you are going to do devotions before playing video games, do devos first.

When you had an amazing time on family vacation, don't exaggerate the stories.

When you played well at some tournament, don't brag about yourself at the expense of the team.

Tell the truth. Period.

ACT ON IT!!

1. Do you struggle with lying? Sometimes we convince ourselves that we don't but the truth is we all do. Confess any lies that come to mind.
2. Also confess when you didn't lie but you also didn't tell the WHOLE truth. That's a lot like a lie in God's eye.
3. Finally confess any times when you exaggerated the truth to make yourself look better.
4. And ask God to help you to be truthful!

HIDE IT!!

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DAY NINETEEN: Read James 5:13-18

THINK ON IT!!

Prayer is a strange thing. Have you ever wondered why God needs you to pray? I mean doesn't He know the future anyways? Isn't God powerful enough to act without your prayers? And what's the deal with the prayers I've prayed that weren't answered? Do I need to be some sort of spiritual superhero like Elijah to get an answer?

Um nope. In fact the whole point James is telling us here is that actually Elijah was pretty normal. Kind of a human being like you and me, and God *still* used him to do amazing things.

That gives me such hope! Did you know that if you were faithful like Elijah in those circumstances God could have used you to call down fire from heaven, and stop the rain? Amazing. But this is the thing that we mess up, you and I aren't being asked to *do* what Elijah did, we are being asked to *trust* the same God Elijah trusted. God is in the habit of using ordinary punks like you and me! And the more you and I get to know God, the more we are going to know what God wants us to pray!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Have you had an answer to a prayer in your life? One of the reasons we can't always think of one (or maybe the reason we can ONLY think of one or two) is that we actually don't realize when God is answering prayers! I would encourage you to start a list of prayer requests and answers to prayers when they come. Don't write down long explanations just something like, "I need a friend at school." And then pray down the list from time to time – and when God answers, you mark it down and praise God.

HIDE IT!!

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DAY TWENTY: Read James 5:19-20

THINK ON IT!!

You made it to the end of James, well done! Now what can you do with all this new-found information. Like now you know that your tongue is a fire and Elijah was an ordinary man, but so what?

Well, you can go out and help others discover this truth as well. This is what the final passage in James is talking about. You now know some things that actually might help someone turn away from their life of sin and draw near to Jesus!

You know it is pretty special when you meet with Jesus, when you deal with your sin, when you begin to understand spiritual things, but there is something that is almost more special, and that is helping someone else discover the same thing!

ACT ON IT!!

1. Write down some of the things that you will remember from the book of James, what has stuck in your head?
2. Who do you know of that needs to hear what you have learned? Ask Jesus to show you! Then write them a card and pray for them.

HIDE IT!!

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