

# EXTREME FAITH

WISDOM FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES

## Discussion One:

### *When Life is Hard, God Offers Wisdom (James 1:1-18)*

Welcome to our study of James! This challenging and transforming letter was written by the brother of our Lord to believers under significant persecution. It probably dates from the late 50s, early 60s AD, about the same time the Apostle Paul was writing his letters. The late Pastor Eugene Peterson said that James is an example of an early church pastor, "Confronting, diagnosing, and dealing with areas of misbelief and misbehavior...with deep and loving wisdom on display..." Wisdom includes knowledge, but it is primarily godly skill in living rooted in prayer and reverence for God. Fasten your seat belts for very bold and practical instruction!

### Opening dialogue:

Apart from parents or pastors (no authors or outside speakers, we are looking for regular people!), share an example of a wise person who has been a positive personal influence on your life. What made them wise in your eyes?

### Key Theme:

James' entire letter focuses on divine wisdom in contrast to our human passions and preferences.

## Reading #1: James 1:1-8

### Key Idea:

We can rejoice in our suffering and God offers wisdom as we trust him.

- Parallel scriptures: Let's read Romans 5:1-5 and Hebrews 12:1-3.
- Question: What do all these passages have in common? (Hint: enduring through trials)
- Question: When have you experienced unfair suffering or difficulties that were not your fault? How did the Lord use this in your personal growth?

### Selah:

Take a moment for silent reflection and thank the Lord for helping you through your trial.

- Insight: Wisdom in the Bible is...
  - Moral: it leads to purity and fairness.
  - Practical: it leads to good choices.
  - Relational: it improves all our relationships as we think of the good of others with a pure heart.

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## Reading #2: James 1:9-12

### Key Idea:

We need to see our lives in light of eternity and boast only in the Lord.

- Parallel scriptures: James 5:1-6; Isaiah 58:5-9
- Question: What structures or systems can keep people poor? What can we do to help people out of poverty?
- Question: How do materialism and pride infect our society? Share an example of a successful person using their position for the Lord.

### Reflections:

How are we using our resources to serve others? Are there any types of people we struggle having a good attitude toward?

## Reading #3: James 1:13-18

### Key idea:

God is the Source of all that is good, not evil (inside or outside of us).

- Parallel scriptures: Psalm 90:1-2, 17; Proverbs 2:1-8
- Question: What or who do we sometimes blame when we sin? (examples: our personality or culture or someone's difficult personality)
- Question: What natural and spiritual gifts has God given to you for service to others?

### Two-sentence prayers:

Have several members of the group offer short prayers of gratitude

Let's ask God, especially in moments of frustration,  
*"What are your teaching me?"*