



## MONDAY 26 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 1:1-4

### **Plug In...**

Today until the end of January, when we return at The Lakes to the Gospel of Matthew, we will work through James – a letter with strong affinities with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. James is on about calibration and recalibration. Let's set the tone for 2017.

Fourteen times in James the readers are referred to as 'my brothers'. It is most likely his readers are mainly Jewish Christians who may well have been former members of James' congregation. They were scattered throughout the empire by the persecution that continually accompanied the gospel (*cf.* Acts 8:1, 11:19). As a matter of care for these brothers and sisters James writes this letter.

### **Chew It Over...**

James demonstrates affection and warm pastoral concern. What does this passage indicate are God's goals for the believers in the midst of this great turmoil? What are God's goals for the believers in the midst of this great turmoil? Do you pray for these goals to be part of the life of our church and for the Christians you know?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Take time to pray for that these are our goals at The Lakes in 2017 whatever the year may bring.



## TUESDAY 27 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

### Read: James 1:5-8

#### **Plug In...**

The Christians James wrote to may have thought that as a Christian you reach a new part of life, such as if you are in tune with God and bad things won't happen to you any longer. James says they do. They're a test. They're part of God maturing, completing His work in us. So James says ask for wisdom. God will give; gives generously. Especially in the midst of trial, ask. Wisdom to find joy. Wisdom to endure. Wisdom to go the distance.

#### **Chew It Over...**

Verse 6 has encouraged some to think for God to ever answer their prayers they must work themselves up into a special state of positive thinking. That's a misunderstanding of James' point. The doubting man in v.6 is described in v.8 as "double-minded", this is a man who prays to God to be on the safe side-like; he is hedging his bets. James point is that we can trust God wholeheartedly, and should do so especially here in times of trial.

Are you working at this indispensable wisdom? How?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray for this wisdom trusting that God can and does provide for His people.



## WEDNESDAY 28 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 1:9-12

### **Plug In...**

James challenges people to not gauge things by externals but realise one's true state before the Lord. Soon the man Job will be mentioned by James as one whom God blessed – the blessing is that he endured (5:11). The Scriptures are clear that the wise man or woman is one who knows and fears the Lord (Job 28:28).

### **Chew It Over...**

How are we tempted to respond to trials? How would the knowledge of God given here better strengthen you to face such a situation again?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray for God's strength to trust Him and His goodness in the trials you are currently facing, and/or those that are coming.



## THURSDAY 29 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

### Read: James 1:12-18

#### **Plug In...**

Trials in the Christian life present an enormous opportunity to grow in maturity. That is why they are a cause for joy (v. 2). This passage plays on a relationship between 'trials' and 'temptations'. The word 'trials' in verses 2 and 12 is the same word 'temptations' in verses 13 and 14. Trials may include situations of external hardship, even persecution which God allows for the purpose of refining his people (1 Peter 1:6, 4:12).

Lack of wisdom in the middle of hardship can cause us to blame God and doubt His goodness. James wants us to know the seriousness of this mistake so he warns us against the danger of being deceived.

#### **Chew It Over...**

How does this passage demonstrate the importance of the choices we make during times of hardship? Are there choices you are making at the moment that need godly wisdom if you are to choose maturity over sin?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray that in the choices you are making at this time, that that you will actively seek God's wisdom and that He will provide it. Pray that the decisions you make will be pleasing to Him. Don't forget to give thanks that God is good!



# FRIDAY 30 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 1:19-25

## **Plug In...**

One of the challenges in reading James is the apparently random way ideas are presented. Nevertheless, you may have noticed that there is a central idea around which others fit. Today's reading begins with the phrase 'My dear brothers' which is often a signal in this letter of the transition to a new topic. Immediately before, he has spoken of the 'new birth'. James now shows that this experience should show itself in conduct. Central to this section is the exhortation to be "doers of the word" not merely listeners (v.22).

## **Chew It Over...**

What obstacles are there to the word taking root in our lives which are suggested here?

Verse 21 commands our right response to God's saving work. What will humble acceptance look like in practice both generally and for you?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask God to keep you alert to act against these things which can stop His word impacting our lives. Pray that by Gods strength you will accept His word and rid yourself of anger and moral filth in your life.





## WEEKEND 31 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 1:25-27

### **Plug In...**

James' Jewish background is never far from his thinking. Notice in verse 25 his description of the gospel word as the "perfect law that gives freedom". As a Jew who followed the Old Testament, there is great joy for him in the fulfilment of the Old Testament law in the 'perfect law' of the gospel.

James' point for anyone that claims to be a "Christian" is that the true test to that claim is not in the outward rituals of worship but in obedience.

### **Chew It Over...**

The words "looks intently" (v.25) translate a Greek word which means to *look bent over*. What is implied by this? What changes do you need to make in your Bible reading habits?

What tests of 'true religion' does James give in these verses? How do you need to work at these areas? How can you practically put them in place in your life over the next month (to set you up for 2017)?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray that God will strengthen you in your determination to live through 2017 a life which honours Him in action.