

INTRODUCTION

R. Kent Hughes suggests three areas in which we apply knowledge to our everyday lives:

1. Logos, or knowing God's actual Word. We study the Word so that we can express what the Word says accurately.
2. Ethos, or who we are as believers. As much as possible, believers must embody the truth.
3. Pathos, or personal passion and conviction. David Hume was a skeptic who went to hear George Whitefield preach. He was challenged because of the words he heard. The challenger said to Hume, "I thought you don't believe in the gospel." Hume answered, "I don't but he does!" When you say and do what you believe, there will be a passion that is apparent.

It is generally accepted that the author of the book of James is Jesus' brother, also known as James the Just. There are others named James in the New Testament. Find those, and discuss why they aren't the James who wrote this book:

The obvious choice as author is the James who had stature and authority in the Jerusalem church. This brother of Jesus also fits the required dating because Josephus writes that James was condemned to death by the Jewish Sanhedrin in A.D. 62, just after the death of the Roman governor, Festus and before the arrival of Albinus, his successor.

This James was only one of Jesus' brothers. Read Matthew 13:55-56 and list the other brothers: _____

Also read Acts 12:17 and Galatians 2:9 to get additional information about James: _____

One might expect James to begin with a glowing description of himself. Instead he begins differently. Write his salutation here: _____

The word translated "servant" is "doulos." Do a word study on "doulos" and write the result here: _____

The mark a doulos received was called a stigmata. Read Galatians 6:17 and write what you learn: _____

The recipients of the letter are Christian Jews scattered outside of Israel, who were likely scattered by persecution. They were victims who had left homes, jobs and property. The purpose of the letter was to give instructions dealing with stress and pressure in difficult times.

The letter was probably written from Jerusalem where James was headquartered. Herod the Great, who was appointed by Augustus in 40 B.C., had chosen Jerusalem as his residency. The Herod family tried to keep peace by appeasing religious leaders. Herod the Great had made magnificent additions to the temple. In James' time, the city was a political hotbed.

Although the Jews in Jerusalem were generally poor, there were landowners and religious leaders who had wealth. Tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus made financial gain by allying themselves with the Romans and exploiting their countrymen. Eventually Jerusalem became desperately poor because of Roman greed and famine. Read Acts 11:28-30 and write what you learn here: _____

Christians were a persecuted minority in Jerusalem.

The date of writing is approximately 47-49 A.D. James was martyred in A.D. 62 according to Josephus. The book of James doesn't mention the Jerusalem Council, described in Acts, at which James was the moderator in about 50 A.D. so the book was likely written before this. There is also no mention of Paul, so it is likely written before his rise to prominence around 49 A.D. There is also no mention of the false teaching spoken of by Paul, Peter, Jude, and John.

The burden of the book is that believers should be doers of the Word and not just hearers. In other words, James believed in practicing what you preach!

Read through James 1:1-12 and journal what you learn here: _____

PREDICTABLE: The first fact that James teaches is that the Christian life has stress. In fact, the idea is one of being blindsided with inadequate time to run. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7 for Peter's perspective: _____

Also read Acts 20:19 _____

Trials take two basic forms: correction and perfection. When we are outside of God's will, there is correction. When we are within God's will, there are perfecting trials.

PROBLEMS: The second fact that James teaches is that the stress of the Christian life will create problems. Stress hurts people, relationships, health, home, and hopes. Some of these problems happen because we live in a fallen world; some because we live in unredeemed bodies. Some trials are supernatural and happen to us because we are Christians.

PARADOX: The third fact that James teaches is the great paradox that we are to consider it joy! Read Hebrews 12:2 and write what you learn here: _____

PURPOSE: The fourth fact that James teaches is that the testing of faith produces perseverance. Do a word study on the word translated "testing" in James 1:3 _____

People have misunderstood James thinking that the book is about works; however, we can see that before James even mentions works, he is talking about faith. It is our faith that is tested because without faith it is impossible to please God.

PRAYER: The fifth fact that James teaches is that trials produce prayer. If wisdom is lacking, God should be consulted! Read Ephesians 1:17 and Colossians 1:9 for Paul's parallel perspective: _____

Wisdom doesn't come from experiments, or study. It comes from God through prayer. And one must act without being double minded. Do a word study on double-minded in James 1:9 _____

Anyone can gain knowledge, but only those who seek God can gain wisdom, which is the ability to use knowledge in a practical and appropriate way.

PROFITABLE: The last fact taught in this section is that stress is ultimately profitable. God's trials are great equalizers. The great mystery of the Christian faith is that the last shall be first.

HE IS NO FOOL WHO GIVS WHAT HE CANNOT KEEP TO GAIN WHAT HE CANNOT LOSE. Jim Elliott

RELATIVISM AND THE CREDIBILITY CRISIS

As you begin the lesson for today, read James 1:13-37. Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, writes of an undergraduate class at the University of Chicago. The class was asked to identify a person they identified as evil. The students had difficulty identifying what evil actually meant and therefore couldn't name evil people. If there are no absolutes, then there are no restraints. Last week we considered external trials. This week we will turn our attention to James treatment of internal temptations.

THE CAUSE OF TEMPTATION is defined specifically. And James says that God is untemptable. In other words, God has never sinned. The relativistic perspective would say:

1. God created everything
2. So God must have created the impulse within me to sin
3. So God created sin
4. So God is ultimately responsible for my sin

The logical conclusion that follows this reasoning is:

5. I can't help it; God just made me this way

Other times, relativism blames circumstances: it isn't God's fault, or the devil's fault, or my fault, it is just one of those things.

Sometimes relativism blames the environment: I never would have become a drug addict if I didn't live in a city where drugs and immorality are rampant.

James teaches that temptation is caused from two sources. One source is external; the other internal. James calls the internal "lust" or a strong desire

directed toward an object. The problem is wanting to satisfy our desires outside the guidelines of God's will. The external source is actually deception because the action draws us away from our place of shelter and security and leaves us vulnerable to sin. When desire and deception connect, the result is sin.

If it were not for evil desire, Satan would never gain a victory over us by dangling bait in front of us. Read Mark 7:20-23 and write what you learn here:

It isn't sin to see the bait. It isn't sin to be tempted. Sin is born when we take the bait – act on the evil desire. We counter the internal source of temptation with prayer. Read Matthew 26:41 and record Jesus' words here: _____

Payer connects us to God so that our desires become more like His.

The Greek word translated "sin" is hamartia which means "to miss the mark." It is used three ways:

1. Physically, it means missing the target, as in archery
2. Mentally, it means failing at something, perhaps a test
3. Spiritually it means failing to act on a standard of behavior you know to be right

James says that sin gives birth to death. Death is ultimately physical but it can also result in the death of dreams, ambitions, reputations, relationships, and everything else that is good. Sin never brings anything permanently good into our lives.

James 1:16 cautions against deception. Do a word study on this word: _____

Relativism deceives us concerning Jesus. Good things come from God. If you stand directly under the light, there is no shadow. The farther you move from the light, the darker it becomes.

James is warning us against taking the bait of relativism; there is a hook in it.

Besides the perils of relativism, there is a tremendous credibility crisis in the church. James says that true religion is characterized by three important elements:

1. Knowing Jesus
2. Being consistent
3. Showing character

Many churches have no life, enthusiasm, or expectancy. People are being bored to death. Literally. While people are seeking, Christians have the answer. The rise of the New Age movement and the Emergent Church show how interested our culture is in spiritual things. The church must make certain that a relationship with Jesus in the spiritual things being presented.

TRUE RELIGION IS ABOUT KNOWING CHRIST. Some people believe that James is about salvation by works. But a closer look proves this is not the case. Before ever looking at works, James makes sure that his readers knew salvation was in Christ alone.

ORIGIN: James 1:18 indicates that salvation begins with God and not with man. Confirm by reading Ephesians 2:1 _____

Romans 5:12 _____

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 _____

OPERATION: James indicates that the way of salvation is through the word of truth. Read 1 Peter 1:23 to confirm _____

There must be conviction before conversion and conviction is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

OUTCOME: The Word brings forth fruit. The Christians to whom James was writing were the first generation to trust the Lord as the Messiah.

TRUE RELIGION REQUIRES CONSISTENCY which is manifested in two ways: our talk and our walk. Unfortunately the lives of too many believers' actions don't

align with words. James 1:19-21 tells us how important what we say and how we listen really are. Read the following verses, recording what you learn here:

Proverbs 10:19 and 17:27 _____

The tongue is a powerful weapon; some use it for gossip, others for bragging, and others for degrading others. Many Christians who would never think of being physically abusive are verbally abusive to others.

James cautions us to be slow to become angry as well. He doesn't say that we must never be angry, but that we should carefully consider the whole picture. Read Paul's further caution in Ephesians 4:26 and record it here: _____

James 1:21 tells us what to do with sin. Read James 1:21 and record what this is: _____

Do a word study of the word translated "put aside" in James 1:21 _____

The church has contributed to the level of sin by making its labels milder. James called sin what it is: moral filth. Sin destroys what it touches.

James says that we must hear and listen and then act. Blessing doesn't come by simply hearing great biblical truths. It is the doing that produces blessing. In James 1:22, the word translated "hearers" is akroatai which is the Greek word used for auditing a class. A person who audits attends classes, hears lectures, but never has to take a test. He doesn't get a grade. There is no pressure. But when graduation comes, there isn't a diploma for someone who audited the class.

Many Christians "audit" Christianity. They don't lead a Bible study; they may not even attend. They don't visit the sick; they don't help others in need; they aren't involved in evangelism; they don't return a tithe to the Lord. They hear teaching and believe it...but where will they be on graduation day?

TRUE RELIGION SHOWS CHARACTER. There is a lot of counterfeit Christianity today. This is why James words 1:26 as he does. People are prone to pick and choose the scriptures that they like to prove their position.

Read Matthew 7:21-23 and journal what you learn here: _____

As we end our study for this lesson, ask yourself if relativism has overtaken you. As yourself if you are credible. Do you live a lie, or live a Christlike life. The world is watching and waiting to see if we are real.

PREJUDICE AND ETHICS

Many changes have swept across our nation and the world in the past two decades. The Arab-Jewish conflict is no better. North Korea threatens. Ironically, Christianity has the answer to conflict, but is finding itself under discrimination and persecution daily.

Christmas carols are not allowed in schools. Manger scenes no longer dot our city squares. A Billy Graham film was given a PG rating because pre-teen children should not be exposed to Christianity without parental permission! After two thousand years, we would have expected James 2:1-13 to have become irrelevant. Unfortunately, it is not. Read those verses as we begin our study today, noting important points here: _____

Discrimination is as rampant now as it ever was in the time of James. Christians with money discriminate against those without. Christians without money discriminate against those who have. Ethnic groups discriminate against each other. The un-tattooed don't like the tattooed and vice versa. The "wear your best clothes" group doesn't appreciate the "ripped jeans" crowd. Discrimination is based on two false premises:

1. PREJUDICE
2. PRESUMPTION

Both of these are enemies of the cross.

PREJUDICE is defined as "bias because of a fixed idea; an opinion arrived at without taking time and care to judge fairly."

James 2:1 warns against favoritism. Do a word study on that word from the text and write your result here: _____

It is important to remember that God is unimpressed by possession, position, or social standing. God cares about the condition of the heart. Read 1 Samuel 16:17 for God's perspective: _____

The poor widow was loved by Jesus as much as a wealthy Pharisee. I once heard gossip and flattery defined like this:

Gossip is what we say behind someone's back that we would never say to the person's face

Flattery is what we say to someone's face that we would never say behind the person's back

James backs up his point about the well dressed rich man who desired a good seat because of his status. Read Matthew 23:6 for perspective: _____

We must be careful not to confuse issues. Read 1 Timothy 6:10 and discuss the problem with money here: _____

Some people with very little money love it more than those who are wealthy. It isn't necessarily sinful to be rich; neither is it more spiritual to be poor. James is pointing out the attitude that loses a proper sense of priorities. In James 2:6, we read that the poor have been dishonored. Do a word study on that word and write the result here: _____

When a poor person is insulted, the last valuable thing he possesses has been taken from him: his dignity and honor.

Read Matthew 25:40 for Jesus' perspective _____

Why is it that the poor seem to accept the gospel in greater numbers than the wealthy and powerful? Is it because Christianity is not for educated or thinking people? No, it is because the poor are more aware of their powerlessness and makes it easier to acknowledge their need of a savior. For the rich and powerful, the greatest barrier is pride. For the poor, the greatest barrier is self-pity and bitterness.

Jesus was born into a poor household. His parents could only afford two turtle doves at his dedication. Read these words from Jesus' first sermon:

Luke 4:18 _____

The more we become like Jesus, the more we will show mercy to the poor and rejected. Jesus talked to an invalid at the pool of Bethesda and to Nicodemus, a powerful ruler. In Jericho, he ate with Zacchaeus and interacted with poor, blind Bartimaeus on the road.

Who are the poor and homeless that you are helping? Who are the prideful rich that you interact with?

PRESUMPTION assumes that discrimination isn't sin. When we have discriminated, we deal with it as any other sin: confess it to God and forsake it in the future. Read Matthew 22:37-40 and discuss how you can live within the

parameters of Jesus' teaching here: _____

James was writing to people who mistakenly thought that sins of disrespect and favoritism were not significant. Many Christians feel that because they have lived lives free of "significant, big" sins (like murder or rape) that God will just pass over the little tiny sins. James 2:10 clearly refutes that position. James ends this section by discussing "mercy triumphing over judgment." Read the following verses and record your thoughts here:

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 _____

John 5:24 _____

We are not saved by being merciful; we are saved by receiving mercy from Christ. When we have received mercy, we can show mercy in return.

2 Corinthians 8:9 _____

Sometimes people mistakenly think that James was speaking about basing faith on works; but James was speaking about working faith: faith that works! The obvious distinction is between the requirement for salvation and the result of salvation. Good works are not required for salvation, but they are surely the result.

Read through the balance of James 2. Compare the thoughts there to Matthew 7:16-20 _____

Much controversy about James centers on James 2:14. Some translations read, "can faith save him?" It would better be translated "can such faith save him?" In the Greek text, there is an article in front of the word translated "faith," which indicates that this faith is the same faith as that just mentioned: false faith.

James 2:18
faith without
you my faith **by**
Greek "ek"
out of or
Compare with

Lawyers say that in a trial they cannot deal with hearsay. They need cold, hard facts. If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

says, "show me your deeds and I will show what I do." "by" is the which means "emerging emerging from."
Ephesians 2:8-10

Some feel that James contradicts Paul's statement in Romans 3:28 _____

In reality, they are approaching the same point from different perspectives. Paul was speaking of works of keeping the law; James spoke of works as the fruit of our faith.

It surprises some people to read James 2:19 and learn that demons have a level of faith. They are not atheists or agnostics. They recognize the deity of Christ and the holiness of God. But they lack saving faith. Demons not only believe, but they "shudder." Do a word study on "shudder" and write the result here:

Many people who profess Christianity today have no fear of God. In reality, they are farther from God than demons insofar as demons at least have enough knowledge of God to fear Him!

Such people may believe facts about God and Jesus, but they haven't been life changing. James claims that faith without fruit is "dead." There are no vital signs. Romans 3:10 reminds us that "no one is righteous, not even one," but James reminds us that Abraham's faith was "credited" to him as righteousness. Abraham's spiritual bank account was depleted, but God put his own righteousness into Abraham's account. Abraham didn't earn it, but received it as a gift.

The sad truth is that today many church attendees have neither faith nor works. They may gather to recite creeds and talk about faith and positive thinking, but they have no ongoing ministries to meet people's needs. Others have works without faith. Their approach is motivated by social or humanistic values.

The "Great Blondin," a tightrope walker, was performing on a cable across Niagara Falls. He asked the audience, "how many of you believe I can walk across this cable pushing a wheelbarrow?" The people cheered. Then he asked, "how many believe I can push the wheelbarrow across the cable with a man in the wheelbarrow." The people cheered. Blondin pointed to one very enthusiastic man in the front row and said, "you're my man. Hop in." The man made a rapid exit.

Millions of professing people are quick to claim faith in Christ, but live with no ethical effect of faith or proof shown by works. To them, Jesus is saying, "Hop in the wheelbarrow."

In 1887, D. L. Moody led a young man to Christ who gave his testimony, "I intend to truth the Lord from this day forward and to obey Him and His Word." When John Sammis heard the testimony, he wrote this hymn:

WHEN WE WALK WITH THE LORD IN THE LIGHT OF HIS WORD
WHAT A GLORY HE SHEDS ON OUR WAY.
WHILE WE DO HIS GOOD WILL, HE ABIDES WITH US STILL,
AND WITH ALL WHO WILL TRUST AND OBEY.
TRUST AND OBEY, FOR THERE'S NO OTHER WAY
TO BE HAPPY IN JESUS, BUT TO TRUST AND OBEY

WORDS AND WORKS

The United States is a nation of communicators. We have radio and television, and internet and cell phones. We have something to say and we want people to pay attention! What comes out of our mouths (and our computers and tablets and phones) is important. As we begin our study for this week, read James 3:1-12 and write key thoughts here: _____

It isn't enough to have words without works nor is it enough to have works without words.

In grade school, a common taunt was "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." James would disagree. Scars from physical wounds heal; but often the damage caused by words never heals. Children's lives are shaped by parents: some hear themselves being called worthless; others receive loving support. Today we will be considering how the words we hear are powerful.

James 3:1 confronts teachers, who will be strictly judged if actions and words don't match. Because teachers have received more spiritual light, they should live on a higher level of obedience to God. Read Matthew 12:36-37 for Jesus' perspective: _____

James makes three statements concerning the tongue in our verses for today. For each statement, he gives two illustrations.

STATEMENT #1: CONTROLLED SPEECH IS DIRECTIVE (James 3:1-5)

Read the above verses and write your thoughts concerning the bridle of a horse or a rudder on a ship. Each sets a course and gives direction to live. After his two illustrations, James summarizes with thoughts about the tongue as a small part of the body, but one that makes great boasts. Do a word study on "part" and record the results here: _____

Interestingly, the word can also mean "melody, music to which a song is set." God created the tongue to produce melody; saying one thing and doing another ruins the music, the harmony God intends. Read the following verses and record what you learn here:

Proverbs 18:21 _____

Psalms 141:3 _____

STATEMENT #2: CONTENTIOUS SPEECH IS DESTRUCTIVE (James 3:5-8) Just as lightning can start a fire that burns an entire forest, people can have their reputations ruined by a word carelessly spoken. With the internet and cable TV, rumors fly faster and farther than we imagine. A tiny word spoken wrongly can do irreversible damage. The influence of the word can grow; they can burn and hurt and destroy reputations and relationships.

Men are able to tame all manner of animals, but James says that we can't tame the tongue! We can't, but Jesus can. Jesus can take a tongue of gossip and turn it to a tongue of glory. He can take a tongue of bitterness and make it a tongue of blessing.

James reminds us that the fire of the tongue originates in hell. This is the only place in the Bible outside the Gospels where "Gehenna" is found. A valley by this name was outside Jerusalem where pagans worshiped the false god, Moloch by sacrificing children to fire. James tells us that the fire started with the tongue – the gossip or slander—comes right out of hell. Behind every word of divisiveness or filth or rumor or uncontrolled anger is demonic power, destroying hearts and hopes. Fire is not inherently bad; but uncontrolled it destroys. Likewise, words can be used to destroy or direct.

STATEMENT #3: CONFLICTING SPEECH IS DECEPTIVE (James 3:9-12)

The Native Americans used the term "forked tongue" to describe conflicting, deceptive speech. James uses the same concept to describe a man who praises the Lord one moment and curses his neighbor the next.

James points out that fresh water and salt water cannot flow from the same spring. Neither can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs. The fruit shows what sort of root system a tree has. Likewise, our mouths show what is in our hearts. Conflicting speech may be believed for a while, but in the end, we will reap what we sow. Read Matthew 6:24 and write Jesus' position here:

Our tongues produce fruit according to our inner nature. If we bless and curse at the same time, something is desperately wrong. Evil speech emanates from an evil heart. A heart for God will not produce a tongue that lies, slanders,

gossips, and curses. Read Matthew 12:34 _____

We deceive ourselves if we believe we can sail through life with forked tongues. Our tongues are good barometers of what is in our hearts.

A really bad doctor might treat symptoms but not the source of the disease. Medical doctors often look at our tongue to see if there is a problem in our body because often the tongue will show the source of trouble. But a competent doctor wouldn't just clean the tongue – he looks for the source of the symptom.

If you have the symptom of conflicting speech, the source of the problem must be brought to God. Read Psalm 19:14 and write your thoughts: _____

In this day of human achievement, our ingenuity has reached heights we never thought possible, yet we can never do in ourselves what only Jesus can do. Because we are made with a void inside that only Jesus can fill, the best thing we can do with our tongues is to confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Read Philippians 2:11 _____

When Charles Wesley became a Christian, he was so excited that he wrote these words:

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemers praise,
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of His grace

What are you confessing with your tongue? What inner condition of your heart does it reflect?

WISDOM OF THE WORLD vs WISDOM OF GOD

People alive today have access to more information than any other previous generation. Textbooks and encyclopedias are outdated because of the technological advances. But in this explosion of available knowledge, wisdom sometimes seems to be nonexistence. People's lives are in shambles. They are learning that position, power, and prosperity do not bring peace and purpose. Suicide and divorce rates are astronomical.

KNOWLEDGE: THE ACCUMULATION OF FACTS

WISDOM: THE ABILITY TO PUT KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION AT THE POINT OF NEED

As we begin our study for this week, read through James 3:13-18. We will be learning that God's wisdom is supernatural whereas the world's is natural. God gives the ability to perceive the true nature of circumstances so that we can apply the will of God to the issue at hand.

Many early decisions are made in their early twenties, not during old age after years of experience. Believers have a great advantage over the non-believer because the non-believer has only the world's wisdom. So, how can we obtain God's wisdom? Read 1 Kings 3:5 _____

Once we have the wisdom of the Word, it should show. Our lives should exhibit purity, peace, patience, productivity and prudence. Our witness should stand in sharp contrast to the world's perspective.

James 3:15 tells us that the world's wisdom isn't from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil. If these three areas are its source, its manifestations are in three other areas as seen in Ephesians 2:1-3. The wisdom of the world originates in the secular, the sensual, and the Satanic.

THE SECULAR: Wisdom that originates in the secular results in confusion. Genesis 11:1-9 provides an example. _____

In the hope of making a name for themselves, they built a tower to get God's attention. It resulted in confusion and disorder, along with God's displeasures. Read 1 Samuel 17:38 _____

THE SENSUAL: James 3:15 says that the wisdom of the world is natural. Do a word study on this word and write what you learn here: _____

We distinguish between a person's immaterial being with "psuche" or soul and "pneuma" or spirit. James is referring to that which animates the body and gives us a sense of identity. Animals have psuche but not pneuma. Sometimes we use the words soul and spirit interchangeably; however in first century Greek, there was a clear association of psuche with sensual physical life. James was saying that the world's wisdom is like that of animals: it is based on natural instinct, learned facts, and personal survival.

THE SATANIC: James says that the world's wisdom is demonic. The wisdom of the world doesn't originate with God. The problem started in the Garden of Eden when Satan's deceit created a selfish desire which produced a sinful action. Eve's choice had its roots in the wisdom of the world. Many theories taught as scientific fact in reality are based on the world's deception. The New Age movement is the epitome of the world's wisdom. The Emergent church is another. It encourages people to search for wisdom in the wrong places. Read Deuteronomy 18:10-13 and reflect on its applicability today: _____

THE OUTCOME OF WORLDLY WISDOM:

1. Jealousy. Do a word study on this word and reflect on the ways that zeal can be good or bad. _____

2. Selfish ambition. This word literally means "party spirit," or pushing oneself forward for personal gain or glory. The Greeks used this word for

a politician out campaigning. Today a similar word might be "partisanship."

Read Paul's caution in Philippians 2:3 _____

James observed that selfish ambition and envy are harbored – in the hearts of those relying on the world's wisdom.

3. Disorder is the third result. Do a word study and reflect on the similar use of the word in 1 Corinthians 14:33 _____
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4. Every evil thing: the word means vile or foul, literally "good for nothing." The wisdom of the world brings about envy, strife, confusion, and eventually every evil practice.

We are born with the wisdom of the world complete with the propensity for envy, partisanship, confusion and perversion. Do children have to be taught to disobey? Do you have to teach a child to grab a toy from another kid? Do you have to teach a child to exclude someone or say something unkind? We inherit the wisdom of the world through our sin nature.

THE WISDOM OF THE WORD. The "but" in James 3:17 is not accidental. It contrasts the world's wisdom and God's wisdom. God's wisdom is supernaturally bestowed by God on His people. James tells us that we can ask God for this. It doesn't come from education or practical experience; it isn't learned. It is a gift and must be requested in faith. Read 1 Corinthians 1:24-30 to get another perspective: _____

All of this is not to imply that education is worthless. James 3:13 refers to both wisdom and understanding. Wisdom "Sophia" is the ability to discern facts supernaturally; understanding, "epistemon" is intellectual perception and the accumulation of facts which implies knowledge acquired through human effort. Asking for wisdom does not eliminate our need to study. Read 2 Timothy 2:15

THE OUTCOME OF GOD'S WISDOM. When we apply the wisdom of the Word to our lives, the first result is purity. Do a word study and define the word: _____

God's wisdom is also peaceful, which is characterized as considerate, submissive, and merciful. It is characterized by a willingness to yield. This is exactly the opposite of the envy of the world.

God's wisdom will be shown as producing fruit. Read Matthew 7:20 for Jesus' perspective: _____

God's wisdom is life changing. It can make you pure, peace-loving, patient, productive, and prudent. It is impartial and sincere. God's wisdom never wavers. The world's wisdom produces pressure from one side and then another. God's wisdom is decisive. It is without hypocrisy. God's wisdom doesn't pretend to be something it is not. The wisdom of the Word is sincere.

We need this sort of wisdom. Read Proverbs 1:7 and 2:1-5 _____

We must each choose between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the Word. The first finds its origin in the secular, sensual, and demonic. The other originates in heaven. The first results in envy, partisanship, confusion, and perversion. The other is purity, peace, patience, and prudence.

WAR AND PEACE

Begin our study for this week by reading through James 4:1-12, recording those portions that contain pertinent points. _____

In more than 5600 years of recorded history, around 15,000 wars have been fought. This is an average of three wars each year. So James might well ask, "what causes fights and quarrels among you?"

Some of us are in war right now. We aren't wearing military fatigues and sitting in a tank, but we are at war. We feel our flesh warring against the Spirit. Some of us are experiencing wars in our families and homes. Some of us are even at war with God. James tells us that such war has symptoms, sources, and solutions.

WAR HAS SYMPTOMS: There is a difference between a source and a symptom. You don't get over a flu virus (source_) by treating a drippy nose (symptom) James speaks of a symptom: slander. The believers to who James wrote were engaged in a war of words, but the words were only an external symptom and not the cause of the strife.

In many ways, a Christian is a civil war incarnate. Read Galatians 5:17 for perspective: _____

James 4:1 speaks of the source of pleasures. Do a word study on pleasure and write the result here: _____

Hedonism is defined as an unchecked search for pleasure. For many people, life is a competitive arena where possessions, power, position, passion and popularity take over. It can lead to killing and coveting. It can keep us from asking for the right things. Prayer becomes futile when we ask with wrong motives.

War is motivated by selfish desire. We lust for something that we don't get.
Read Titus 3:3 for a comparison: _____

WAR HAS SOURCE: The real source of war is not our relationship with ourselves or others, but in a rebellious relationship with God. James calls this the battle within. It implies that a rebellious man continually fights to have his own way. James says that such a one is a friend of the world and an enemy of God.
Read 1 John 2:15 for perspective: _____

There really is no neutral territory. If you are a friend of the world, you are God's enemy. Christians commit spiritual adultery when we play with the world. We should be true to God as a faithful woman to her husband.

Spiritual adultery was the sin of the church at Ephesus. Read Revelation 2:4-5 for Jesus' teaching: _____

James 4:4 uses "oida" as "know" which tells us that we don't have to experience a particular sin to know that it is wrong. We also don't need to experience the sin to receive the grace that helps us resist doing wrong.

Annie Johnson Flint wrote a beautiful hymn of the church:

He giveth more grace when the burden grows greater;
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.
To added affliction he addeth His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

WAR HAS SOLUTIONS: There will never be peace without the Prince of Peace. There can't be international peace until there is national peace; it won't happen nationally if it doesn't happen in our state, our city, our homes, and our hearts.

James concluded his discussion on war with a five-fold method to find peace. Reflect on each in the space provided:

SUBMISSION _____

We first submit to God, then we resist the devil. Most of our problems can be traced to our refusal to submit to Jesus' lordship in every area of our lives.

OPPOSITION _____

We are to oppose evil. When we submit to Jesus, spiritual conflict increases. Satan desires to keep us at war with God because if we submit completely to the lordship of Christ, we will battle him wholeheartedly. Read 1 John 4:4 for added insight: _____

PROPOSITION _____

The invitation is issued to come near to God. What a privilege. The issue is repentance. In the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is described three steps that the prodigal took: He submitted to his father and went home; he took a stand against the devil and turned his back on his wrong ways; he accepted the proposition to draw near – he went home. When his father saw him, he ran to meet him.

ADMONITION _____

We must admit our need and ask for forgiveness. Then we can draw near.

Read 1 John 1:9: _____

Actions of our hands are a result of attitudes of our hearts. We need both to be clean.

Psalm 24:3-4 _____

The mark of genuine repentance is a heart-felt sorrow for our sinful actions and attitudes. This isn't just remorse or regret. It is a spiritual brokenness. Read the words of the prodigal in Luke 15:19 _____

DISPOSITION _____

Finally, James said to "humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up." Do a word study on humble and write the result here: _____

We must recognize our bankrupt spiritual condition and admit our need for God. Read Luke 18:14 _____

If we would follow these five steps, our wars would cease. War and peace are two of the great issues facing the church as we head toward Armageddon. God has not abdicated His throne, but is at work in the world and within our hearts. He calls us to be peace makers because we know the solution to the war within ourselves, to the strife within the church, and to the enmity of the world.

THE ARROGANCE OF THE TIMES

Begin this week's study by reading through James 4:13-17, recording points that stand out to you. _____

In an economic class (that I was forced to take) recession was defined for us:

1. Two consecutive down quarters in the GNP
2. Economic decline brought about by higher unemployment, declining consumer purchasing, tightening credit, and an overall slump in the economy
3. Consistent decline in overall economic activity resulting in the loss of jobs

Economic and spiritual recession have some of the same causes, and they may be closer to home than we think or desire. James is writing with an interest in the spiritual recession that is found in many churches, homes, and hearts.

According to James, recession has its roots in three areas:

1. Foolish presumptions
2. Forgotten perspectives

3. Forsaken priorities

Recession isn't necessarily a bad thing. Like the medicine that says "shake well before using" we may find that we have let all of the good stuff settle to the bottom. In times of recession, God shakes us up. We get rid of excess baggage and cut our budgets. We go back to basics and check our priorities. James begins the section with the words, "now listen." The verb is in the second person singular. James was talking to each one individually. Don't think this section is for someone else. It is for you.

FOOLISH PRESUMPTIONS: The materialistic man in James 4:13 is obsessed with money; his life is motivated by money and greed. He isn't bad. Nothing indicates that he is unethical or unprofessional. He seems self-confident, goal-oriented, and profit-motivated. However, he lives as a practical atheist with no consideration of God in his planning. He is a microcosm of the American mentality, "I can do it on my own." The Bible never speaks against good planning, positive attitudes, or hard work. This man's attitude is the issue. In arrogance, the man presumes the when (today or tomorrow), the where (to this city) and the what (to carry on business).

It is arrogant to allow foolish motivation to control our actions. Read the story of Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:20-22: _____

There is nothing wrong with the motivation to make a profit. Read Matthew 25:14-30 _____

Christians ought to be good goal-setters, but goals alone will let us down if we leave God out of them. It is foolish to make presumptions about the future with no thought of God. Christians who are in spiritual recession and arrogantly believe they can grow in Christ when they decide to, where they want to, and how they want to will find themselves spiritually stunted by their foolish presumptions.

FORGOTTEN PERSPECTIVES: It only takes being soldier in a war or a patient in a cancer ward to relate to James 4:14. Seventy years from now, people in this class will be living in either heaven or hell. Jesus actually taught more about hell than He did about heaven. Forgetting proper perspectives causes us to number our years rather than our days and hours. The Bible uses many metaphors to speak of the truth of life's brevity.

1 Chronicles 29:15 _____

Job 7:7 _____

Job 9:25 _____

Psalms 102:3 _____

Proverbs 27:1 _____

Psalms 39:4-6 _____

Since the duration of life is uncertain, the fact that it will end is not. Peter Marshall told the following old Arabic fable:

A servant went to the market and returned white and trembling
He told his master that Death had jostled him in the market
He asked his master for a fast horse so he could escape to Samarra
The master loaned him the horse, and the servant rode off
Later, the master was at the market and saw Death
He asked him why he had frightened his servant that morning
Death replied, "I didn't mean to frighten him; I was just surprised to see him
in Baghdad
Because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

Christians need to have no fear of death. This is why Amos 4:12 strikes no fear in Christians who are ready to die. Read that verse: _____

Spiritual recession is rooted in foolish presumptions and forgotten perspectives.

FORSAKEN PRIORITIES: God wants us to know His will and do it. Read Colossians 1:9 for Paul's perspective _____

Waiting on God's will is not permission to sit back and do nothing or live without motivation. Some people make a profession of sitting and waiting on God. Whatever work we do, being in God's will should characterize our lives. Read the following verses, recording what you learn here:

Acts 18:21 _____

1 Corinthians 4:19 _____

Acts 16:10 _____

Do a word study on "concluding" in Acts 16:10 _____

When we move in God's will, the pieces of our lives will come together. To avoid spiritual recession, we must keep our priorities straight. Read Psalm 37:4 _____

When we seek God's will as we make plans, His desires become our desires as well.

Priorities involve not only God's will, but God's way. James 4:17 is the quintessential definition of sin. It portrays a person who knows a certain standard is right but falls below it. We often think of sins as things we do when we know we should not do them. James adds the sin of omission. Not doing right is as sinful as doing wrong. People who know what they should do and willfully refuse to do it have forsaken proper priorities.

2 Peter 2:1 _____

If you think that there will always be time to get right with God, remember that we do not know the length of our days. Take James' advice and don't make presumptions about tomorrow.

MONEY TALKS

As we begin the study for this week, read through James 5:1-6 and record the key ideas you see here: _____

Some may be prone to think that this section doesn't apply to them. It must be for trillionnaires! There are two basic reactions:

1. Those who don't have money feel more spiritual than those who do
2. Those who have money feel a need to be defensive

Neither is the case. These verses apply to everyone because being "rich" is relative. Compared to most people in the world, everyone in the United States is

rich. The real issue is not whether we have money, but whether money has us. Many poor people are more preoccupied with money and possessions than some wealthy people.

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Genesis 13:2 _____

1 Chronicles 29:28 _____

Matthew 27:57 _____

Acts 4:36 _____

If there is nothing inherently wrong with wealth, then what is James saying? Do a word study on the word translated "miseries" in James 5:1, writing the result here: _____

James is concerned with three things:

1. How we get our money
2. How we guard our money
3. How we give our money

When these issues are evaluated, we will see our real priorities. They are so important that one out of every three of Jesus' sermons dealt with money and a third of his thirty-eight parables dealt with possessions.

Read Matthew 6:21 for Jesus' perspective _____

HOW WE GET MONEY

The issue of how wealth is acquired is so important that this is where James begins. At issue is the acquisition of wealth by illegal and immoral means. The man in this section promised a certain payment but refused to pay when the work was done. Do a word study on "withheld" in James 5:4 _____

Read the following for perspective:

Leviticus 19:11 _____

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 _____

Luke 10:7 _____

Remember that "rich" is relative and you don't have to be an employer to be guilty of exploitation to get money. Employees also do it to employers by fudging time sheets, taking longer breaks, internet shopping on the job, leaving a little early and the like.

The word translated "condemned" in 5:6 is *katedikasate* which implies that the man who refused to pay had the political power to control the system and prevent anyone from opposing him. James is speaking of someone who steps over anything or anyone in order to reach the top. The victims didn't offer much resistance because the system was controlled by the rich and they could not.

We cannot help remembering that the love of money was at the roof of Christ's betrayal. Look at how Judas got his money. Look where he ended up. What does your money say about how you got it?

HOW WE GUARD MONEY

The rich in James 5:3 have "stored up" their treasure. Do a word study on this word and write the result here: _____

The word carries the idea of hoarding treasures. There is nothing wrong with savings accounts and fiscal responsibility. Read 2 Corinthians 12:14 _____

But it is wrong to hoard wealth that is owed to others. Wealth guarded in this way is deceitful. It is good to have what money can buy, but even better to have the things that money cannot buy.

Guarded wealth is also decadent – it rots—we can't take it with us. Read Matthew 6:19-20 _____

Guarded wealth is also deceptive. It brings a false sense of security. Shortly after James wrote, Jerusalem was sacked and the Jews' accumulated wealth was taken, bringing famine and disease. It is a mistake to think that security is found in wealth.

God is as concerned about how we guard our wealth as how we get it. It would be tragic to come to the end of this life and have only this world's treasure stored up. Do you possess your money, or does it possess you? Guarded money will never spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

HOW WE GIVE MONEY

Money speaks loudest by how we give it. Some people give to themselves in self-indulgence while others give it to the Lord to advance His kingdom. James describes a man who lived luxuriously. He gave himself every pleasure. But at the judgment seat, Jesus isn't going to ask to see our Bibles and note the pages that are marked up. He isn't going to ask for Pastor Ron's sermon outline and be sure all of the blanks are filled in. He isn't going to ask if you had perfect attendance in Christian Education class. (this is good news for some of you!) He is going to ask how we spent our lives and resources. This reveals what is really important to us.

There are some laws that govern our giving.

LAW OF CLARIFICATION which states that God owns all of the wealth in this world and the next (1 Chronicles 29:11 and Psalm 24:1)

LAW OF CIRCULATION which means that God wants His wealth in circulation, being used for His kingdom

LAW OF COOPERATION which states that God's wealth is to be used by His children in cooperation with the work of the kingdom

LAW OF CULTIVATION which means that the way to appropriate God's wealth is to give. We can't reap until we sow.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:11 and write David's perspective _____

We live in a world where accumulation of wealth is the name of the game. The danger here is that wealth can cause us to focus our complete attention on the world. We begin to live for the world and its stuff. Eventually the wealth we possessed begins to possess us.

We must be careful to get our wealth honestly, guard it loosely, and give it selflessly to Christ. To do otherwise will only produce misery.

TOUCHING A HURTING WORLD

As we begin our study for this week, read through James 5:9-20, writing the highlights you see here: _____

James admonition in 5:9 is against grumbling. This word expresses a feeling that is internal and unexpressed; it refers to what is harbored inside. James is telling us to check out the interior—to look inside and be clean. Since the return of Jesus is imminent, we cannot afford to hold grudges or harbor sin in our lives. Until the Lord returns, we need to stay calm and stand firm.

James calls us to look up, look in, and look back to those who went before. Hebrews 11 is a roll call of persecuted believers.

If you have family members trying to pull you down, look back to Abel
If you face misunderstandings, look back to Noah
If you face crisis of faith, look back to Abraham
If you face a great task, look back to Moses
If you face obstacles and walls that cannot be scaled, look back to Joshua
If you worry about sins of the past, look back to Rahab

Read through Hebrews 11:36-40 _____

All of the admonitions point back to the words, “be patient.” Impatience causes failure. Paul said that “everything written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Word we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

We need consistence; our talk and walk should match. When James said that we shouldn’t swear, he wasn’t speaking of profanity, but of taking oaths. In James’ day, people rarely signed contracts, they swore oaths instead. They were an important part of Jewish life. Read Hebrews 6:13-14,17 and answer the question, “who did God swear by?” _____

Matthew 26:63 _____

2 Corinthians 1:23 _____

By James day, oaths had acquired a shady reputation because they were used so lightly and had lost their significance. There were binding and non-binding oaths with lots and lots of loopholes. People were using oaths the same way a child says , "cross my heart and hope to die." Jesus condemned such perversions.

Matthew 23:16-22 _____

James 5:12 reminds us that Jesus said not to swear AT ALL. Read Matthew 5:34-37 _____

It is dangerous to ask God to give witness to our lies and exaggerations. We must be consistent, always people of integrity. There is a sense in which the coming of Christ for us is not sometime we can plan in advance. We won't have time to "get ready" because we must "be ready."

Because we live in a world full of hurt, and the church has done little to help, many see the church as "out of touch" with reality. And Christians feel too little urgency to do anything about it. As a result, doctrine has sunk to unthinkable levels and almost anything goes.

A Presbyterian Church task force reported to the General Assembly these words: "in the past, we have viewed marriage as a prerequisite to sexual intercourse and considered sex outside of marriage as sin. Those beliefs must change or the church will be seen increasingly as irrelevant to most people's lifestyles."

A lot is at stake and the church must be in touch with a hurting world. James maintains three types of situations are common to people:

1. **STRESS AND PRESSURE:** James 5:13 asks if any are suffering. Do a word study on "suffering" in this verse and write the result here: _____

Sometimes we do everything we can think of and finally realize that there is nothing left but to pray! But James says that our first action should be prayer. Read Psalm 50:15 _____

2. PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS: James continues by telling happy people to sing songs of praise. "Happy" is euthemeo which means "well-being of the soul." A Christian may not be happy about what is going on outside of him, but he can be ecstatic about what is going on inside. It actually means to "pluck stringed instruments" and is the same word translated in Ephesians 5:19 as "making melody."
3. PAIN: James 5:14-15 is the only place in scripture describing praying for the sick. It can mean weakness of body or spirit. Read Romans 14:1-2 and Acts 20:35 _____

It is somewhat strange that James changes words for "sick" in 5:15 and uses a word which means "to grow weary." Kamno is used the same way in Hebrews 11:3 _____

See the word also in Revelation 3:3 _____

James was thinking of someone who was weary because of struggles of body or spirit. The implication is that they were at the point of being unable to pray for themselves because of weariness. What should they do? Call the elders of the church, men equipped by the Holy Spirit to serve the church as spiritual leaders in times like these. People who are spiritually weak need someone on whom they can lean. The initiative is taken by those who are sick. In response, the elders respond with a ministry of encouragement.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 _____

How does this work? The elders pray over the person and anoint him with oil.
Read Acts 6:4 for the ministry of elders _____

Two words are translated "anoint." Read the following verses and note the word being used:

Luke 20:34 _____

John 12:3 _____

Luke 4:18 _____

Acts 4:27 _____

2 Corinthians 1:21 _____

James is using "aleipho" the secular word. He wasn't speaking of ceremonial anointing but practical anointing providing comfort. James point is that the church should do more than just say "we will pray for you." The church should be in touch with the hurting people.

The prayer offered should be "in faith." Read Romans 14:23 for Paul's perspective: _____

Now read Jesus' perspective in Mark 11:24 _____

It is impossible to pray in faith unless we have received from Him the Word on which we stand. Read carefully through James 5:15. Is this "carte blanche" for healing? Is it God's will that everyone be healed?

Read these verses:

1 Timothy 4:20 _____

Philippians 2:27 _____
2 Corinthians 12:5-9 _____

Physical healing is a mystery wrapped up in the council of God's will. Some people think they have it all figured out, but they don't. Some people feel that everyone is supposed to be well ... but God didn't heal Paul. Some people say that sickness is the result of sin...but some of God's greatest servants lived a life filled with pain and sickness and some of the world's most sinful have been free from pain. Some say that healing has to do with attitude, but look at the attitude of Naman when he approached Elisha for a cure. We cannot put God in a box. God is sovereign and healing is divine. Our part is to pray and believe.

James had more than the physical in mind. He also had spiritual uplift in mind. It is easy to fall into sin when we are weary, when we are too defeated to pray and our guard is down.

1 John 1:9 _____

Matthew 5:23-24 _____

Matthew 18:15 _____

Galatians 6:1 _____

It is a real privilege to pray for one another. The Greek word translated "prayer" in James 5:16 is "deesis" which means a humble begging or plea. It is a humble request for help and should be offered with integrity because the "righteous" man is in mind. Elijah was a man, but a righteous one. James also notes that such prayer is powerful. These don't have to be long drawn-out orations. They are pointed and powerful, asked with intensity and approached with integrity. Read Luke 18:13 for one such prayer _____

God is in the business of divine intervention. We have wonderful opportunities to bring help, hope and healing to hurting, pressured people. It is the job of the church to reach out and touch a hurting world. James has told us how.

RESTORATION

The first property we bought on campus was an old rooming house that had burned. The insurance company was going to tear it down, but we saw the potential and purchased it from the insurers. In the basement of that property, in an area reached only by water damage and not fire, was an old hutch that had scrapes and dents covered by layer after layer of paint in various shade of bright yellow, orange, and glossy black. It was really ugly and destined for the dumpster when we realized that it was oak, so we took it to a furniture restorer who stripped the old paint off, sanded and repaired, stained and urethaned, and restored the beauty original to it around 1900. Today it is one of our favorite pieces.

God is in the restoration business, too. It is remarkable that He asks us to help in the restoration of people who have been relegated to the basement of life, beaten by life's circumstances, covered by glossed-over hurts, and set aside because they aren't beautiful.

James closes his letter with the recurring theme of a second chance. Good news for all of us! As members of God's family, we have duties to each other. We have the ministry of reconciliation – restoration of fallen believers. James makes us think about three areas in this process: who, how, and where.

WHO: Believers, addressed as "brothers." Do a word study on this word and write the result here: _____

It is possible for a believer to leave the right path. This doesn't mean that the fallen brother (or sister) isn't a Christian anymore. It is much like the parent dealing with a disobedient child. The child still belongs to the parent, but the relationship has been damaged. A believer's fellowship within the family of God can be damaged, but the good news is that it can be restored.

HOW: Believers can stray from the truth. Do a word study on this word and write the result here: _____

The word suggests a gradual moving from God's will. Read Matthew 18:12-14:

The sheep wandered away a little at a time...a tasty patch of grass here, a juicy weed there...so that by following his appetite, the sheep had become separated from the fold.

Read 1 Peter 2:28 for Peter's perspective

James uses "planao" in the aorist tense, indicating that the act was completed and isn't habitual. Habitual sin brings up an entirely different set of responses. This believer may have neglected prayer or stopped being in the Word; maybe new friends led him astray. Step by step by step he wandered.

WHERE: James indicates that the believer goes astray from truth. Jesus says that He is the truth. Read John 17:17 for additional insight:

Today, more and more so-called Christians are saying that doctrine doesn't matter. But we know that what we believe shapes our actions. When a believer wanders from sound doctrine, eventually he will wander from purpose as well.

The Greek word for church is "ekklesia" and it is found 115 times in the New Testament. It means "those who are called out." Believers have the ministry of restoration. Read the following verses:

2 Corinthians 5:18

Galatians 6:1

When you hear that a brother or sister in Christ has fallen, what is your first reaction? Do you delight in spreading the news? Do you accuse or condemn?

Do you think of possible punishments? Are you burdened enough by your calling to want to go and help bring the person back? In our enthusiasm to win the lost, sometimes we forget that we are also called to save the saved.

Even though a believer may have fallen from the truth, one need not stay on the path of deception. We can realize mistakes, go back to the point where we made a wrong turn, and start over. This is why journaling your Christian walk is so important.

When a believer turns back to the right path, it must be more than just being sorry that they were caught. James also isn't talking about someone who makes the same bad choice over and over. We must realize that, despite our best efforts, some people choose to stay on the wrong path.

This brings up the interesting concept of whether it is ultimately possible to lose our salvation. I don't like this terminology at all! We lose our car keys; I have been known to lose my phone. But our salvation? How would you even do that? But the real question is if it is possible to decide that you don't want salvation any more. Is it possible to decide that you like the world better than you like Jesus?

James 5:20 says that it is possible to turn a sinner from the error of his way and save him from death. Read the following verses and record your thoughts here:

1 John 5:16-17 _____

Acts 5:1-10 _____

1 Corinthians 5:5 _____

1 Corinthians 11:30 _____

A person who repents and turns back to God has his sins covered through the atoning blood of Christ. In Psalm 51:12, David asked God to "restore to me the joy of my salvation." Until we are restored, the thrill, the joy of walking with the God is lost.

It is wonderful to realize that God calls on us to be His messenger in proclaiming this good news. We are called to a ministry of reconciliation. The responsibility that comes with our calling is to bring others to repentance and restoration, in a spirit of love. Read Proverbs 10:12 _____

We must be careful to speak the truth in love. So, two principles apply:

1. The Spirit will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and expose the motives of a heart. Read 1 Corinthians 4:5 _____

2. Concealed sin will cause a person to fail to prosper. Read Proverbs 28:13 _____
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Whenever we sit in our dining room and see our hutch, we are reminded that God is in the restoration business. So many people are battered and bruised, stuck in back corners. They don't look beautiful. Let's take them by the hand and bring them back to the one who can make old things pass away and all things become new. Let's answer God's call to be agents of reconciliation.