

Spring Scripture Sharing: James and 1,2,3 John

Let's keep the following points in mind:

-Make sure every person gets a chance to talk if they feel comfortable doing so. Don't dominate the discussion.

-Take a risk and share your thoughts! We all benefit from one another's perspectives.

-Keep any personal information shared in the group in confidence.

Reading for the Week: James 4-5

For all readings for each person in the circle:

-What caught your attention in this reading or resonated with you in a particular way? Why?

-What questions does this reading bring up for you?

Chapter 4

Background: This chapter deals with the root causes of divisions in the community. The term "adulterer" is used because those who caused divisions in the faith community were considered to be unfaithful to God. God's will for his people is that they are one in faith and love, not divided. Verses 13-14, then, turn back to a theme of knowing in what or in whom you place your trust. Verse 13 is meant to complain against those who have a false sense of security because of their riches, not against commerce in general. Verse 14, then, further emphasizes the fragility of human existence and our need to rely upon God.

- What are the main causes of division that James identifies? Why are these things so damaging and dangerous?
- How have we experienced the effects of these kinds of divisions in our own lives?
- What remedies does James present for fighting the causes of division?
- How can we incorporate these remedies more into our own lives and church communities?

Chapter 5

Background: The "rich" that James addresses are those who are wealthy and who oppress the poor workers by withholding their deserved wages. As was mentioned before, this kind of division between rich and poor broke communities apart. Additionally, James' words can be seen as a consolation to those who are currently oppressed by the rich. James addresses these "brothers" and calls them to patience and hope for the Coming of the Lord. There is a sense of expectation that the Lord will return soon. The Letter ends with a description of how to care for the sick of the community. This is seen as one of the Scriptural foundations for the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (formerly known as Extreme Unction).

- How can James' words of assurance to the brothers in verses 7-12 help us as we continue on in faith communities today? How does it inform how we treat others in our parish communities, and the world at large?
- The last verses talk about anointing the sick. The "saving" of the anointing is not primarily one of physical healing, but spiritual healing. The anointing helps the one who is ill to join his/her sufferings to Christ. How can we become closer to God in times of sickness and suffering?
- After a letter filled with many admonitions and warnings that call those who stray back to the Lord, James closes on a note of hope. He addresses the power of conversion and coming back to the Lord after a time of straying. How do we/can we support one another in living the truth and staying true to our faith?

(over)

Bring the Word to the Week:

What is one thing we can do in the next week that will help apply what we've found today to our everyday lives? How can I share what I've received from the Word today with others?