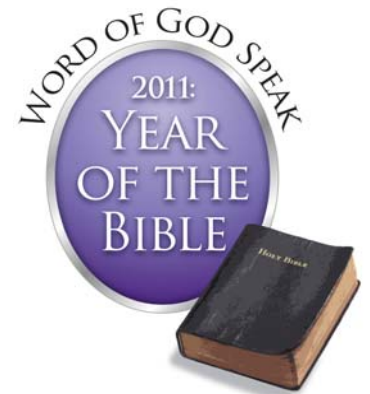


Week 45: Hebrews 10-13; James 1-3 Study Guide for the week of November 7-13, 2011



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with James 3:1-12. Spend some time and reflect on the talk that comes from you. How is your talk like a bit that steers a horse or a rudder that guides a ship? When has your talk been like a spark that starts a forest fire? Which one of the six illustrations in this passage (bit, rudder, spark, taming of animals, water, fig tree) most helps you to understand the teaching about the tongue in this passage? Why? Have you tamed your tongue? When have you used your speech to encourage another person? To curse or put down someone? When have you been encouraged by the words someone spoke to you? When have you felt put down or cursed by the words someone spoke to you? What would it take for you to begin to see the words you speak to or about others to be a reflection of the praise you speak or sing to God? (v.10) Take a few moments at the end of each day this week and ask God to show you where you used words to encourage and where you may have used words to hurt another person. Ask for an increased awareness of the power of your words and for God's power to use words only to be a blessing to others.

Discussion starters *If you are leading a small group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: What is a kind or encouraging thing that someone has said to you?
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Hebrews 10:19-39 In Hebrews 7:1-10:18 the Jewish priesthood and sacrificial system have been used to teach that Jesus is the perfect priest and sacrifice. This leads to the "therefore" at the beginning of 10:19-39. According to 10:19-39, what are the "therefores" for us because Jesus is the perfect priest and sacrifice? Which one of them speaks to you right now? Why?
4. Hebrews 11 What does faith mean to you? After you have answered that question, read chapter 11 with its list of the heroes of the faith. What new insights do you gain from reading this amazing faith history of the Old Testament saints? *A fun way to read this chapter out loud is to have a new person take up the reading with each "By faith ..."*
5. Hebrews 12:1-3 These verses are linked to chapter 11 with another "Therefore ..." List the "therefores" for us in these verses. What does each mean? Which one speaks to you right now? Why?
6. James 1:5-6 What is some wisdom on anything in your life that you want from the Lord now?
7. James 1:6-8 and 4:3 There are many reasons for unanswered prayer. These verses describe two of those reasons. What other reasons for unanswered prayer can you name? Have you experienced unanswered prayer? How did/are you dealing with it?
8. James 1:22-25 What do you think about this illustration?
9. James 1:27 How would you define pure and faultless religion? What do you think about James' summary of pure and faultless religion in this verse? Is this a new definition for you? See Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Jeremiah 7:5-11. What more do you learn about religion that is pure and faultless from reading James 2:1-13? Continue your discussion with the next question.
10. James 2:14-26 Do you think it is possible for someone to continually act in opposition to their core beliefs? What happens when one tries to do this? What is James teaching here? Is James saying good works are needed to be in a relationship with God (salvation) or is he arguing that faith naturally leads to actions? Could people accurately guess your faith by simply watching your actions?

Bible verse to memorize: James 2:17

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. One possibility this week is to pray out of James 1:5-6. Have everyone answer this:

What is some wisdom on anything in your life that you want from the Lord now?

After everyone has answered, go into a time of prayer and have the person to your left pray over the answer you gave to the question.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.