**Faith Foundations 2021-2022**

**The Catholic Epistles**

**Session 8**

**In today’s session, we read James’ continued admonitions to his readers to live in ways that are pleasing to God. In this section of text, James singles out an affinity for the things of this world as a special spiritual danger to Christians. If believers wish to be godly, then they must avoid become worldly in their approach to life.**

**Read James 4:1-5. What causes quarrels and fights among James’ readers?**

**What are “passions,” and what are some examples of them, either that James mentions or that you can think of yourself?**

**What is the result of giving in to one’s passions?**

**How have James’ readers misused (or failed to use) God’s gift of prayer? What has been the result?**

**What does it mean to be a “friend of the world?” When have you been tempted to “friendship with the world?”**

**What enemy does a “friend of the world” make? What does this mean for his or her spiritual state?**

**The quotation found in verse 5 is not a quote of a particular Scripture verse, but is rather a paraphrase of biblical teaching. What does it mean that God “yearns jealously over the spirit he has made to dwell in us?”**

**What, exactly, is the “spirit he has made to dwell in us?”**

**Read James 4:6-10. How does God help us to avoid friendship with the world?**

**What does James’ quotation of Proverbs 3:34 in verse 6 say about those who receive God’s grace? How would one NOT receive it?**

**Taking all of this into account, what encouragement does James give his readers in verse 7? How will doing this help a person spiritually?**

**What does it mean to “draw near to God?” Why would it be a mistake to understand this verse as encouraging us to “make a decision for Jesus” or “invite Jesus into our hearts?”**

**What metaphor does James use in verse 8 to describe how his readers should avoid sin?**

**According to verse 9, what should James’ readers do? Why might he say something like this to them?**

**What does James promise will happen to those who humble themselves before God? How does this help take the sting out of his encouragement in verse 9?**

**How does Jesus serve as the greatest example of what James encourages us to do in verse 10?**

**Worldliness is a great temptation for Christians, and it carries with it great spiritual dangers. Love for the world is a surefire way to place one’s faith and salvation in jeopardy. Yet God does not throw us into the world alone; He gives us His grace so that we might remain on the straight and narrow path. He helps us to humble ourselves, so that He might exalt us. And if we, by His grace, continue in our faith in Jesus and resist the temptations of the world, He will indeed exalt us to eternal life in His kingdom.**

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**The Catholic Epistles**

**Session 9**

**In this section of text, James returns to his discussion about how believers should speak (he really seems to care a lot about those sins of the tongue). The nuance of the discussion in this passage, however, is slightly different than it was in chapter 3.**

**Read James 4:11-12. What does it mean for Christians to “speak evil” against each other? Does this refer to making true statements or false statements about another Christian?**

**Against what also do we speak if we “speak evil” against a fellow Christian? Why is that?**

**How does “speaking evil” against fellow Christians make us “judges” of the Law?**

**Who should really be making judgments in the church? Why is this?**

**In the context of this passage, what does it actually mean to “judge” one’s neighbor? How does one distinguish this type of judging from recognizing someone’s sin and trying to restore him or her to repentance? Can you think of specific examples?**

**Read James 4:13-17. What is the problem with talking about our future plans, especially if they involve personal gain on our part?**

**To what does James compare our lives? What characteristics of our lives are highlighted by this comparison?**

**How should we speak about the future? Why?**

**What does speaking about the future without reference to the Lord and His plans indicate about the speaker?**

**How does James’ statement in verse 17 neatly summarize much of what he teaches in his epistle?**

**As before, James in this passage has some very pointed encouragement to his readers to obey the Law of God and do His will in their lives. He encourages them to control their tongues by refraining from passing judgments on their fellow Christians and from boasting about their big plans for the future. Both of these sins place oneself as the highest authority rather than God, which is why they are both a form of idolatry. As we seek to live Christian lives, let us then take heed to James’ counsel and speak in ways that are pleasing to God.**