

## CHURCH: Week 1 – A Society of Suffering

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

Written by James, the half-brother of Jesus, the book of James is a concise “how to” guide on helping disciples of Jesus grow in spiritual maturity. Like Jesus’ teachings, the book of James is a source of encouragement and comfort, as well as reproof. The book of James is extremely practical, but it also contains some of the most profound theological truths of the New Testament. It gives us sound insight for our daily walk with Jesus.

Tell the story: James 1:1-18 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[Trials are designed by God to grow us in our spiritual maturity and should therefore be counted as joy; God gives wisdom to us when we ask Him for it; God is completely faithful and worthy of our trust; God does not tempt us with evil; sin separates man from a holy God; God’s intentions for me are always good (Romans 8:28); God is unchanging in His character; God gives us the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ; etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I am called to serve Jesus Christ and honor Him with my life; I struggle in my faith and can often doubt my Lord; I can let difficult circumstances toss me about like a ship in a storm; I need to be continually anchored in God’s Word; I look to money for security; I make poor choices that draw me away from following Jesus fully; I must continually take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you’ve learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other Questions specific to this passage:

1. Why is it so difficult for us to respond to trials with joy?
2. In what circumstances do you struggle to believe that God is good to you? Do you believe that everything He has allowed in your life is for your good? Why or why not?

Assign next week’s passage: James 1:18-27 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 1 – Leadership Coaching

*The purpose of this page is to help you sharpen your skills as a small group leader. Each week, we will include concepts, challenges, and resources designed to assist you as you lead and shepherd your small group and grow as a disciple yourself.*

### **Leading** *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

Never meet as a small group without sharing the vision and mission of your group. It may seem like a monotonous thing to do, but you will never reach your destination if you do not know where you are going. Small groups exist to provide a place where relationships can be strengthened around the Word of God. Our goal is for those relationships to model the example of discipleship that Jesus set for us. As we equip disciples and grow our groups, we will branch the small group in order to continue effectively reaching and discipling others. The bottom line is that we exist to glorify Jesus Christ by making disciples in our community, in our country, and in the world!

### **Shepherding** *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

We cannot achieve the vision and mission of small groups by simply meeting one hour a week to discuss a passage of Scripture. That is not the model that Jesus laid out for us. Jesus ate with His disciples, cared for His disciples, challenged His disciples, walked with His disciples, mourned with His disciples, and celebrated with His disciples. We must do the same. Make every effort possible to know the members of your small group and what is happening in their lives so that you can help them mature as disciples of Jesus.

### **Developing** *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

We will not be successful at making disciples if we are not personally growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. It's important we make devotionals a part of our daily lives. Spending time with God should always change who we are. In your small group Leadership Covenant, you committed to maintaining a God-honoring lifestyle. Reread Ephesians 5:1-4 below and the other scriptures listed, and ask God to search your heart and reveal areas in which you struggle. (1 Timothy 3:7; Romans 14:13; 1 Peter 2:1,9-12; Colossians 3:12-17)

"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving." (Ephesians 5:1-4 NIV)

## CHURCH: Week 2 – A People under the Word

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

James finishes Chapter 1 in the same way he began it. James challenges the followers of Jesus Christ to not just believe in Him, but to be changed by Him. As disciples of Jesus, we should look very different than those of this world. Every encounter with Jesus should leave us looking more and more like Him and less and less like the world. God has not called us to a religion or merely religious actions. Our faith in Him should transform our lives.

Tell the story: James 1:18-27 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[We are greatly loved by God; God wants us to listen to others for the purpose of understanding them and developing a relationship with them; God speaks to us through His Word, prayer, circumstances, and the church; God wants me to live “unstained” from this world; God calls for me to care for the widows and orphans; God speaks to us when we humble ourselves to His leadership; God wants us to be obedient to His leadership and be used for His glory; etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I am slow to listen to people; I am quick to get angry when things don’t go my way; my anger does not achieve what God desires; I must prepare my heart to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit; I can hear God speak to my heart, and yet fail to be obedient to what He has told me to do; when I step out in obedience, the Lord blesses it; I need to take my thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you’ve learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. Who in your family tends to be calm, unruffled, and cool in crisis?
2. Has there been a specific area in your life recently where you were merely “hearing” God speak, but you were not “doing” His will? Which area was it?

Assign next week’s passage: James 2:1-17 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 2 – Leadership Coaching

*The purpose of this page is to help you sharpen your skills as a small group leader. Each week, we will include concepts, challenges, and resources designed to assist you as you lead and shepherd your small group and grow as a disciple yourself.*

### **Leading** *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

Let the Holy Spirit lead. Read the Scriptures and be prepared to facilitate your small group discussion, but always be open to where the Spirit leads. Allow time for members of your small group to share what they have learned. You may be surprised by what God wants to show you! If this is a particular struggle of yours, challenge yourself to limit your comments to a certain number during the group session. If you're not currently sharing the role of facilitating and storying, encourage others to participate in those leadership responsibilities. It is our prayer that God is working in the hearts and lives of everyone in your small group. Make sure you allow them the opportunity to share those wonderful stories.

### **Shepherding** *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

The Holy Spirit is always with us. He's not just present during our small group meetings. As you go through the week, be sensitive to His presence and promptings. It may be that He brings a member of your small group to your mind at the very moment they need your prayers. Do not ignore that as an opportunity to reach out. It's amazing to watch what He will do with just a simple act of obedience. Send a text, write a letter, place a phone call, or set up a dinner date!

### **Developing** *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

We want to make every effort in the small group ministry to give you opportunities to develop as a leader. From our scheduled e-mails to our training meetings, as well as offering opportunities for you to serve on the small group leader training facilitator teams, we want to help you develop as a leader. By signing the small group Leadership Covenant, you committed to being a team player, meeting with us (and letting us equip you), and effectively leading your small group. This week, evaluate how faithful or unfaithful you have been to that commitment. Set goals for yourself to not only grow as a disciple but also as a disciple-maker and leader at this church.

## CHURCH: Week 3 – A People of Justice

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

In chapter 2, James continues his address to the Christians of the early church. He chooses this time to speak about the treatment of others. James reminds us that we are all unique creations of God and all of us have fallen short of His glory. As His disciples, we have truly been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, out of that abiding relationship with the Lord, we are called to love others as Christ has first loved us.

Tell the story: James 2:1-17 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[God is absolutely impartial in His dealings with people; God calls us to treat others the way we want to be treated; God commands us to love others as we love ourselves; God calls us to regard others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3); God calls us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance; God transforms a selfish sinner into a compassionate disciple of Jesus; God can see beyond our actions to the motives of our heart; etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I judge people based upon their outward appearance; I sometimes have ulterior motives in showing people kindness; I am not naturally inclined to be impartial; I can trust in the uncertainty of riches (I Timothy 6:17); I should love others as much as I love myself; I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; as a recipient of God's mercy, I cannot save myself by doing "good works" (Ephesians 2:8-9); I should willingly dispense mercy to others; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. Are there certain people you struggle to accept? Why do you think you struggle?
2. When thinking about the people you meet in a typical day, do you show favoritism to some? What are some forms that that favoritism might take?

Assign next week's passage: James 2:18-26 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 3 – Leadership Coaching

*The purpose of this page is to help you sharpen your skills as a small group leader. Each week, we will include concepts, challenges, and resources designed to assist you as you lead and shepherd your small group and grow as a disciple yourself.*

### **Leading** *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

It's all about personal application. While very beneficial, a small group's goal is not just to maximize our knowledge of the Scriptures. Our goal is to see transformation in people's lives and not merely the "transfer of information." As your group studies the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will reveal direction to each individual and how they can grow to be more like Christ. Make sure you are prepared each week to ask your members what God is telling them to do with what they have heard.

### **Shepherding** *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

It is easy for all of us to hear God speak to us, and then go back to doing things the same way as before. As you take note of what your members share, use that as a way to follow up. If someone says they are convicted about not spending time in God's Word, as a friend in a discipleship relationship with them, you are free to follow up with them that week. Ask them if they have been spending time with God. Sometimes, those little nudges can help them be obedient to the Lord's leadership. We can't make others be obedient, but we can certainly do our part by encouraging them in their walk with the Lord!

### **Developing** *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

Are you personally struggling to follow through with what God is showing you? Set the example by sharing that struggle with your leadership team. We all need other people to encourage us in our journey. Do not be ashamed to tell someone about you need to be challenged and encouraged. No matter where you are on the discipleship wheel, God has called you to be in relationship with other believers. We truly need each other.

## CHURCH: Week 4 – A Fellowship of Practice

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

James continues chapter 2 by jumping right into another familiar debate: faith and works. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have been profoundly changed by the gospel, and that should always compel us to act on the grace we have received. While we cannot earn our salvation, our salvation should lead us to perform good works. If your life does not bear this spiritual fruit, James says that your faith is dead.

Tell the story: James 2:18-26 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[God saves us by grace through our faith in Him; God knows the motives by which I perform "good works"; it is the power of Jesus in our lives that produces spiritual fruit in us (John 15:5); God is worthy of every moment of my life; a life void of spiritual fruit is not acceptable to God (Matt. 7:23); God calls us to examine ourselves to see if we are living by faith (II Cor. 13:5); God is glorified when I bear spiritual fruit and prove to be His disciple (John 15:8); etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I cannot save myself by doing good works; I still try to earn my salvation through Christ by doing good works; the proof of my salvation is seen in how I live my life; I call Jesus "Lord" but may not often do what He actually tells me to do (Matthew 7:21-23); it is through obedience that I express my faith in God and my love for Him; I am called to walk in the same manner that Jesus walked (I John 2:6); etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. What is difficult about applying what you hear in a sermon or in a small group to your everyday life? Why is that a struggle?
2. In what kind of "works" is your faith in Jesus typically expressed?

Assign next week's passage: James 3:1-18 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 4 – Leadership Coaching

*The purpose of this page is to help you sharpen your skills as a small group leader. Each week, we will include concepts, challenges, and resources designed to assist you as you lead and shepherd your small group and grow as a disciple yourself.*

### **Leading** *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

Share the load. Our small groups are set up with facilitators, co-facilitators, and observers for multiple reasons. Share the responsibilities of storytelling, hosting, outreach, and ministry efforts with your leadership team and other spiritually mature members of your small group. Not only does this relieve you of some of the pressure but it also gives others an opportunity to grow and prepare to lead their own small group.

### **Shepherding** *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

We have developed several mechanisms in the church to help you in your disciple-making efforts. Our next training is:

What:

When:

Where:

Please be aware of those in your small group who would greatly benefit from seeing how our relational disciple-making process works!

### **Developing** *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

It's always a great idea to visit other small groups and to serve on the leader training facilitation teams. Visiting other small groups lets you get an idea of how others are leading their group, and you may see something you would like to implement in your own small group. It can also be a time for you to hear from God! Serving on the leader training facilitation team will remind you of the basics of small group facilitation, but more importantly, it can remind you of how essential it is to live your life intentionally on mission for God. This week, focus on Matthew 28:19-20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”



## CHURCH: Week 5 – A Community of Peace-Making

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

James is not afraid to confront real life issues with disciples of Jesus. Chapter 3 of James identifies the importance of the tongue. He gives several examples of how difficult it is to tame the tongue and how the tongue can be used for both good and evil. He challenges believers to watch how they use such a powerful weapon because it can have such a harmful impact on our personal relationships.

Tell the story: James 3:1-18 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[God says that the genuineness of a person's faith will be demonstrated by his speech; God wants teachers of God's Word to take their role very seriously; God holds teachers of God's Word to a higher standard; God warns us that the improper use of our tongues can be very harmful to our relationships; God can give us the power to control our tongues; God is worthy of our praise; God alone is the source of true wisdom; etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I stumble on a consistent basis; my submission to the Holy Spirit is a mark of God's wisdom in my life; I can praise God at one moment and then belittle someone else a few moments later; I have to continually seek God's strength to control my tongue; my speech should encourage others and build them up in their faith; I can become arrogant and jealous of others; I am not quick to listen or slow to speak; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. How is your speech impacted by the people around you? Do you think of yourself as mostly influencing how others speak or are they influencing how you speak?
2. What positive words do your friends need to hear from you this week?

Assign next week's passage: James 4:1-12 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 5 – Leadership Coaching

*The purpose of this page is to help you sharpen your skills as a small group leader. Each week, we will include concepts, challenges, and resources designed to assist you as you lead and shepherd your small group and grow as a disciple yourself.*

### Leading *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

- Recording attendance helps you keep track of your small group members, and it helps the church staff to know who is active in your group. If you have any questions about using your app to take attendance, please contact:
- Keeping your roster current is important, as well. Let us know when someone is no longer attending your small group. We will remove them from your roster.

### Shepherding *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

- In Matthew 18:10-14 and Luke 15:3-7, Jesus tells the parable of the Lost Sheep. Jesus tells those listening that if a shepherd with 100 sheep has lost just one of them, he will leave the 99 and go find the one. When the lost sheep is found, the shepherd rejoices. In the same way, it is important for us to keep in contact with everyone who is part of our Small group.
- If there is someone in your group who has not been in attendance for a while, call to check up on them. Let them know how much the small group has missed them. Find out what is going on in their life that is keeping them from attending. Ask how you can be praying for them. Invite them to have lunch or coffee with you. A personal contact from the Facilitator or Co-Facilitator will often bring someone back into the small group.

### Developing *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

- Read Psalm 13. Reflect on the ways God shepherds you. Thank Him for His care and concern for you.
- In 1 Peter, we are told to care for the flock God has given us. Read these verses and think about how you can care for your group the way God cares for you.
  - 1 Peter 5:2-4 (NLT) "Care for the flock that God has entrusted you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor."

## CHURCH: Week 6 – A Counter-Culture of Grace

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

James is very blunt in telling us that we can only be successful and experience peace in our Christian walk through humble submission to our Lord. We cheat on God when we chase our fleshly and selfish desires. We incorrectly think we will find fulfillment. Unfortunately, in that pursuit, we are only led further away from His will for our life. This submission to God is revealed in humbly approaching Him and drawing closer to Him in an abiding relationship.

Tell the story: James 4:1-12 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[God opposes the proud; God gives grace to the humble; God satisfies the longing of our hearts; God wants us to live in such a way that we are "unstained by the world" (James 1:27); conflict within the church is not God's design (John 13:34); God is the ultimate Lawgiver and Judge; God desires for us to not be enslaved to sin but to find freedom through a personal relationship with Him; God tells us that we cannot serve two masters; etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I want Jesus to be my Savior but not my Lord; my actions sometimes show that I love the world more than I love Jesus; my pride leads me to make poor decisions; I need to draw closer to Jesus; I judge people in order to feel better about myself; I can praise God with my lips but deny Him with my lifestyle; I can repent and seek the Lord's forgiveness; I struggle with submitting to God's leadership; I am not often grieved by my sin; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. God longs for an intimate and personal relationship with us. Is there anything that you put before Him or trust more than Him?
2. Looking back over your week, was your conduct more indicative of humility or pride?

Assign next week's passage: James 4:13 – 5:6 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 6 – Leadership Coaching

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### Leading *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

- Rebuilding the story gives the whole group a chance to talk through the story from beginning to end. Start by asking the group, “What happened first in the story we just heard?” You may need to prompt them to continue using questions like, “Then what?” or “What did he do next?” Be prepared to help them fill in the story line.
- During the rebuilding of the story, you may want to tell the small group that you are going to go around the group and take turns telling the next part of the story. Alternately, you may ask one person to tell the group everything they remember about the story and then ask other group members to add to that.

### Shepherding *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

- Helping and supporting others is a vital aspect of group life. Be attentive to the practical needs in your small group. Be aware of skills, knowledge, and gifts that you and others in your group have that could be used to help one another.
- Offer help, but be cautious not to offer unsolicited advice. Advice begins with “You ought to...” while help begins with “Can I offer to help by...”

### Developing *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

James is a tough book to read through. It is convicting and challenging. Is there something specific you have read in the past few weeks that sticks out more than others? Have you talked with someone about the conviction and about your prayers on how you can tackle that sin? It is important as you disciple others in your small group that you have accountability yourself. If this is something you are lacking, commit today to seek out an accountability partner.

## CHURCH: Week 7 – A Community of Justice

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

James pleads with Christians to understand how momentary our life on earth truly is. He reminds us of the importance of remaining kingdom focused. We make decisions, thinking we are in control, instead of humbly submitting to the plan God has for us. James also stresses, again, the importance of obedience. While we may be guilty of committing sin, we can also be guilty of the sin of omission by refusing to follow His will for our life.

Tell the story: James 4:13 – 5:6 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[God is all-powerful and omniscient, sustaining the universe; God has a will and purpose for our lives; God has created us as His workmanship for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10); God calls for us to be generous and willing to share (1 Timothy 6:18); the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ; there is no favoritism with God based upon personal wealth; God is the ultimate Judge; etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[I'm good at making my plans for my life, often ignoring God's agenda; I should desire to do the will of God; in arrogance, I try and live independent of God; I live for the momentary pleasures of this earth; I don't often think about the eternal consequences of my actions; I am greedy with the material blessings that the Lord has given me; I often fail to live by faith; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. James condemned the wealthy landowners of his day. Have you experienced past moments of hoarding God's resources instead of using them for the glory of God?
2. How can you consistently remind yourself of the temporary and fleeting nature of life?

Assign next week's passage: James 5:7–20 *[Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 7 – Leadership Coaching

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### Leading *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

- As you spend more time in your small group, pay attention to your “quiet ones.” Often, those with a more introverted personality will not be the first to respond, but given time to respond, they will add depth to the discussion. Consider asking them specific questions or allowing more prolonged silences between questions to provide them with the opportunity to contribute.

### Shepherding *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

- Prayer is vital. Ask your group members to name one specific request for the upcoming week. Write these down and take a few moments to pray for a few of these each day until your small group meets again.

### Developing *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

- Read Galatians 5:16-21 (NIV): “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- Notice that Paul contrasts the working of the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh refers to our sinful nature that rebels against God’s ways. In contrast to this, the Spirit is life in harmony with God. We live in this tension between flesh’s rebellious nature and the Spirit’s drawing us to the Father. This week, personally live out this verse, “walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” Don’t focus on your struggles; rather, follow the Spirit of God in obedience and allow Him to transform you.

## CHURCH: Week 8 – A Fellowship of Concern

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions/Cast Vision

Remind the small group of the ground rules

Share context of the story *[Provide context by sharing the information below.]*

James encourages us to be patient for the Lord's return. God is using our current trials and circumstances to strengthen us and make us more like Jesus. A lost world should take notice of our integrity and love for one another. We are also to be men and women of prayer, encouraging others in their faith. Just as Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, we are also called to bring others to faith in Him.

Tell the story: James 5:7-20 *[Have someone tell the story.]*

Rebuild the story *[Group members tell the story together based on what they remember.]*

Read the story out loud *[Read the scripture passage to see if anything was added or omitted.]*

Discuss these questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this passage? *[God is the ultimate Judge; God is patient towards us; God encourages believers to remain patient in the midst of difficult circumstances; the certainty of Christ's return is a great source of encouragement; He is full of compassion and is merciful; if we confess our sins to God, He forgives us; God answers our prayers; God encourages us to pray; God uses trials in our lives to strengthen us; God gives us the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18); etc.]*
2. What do we learn about Man/Us from this passage? *[Those who desire to live their lives for Christ will face persecution (II Timothy 3:12); I grow impatient in waiting on the Lord; I often complain when things don't go my way; God calls me to live a life of integrity; I can keep my struggles to myself and not share them with those who care for me; I need to encourage others and pray for them; I need to continually abide in my personal relationship with God; I am called to share Jesus with others; etc.]*
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned today, what do you need to do to obey God?

Other questions specific to this passage:

1. James 5:7 encourages believers to be patient until the coming of the Lord. Are you growing weary in the wait? What has God provided as resources to help us in the wait?
2. What resources or methods have you used that have strengthened your prayer life?

Assign next week's passage: Ecclesiastes 5:10-11, Matt. 25:14-30 *[Ask someone to tell the story.]*

Close in prayer

## CHURCH: Week 8 – Leadership Coaching

*The purpose of this page is to help you sharpen your skills as a small group leader. Each week, we will include concepts, challenges, and resources designed to assist you as you lead and shepherd your small group and grow as a disciple yourself.*

### Leading *[learn to facilitate your group more effectively]*

- Expectation is everything! Does your small group have understood expectations? Do your people feel there is an expectation for them to attend on a weekly basis? Is it expected that they have read the passage before small group every week? Do they understand the importance of participating—both inside and outside of group?

### Shepherding *[know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]*

- Discipleship isn't a secret mission. Discipleship comes from a mutual relationship. Be sure to sit down with those in your small group who you are personally discipling. Discuss where they see themselves spiritually and set up some goals for them (personal time with God, praying with their spouse, devotions with their children, tithe, tackle a particular sin, commit to the "next step" of obedience, etc.).

### Developing *[grow as a disciple yourself]*

Remind yourself this week of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Read the following passages and pray that you will simply be a vessel that the Holy Spirit uses to lead your small group.

- John 16:13-15 (NASB)—Jesus explains to His disciples what they can expect from the Holy Spirit when He comes.  
  
"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore, I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you."
- I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)—As a disciple of Jesus, I am a temple of the Holy Spirit.  
  
"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body."