

JAMES  
Real Faith  
by Arden C. Autry, PhD

LESSON 1  
INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES

James is one of the simplest books in the New Testament. Written in a direct style, it deals with practical concerns rather than difficult theological concepts (compare Hebrews!). Simple is not always easy, however! James is a difficult book precisely because it speaks so plainly about genuine faith. James is often uncomfortable reading.

Author: Reliable tradition associates this epistle with James, the earthly brother of Jesus (or half-brother, to be more precise). The book does not make this claim in so many words, but James seems to be the most plausible candidate for author. Perhaps James did not physically write it: perhaps someone else wrote it as a summary of James' teachings. That, however, cannot be proved or disproved.

Although he was Jesus' earthly brother, James was apparently not a believer until after Jesus' resurrection (see John 7:5). Yet in the Book of Acts he is seen as an important leader among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21; also see Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12). The explanation for his prominence in the early church—despite not being among the original twelve apostles—is to be found not merely in his human relationship to Jesus but also in the fact that he had been singled out for a personal encounter with the resurrected Lord! (See 1 Corinthians 15:7.)

Date: Assuming James wrote the book himself (or someone put his teachings in writing shortly after his death), the time of writing would be no later than about 62 A.D., when James died as a martyr. Possibly James wrote much earlier, perhaps even in the 40's A.D. If so, James could be the earliest writing in the NT or one of the earliest.

Audience: Probably the letter was meant to be read/heard first by Jewish Christians living in Palestine ("twelve tribes" in 1:1). This is not certain, but it seems to fit historically the kind of exhortations contained in the book.

Key themes: The organization of the material appears to many readers to be very loose, as James jumps from one topic to another and later jumps back to previous topics. Indeed, the changes in subject can sometimes be quite abrupt (e.g., 4:12). It is possible, however, to identify *three recurrent themes* which are related to one another.

The first theme encountered in an obvious way is the topic of *testing and temptation*. This leads to the introduction of a second theme: *wisdom*. Before we get out of the first chapter we encounter a third major theme of the book: our *attitude toward wealth* and our response to those who lack resources. These three themes—testing, wisdom, and attitude toward wealth—are found repeatedly in the book of James.

Because these topics are woven together in various places in James, it might be better simply to think of James as a New Testament "wisdom book," similar to Proverbs in the way it applies godly wisdom to a variety of topics. If we try to identify just one single theme which marks James throughout, it would have to be wisdom: the wisdom needed to face trials and temptations, to control our speech, to demonstrate genuine religion, to treat rich and poor with the right attitude, to avoid quarrels, to pray with right motives, to use our resources (time as well as money), and to respond appropriately to trouble, happiness, or sickness. This lesson series will not attempt to provide comprehensive coverage of all the points James makes; rather we will focus on the relationship between godly wisdom and genuine faith. True faith walks the path of true wisdom, and true wisdom lets God's word define both faith and wisdom.

I don't know anyone who would deliberately turn down the offer of more wisdom, provided it did not have too high a price. James speaks, however, of a wisdom which is not only costly but often inconvenient. We may not want his kind of wisdom, or at least it may not strike us initially as attractive. But if it is true wisdom, its value will prove itself. The comfortable thing to do with James is to ignore him, but that will not be good for us.

Especially when James talk about our attitude toward wealth (and our attitude toward people based on their wealth or lack of it), we may find his words quite uncomfortable. As preparation for understanding the way James refers to the "rich" and the "poor," you will find it helpful to read the following texts from the OT and from the teachings of Jesus:

Deuteronomy 10:16-19

Psalms 69:32-33

Psalms 86:1-2

Psalms 109:16, 21-22, 31

Ezekiel 16:49

Amos 2:6-7

Matthew 5:3

Matthew 6:24

Matthew 11:4-5

Luke 4:18

Luke 6:20-21, 24-25

Luke 12:13-21

Luke 14:33

Luke 16:19-31

Luke 18:18-30

From these texts and others (many others in the OT), you can see that James builds on a long-standing tradition of using words such as "poor and needy" to refer to any person who knows his or her need for God. On the other hand, the term "rich" can be used to refer to the proud and oppressive people who are causing the suffering of the weak and defenseless. What makes one "rich" in this sense is not the amount of money possessed; rather it has to do with one's attitude toward God, toward other people, and toward one's own resources in the face of life's challenges. The issue is not possession of money or other forms of wealth; the issue is humility. Great heroes of faith in the OT were sometimes rich in earthly goods and influential in the eyes of other people (such as Abraham and David), but their true greatness lay in their humble dependence on God. Other heroes of faith lived austere lives, without much of the world's resources (such as Elijah). Having wealth doesn't make you ungodly; neither does being poor make you holy. What you do with what you have reveals what is in your heart. Someone has said the issue is not how much money you have, but whom you love with it.

In other words, the key contrast at stake when James speaks about "the rich" and "the poor" is the difference between *proud* (selfish, self-sufficient, self-centered) and *humble* (dependent on God, needy because human resources are insufficient). In that sense, a person with much money could see himself as "poor" when confronting problems which money cannot solve, or when confronting his own mortality. It follows that a wise person will identify with the "poor" in that sense; only a fool could fail to see how inadequate human resources are to meet the real challenges of life and death.

Having recognized that the real issue is not the size of one's bank account but one's humility before God, we need to be careful, however, not to miss the rebuke James gives against the attitude which is so easy to copy from the society around us: the tendency to have higher regard or admiration for the rich and powerful than for the literally weak and poor of the world. Even if we do not take pride in our own possessions we can easily fall into this trap of being impressed with the rich and famous, while being bored or embarrassed by the poor "nobodies."

Whether we have a lot of money or very little, if we have the attitude of Jesus and James, we will be able to welcome the poor and despised with the genuine attitude that "these are my kind of people!" (See how Jesus claimed them in Mark 3:31-35; see also Matt. 11:5.) We need to be careful not to let our money deceive us into thinking that we don't need God; we also need to be careful not to let the money of others influence our opinion of their value as human beings. God does not love the rich more than he does the poor; neither should we.

[Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or from the New International Version (NIV).]

## LESSON 2 JAMES 1:1-18

James begins with an encouraging word about trials "of any kind." Everyone encounters difficulties in life, some more than others. Each of us knows that *we* go through trials. If given a chance we could report on the trials we are going through today! That should cause us to reflect on this fact as well: everyone you meet has trials. Thus everyone needs encouragement. No one should ever wonder if he or she can make a contribution to the lives of others. If nothing else, you can be an encourager. That's no small thing, and the need for your services will never end.

How we respond to trials makes a significant difference in the long-term effects of trouble in our lives. Perhaps the most important factor shaping our response is our view of God. Notice what James has to say about God in these first eighteen verses and reflect on how such a view of God enables us to respond constructively to the problems we all face from time to time. You might ask the question: "What picture of God do you get from the first fifteen verses?" Among other possible things, the following may be found:

1. God is generous (vs. 5)
2. God responds to faith (vs. 6)
3. God does not honor "double-mindedness" (vss. 7-8)
4. God will give the crown of life to those who love him (vs. 12)
5. God cannot be tempted to do evil (vs. 13)
6. God does not tempt us to do evil (vs. 13)
7. God is the source of good things, which he gives to us (vs. 17)
8. God is constant, unchanging (vs. 17)
9. God has given us new life by giving us his truth (vs. 18)

All these could be summarized by saying that God is generous, and his will toward us is always for our good. This is fundamentally important not only for how we respond to difficulties in our own lives but also how we respond to troubles we see in the world around us. Knowing God's will toward human beings is generous and constant encourages us in our own struggles and motivates and guides our reaching out to others in need. Believing God is generous and steadfast is the essential basis for our own generosity and consistency as Christians.

James says that when we encounter trials we should consider it joy (vs. 2). This sounds like a strange statement, but it makes good sense if you keep reading and believe what you read: "because you know . . ." (vss. 3-4). If you know there will eventually be good results, you can take courage and persevere in your own difficulties. If you know God intends good results from the trials of others, you can be a patient and encouraging helper of those in need. What are the good results that God wants for every human being? See vs. 4: "mature [perfect] and complete, lacking in nothing." That is God's will for you. That is God's will for everyone you meet!

There should be no question about God's good will for us all, since God is the source of good things and evil is foreign to his nature (vss. 5; 12-13; 17-18). The real question is whether *we* are committed to those purposes, both for ourselves and for others. To the extent that we are *sure* of God's good purposes, we can be *committed* to God's good purposes, and we will be people of

genuine faith whose lives will serve God and others. To the extent we are not committed to God's good purposes (because we don't fully trust him), we will be what James calls "double-minded" (vs. 8, but also 4:8 and Matt. 6:22).

What does it mean to be "double-minded"? Most of us probably have a pretty good idea, since we have all struggled with it at times. We could say the double-minded cannot be single-hearted in their lives, because James describes not so much inability to decide but *unwillingness to commit*. James does not mean honest, undecided opinion or partial, imperfect understanding; rather he refers to selfish, divided ("half-hearted") commitment. (A single-minded person asks for God's wisdom with the commitment to follow wherever God leads. A double-minded person may ask God for guidance but deep be thinking "maybe I'll follow or maybe I won't; it depends on God's will being what I desire.")

This again is something we all struggle with at times—mixed motives. But James serves a strong warning against complacency about this common problem. First of all, he says that we cannot really expect God to help us with our mixed-motive agendas (vss. 6-7). Later he warns us: "purify your hearts, you double-minded" (4:8). Double-minded people, in James' sense, have defiled hearts which need to be cleansed.

Cleansing from double-mindedness is necessary for us to be "mature and complete, lacking in nothing" (vs. 4). This is one of the most important benefits of the trials which come our way: if we respond in faith and perseverance, we will find our motives being purified, our hearts being cleansed, and our double-mindedness becoming single-mindedness (vss. 2-4). When we are single-minded in trusting God, we will know our true security is in God, and our future rests in his good purposes for us (vss. 9-11). We will no longer trust in our earthly riches or human resources, although we will thank God, the giver of all good things, for those resources (vs. 17)

Further note on trials/temptations: The Greek word translated "trial" is *peirasmos*, which can also be translated "test" or "temptation." It is actually the same Greek word in vs. 2 and vs. 12 (and in the "Lord's Prayer"), and the related verb form (*peirazo*) is used in vs. 13. In one sense every trial is a temptation, because each trial or test brings the temptation to give up or to resolve the situation in some way displeasing to God. Our use of two different English words for "trial" and "temptation" is helpful, however, in keeping clear on an important truth: While God may allow us to be tested, his purpose is never to cause us to fall into sin. God's unchanging purpose is to bring us into greater maturity and trust in him. His purpose is always good (vs. 17). Thus, it is wrong to say "God is tempting me" in the sense of wanting me to sin. It is not God's will for you not to do his will! God's nature is completely opposed to sin in any form; he will not "tempt" us to sin. Therefore, if we sin it is not God's fault but ours (vs. 14). James does not even allow us to blame the devil instead of taking the responsibility ourselves! (See also 4:7 in its context.) Whether we like it or not, we must admit that when we fall into sin it is because of our motives, the desires within us (vs. 14; also 4:1).

Notice that being tempted is not itself sin, but it will lead to sin if allowed to get a grip on us (vss. 14-15). And sin, if not renounced and repented of (vs. 15; also 4:7-10), will lead to death. Notice how perseverance in trials (vs. 12) has exactly the opposite result of giving in to temptation (vs. 15). Life or death—that's the choice!

Possible discussion questions:

1. Why should we rejoice when we face trials?
2. What is God's involvement in our temptations and trials? What does God want to happen as compared with what Satan wants to happen?
3. What is our involvement in our temptations and trials? What is our responsibility as compared with God's?
4. If "endurance" produces maturity, what will be the result of failure to persevere?
5. What do these first eighteen verses teach about wisdom?
6. What kind of person is "double-minded"? (See also 4:8.)
7. What should the "rich" person boast about? Is the "rich" person as rich as he thinks he is? Is anyone rich enough not to need God?
8. Would we all be "poor" if we really understood our situation?

### LESSON 3 JAMES 1:17-27

This lesson continues the emphasis of last week on the generosity of God, since that is fundamental to our responses to the difficulties of our own lives but also to our responses to the needs of people around us. Response to the needs of others especially comes into view in the last part of chapter one.

God is described as the giver of all that is good and as "the Father of lights," that is, the source of all light (vs. 17). God created the sun and the stars, which emit physical light, but God is also the source of all moral light. His very character defines what *moral light is* (as 1 John 1:5 also says). James goes on to say that God is absolutely unchanging, even more constant and eternal than the great givers of physical light (sun, moon) which he created. God is the constant, absolutely reliable source of all that is good, and *he* is the one who has given us new life through his word (vs. 18). How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord!

Surely we want to hear and adhere to the good purposes of this unchanging, generous God! But James knows we are more prone to speak than to listen—whether in the presence of God or in human company. Thus he exhorts us to "be quick to listen, slow to speak" (vs. 19).

Perhaps the most pathetic and obvious example today of our human desire to make ourselves heard is the seemingly endless supply of guests for TV "talk shows." Someone suggested these could more accurately be called "shout shows," since often the guests and/or audiences interrupt one another with loud words such as "O, yeah? Well, just let me tell you something!" What is truly amazing about these programs is what people are willing to admit and to talk about openly in front of hundreds of people in the studio audience and unseen millions in the TV audience. Certainly the contents of these programs reveal a sad decline in the levels of decency in our society, but they also reveal something that, to some extent, has always been true about us—we love to talk about ourselves.

Perhaps we could more generously put it this way: we feel a *need* to talk about ourselves, probably because it makes us feel important. Perhaps the nature of our society reinforces a basic fear that our significance as individuals is threatened. We seem to feel that we must assert our significance, through "making a statement" with our wardrobe or automobile, writing graffiti on public property, or dominating personal conversations. So many people seem to be saying, "Look at me! I'm here and I count! You must reckon with me." Everyone wants to make a point; few want to listen.

This is instruction for us, to encourage us not to be "quick to speak." It also represents a great opportunity for us to minister to others—by listening. People need to be listened to. Perhaps some talk too much because they don't feel listened to! Others don't talk and need to; they need to share the pain instead of bottling it up inside. Listening sometimes requires a lot of God's grace, but it definitely is one way of communicating God's grace and love to hurting people.

Genuine listening is especially helpful when dealing with the poor, the homeless, those who often are painfully aware of how society at large tends to look past them, to treat them as "nobodies." Simply to treat a destitute person as a real person can be a real act of Christian love.

James connects "slow to speak" with "slow to anger" (vs. 19). Speaking too quickly is not always because of anger, but being too quick to speak and too easily angered have this in common: both reflect a self-centered, self-concerned approach to life. Anger often is rooted in wanting our own way; domineering speech or dominating conversations aim at the same goal. This self-centeredness, either in anger or conversation, "does not produce God's righteousness" (vs. 20). Neither does our assertive self-expression have the power to save our souls. That power rests in God's word, not ours. Thus James exhorts us to "welcome with meekness the implanted word" (vs. 21).

When we trust God's goodness, we can be patient, listening, and slow to speak and slow to anger. Receiving with meekness the implanted word is an expression of trust in God's good purposes. Inattentiveness to God's word promotes lack of trust. In turn, lack of trust in God promotes self-centered efforts to satisfy the longings of the heart. These efforts eventually produce a high frustration level, which produces anger rather than the righteousness of God in our lives. It is wise to be "quick to listen" and "slow to speak."

True wisdom will involve more than mere listening, of course. As James goes on to tell us, we need to be "doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" (vs. 22). James instructs us to be a responsive audience, not a passive one. We need to let God's word shape and reshape our lives, to change our way of life. We have to adjust to what God says.

James compares listening to the Word with looking at a mirror (vss. 23-24). In this mirror, God shows us what we are like and what he wants us to be. The person who looks at this mirror but does not let what he sees affect his life might just as well not have looked. Profitable use of the Bible is to read and hear it and then to be shaped by it. Not to be shaped by it renders the reading and hearing unprofitable. (Even worse, now one is even more responsible!)

The only way to avoid being a forgetful hearer is to respond with action befitting what one has heard. Repeated hearing is also necessary, but mostly to encourage us in persevering adjustment to the Word and adherence to the Word. Here again our society magnifies a problem which humans have probably always had. Since we love to learn, we may fall into the trap of continually learning new truths out of the Scripture but failing to respond to the truth we have heard already. Learning new things is not bad; it is actually wonderful, but it is not a substitute for obedience to old, familiar truth. We can easily deceive ourselves in this regard. More and more Bible study will never replace simple obedience to the basic truth. Notice that the blessing is for "doing" (vs. 25), not mere hearing. This is true, biblical wisdom in contrast to what the world thinks of as wisdom. Wisdom is not so much in knowing as in doing.

Sometimes we recognize that our faith is being tested (1:2-3). Other times our religion is being tested but we don't recognize the test. In 1:26-27, James describes a test of religious reality which focuses on whether our speech and deeds match our confession of faith. If we are genuinely "religious" we will want to be like God, who is a "father to the fatherless, a defender

of widows" (Ps. 68:5). The orphans and widows represent the truly "poor and needy," society's powerless and vulnerable. Unlike the rich and powerful, whom we are tempted to treat with deference and respect (ch. 2), the "orphans and widows" are powerless to help or hurt us. Anything we do for them will be solely because of love and a genuine "religion" which wants to please God, not because we expect them to repay us or because their favor will benefit us. (You might also look at Matt. 25:36, 43.)

Connected with caring for "widows and orphans" is keeping oneself "unstained by the world" (vs. 27). There are, of course, many ways to apply this exhortation. In this context, however, we might reflect on the fact that nothing is more characteristic of "the world" today than the "me first" attitude, the obsessive quest for personal happiness and fulfillment. There is nothing wrong with preferring happiness to unhappiness, but the path of real wisdom is to allow God's word to show us what will really satisfy and to adjust our lives accordingly. According to Scripture and the testimony of countless Christians, the life that finds true fulfillment is the life which makes a priority of serving God through ministry to others.

Possible discussion questions:

1. Whom will you deceive if you hear God's word but don't do what it says?
2. What is meant by "the perfect law"?
3. How does James describe true religion?
4. What does this passage teach about the proper attitude toward wealth?
5. What does this chapter teach about our speech?
6. How might being "quick to listen" be connected to our responsiveness to the needs of "widows and orphans"? Who are the widows and orphans today?
7. What are some practical ways we can help the "widows and orphans"?  
Who is our neighbor?
8. What are some of the hindrances and dangers which may prevent God's Word from taking root and bearing fruit in our lives?

## LESSON 4 JAMES 2:1-13

Two lessons in this series will be given to the study of chapter two in James, but the entire chapter is actually unified by one theme—our treatment of the poor and needy. How we treat them socially is dealt with in 2:1-13. How we respond to their material needs is dealt with in 2:14-26. Do we show them the same respect we do to the rich and powerful? If not, we are "lawbreakers," violating the command to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (vss. 8-9). Do we give of our resources to help the needy, or do we mouth empty words of wishing them well (vs. 15)?

The scene James pictures in vss. 2-4 is so realistic it is painful to contemplate. If we are honest we know we have sometimes let the outward appearance of others affect us in this way, perhaps not to the extent of actually being rude to the poor or poorly dressed person but perhaps being less than enthusiastic in our welcome. Why do we do this?

I believe one reason we show favoritism toward the rich, famous, or powerful is that we think we have something to gain from them. It might not be something in a material sense, although that can surely influence us in some cases. I refer to something less tangible but greatly desirable—positive identification. We enjoy having other people think of us in association with people whom they hold in high regard. That is why I might indulge in "name dropping" about the famous person I was talking with "just the other day." I may be using that name to make you think more highly of me, to give myself a more positive identification in your mind. Perhaps even at the subconscious level, I may think my reputation is enhanced by linking it with this person who enjoys your admiration.

Nothing is wrong with having a good reputation (it is more desirable than riches, Prov. 22:1). It is far better than having a bad reputation! A person with a good reputation can use his/her influence for good, just like a wealthy person can use material resources for good. The danger James warns us about deals with letting a person's wealth or reputation make us into "judges with evil thoughts" (vs. 4). The "evil thoughts" would be our selfish desires to use that person's reputation to enhance our own. The "evil thoughts" would be the condescending, dismissive attitude we might have toward those whose company will not enhance our reputation or add anything good to our image.

The situation James pictures is the "rich" person being treated with respect while the "poor" is merely tolerated or treated with disdain. But it's also possible to judge wealthy persons unfairly. Have you ever felt resentful of those who were better dressed than you, driving a more expensive car, and living in a part of town that was way beyond your means? Does James, in fact, seem to be unfair in the way he describes the "rich" in vss. 6-7? Is he being naive and sentimental in the way he describes the poor as "rich in faith" in vs. 5?

For these questions, which could very reasonably be raised in response to these verses, I would refer you back to Lesson 1, where the terms "rich" and "poor" were discussed. James is not condemning all wealthy people, nor is he making saints out of all impoverished people. Rather, he is correcting a wrong way of evaluating people. To think highly of people *only* because they

have wealth, fame, or power is to give implicit approval to the kind of wicked behavior described in vs. 7. James is not saying all wealthy persons indulge in such behavior. Likewise with regard to the poor: *some are* rich in faith (vs. 5) and should be respected for that. If we disdain them, we are evaluating them with a different standard than the one God uses.

Sometimes we might be tempted to show more honor to the poor than to the rich. James deals here only with preferential treatment of the rich because that is far more likely to happen, since that is the way the world tends to treat people. In fact, to regard either more highly than the other is to have an ungodly way of judging. The world's way of evaluating people is to be impressed with wealth, power, or appearance and to treat those people with greater respect. But how much should the church's or the Christian's evaluation and treatment of people be like the world's?

Because the church of Jesus Christ is an *inclusive* community, any attitude or action which tends to make it *exclusive* of any person because of race, social standing, or economic level is contrary to the true nature of the church. It may be natural for me to prefer spending time with "my kind" of people, or with people I like to imagine are "my kind," but what is *God's kind of people*? Who were Jesus' kind of people? He seemed to be equally able to have fellowship with the poor or the wealthy. He even ate with those who were regarded as sinners in the eyes of the religious authorities. What kind of people did Jesus die for? Does my attitude or action exclude someone whom God has included or wants to include?

Speaking quite frankly, some people, for a variety of reasons, may not feel comfortable in our sanctuary or among us. They may not feel like we are "their kind of people." We cannot fully control how people respond to us, even though we should try to make everyone feel as welcome as possible. The main point here is not their attitude toward us but our attitude toward them. We are responsible for how *we* live by the law of loving our neighbor as ourselves (vs. 8). Regardless of others' attitudes toward us, we are not free to disregard this commandment any more than we are free to disregard the laws about adultery or murder. To be in violation of *any* law is to be in violation of *the* law (vss. 9-13).

Thank God for mercy on us and for the fact that "mercy triumphs over judgment" (vs. 13), for we have all broken the law at some time. But if we are counting on mercy, we have to show mercy to others. If we are judging others as unfit for our company we are not showing mercy. If we are judging rather than showing mercy, we are not on the side of mercy. Instead, we are opposed to mercy, and James sternly warns us that "judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy" (vs. 13).

It might be helpful at this point to observe that the biblical idea of "mercy" is broader than we tend to think of it. We think of mercy as showing kindness to someone who does not deserve it or who has no personal claim on our attention. The biblical idea is probably better understood as generosity. For the concept, see Matt. 5:7; 6:2 (where "alms" is literally deeds of mercy); 6:15; 7:1; 18:23-25. This understanding of "mercy" is what James will go on to discuss further in the rest of this chapter, which is next week's lesson.

Possible discussion questions:

1. What is wrong with showing favoritism toward the rich and powerful?
2. Do we evaluate people by their possessions? Should we evaluate them by what they are instead of what they have? Is that easy to do?
3. Should we show favoritism to the poor?
4. In what way are "the poor" rich?
5. What is meant by "mercy triumphs over judgment"?
6. What are some of the causes of poverty? Are people who are poor always at fault for their state?

LESSON 5  
JAMES 2:14-26

Today's lesson continues looking at James 2. Last week in vss. 1-13, we reflected on how we treat the poor in social terms. This week we look more specifically at the issue of how we use our resources to help those in need. Using our resources (material or otherwise) to help those in need is called "deeds of mercy" or "acts of mercy" or "giving alms" in the Bible (Matt. 6:2; Acts 10:2). Thus the discussion contained in vss. 14-25 is actually a continuation of the reference to "mercy" in vs. 13 of last week's lesson. "Mercy" is not just when we forgive others (although it includes that); "mercy" in the biblical sense includes acts of generosity, especially toward those in need.

We tend to read the last half of ch. 2 as a discussion of faith, with giving to the needy as an illustration. That is not entirely wrong, but the emphasis should perhaps be put differently: James is discussing our attitude and actions toward the poor, and he asserts that actions show the genuineness of our faith. The teaching of James that "faith without works is dead" (vs. 26) is well known, perhaps the best known quotation from James. While the principle should be applied in every area of our lives, in this context the primary application would be in the area of giving of our resources to those in need (vss. 14-17). Giving to those in need is a living demonstration of our living faith. If we only confess our faith but don't demonstrate it by our deeds, we find it impossible to answer the challenge of James: "Show me your faith apart from your works" (vs. 18). Genuine Christian faith manifests itself, over time, in many different kinds of "works," but in this context James is clearly talking about the kind of works involved in giving tangible help to those in need.

Another point should not be missed in this regard: James is, in effect, asking, "Where's your faith?" But he issues this challenge to people *with* resources, not to those *without* resources. Seeing someone in need, we may be tempted to think, "If that person would only work . . ." or "If that person would only have faith . . . he or she would not have that problem." Sometimes that is true; sometimes it is not. Certainly when we are short of earthly resources we need to be responsible to work if we can and to believe that God will supply our needs, but that is not the subject here. James is speaking to people with resources, telling us that the needs of others are our opportunities to show *our* faith by giving to help meet their needs. (Of course giving can take many forms—direct gifts of money, food, clothing, shelter, etc., but also helping people to get jobs, helping people learn how to trust God and be good stewards.)

The kind of faith James has in mind here is shown by what you *do* with what you have, not by what you *say* you would do with what you don't have. I might fantasize that if I had ten million dollars I would do great and noble works of charity, but what if I have more modest resources, perhaps barely enough to provide a decent living for myself and my family? Would it not be a greater act of faith to find some way of giving to the poor from my limited resources—either by financial sacrifices or volunteer work—than to give much larger amounts from money I will never miss? Remember Jesus' approval of "the widow's mite" (Luke 21:1-4; also 2 Cor. 8:12).

Giving as an act of faith is possible for the person with minimal resources just as it is for the person with relatively great resources. The size of the gift does not determine the size of the

faith. The important thing is for everyone to regard their giving as an act of faith, and not to deceive themselves by thinking that they have genuine faith even though they are not giving. You may give without having faith (perhaps trying to earn salvation), but you cannot be sure you have genuine faith if your "faith" does not motivate you to give. If you think otherwise, how will you answer James' challenge: "Show me your faith apart from your works" (vs. 18)? No, "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (vs. 17).

**Further note on reconciling James' teaching with Paul's:**

The focus of this lesson and this series is on the practical implications of James, rather than on in-depth theological analysis. Nevertheless, the question might be raised how to understand the seeming discrepancy between James and Paul on the necessity of works. Is James talking about "works righteousness" in contradiction to Paul? For the purposes of this series, I hope you will not let this issue distract you for long, but I provide the following for the sake of you, the teacher, to have at least a brief answer which can be employed if the question arises.

The basic problem is this: James says, in 2:24, "that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." Paul says, in Rom. 3:28, "that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law." James seems to deny what Paul affirms—that salvation depends on faith alone, faith without works.

There are many elements in a full answer to the questions which could be raised in this comparison of two Spirit-inspired writers. I will use the words of George Ladd (*Theology of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, pp. 592-93) to help resolve the main problem:

Faith for Paul is personal cordial trust; for James it is orthodox opinion. . . . by works Paul designates Jewish deeds of formal obedience to the Law that provide man a basis for boasting in his good achievements. For James, works are deeds of Christian love—deeds that fulfill the 'royal law' of love for the neighbor. . . . James and Paul are dealing with two different situations: Paul with the self-righteousness of Jewish legal piety and James with dead orthodoxy.

The superficial contradiction disappears once we recognize the context for the verses cited (James 2:24 and Rom. 3:28). Paul is concerned to show that we cannot trust our performance of religious observances to secure our salvation; rather we must trust in God's provision in Christ and receive it by faith. James deals also with misplaced trust and false security, but this time it is the deception of thinking that right thinking is all we need for salvation. Paul is saying that instead of trusting our works we have to trust God; James is telling us what real trust looks like when allowed to shape our lives.

Someone else put it this way: Real saving faith does not depend on works, but real saving faith always produces works. That is a good summary of Paul's own teaching in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, . . . not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are . . . created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

Not *by* good works but surely *for* good works. You are not a Christian because you do good works, but because you are a Christian you do good works. The point James drives home is that you cannot smugly assume you are righteous if your life shows no evidence of righteousness in the way you treat others, especially those in need. Real faith is alive and affects the way we live. "Faith" that does not affect our living is not alive, and dead faith cannot save.

One last note of interest: both Paul and James use Abraham as their example. (See Romans 4.) James' use of Abraham is made a bit clearer by realizing that the episode referred to in vs. 21 (from Gen. 22) occurred about 30 years after the pronouncement quoted in vs. 23 (from Gen. 15:6). Because of his faith in God's promise, Abraham was credited with righteousness in Gen. 15; his conduct in Gen. 22 showed that he really was righteous. Real righteousness will manifest itself in righteous works. "Righteousness" that is never manifested is not real, but a deception.

Possible discussion questions:

1. Whom does James challenge to show more faith—the person with a need or the person with a resource to meet others' needs?
2. What kind of faith do demons have? Does it save them? How is your faith different from that of demons?
3. What does James say is essential to genuine saving faith? How does this compare with having the right opinion?
4. How can we really make a difference for the poor? What is our responsibility—individually and as a church—for the poor?
5. How can we be responsible stewards?
6. How were Abraham and Rahab alike?
7. What is the relationship between "being saved" and doing good?

LESSON 6  
JAMES 3:9—4:12

Lesson 1 in this series observed that James sometimes seems to be rather disjointed, with various topics being addressed in no particular order. On the other hand, the book sustains certain themes which give a definite unity to the message. The three most central themes identified in Lesson 1 are testing/trials, wisdom, and attitude toward wealth. The two lessons previous to this emphasized attitude toward wealth, especially how we treat others in view of their wealth or their need. In this lesson we find a focus on wisdom, especially the wisdom we need in speaking and in dealing with our desires or ambitions. Another way to describe this section: James is dealing with the issue of consistency or congruency. There needs to be a godly consistency in the way we speak and in the way our life reflects our Christian beliefs. Our speaking and our living should agree with our Christian confession.

Today's lesson begins at 3:9, but it might be useful to observe the passage just before this. In 3:3-8, James vividly illustrates how the tongue is a physically small but important part of the human body. Under control, it can be used to good effect (like the rudder of the ship). Out of control, it can do great damage (like a spark that starts a forest fire). In many respects, the human capacity to speak ("the tongue") is a powerful ability. Yet, as today's passage tells us, the human tongue is capable of inconsistency so unnatural it cannot be found in nature (vss. 9-12).

One of the best things to do with the tongue is to "bless" (or "praise") God. One of the worst things to do with the tongue is to "curse" people. What a contradiction to use the same instrument for both blessing and cursing! To curse those made in God's image seems to invalidate the blessing spoken toward God! As the tongue reveals what is in the heart (Matt. 12:34-37), such contradictory uses of the tongue reveal the state of double-mindedness (mixed motives, or divided heart) which James warns against (1:8; 4:8).

Perhaps we avoid cursing others in an overt way, but we might still consider whether our words to and about others have the effect of blessing or cursing, of building up or tearing down. Just as we need to show mercy (defined as generosity) by our actions (ch. 2), we need to be generous in what we say to people and what we say about people. (Compare 1 Peter 3:9.)

In the next paragraph (3:13-18), James shows how to identify true wisdom by the presence of godly consistency or congruency in our lives. Wisdom is not the same as cleverness of speech or intellectual power. You don't have to be smart to be wise. Just as true religion is shown by deeds (1:27), and living faith is shown by deeds (2:17, 26), so real wisdom is shown by attitudes and actions which reflect the character of God, the giver of wisdom (1:5). "Wisdom" which manifests an ungodly attitude and produces ungodly results is not wisdom from God. Notice again how the importance of motives keeps coming up in this book.

When James emphasizes that godly wisdom is "first of all pure" (vs. 17), he is contrasting it to the impurity and double-mindedness of the world's wisdom and motives (see 4:8). Godly wisdom is pure because it is "single-minded" in its desire to please God (compare Matt. 5:8). Such wisdom is "peaceable" or "peace-loving" because it is not driven by selfishness, which creates conflicts with others (compare Matt. 5:9). This wisdom is "full of mercy," i.e., generous

toward others, as discussed in ch. 2. This wisdom is devoid of the partiality against which James warned us (also in ch. 2). James promises a "harvest of righteousness" for those who sow peace.

This is a good place to insert a quote from Mother Teresa of Calcutta, since it relates to the same peace of which James speaks:

The fruit of silence is prayer.  
The fruit of prayer is faith.  
The fruit of faith is love.  
The fruit of love is service.  
The fruit of service is peace.

I think James would love that quote, for it deals with many of the issues he has already touched on in his letter—being slow to speak and quick to hear (1:19); genuine faith and service, which fulfills the law of love (ch. 2); and now peace.

The contrast between godly wisdom and unspiritual wisdom is complete: they are different in source and different in outcome. They are also different in operation and motivation. Earthly wisdom looks for a way to control. Godly wisdom looks for a way to contribute, trusting God to be in control. Godly wisdom results in peace. Ungodly wisdom brings the warfare we read about in the first few verses of ch. 4.

In contrast with the peaceful results of godly wisdom (3:17-18) notice the "conflicts and disputes" caused by competing "cravings" or "desires" (4:1-2). Perhaps we have not literally killed our competitors, but quarreling and fighting have the same root as killing—selfish desires (compare Matt. 5:21-22). James speaks principally of fights between people, but the application could also be made to some of the internal conflicts within an individual. When, for example, we desire God's will but not with our whole heart, we have internal fights rather than peace.

Just as our relationships with other people can be disrupted by selfish desires, so can our relationship with God (4:3-4). Prayers can be motivated by selfish desires rather than legitimate needs or the desire to serve God. James rebukes the tendency we have to want God to serve us rather than for us to serve him. This he calls spiritual adultery—maintaining "friendship with the world" and its self-centered motivations while supposedly being devoted to God. God opposes the pride lying behind arrogant attempts to use him for our purposes.

A comparison among various translations will show that vs. 5 is capable of being understood in more than one way. Mainly the choice comes down to two possibilities: (1) the human spirit has strong desires and must be disciplined and helped by God's grace (as in the NIV); or (2) God is jealous for our complete, whole-hearted devotion to him (NASB, NRSV, ESV). Either understanding of the Greek words is possible, and either makes sense in the context. Since both are also *true*, perhaps we do not need to decide for one to the exclusion of the other. The second understanding would have more biblical precedent (God describes himself as "a jealous God" in the OT).

As noted in Lesson 1, the contrast between "proud" and "humble," which is explicit in vss. 6-10, is fundamental to the perspective of the entire book, especially James' words to the "poor" and the "rich." Humble submission to God is the key to resisting the devil, being cleansed from the defilement of double-mindedness (remember 1:8), and eventually being lifted up according to the good will of God (rather than according to our destructive, selfish wills). James' exhortation to "lament and mourn and weep" (vs. 9; see also Matt. 5:4) will not make for a popular sermon, but such responses are entirely appropriate when the Spirit of God convicts us (as he may while we are studying James) of trying to use God to advance selfish personal agendas. If we are entangled in destructive rivalries and quarrels with other Christians, we need to wash our hands and purify our hearts.

No matter how religious we act in other ways, our fights and quarrels with other Christians show that we are still in "friendship with the world," doing things the world's way (promoting ourselves at the expense of others) rather than God's way. If we stand convicted of such a charge and repent and humble ourselves as James instructs, we will be glad for the promise that God "gives grace to the humble" (vs. 6). Only with God's grace can we truly abandon self-centeredness. And unless we renounce selfishness and submit to God, we will have no success in resisting the devil, who appeals to our selfish desires (1:14). If we are proud, we will be opposed by God. If we are opposed by God, we cannot resist the devil. If we humble ourselves before God and renounce selfishness, we deprive the devil of his foothold in our lives.

If we renounce selfishness, we will also stop slandering one another (vs. 11, NIV; "speak evil against one another," NRSV & ESV), for slander is generally motivated by the desire to look better than the person being slandered. Since the law commands us not to slander but to love our neighbor as ourselves, the one who slanders is also (by that action) speaking against the law. To break the law is to reject it; to reject it is to act as the judge over the law. To act as the judge (over the brother and over the law) is to presume to take God's place.

Possible discussion questions:

1. What is the nature of true wisdom? How is it demonstrated? (Compare with the "fruit of the Spirit" in Gal. 5:22-23.)
2. How does godly wisdom compare with the world's "wisdom"?
3. What are the motives at work in worldly "wisdom"? What are the motives at work in godly wisdom? What are the results of pursuing those motives?
4. What is the root cause of quarrels?
5. Does James say that we should renounce all desires? How should we handle them?
6. Why may some requests in prayer not be granted?
7. What does James mean by "friendship with the world"? How is this different from "God so loved the world" in John 3:16? How is this exhortation by James like the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:24?
8. What do you need to do before you try to resist the devil?
9. How does judging your brother or sister make you a judge over the law rather than a doer of the law?

## LESSON 7

### JAMES 4:13—5:11

James seems to change the subject abruptly in vs. 13, but some continuity can be seen in the fact that he is still dealing with presumption—the presumption of judging in vs. 12, the presumption of boasting about tomorrow in vss. 13-17. James certainly does not condemn the making of plans; Scripture elsewhere commends the prudence of foresight (Prov. 6:6-11; 20:4, 18; 21:5). James condemns presumption, not planning. What he condemns is the arrogant attitude that fails to recognize the limits of human control over life (Prov. 16:3; 19:21; 27:1; Luke 12:16-21). In fact the word that is translated as "pride" in vs. 16 (NRSV; translated as "brag" in NIV) is one of the three fundamental sins listed by John in 1 John 2:16 (along with lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes).

As humans we need plans in order to proceed, but our plans are always subject to be changed by events or developments which only God could foresee. When we make plans, we should at least implicitly acknowledge that God may overrule them. Such an attitude of humble deference to God's will may be shown by the expression "If it is the Lord's will," although obviously the mere reciting of those words does not guarantee that the attitude is really present. The real question is whether we are in fact submitted to God's will, rather than caught up in our own plans, made without even considering God's purposes for our lives. Especially we might ask ourselves, What does God want us to do with our most precious resource—our time? How would he want us to invest it? Someone has said that God's way of investing is giving to the poor (see Matt. 6:19-21 about storing up treasures). What are your plans to bless others?

The first six verses of ch. 5 contain the harshest words in James concerning the "rich." In dealing with this passage it is especially important to recall the background for James' use of "rich" and "poor," as discussed in Lesson 1. In condemning the "rich" James is referring to those who have acted in cruel and arrogant ways to enrich themselves by exploiting others. This paragraph is not an indictment of capitalism as an economic system; it is an indictment of human cruelty, selfishness, and unconcern.

Remember that God blessed Abraham, David, Solomon, and others with great wealth. As long as wealth is viewed as a blessing *from* God and is not used as a substitute *for* God, it is a good thing. Remember the emphasis in James 1. God is the giver of good things (1:17). We should be grateful for all he has given us, but we should also be alert to ways we can use what he has given us to spread his blessings to others. God's will to bless us always includes partnership with us in blessing others (Acts 20:35: "it is more blessed to give than to receive").

Those who seek ultimate security in wealth and those who abuse others to get wealth are under the illusion that they will never have to answer to God for how they have used their resources and how they have treated other people. Perhaps James is not speaking primarily here to Christians but is denouncing those who have oppressed their Christian workers. But this warning needs to be heard by sincere Christians as well, for we also are susceptible to the temptation to use people to help our own selfish causes—to build our bank account or to advance some personal scheme. Whenever we take advantage of others and exploit their labor or time in a selfish way without regard for their welfare or benefit, we are playing the part of the "rich,"

those whom James warns of God's imminent judgment. We will be saved from this very common temptation if we remember the inevitable reality of being held accountable for our deeds (see also 2 Cor. 5:10).

"You have . . . murdered" (vs. 6) may seem like an exaggeration, but James may be speaking of "legal" confiscation of the person's property which resulted in his starvation and death, or he may be referring again to the immorality of withholding the wages of the workers (vs. 4). If the worker has given one day of his life in working for you, and you have taken that day without paying him for it, you have stolen the work but you have also taken that much of the worker's life. Taking another's life is called murder.

The reminder that judgment is coming is a warning to the oppressor (vss. 1-6) but a comfort and hope to the oppressed and persecuted Christian (vs. 7). It is also a caution not to take judgment into our own hands. We don't want to be caught judging one another when the true Judge arrives! (vss. 8-9) Just as the faithful prophets of old, we need to endure patiently while we wait for vindication to come from the Lord (vss. 10-11; see also Matt. 5:11-12).

Possible discussion questions:

1. How is boasting about what you will do in the future different from prudent planning?
2. If you knew you would die tomorrow, how would you live today? If you knew you would die next year, how would you live this year?
3. How does knowledge of our mortality encourage humility? Does our society encourage us to think seriously about our mortality?
4. Why does James speak woe to the "rich"? Is he referring to Christian people?
5. In what sense have the rich "murdered the righteous"?

LESSON 8  
JAMES 5:13-20

Simply praying for people in need can be an evasion of responsibility to do something tangible (ch. 2), but that doesn't mean prayer is inappropriate. When confronted with challenges or needs (ours or those of others), the wise course is to use all the appropriate resources at our disposal. One of those resources is certainly prayer.

Beginning in vs. 13, James asks three questions, each of which is followed by an instruction on what to do if you can say "yes" to the question. If you have to say, "Yes, I'm in trouble," James says, "Pray." If you can say, "Yes, I'm happy," James says, "Sing praise to God." If you have to say, "Yes, I'm sick," James says, "Call for others to pray for you." In each case James is not giving us some kind of legalistic pattern to follow; he is simply indicating the proper response and urging us to take appropriate action.

Praying when in trouble, praising God in our happiness—these would almost seem to come naturally to Christians, yet we often are slow to share our burdens or our joys with the Lord. It is good to be reminded to do both. When it comes to the third instruction (calling for prayer from the elders), many Christians are also slow to do this. In fact, many times we resort to prayer only when nothing else has worked! Among other things, James is telling us that prayer for healing should not be our final, desperate response to illness; we should ask for the prayers of others just as naturally as we praise God in our happiness or pray to God when we are in trouble. Asking for the prayers of the church is the right thing to do when we become ill.

James is not saying it is wrong to go to a doctor or to take medicine or seek other sorts of medical relief. Quite the opposite is true. James is saying that if we get sick, we need to do what we can to get well. Human beings know this instinctively. When we get sick, we want to get well. That is a good, natural, God-given desire to be well. Since prayer by others is one of the things we can enlist in our efforts to get well, we should do it; we should ask for prayer, obtain needed medical help, and do anything else within the bounds of God-given wisdom and knowledge to help us get well.

Among other things, this passage reveals it is God's will for us to respond to sickness with a will to get well. That means it is God's will for us to *want* to get well, and it is God's will for us to *try* to get well, and it is God's will for the *church* (represented by the elders) to become involved in our efforts to get well. God is for healing; so are we.

This passage, in fact, reflects an underlying conviction (in James' mind) that it is God's will for us to be well, and that we should respond vigorously to sickness and ask for prayer with confidence that it is God's will for us to be well. James has already indicated that he thinks prayers should be offered to God with a single-minded focus and confidence that God's will for us is good, that God wants to give good gifts to his children in answer to their prayers (see 1:5-8, 17). So, James tells us, in simple, straightforward language, "If you're sick, call for the church to pray and expect to get well, for the Lord will raise you up." The question inevitably arises, however, of how to explain the situation when a person has received prayer and has not been raised up (at least not yet) from his or her affliction.

This is an important question which could occupy a book-length discussion. All of the possible explanations which might apply in different individual situations cannot be mentioned here. Some comments should be made, however, that are directly pertinent to the passage being looked at in James.

The first point has already been mentioned: our response to sickness should be vigorous efforts to get well, including our prayers and the prayers of others. We should pray with confidence in the good will of God, believing that his will is for our health. Praying to get well is the right thing to do. Praying to get well is our responsibility in the situation. The church also has a responsibility to pray for us. (Note the similarity to the implied appropriate response to physical needs in 2:14-17.)

The second point involves what is *not* our responsibility: we are not responsible to make a miracle happen. By definition, a miracle is something only God can do. We are responsible to pray, to believe, and to do whatever else is available to us as human beings. If we have not yet received a miracle, it *may* be because we have not prayed, or we have not prayed with faith, or because there is some other spiritual hindrance such as unconfessed sin (vss. 15-16), *or* there *may* be some other reason of which we are unaware, and of which we may remain unaware for this lifetime. When we do not know the answers, we should keep doing what we know we are supposed to do, and we should let God be God. He knows what he is doing, even if we do not understand what is happening.

When reading this passage in James, we should realize that he is giving us instructions on how we should respond to sickness—we should pray with expectation of healing. James is not giving us a simple formula that gives us sovereignty over our lives (remember it was this same book that pointed out how our lives are not under our control, but under God's, 4:13-16). Put another way, James is *instructing* us in what to do about sickness; he is not giving us a *guarantee* that sickness will be over as soon as the elders pray for us.

James urges us to pray with confident expectation that it is God's will for us to be well. I do not wish for anything said here to undermine that confidence. But James' whole message (and the message of the entire Bible, for that matter) would teach us that *confidence in God* does not mean *control over God*. We best show our confidence in God when we obey and go on obeying even though we're waiting to see the final fulfillment of God's good will for us. Our confidence in God is that his purposes are good and unchanging, and that God is constantly working his purposes out even in the midst of our trials (1:2-4).

If we are still sick after receiving prayer, we don't stop serving God, and we don't stop believing that it is God's will for us to be well. We keep our wills set on getting better, because we know it is God's will for us to get better. But above all, we keep our wills set on being faithful to God while we are waiting to get better. (I agree with those who say that God always heals his own—sometimes immediately, sometimes gradually, sometimes in the resurrection. Actually we all need that resurrection healing. Even after getting healed of various ailments in this life, we still have mortal bodies which need to be changed to live eternally. No matter how much "better" we get in this body, we still need that new one!)

Another point is that the responsibility for faith in this situation is placed on the elders who offer the prayer. James says nothing directly here about the sick person having faith. It would be expected, presumably, that the sick person should exercise faith, too, but people who are so ill that they cannot go to the church but have to ask the church to come to them may be so ill that having faith is very difficult at the moment. At the very least, we should see that it is unhelpful (and often very damaging) and out of keeping with this passage to blame the sick person's lack of faith for the persistence of the sickness. If anyone should be blamed for failure to get the miracle (and trying to fix blame is usually not helpful), it would seem the blame should go to those who prayed, not the person prayed for! This passage, read carefully, provides no ammunition for further wounding the sick by blaming their continued sickness on their lack of faith.

The reader should carefully note that James does *not* say every sickness is caused by sin. He says that the person receiving prayer for physical healing can receive spiritual reconciliation at the same time, *if* it is needed (vs. 15). Some sicknesses can be traced to specific sins; some cannot. It can even happen that a person who needs physical healing may also need forgiveness for sins unrelated to the physical problem. James is saying that the time of prayer for one need is a good time to get right on other issues, too. Prayer for healing, then, is a good time to confess one's sins, *if* confession and the receiving of forgiveness have not already occurred.

James ends his short letter by urging us to be helpful and responsible toward our Christian sisters and brothers who may go astray. We should try to bring them back into the way of truth. When a sinner is turned away from error, he or she is saved from the painful consequences which otherwise would have resulted (ultimately "death"). Sins committed in the process of straying from the truth are thus covered over and should no longer create a barrier to Christian fellowship. Note that James is not talking about "cover-ups" in the sense of hiding the truth and refusing to deal with the problems. Rather he is talking about dealing honestly, compassionately, and discreetly with the brother or sister who has slipped (see also Gal. 6:1-2; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 John 5:16-17). It is by *turning* from sin and coming back to the *truth* that we and those we help can "cover over a multitude of sins" (vs. 20). Our goal, always, is restoration of the sister or brother, and restoration is not produced by exposure for exposure's sake or by ignoring problems which need to be corrected. Again, God is for healing; so are we.

Possible discussion questions:

1. Is the healing spoken of here physical or spiritual? Could it be both?
2. Who is responsible for having faith when the elders pray?
3. What is the role of confession in bringing healing?
4. How was Elijah like us? (See 1 Kings 17-18.)
5. If God is for healing, what should be our attitude toward people with AIDS?