

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **I: James 1:1-4: The Benefits of Facing Trouble**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and his promise to work in the lives of his people.

*Breaking the Ice:* If your group does not know each other well you may want to get people to answer a number of questions which will enable people to learn about one another. If your group does know one another fairly well consider asking the following question: "What is one of the more significant things which happened to you this past week (summer)?"

#### **Bible Study - James 1:1-4** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. James identifies himself as first and foremost "*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*". What attitudes and behaviors characterize a servant?
2. What fears and concerns arise in your heart when you consider God's call to be a servant?
3. How does knowing that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are your Masters effect such fears and concerns? In what particular situations do you need to let God melt your fears of being a servant?
4. Whereas the hedonist avoids trouble at all costs and the masochist enjoys suffering, the Christian expects troubles and has a deep joy even in the face of them. According to this passage, why is this so?
5. Why is it important to distinguish between "*rejoicing in suffering*" from "*rejoicing for suffering*"?
6. Consider this definition: "A trial is anything presented to us in life which may cause us to disobey or disbelieve God on the one hand or on the other may confirm us in obedience and belief and strengthen our character." In what ways does that definition give you insight as to what is going on and taking place whenever you face trials?
7. What is a trial which you have faced in the past which has confirmed the truth that we can "count it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds"?
8. What is a trial you are facing now in which you need strength to persevere to the finish? Take time to pray for one another in these areas.

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does Christ wish to do in my life right now?*" Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question and do not be afraid of the silence. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **IX: James 2:8-17: A Lifestyle of Mercy**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives, and through us, our communities.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Print up a sheet of familiar Christmas carols and sing a number of them. Many of them are theologically rich and serve to both inform our thinking and warm our hearts towards God.

#### **Bible Study - James 2:8-17**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. We are told that the royal law is "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." How would you define love? Can you think of an example in which someone exercised this kind of love toward you?
2. James writes, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." What did he mean by this? What impact did he intend for it to have on his readers? How did he intend for them to change their lives as a result of reading these words?
3. From looking at verses 12 and 13, what do you think James means when he writes, "Mercy triumphs over judgment"?
4. Do you see a connection between verses 12-13 and verses 14-17? If so, how are they connected?
5. What has been your experience with regards to living a lifestyle of mercy (caring for the material and emotional needs of those around you)?
6. What are the greatest obstacles you face when it comes to being a merciful person and what do you think you need to do in order to surmount those obstacles?
7. What are specific situations in which you presently find yourself where you can show mercy to others? What kind of plan will enable you to do this? (You may want to tie this question into the sharing and prayer time).

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider asking people, "Has there been some truth that you have heard from the Scriptures, from a sermon, from a book, from a friend, etc. that God has been using to operate on your life lately. Maybe it was encouraging. Maybe it was convicting. Maybe it was both. If so, would you consider sharing it with us?" Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the worship services at Redeemer. Pray that God would make his presence felt in such a way that people leave changed and with a more fervent desire to serve God and his purposes. Pray that the good news of God's great love to us in Christ is communicated in all parts of the service. Pray that those who are skeptical towards the Christian faith would meet Christ and embrace him as their Savior and King.

*Due to the Christmas season, the next curriculum installment will not appear until December 31st!*

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **Interlude III: *Sharing the Good News***

(Tim will not be preaching on James during the next two weeks. To keep pace with his preaching schedule this study may be used by your group.)

#### **Opening Activities** (*allow 15 -20 minutes*)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary purpose of fellowship groups is **to experience Christ in our midst** in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another in caring and encouraging relationships to the end that we come to know him and our lives are changed.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be visibly at work in your midst.

*Ice-Breaker:* Consider asking, "What is one of the more significant things which has taken place in your life during the past week?"

#### **Bible Study:** 2 Corinthians 5:11-21(*allow 35-40 minutes*)

1. In verses 11 through 13 Paul is seeking to persuade others that he is a sincere proclaimer of the gospel. What things show a person to be sincere in their proclamation of the gospel?
2. What is the motive which lies behind Paul's sharing of the gospel? Why is this motive primary among other legitimate motives?
3. What prevents us from sharing the gospel with others?
4. Paul uses the phrase "ministry of reconciliation" as synonymous with evangelism. Why is this such an appropriate phrase for this task?
5. Reflect on Paul's metaphor of serving as Christ's ambassadors. What are the characteristics of an ambassador and what are the implications of this for our sharing of the gospel?
6. Paul expresses the basic content of the gospel in a couple of ways in this passage? What are they?
7. What do you find to be the most compelling ways of expressing the basic content of the gospel in one or two sentences?
8. What do you think Paul is getting at when in 6:2 he writes, "now is the day of salvation"? What are the implications of this for our witness?

#### **Worship** (*allow 10-15 minutes*)

Take time to thank and praise God for his salvation - that he rescued us from judgment by allowing the judgment we deserved to fall on Jesus. Thank him for establishing the good news by taking the initiative toward the undeserving: "While we yet sinners, Christ died for us."

#### **Prayer** (*Allow 10-15 minutes*)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*Who are 2 or 3 people with whom I would like an opportunity to share the gospel?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close by praying for the 2 or 3 people that each member has mentioned asking for opportunities to share the good news with them in the near future.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **Interlude IV: *Renewing our Devotion to One Another***

#### **Opening Activities and Worship***(Allow 20-30 minutes)*

*Remind the group of its purpose:* We are here to experience Christian community - community over which Jesus Christ presides and in which he is the primary participant. We are here to learn from him and to use the gifts that he has given to us to minister to one another and build up one another.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study - Romans 12:9-16***(Allow 35 minutes)*

1. Think about something to which you have been devoted. What does it mean to be devoted to something? What are the implications and costs of being devoted to something?
2. Paul writes that "love must be sincere." How would you define love? How would you distinguish sincere love from insincere love?
3. In the midst of the commitments and obligations that each of us has, what would it look like to fulfill the command, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love"? What kinds of expectations are realistic to have of one another?
4. The rest of this passage (10-16) spells out some of the specifics involved in being devoted to one another. Which of these strike you as particularly important to the development of community life of your fellowship group? Why?
5. What do you consider the greatest obstacles to being devoted to one another? What are some suggestions you have for overcoming them?
6. What ways do you feel this group has been effectively devoted to one another? What about the community life of this fellowship group do you find especially satisfying?
7. What is one area which has left you disappointed or frustrated regarding the devotion of the members in the group to one another?
8. If you could have your way, what is one thing which you would like to see happening in the group in terms of our devotion to one another which is presently not taking place?
9. What practical suggestions can you come up with for increasing the quality of our devotion to one another?

#### **Sharing** *(Allow 15-20 minutes)*

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?"* . Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** *(Allow 10-15 minutes)*

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts and brokenness in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. It would certainly be appropriate to pray about the things which you discussed in the Bible study. Close with prayer for these items.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Take time to thank God for providing the needed financial resources of the church. The 1995 giving goals were met. Pray that God might continue to make us a people who increasingly recognize our dependence upon him.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

**X: James 2:17-26 : A Lifestyle of Faith**

### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* Consider beginning by reading the following: "We are here to know and experience Christ Jesus ministering to us and through us to one another. He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in their midst.' 'I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.' 'The Father and I will abide with you.' 'The Spirit will be in you and with you.' We believe Jesus does just what he promised. We acknowledge his presence and welcome him into our midst."

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

### **Bible Study - James 2:17-26**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. From an initial reading of this passage, what does James seem to be saying is the relationship between faith and works?
2. James states that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." How is he defining the word "faith" and what leads you to that conclusion?
3. Look closely at James' account of Abraham. What is the chronology concerning Abraham's faith, his being "considered righteous", his works, and his being "credited righteousness"? How do those things fit together? Does this lead to any refinement of your initial assessment about the relationship between faith and works?
4. In verse 24 James says, "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." In Romans 3:27 Paul writes, "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." Is it possible to resolve the apparent conflict between the verses? If so, how? (*Hint: think about how their definitions of key words might differ.*)
5. In looking at James' examples of faith producing works in vs. 14-26, what are the varieties of works which are manifested? What does this tell us about the works which faith produces?
6. How is it that genuine faith stirs us up to produce works?
7. Can you give examples of how faith has produced works in your life?
8. Are there certain works of faith which you feel ought to be manifested in your life which are not currently present?
9. James is trying to protect us from having false assurance about our salvation. How can we regularly bring his warning to bear on our own lives so that it spurs us on to live for God without crushing us under a load of guilt for not having done enough?

### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" If someone believes that there are certain works which ought to be manifested in their life Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts and brokenness in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the raising up of more home fellowship group leaders so that attenders at Redeemer can be more effectively cared for and encouraged to lead God-honoring lives. Pray that God would equip the leaders with the maturity, gifts and skills necessary to do their job well.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XI: James 3:1-6: A Lifestyle of Self-Mastery (I)**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The reason we gather is to experience life together, expecting Jesus Christ to be present and participate. Our hope is that he would change us as individuals and change us a community

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider reading Psalm 33 in three segments (1-5; 6-11; 12-22). Instruct the group that after reading a segment out loud the members may spontaneously offer prayers of praise and adoration in response. After the three segments have been read and people have had the opportunity to respond to each segment, the leader should close the time of worship.

#### **Bible Study - James 3:1-6**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. What is the basic theme of verses 1-6?
2. Why do you suppose James issued the warning in verse 1? What was he seeking to accomplish through this warning?
3. How does the first part of verse 2 soften and temper the warning of verse 1? Why do you think this was important to say? What does it tell us about progressing in holiness in the Christian life?
4. How does James view self-control of the tongue to be related to self-control of the whole body? Have you found this to be true in your own experience?
5. How might you define self-control and what is its purpose according to this passage?
6. What points does James make about our tongues in verses 3-6?
7. Can you recall a time when you carelessly said something that hurt another person deeply? Or can you recall time when someone carelessly said something to you that deeply hurt? How has either of these experiences continued to have an effect on you? What do these experiences tell you about the power of words?
8. What steps have you taken that have been helpful in controlling your tongue? Are there practices in which you engage or rules you try to follow which you have found to be of assistance in this task?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" Perhaps there is a particular person in whose presence you would like to exercise better control of your tongue. This would be an appropriate thing to share. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the children of our church and those who give of their time to teaching them every Sunday. Pray that the children will come to understand and experience the depths of God's love for them. Pray that the teachers will be equipped with every gift they need in order to build into these children's lives. Pray also for the School of Discipleship and its teachers.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XI: James 3:1-6: A Lifestyle of Self-Mastery (I)**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The reason we gather is to experience life together, expecting Jesus Christ to be present and participate. Our hope is that he would change us as individuals and change us a community

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider reading Psalm 33 in three segments (1-5; 6-11; 12-22). Instruct the group that after reading a segment out loud the members may spontaneously offer prayers of praise and adoration in response. After the three segments have been read and people have had the opportunity to respond to each segment, the leader should close the time of worship.

#### **Bible Study - James 3:1-6**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. What is the basic theme of verses 1-6?
2. Why do you suppose James issued the warning in verse 1? What was he seeking to accomplish through this warning?
3. How does the first part of verse 2 soften and temper the warning of verse 1? Why do you think this was important to say? What does it tell us about progressing in holiness in the Christian life?
4. How does James view self-control of the tongue to be related to self-control of the whole body? Have you found this to be true in your own experience?
5. How might you define self-control and what is its purpose according to this passage?
6. What points does James make about our tongues in verses 3-6?
7. Can you recall a time when you carelessly said something that hurt another person deeply? Or can you recall time when someone carelessly said something to you that deeply hurt? How has either of these experiences continued to have an effect on you? What do these experiences tell you about the power of words?
8. What steps have you taken that have been helpful in controlling your tongue? Are there practices in which you engage or rules you try to follow which you have found to be of assistance in this task?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" Perhaps there is a particular person in whose presence you would like to exercise better control of your tongue. This would be an appropriate thing to share. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the children of our church and those who give of their time to teaching them every Sunday. Pray that the children will come to understand and experience the depths of God's love for them. Pray that the teachers will be equipped with every gift they need in order to build into these children's lives. Pray also for the School of Discipleship and its teachers.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XII: James 3:7-12: A Lifestyle of Self-Mastery (II)**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship** (Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives, and through us, our communities.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and his promise to work through people's lives and in people's lives.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

*Breaking the ice:* Consider asking, "What is a significant or important thing which happened in your life this past week?"

#### **Bible Study – James 3:7-12** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. Review last week's study. What were the primary points which were made about our tongues and about the relationship between the control of our tongue and self-control in general?
2. Having looked last week at the importance of watching our words, what changes, if any, did you see in your practice during the past week? What victories did you experience? What failures did you experience? What things did you learn about yourself by trying to practice tongue control?
3. According to verses 9-12, what do the words which come off of our tongues indicate about the state of our hearts? What do you think James' purpose is in stating that it is impossible for an olive tree to bear figs, etc.?
4. "Self-control is the ability to choose the important thing over the urgent thing. The important thing is to please God, to bring him joy; to urgent thing is to please yourself (i.e. to seek *joy apart from pleasing God*). Its opposite is a lack of discipline. Its counterfeit is will-power through pride." What is your reaction to this definition of self-control? How does it help you in your reflections on the topic of self-mastery in general? On mastery of the tongue in particular?
5. Self-control involves two things: (1) Envisioning the important thing so that it is desirable and attractive; (2) Drawing on the vision and choosing it at the moment the important thing presents itself. Which of these do you find more difficult? What practices have you engaged in which strengthen your ability to do either of these things?
6. What is one specific situation in which you would like to exercise better control of your tongue? Pray for one another regarding this.

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "What work of his power and grace does Christ wish to do in my life right now?" Perhaps there are some specific things which arose out of the Bible study that you believe Christ wants to change. If your group is large you may want to break it down into smaller groups of three or four. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels led to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?" Give opportunity for each person to share. "This week Christ wants to use me to...." People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the ministers at Redeemer. Pray that their relationship with Christ would be vital. Pray for the integrity of their lives. Pray for the effectiveness of their ministry.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XIII: James 3:13-18: Wise Relationships**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The reason we gather is to experience life together, expecting Jesus Christ to be present and participate. Our hope is that he would change us as individuals and change us a community.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

*Breaking the ice:* Consider asking, "What is a significant or important thing which happened in your life this past week?"

#### **Bible Study - James 3:13-18**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. According to this passage, how do you identify a wise person?
2. How does James' view of the wise person contrast with our culture's view of the wise person? What does this tell us about our culture and the dangers in it which we must avoid?
3. What is it about bitter envy and selfish ambition that would make someone call the possessors of them "wise" (v. 15)? What is valued by people who are characterized by "envy and selfish ambition"? In contrast, what do the truly wise value?
4. What does it mean to do deeds "with humility"? Why is it so important that humility accompany the good deeds we do toward others? What happens when humility does not accompany our good deeds?
5. In verse 17 James mentions a number of traits found in the wise. They are "peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere." How would you define each of these traits? What do they look like in concrete, practical ways when people are practicing them?
6. Why is each of these traits so important to the developing of healthy relationships?
7. Is there one of these traits in which you feel weakest and in which you would like to see development?
8. What do you think the "harvest of righteousness" is to which James refers in verse 18?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" If there is a particular trait mentioned by James in vs. 17 which you would like to see develop in your life, this would be an appropriate thing to share. Or perhaps there is a particular relationship in which you would like to see greater evidence of these traits. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the worship services at Redeemer. Pray that they would be honoring to God. Pray that God would meet his people in his power and grace during the worship services. Pray that those in attendance who have not yet believed on Christ, would come to know him and embrace him as their Lord and Savior.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XIV: James 4:1-3: Fights and Wars**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and his promise to work through people's lives and in people's lives.

*Ice-Breaker:* Consider asking, "What is one of the more significant things which happened to you during the past week or two?"

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a capella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study - James 4:1-3** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. What are the different forms of fights and quarrels you have noticed being present in relationships within the church? From your observations, what types of issues give rise to quarrels?
2. Why do fights and quarrels so deeply grieve God?
3. What kinds of "desires" do you think James has in mind?
4. What does James mean when he says our "desires battle within us"? Can you give examples of this battle?
5. What makes desires legitimate and what makes them illegitimate? How is our tendency to "kill and covet" related to the illegitimacy of our desires?
6. What does this passage suggest we are to do with our desires?
7. What does this passage teach us about prayer and what ought to be taking place when we pray?
8. Is there an example in your life in which a desire has moved from having too much control of you to being brought in check? If so, how did the change take place and how is this new attitude toward the desire manifested in your life?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider asking people, "Has there been some truth that you have heard from the Scriptures, from a sermon, from a book, from a friend, etc. that God has been using to operate on your life lately. Maybe it was encouraging. Maybe it was convicting. Maybe it was both. If so, would you consider sharing it with us?" Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray that Redeemer becomes a more prayerful church, relying less on our own power and wisdom and more on the grace and power of God.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XV: James 4:4-10: Courage**

#### **Opening activities and worship** (Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* Consider beginning by reading the following:

“We are here to know and experience Christ Jesus ministering to us and through us to one another. He said, ‘Where two or three of you are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.’ And ‘I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.’ ‘The Father and I will abide with you.’ ‘The Spirit will be in you and with you.’ We believe that Jesus does just what he promised. We acknowledge his presence and welcome him into our midst.”

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week’s bulletin. You can either sing them (a capella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study – James 4:4-10** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. James accuses the church of developing a friendship (a sharing of values, attitudes and purposes) with the “world”. What values, attitudes and purposes are a part of the “world” that Christians often assimilate into their lives? What should be a Christian’s values, attitudes and purposes in contrast with the “world’s”?
2. What do you make of James calling the church an “enemy of God”? Why is such strong language justified? What kind of interaction does he suggest would characterize the relationship between God and his people?
3. In the midst of severe admonishment, James, rather unexpectedly, writes, “but God gives more grace.” What does that tell us about God and about the nature and meaning of grace?
4. What does it mean to “submit yourself to God” and why is this James’ first exhortation to this group of stumbling believers?
5. What does it mean to “resist the devil”? What would “resisting the devil” look like in terms of practical and specific actions? How have you found the promise “he will flee from you” to be true in your own experience?
6. We often feel as if God wants nothing to do with us when we have fallen into behaviors which we know are displeasing to him. How does the promise in verse 8 counter that belief? What does it tell us about God’s attitude toward us even when we have fallen into sin?
7. What do verses 8 and 9 tell us about the nature of true repentance—both its actions and attitudes? How does your own repentance usually measure up to this description?
8. What do you think James means when he writes that God “will lift you up”? In what ways has God lifted you up when you have come to him in repentance?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, “*What work of his power and grace does Christ wish to do in my life right now?*” Perhaps it might relate to the Bible study or it might have to do with a totally unrelated issue. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes, no one feels led to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, “How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?” Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to... People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer’s ministry:* Pray for the international missions efforts of Redeemer. Pray that the hearts of those in the congregation will more and more reflect the same love that God has for the whole world. Pray that God will continue to raise up individuals from Redeemer who want to serve him overseas.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **II: James 1:5-8: *The Power for Facing Trouble***

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* Consider beginning by reading the following: "We are here to know and experience Christ Jesus ministering to us and through us to one another. He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in their midst.' 'I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.' 'The Father and I will abide with you.' 'The Spirit will be in you and with you.' We believe Jesus does just what he promised. We acknowledge his presence and welcome him into our midst."

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider reading Psalm 107:1-22 in three segments (1-9;10-16;17-22). Instruct the group that after reading a segment out loud the members may spontaneously offer prayers of praise and adoration in response. After the three segments have been read and people have had the opportunity to respond to each segment, the leader should close the time of worship.

#### **Bible Study - James 1:5-8**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. How do you see James' exhortation in these verses to be connected to the immediately preceding verses?
2. Why is prayer such an important activity when facing troubles and trials? What role does prayer usually play in your life during difficult times?
2. What is "wisdom"? How does it differ from knowledge?
3. How does one get wisdom and how do you know when you've got it? Can you recount an experience when God gave you wisdom in the midst of troubles and how it came to you?
4. What does verse 5 tell us about the character of God? How does it serve to correct out tendency to see God as hard, austere, and difficult to please? How have you seen God show forth his generosity in his relationship to you?
6. What is the nature and character of the doubt which James is addressing in vs. 6-8? How is this doubt to be distinguished from legitimate doubt? What is the double-minded person doubting about God that makes the persons doubt particularly sinister?
7. What have you found to be effective ways of dealing with the double-mindedness this passage speaks of in your life?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" Perhaps people are going through trials for which God wishes to give them wisdom. This would be an appropriate thing to share. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the counseling center. Two new counselors are needed. Wisdom is needed concerning a long term plan to provide a counseling service to all of NYC.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XVI: James 4:11,12; 5:12 : Communication**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives, and through us, our communities.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

*Ice-Breaker:* Consider asking, "What is one of the more significant things which happened to you during the past week or two?"

#### **Bible Study - James 4:11,12; 5:12**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. Look at James 5:12. What is the basic issue which is being addressed here? How widely does it apply?
2. Why is it so important to speak honestly and truthfully to one another while avoiding exaggeration or soft-peddling of the truth? What happens to the Christian community if we do not speak the truth to one another?
3. Look at James 4:11,12. What does it mean to "slander" someone?
4. What does James mean when he writes that "anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it"?
5. James concern seems to be that our speech would be an expression of love for others rather arising out of a desire to harm others. What must be taken into account if we are going to speak in such a way that brings benefit to others?
6. Putting these two passages together we might say we are to "speak the truth in love." What happens when we either speak the truth without love or we speak love without truth?
7. Can you site some examples of when you either did or didn't "speak the truth in love" to someone? What effect did it have on the hearer? *or* Can you site some examples of when someone did or didn't "speak the truth in love" to you and the effect it had?
8. How do you think our group is doing in terms of "speaking the truth in love" to one another? Can you think of things which need to take place in order for us to be able to do it more effectively?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider asking people, "Has there been some truth that you have heard from the Scriptures, from a sermon, from a book, from a friend, etc. that God has been using to operate on your life lately. Maybe it was encouraging. Maybe it was convicting. Maybe it was both. If so, would you consider sharing it with us?" Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the counseling department at Redeemer. Pray that God would provide new counselors for the staff. Pray that the counselors would be given discernment and wisdom so that, through them, God might bring growth and healing to those who see them.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XVII: James 4:13-17: Worry**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* We are here to experience Christian community - community over which Jesus Christ presides and in which he is the primary participant. We are here to learn from him and to use the gifts that he has given to us to minister to one another and build up one another.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Psalm 93 speaks wonderfully of God's strength, sovereignty, and control over the chaotic events of this world. Read Psalm 93 in three segments (1-2; 3-4; 5). Instruct the group that after reading a segment out loud the members may spontaneously offer prayers of praise and adoration in response. After the three segments have been read and people have had the opportunity to respond to each segment, the leader should close the time of worship.

#### **Bible Study - James 4:13-17**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. What is the basic point which James is trying to get across? What new attitudes and ways of thinking is James seeking to instill and develop in his readers?
2. What does this passage teach us about the way in which we are to make decisions?
3. Do you think James' words discourage planning our future or seeking to control things?
4. How, if applied, would this passage make a difference in the way you currently make decisions?
5. How do you see the teaching of this passage effecting our tendency to worry about the future? How, according to this passage, are we to deal with worry if it arises in our lives? How have you sought to drive worry out of your life?
6. What is the connection between verse 17 and the verses which precede it?
7. What causes an action to be characterized as "good"? What makes our actions "good"?
8. Is there any particular "good" thing which you think God is calling you to do which you have been resistant in carrying out?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" If people responded to question 8 above, it would good to reiterate those things and pray for one another. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts and brokenness in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the mercy ministries which fall under HOPE FOR NEW YORK's umbrella. These ministries are directed towards those with significant material needs and who are without the options that others have who are more well-off. These include ministries to the homeless, prostitutes, the poor, and those with AIDS.

**Fellowship Group Curriculum**  
**XVIII: James 5:1-6: Materialism**

**Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* Consider beginning by reading the following: "We are here to know and experience Christ Jesus ministering to us and through us to one another. He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in their midst.' 'I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.' 'The Father and I will abide with you.' 'The Spirit will be in you and with you.' We believe Jesus does just what he promised. We acknowledge his presence and welcome him into our midst."

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

**Bible Study - James 5:1-6** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. How would you summarize the teaching of this passage in a single sentence?
2. What are the faults of those who James addresses which leads him to use such harsh and condemning language?
3. What does the intensity of James' language lead you to conclude about God's character and concerns?
4. What does this passage teach us about the folly of riches? What does it teach us about the dangers of riches?
5. Have you ever seen money exerting a dangerous influence on your life? If so, how?
6. What do you think constitutes a life of "luxury and self-indulgence" and "hoarding wealth"? What makes these behaviors so offensive to God? How do you go about discerning if you have crossed the line into these behaviors?
7. It is sometimes said, "It is your attitude toward towards riches and material things which matters, not merely having riches and material things." What perspective does this passage shed on that belief?
8. What is the effect of this passage on you when you read it? Does it make you angry, uncomfortable, bewildered or something else? Why does it make you feel that way?
9. In light of this passage, how do you think God is calling you to live differently? What, if any, specific and concrete steps do you think God might be calling you to take in response to teaching of this passage?

**Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" Perhaps it might relate to the Bible study or it might have to do with a totally unrelated issue. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

**Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for Redeemer's plans to help support a church which will be planted in one of the poorer neighborhoods of New York City. Pray for the formation of the team to begin this work. Pray that God would guide them in their choice of a neighborhood in which to carry out this church planting and community development effort.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **XIX: James 5:7-11: *Patience***

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives, and through us, our communities.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

*Ice-Breaker:* Consider asking, "What is one of the more significant things which happened to you during the past week or two?"

#### **Bible Study - James 5:7-11**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. How would you define patience? What does it look like in our lives when we are exercising patience? How is patience related to "standing firm" (v. 8)?
2. James states that the second coming of Jesus is a central motive for exercising patience (v. 7,8). How is it that the anticipation of Christ's second coming enables us to stand firm and be patient?
3. How do you think we are to understand James when he writes that the Lord's coming is "near"? What pitfalls must we avoid in a reflecting on the nearness of his coming?
4. Do you find yourself thinking about Christ's second coming with much frequency? If not, why not?
5. In addition to making you more patient, how else would it make your life different if you reflected more often on this event?
6. Why do we "grumble against others" and how is "grumbling against each other" related to a lack of patience?
7. What hints does James give about how we are to overcome our tendency to grumble against each other?
8. What encouragement does James intend for us to draw from the example of the prophets and Job?
9. Is there a situation in your life in which you are being called to exercise patience and avoid grumbling? If so what is it and how do you see James' words giving you insight for handling the situation?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider asking people, "Has there been some truth that you have heard from the Scriptures, from a sermon, from a book, from a friend, etc. that God has been using to operate on your life lately. Maybe it was encouraging. Maybe it was convicting. Maybe it was both. If so, would you consider sharing it with us?" Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* As we come to the season of remembering Christ's passion and celebrating his resurrection, pray that God would use this time of reflection to bring renewal to the lives of individuals at Redeemer. Pray also that God would use our focus on these events to draw non-believers into a relationship with himself.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **Interlude:** *Developing a Life of Prayer*

(Tim will not be preaching on James next week due to the open forum. To keep pace with his preaching schedule this study may be used by your group.)

### **Opening Activities** *(allow 15 -20 minutes)*

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary purpose of fellowship groups is **to experience Christ in our midst** in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another in caring and encouraging relationships to the end that we come to know him and our lives are changed.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be visibly at work in your midst.

*Ice-Breaker:* Consider asking, "What is one of the more significant things which has taken place in your life during the past week?"

### **Bible Study** *(allow 35-40 minutes)*

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault." -- James 1:5*

Read Matthew 6:5-15

1. How would you define prayer? Does your understanding of what prayer is inspire you to pray or take away your incentive?
2. What is Jesus' main point in verses 5-8?
3. What causes these inappropriate behaviors regarding prayer to arise?
4. If God knows what we need before we ask him (v. 8), why should we bother to ask at all? What comfort are these words of Christ meant to bring?
5. What has been a particularly clear answer which you have received to a prayer of yours in the past in which God has demonstrated himself to be a God who hears and acts?
6. What does the model prayer in verses 9-13 teach us about a healthy prayer life?
7. What are your present practices with regards to prayer? How healthy is your own prayer life when measured against Jesus' model prayer?
8. What are the greatest obstacles you face when it comes to being disciplined in prayer and what have you done to try to overcome them?
9. What things have you found to be most helpful in developing a disciplined and healthy prayer life?

### **Worship** *(allow 10-15 minutes)*

Take time to thank and praise God for being attentive to cries of his people. Thank and praise him for the specific ways in which he has answered prayers of people in the group as have just been mentioned in the fifth question of the Bible Study. Also pray for the development of one another's prayer lives.

### **Prayer** *(Allow 10-15 minutes)*

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **III: James 1:9-11: Two Basic Kinds of Trouble**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* Consider beginning by reading the following: "We are here to know and experience Christ Jesus ministering to us and through us to one another. He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in their midst.' 'I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.' 'The Father and I will abide with you.' 'The Spirit will be in you and with you.' We believe Jesus does just what he promised. We acknowledge his presence and welcome him into our midst."

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a capella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study - James 1:9-11** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. Do you sense that there is any connection between this passage and the preceding verses? If so, what is that connection?
2. Why would a person in "humble circumstances" be in a "high position"? What reasons can you list for why a person could take pride in humble circumstances?
3. To what particular temptations and spiritual dangers would a person in "humble circumstances" be subject? How might you overcome these temptations and dangers?
4. Why do you think James calls being rich a "low position"? What seems to be his attitude toward the "rich" and why?
5. To what particular temptations and spiritual dangers would a person who was "rich" be subject? How might you overcome these temptations and dangers?
6. What difficulties have you encountered in seeking to be generous with the resources over which God has given you stewardship?
7. What truths or practices have you found to be helpful in enabling you to become more generous with your resources? What steps have you taken on your pilgrimage to become a more generous person?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" Perhaps people will want to continue taking about growing in generosity and the practical, concrete steps they think God might want them to take to move in that direction. Perhaps there is something of an entirely different nature which they believe God wants to work in them. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for international missions effort of Redeemer. Pray that the hearts of those in the congregation will more and more reflect the same love that God has for the whole world. Pray also that God will continue to raise up individuals from Redeemer who want to serve him overseas.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **IV: James 1:12-15: Sin and Temptation**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship** (Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and his promise to work through people's lives and in people's lives.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study - James 1:12-15** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. This passage distinguishes between "tests" and "temptations"? What do you think the difference is between the two?
2. What motivations does this passage give for standing up firm under tests and temptations? Do they motivate you to want walk in obedience? Why or why not?
3. What is God's role in temptation according to this passage and how does that square with Jesus' teaching us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."?
4. Why do you think James says nothing about Satan's role in temptation while other biblical writers acknowledge the significant role Satan plays?
5. James says that we get "enticed" by sin. Another writer has said that in temptation "Satan shows the bait and hides the hook". Still another says, "every temptation is accompanied by the lie, 'you need this to be happy.'" What insights do these statements give into the nature of temptation? Have you found these statements to be true with regards to your experience of temptation? Explain.
6. What truths do you cling to most in the midst of temptation? What helps you to fight it off best?
7. What is the end product of falling into temptation? How does this serve as a warning to you?
8. What truths do you cling to most when you have fallen into temptation and sin?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?"* Perhaps there is an area of obedience (prayer life, honesty, giving, gentleness, etc.) in which group members want to make strides for which they desire prayer. If your group is large you may want to break it down into smaller groups of three or four. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the upcoming stewardship season in which we want people to examine themselves with regards to how they are investing in God's Kingdom. Ask God to work his priorities into the lives of his people and make us a more generous congregation.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

**V: James 1:16-18:** *Grace and the New Birth*

### **Opening Activities and Worship** (Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* The primary goal for the fellowship group meeting is to experience Christ in our midst in his presence and power. We want him to be at work by His Spirit ministering to us and through us to one another to the end that people are cared for and encouraged to live God-pleasing lives. We want Christ to transform and change our lives.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and his promise to work through people's lives and in people's lives.

*Ice-Breaker:* Consider asking, "What is one of the more significant things which happened to you during the past week or two?"

*Worship:* Consider reading Psalm 19 a loud. Once it has been read encourage group members to respond in short sentences of praise and thanksgiving that God has not left us in the dark but has revealed himself in Creation and in his Word.

### **Bible Study - James 1:16-18** (Allow 35 minutes)

1. James begins this passage with the exhortation: "Do not be deceived!" Why is it so "devastating to our lives to live under deception?"
2. Can you think of any examples in which you believed a lie about God or the world or about what it means to live a God-pleasing life? How did believing that lie affect the way you lived?
3. What practices have you found to be helpful in preventing deception (either self-deception or deception that comes from outside sources) from taking hold in your life?
4. What areas of potential deception is James addressing in verse 17? Do you see any connection between this verse and James' discussion of sin and temptation in verses 13-15?
5. James refers to the good things we experience as being "gifts from the Father of heavenly lights". What deceptions does this description of the good things we experience prevent us from falling into?
6. What in your understanding is at the heart of the experience of the new birth (i.e., What has taken place in the life of the person to whom God has given new life)? What does the language "first fruits of all he created" suggest about the nature of this
7. What does verse 18 suggest about the role God plays and the role we play in the experience of the new birth? Why is it important to be clear on this? What difference does it make if we are confused on this
8. In looking at your life, what are some changes which have occurred in your beliefs and behavior that would substantiate that you have experienced the birth of which this passage

### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider asking people, "Has there been some truth that you have heard from the Scriptures, from a sermon, from a book, from a friend, etc. that God has been using to operate on your life lately. Maybe it was encouraging. Maybe it was convicting. Maybe it was both. If so, would you consider sharing it with us? Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray that Redeemer becomes a more prayerful church, relying less on our own power and wisdom and more on the grace and power of God.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **VI: James 1:19-21: Growth Through Hearing Truth**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* Consider beginning by reading the following: "We are here to know and experience Christ Jesus ministering to us and through us to one another. He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in their midst.' 'I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.' 'The Father and I will abide with you.' 'The Spirit will be in you and with you.' We believe Jesus does just what he promised. We acknowledge his presence and welcome him into our midst."

*Prayer:* Thank God for his promises and presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study - James 1:19-21**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. Verse 19 gives us three commands: "Be quick to listen. Be slow to speak. Be slow to become angry." How are these three commands related to one another?
2. Why is listening well to others so important? What do others do when you are speaking to them that makes you feel like you have been genuinely listened to?
3. James says, "Be slow to become angry." How does one do that?
4. How would you distinguish legitimate anger from illegitimate anger? What are the causes of each? Can you give examples of each kind which have shown up in your life?
5. How would you distinguish appropriate expressions of legitimate anger from inappropriate expressions of legitimate anger? It may be helpful to reflect on the purpose and goals which one should have in expressing their anger.
6. What is the connection between verse 21 and our anger?
7. How does this verse suggest we should deal with our illegitimate anger?
8. What do you think it means to "humbly accept the word planted in you"? Why is it so important to bring humility to the hearing of God's word? What are the potential consequences if you do not?
9. What does this passage tell us about what it means to be saved? Why is the language of "being saved" ("the word which can save you") so appropriate as a description of what is going on in the Christian life?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" This would be an appropriate thing to share. Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts and brokenness in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the raising up of more home fellowship group leaders so that attenders at Redeemer can be more effectively cared for and encouraged to lead God-honoring lives. Pray that God would equip the leaders with the maturity, gifts and skills necessary to do their job well.

## **Fellowship Group Curriculum**

### **VII: James 1:22-27: Growth Through Obeying Truth**

#### **Opening Activities and Worship**(Allow 20-30 minutes)

*Remind the group of its purpose:* We are here to experience Christian community - community over which Jesus Christ presides and in which he is the primary participant. We are here to learn from him and to use the gifts that he has given to us to minister to one another and build up one another.

*Prayer:* Thank God for his presence and ask him to be at work in the group.

*Worship:* Consider using one or two of the hymns or scripture songs from this week's bulletin. You can either sing them (a cappella or accompanied) or you could have one person read the text of a hymn and then allow others to respond with their own verbal expressions of praise.

#### **Bible Study - James 1:22-27**(Allow 35 minutes)

1. What role are the Scriptures meant to play in our lives according to this passage?
2. Why do you suppose we are so willing to stand before the mirror that Scripture holds up to us and not seek to change the things about our heart and life which are in disarray? What accounts for our willingness to go away unchanged?
3. By using the phrase "the perfect law which gives freedom" what are we being told about God's law and true freedom? How does this understanding differ from how people often conceive of God's law and genuine freedom?
4. What have been your practices to make sure that you are not just a person who hears God's word, but who does it as well?
5. Can you think of an area in which you began to practice God's word after having avoided doing so for some time? What was that area? What finally moved you to obedience? What benefits did you experience by obeying God?
6. What picture do you think comes to the mind of most people when they think of a "religious" person? How do James' words counter this view?
7. James states that true religion consists of three things. What are these things and why are all of them important?
8. When it comes to your own life and thinking, which of these three things are you most prone to leave off the list of characteristics which comprise a truly religious life? Why?

#### **Sharing** (Allow 15-20 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*What work of his power and grace does **Christ** wish to do in **my** life right **now**?*" Let people know that you will give them at least five minutes of silence to reflect on this question. Do not be afraid of the silence. If people do begin sharing this will often provide opportunity for group members to minister to one another and pray for one another. If after five minutes no one feels lead to share then move to the next part.

#### **Prayer** (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Consider getting each person to ask themselves, "*How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts and brokenness in the world this week?*" Give opportunity for each person to share. This week Christ wants to use me to...People may also state their personal prayer requests. Close with prayer focusing on these visions for ministry.

*Redeemer's ministry:* Pray for the mercy ministries which fall under HOPE FOR NEW YORK's umbrella. These ministries are directed towards those with significant material needs and who are without the options that others have who are more well-off. These include ministries to the homeless, prostitutes, the poor, and those with AIDS.