

Ministry of West End Church of Christ

The *Quarantine* Bible Study Part 3



6 Daily Bible Studies

Thoughts on the Coronavirus

In just a few short weeks, classification of the coronavirus (COVID-19) escalated from outbreak, to epidemic, to global pandemic; and President Trump declared an official state of emergency for the United States and its citizens. And as anyone reading this knows, the impact of this kind of global crisis extends far beyond the sickness itself.

There is not a person on this earth who hasn't been impacted by the coronavirus, in one way or another, and right now, many people are anxious, on edge, and afraid. Some have even gone to the extreme; bunkering down and "panic purchasing" toilet paper, respiratory masks, and bottled water in preparation for the "end of the world."

Everyone will react to crisis and fear in different ways, but in trying and uncertain times like these, how should Christians respond? When the rest of the world is afraid and loses hope, how can Christians still bring the life and love of Jesus Christ to a sick and dying world? How can Christians still be cautious of this serious disease, while not neglecting their responsibility to the Father?

I'm glad you asked...

First, as Christ-followers, we need to remember that our God is a "refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble" (Psalm 46:1). God has not given us a spirit of fear. We should not panic. Our Heavenly Father is still the all-knowing, ever-present, omnipotent God.

Second, we need to pray for all those who have been infected, those who will be, and for their families. We need to pray for God to deliver the world from this menace to human health and well-being. We need to pray for wisdom, guidance, and protection for our national, state and local leaders as they seek to fulfill their oaths of office in protecting the citizenry.

Third, we need to take necessary precautions. Listen to the medical experts. Be informed, sensitive, and wise in the way we approach this pandemic.

Fourth, don't do anything knowingly that would put anyone else at risk. Seek to help those who need help coping with the aftermath of having the virus or having been exposed to it. And during this whole process, as Christ-followers, we must always remember and have in our consciousness the Lord Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31) and "to do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Luke 6:31). Let's all pray that when we look back on this crisis, our fellow Americans will see this episode of our history as one that reflects credit to the Lord we serve as they see His work in us as we serve them.

Spiritual Side of This Pandemic

Out of the abundance of caution and the threat of this virus spreading, our church family at West End is dealing with something we have never dealt with before. Our elders have decided that for the time being, we will be limiting our exposure at the building by offering Sunday and Wednesday services and Bible study online. In addition to that, we wanted to try and take advantage of the time that many families will have together and offer a hands on Bible study for you to take part in each night.

Each of the lessons provided can be done in a short amount of time or as long as you would like. We would also like to encourage you to share your thoughts from your time together on our private West End Facebook page, where we will have several videos posted each week that correspond to these studies.

By doing this, we are hoping to maintain our fellowship as a congregation and our devotion to God's Word, while still not being able to meet as a body in person. Lets not forget however, that although we can not be present physically in the building, the Lord's church is still meeting and doing great things!

I hope this Bible study will be a benefit to you and your family!

-Billy Bearden

Quarantine Study 1

James 1:1-27

Do you know any Christians who are not happy? Any who are dealing with problems? What about some who are in pain? How recently have you heard a Christian complain about a problem he or she was encountering? God clearly promises pure joy to His children. So why are so many Christians unhappy, disgruntled, and some down right ugly? What would need to change in your life for you to be able to say, “My life is full of pure joy!” God’s path to pure joy is spelled out in this first chapter of James. God turns difficulties into blessings when we apply his Word. The point of trials is not to see whether we are guilty or innocent, pass or fail. The point is development and growth. We should rejoice in the fact that there is growth that needs to take place and will take place when we take God’s Word seriously! God wants to give us strength to resist. He tests us, but He doesn't tempt us. James is drawing a crucial distinction here. God places tests in our path as opportunities for obedience, but they are also opportunities for sin, and if we do not respond to the testing in the proper way, it becomes a temptation that leads us to sin. We must not blame God for the sin that results when we respond wrongly to the test He sends. This study will help us learn to deal with our temptations by knowing when we are being tempted and by turning to God for help.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What are some problems common to all mankind? What are some special problems related to being a Christian?
2. Honestly, how often do you ask God for wisdom in decisions?
3. Keeping verse 6 in mind, can you think of a time in your life where you asked without faith? Can you think of a time in scripture when someone asked with no intention of it happening?
4. Think about some of the problems and pains you are going through. How can you turn those in to opportunities for joy?
5. Reflect on verses 13-15 and explain in your own words what is being said while inserting your own ‘desires’.
6. James talks about being ready to receive the word. Reflect on what it means to be a good listener and how we can better prepare ourselves.
7. What are some things that will hinder the reception of God’s Word?

Quarantine Study 2

James 2:1-13

You'd think that the church would be a place where class falls away and we are all equal as children at the feet of Jesus. Unfortunately, it wasn't so in New Testament days and it isn't so in our own. James calls on us to recognize the problem and deal with it. James, leader of the Jerusalem church, had probably seen it in the gatherings of the Church. A rich person enters and all the elders are catering to him, falling over themselves to honor him with attention, with flattery, with the best seat in the house. Perhaps he'll become a regular part of the church and be able to give big offerings, they think. Then a poor man enters on a day when all the seats are filled. His clothing needs mending and he hasn't taken a bath for a while. Stand there, we tell him. There are some seats on the floor at the front, that's all we can offer, we tell him, hoping that he'll find somewhere else to go to church. His presence is an embarrassment. Too many poor people and we'll be thought of as a poor-person's church.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Are you ever guilty of being like the people in James 2:1-4? Are you guilty of doing this at church?
2. What does it mean to show partiality as it relates to you today?
3. To who was James writing and how does he describe them? What was their economic situation?
4. Where is James prohibiting discrimination specifically (vs 2:2)?
5. Is the church the only place he intends us to welcome the poor?
6. What is the difference between being a “clique/prejudice” and “being a group of close friends”?
7. It can be difficult to love all people, especially when they do seem different than us. How can we develop more love for all people?

Quarantine Study 3

James 2:14-26

This passage is one of the more controversial passages in the book of James among scholars. When we read through scripture it is clear to see that faith without works is dead. Real faith means real obedience which simply means really doing something. Everyone can say how much they want to do good or talk about a game plan for what we should do, but it takes a special, obedient person to actually go out and do those things. True faith leads to change. Endless and meaningless talk leads to nothing. Lots of people consider themselves spiritual, but not nearly as many approach God's Word with a commitment to obedience. Challenge yourself to have a true faith that will lead to a change in your life and in your world.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Some say James downgrades faith in this passage, would you believe that to be true? why or why not?
2. According to James, what good is faith without deeds (vs 14-17)? Explain why he says this.
3. How do your actions demonstrate the reality of your faith?
4. In what ways can you bring your actions more in line with your beliefs?
5. What is our reaction when people need help? Do we actually help them out or just cop out by saying "I will pray for you"? If we say we will pray for them, do we really pray for them?
6. Did Abraham actually sacrifice Isaac? Why does this passage say he did?
7. Do you have a true faith that can lead to change? Identify the type of change you would like to see in your life. Take 5 minutes to pray for that change.

Quarantine Study 4

James 3:1-18

There is no way to overemphasize the importance of using the tongue properly. When we are sick and go in for a checkup the doctor can tell a lot about our physical condition by looking at our tongue. The Christian life is not much different, people can tell a lot about our spiritual condition by listening to our tongue. The tongue is a powerful force and when misused can destroy lives. Real faith changes the way we speak. Nothing is harder to control and bring into obedience to God than our words. This study will give us some tools to begin bringing this unruly member of our bodies under control.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. List some examples of how your own personal tongue can be used for good.
2. Give some examples of how you know you have used your tongue for bad? Reflect on why you did so.
3. James gives four examples of a small thing controlling or overpowering a large one. What are they?
4. If no human can control the tongue, why even bother trying?
5. What is the difference between taming and controlling?
6. What is the greatest need/action of the tongue? Are we doing that very thing?
7. Do you use your tongue for good? Do you constantly monitor the things you say and how you say them? Reflect on your day and see if you use your tongue for God or for man.

Quarantine Study 5

James 4:1-17

James elevates our awareness of how serious this problem is by putting a sharp label on it: adultery. Are you following the wisdom of the world, while claiming to be a Christian believer? If so, you're cheating on God with this world system of serving yourself first and at all costs. You can't do both. If you make yourself a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God (James 4:1-5). James writes that if in your pride you stay on that path, God will oppose you, but He will not reject you. Repentance is always possible. He gives more grace (James 4:6). So, James's plea to those caught up in the wisdom of the world is simple: turn around. Submit to God. Resist the devil. Move closer to God. He will move closer to you (James 4:7-10). In true humility, Christians understand that their lives are fragile and short. Unless God allows it, they can accomplish nothing. Don't be so arrogant as to declare what you will do to gather good for yourself. Instead, make your plans with the humble awareness that God may change them at any time (James 4:13-16).

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is the result of living by the wisdom of the world, rather than the wisdom of God? What should Christians do when they realize that's the path they've been on?
2. Compare the sins of physical and spiritual adultery.
3. What does the indwelling of the spirit do for us?
4. Does verse 9 mean that Christians should never be happy?
5. Why is "Speaking evil" of one another still such a common sin today?
6. Discuss the need for planning ahead and how it can be done without leaving God out.
7. What does James mean when he says, "Life is but a vapor"?

Quarantine Study 6

James 5:1-20

God is interested in everything concerning our money. He is interested in how much we get and how we get it. He is interested in the part we spend and the part we save. This point is made throughout our text. Real faith means compassion and action for the poor. Every blessing from God brings a corresponding responsibility. We are but stewards of all we possess. Strive to always do good and have a faith that leads to action. The question the Book of James raises is simple: what are you going to do about the problems of the poor?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Is it wrong for a Christian to be wealthy and save up money? Where is the line between saving and hoarding?
2. Does James condemn being rich? Can you think of any rich men in the Bible who were Godly men?
3. Do you feel that you give back to the Lord in the manner you should? Reflect on your day to day operations and pray for guidance as you examine your giving.
4. James says that we should pray whether we are in trouble, happy, or sick. Do you find that you pray more when you are happy and thankful or when you are in need? Why do you think that is?
5. Why do you think James tells us to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other in a discussion about healing?
6. James' instructions about prayer come right after a passage about how we must be patient in times of suffering. Do you see any connection between the two? Why discuss prayer and patience at the same time?