

JAMES

MARK IT UP

James 1:9-18 **LEADER** Discussion Guide

Week of 2/27/22

Icebreaker: What food (that your doctor would disapprove of for you) is your greatest temptation to devour?

Getting Started: Read James 1:9-18 as a group.

We'll be highlighting Calvary's Shaping Values in this series. These values describe what's most essential to us as a collection of Christ-centered communities. This week's focus is...

Moral Excellence: We pursue deeper holiness in everyday living.

PICK 2-3 QUESTIONS THAT YOU THINK WILL BE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOUR DISCUSSION.

1. What kind of trials and temptations can come from a lack of material resources and status? What about an abundance of resources and status? There are a lot of ways to look at this, but here's one way: A lack of resources and status can lead to all kinds of trials...hunger, health problems, relational poverty, social marginalization, etc. Temptations to steal or covet could be especially strong. Many on the margins of society struggle with addictions, which only reinforces their problems. An abundance of resources and status may be useful in avoiding some of life's trials, but they can also create their own struggles. Covetousness can be just as strong and so can addictions since a person may have the means to support a bad habit. Pressure to achieve and accomplish in order to maintain a high status can also lead to relational struggles and moral compromise.

2. In verses 9-10, James calls two types of Christ-followers who find themselves in very different circumstances (one lowly, the other rich) to consider and take pride in their future. How could the inevitable loss of earthly possessions and status (i.e., "humiliation") be a cause for "boasting"? This is not a simple issue, but coming to grips with the eventual loss of these can cause us to cling more firmly to Christ. We can say that our hope and satisfaction in life is not in the things that will one day be taken from us, but in the things that can never be taken—our salvation and its eternal blessings through Christ.

Application: What's your reaction to thinking of your life like the description of verses 10-11? Could there be something positive about it?

No one can answer this for someone else, but a potential positive outcome is the freedom that comes from recognizing that our greatest treasure cannot be taken away.

*Building Christ-centered communities of people
fully devoted to loving God and loving others.*

3. With verses 12-15 in mind, what do you think the difference is between a trial and temptation?

From these verses, a trial that produces steadfastness in our faith can lead to eternal life! A temptation, on the other hand, ultimately leads to death. A trial is something that commonly happens to us while a temptation can be the result of our own internal fallen desires.

Application: How can we respond to trials in a way that helps guard us against temptations to sin?

First off, we should consider a trial pure joy (1:2) because of what it can produce in us. Next, if we lack this perspective, we should ask for wisdom to be able to see it from an eternal, God-honoring perspective. We should recognize that our disordered desires can distort a trial into a temptation, so we should invest deeply into those things that will battle against these desires—time in God’s Word, prayer, community with God’s people. We should seek as well to remember God’s true nature and character and purpose for our lives.

4. Temptation, if left unchecked, threatens our Shaping Value of moral excellence. What’s at stake with temptation according to verses 14-15?

Temptation can lead to sin, which in-turn eventually leads to death.

Application: What do you think is our culture’s attitude toward temptation?

We’re not trying to imply an answer to this question, but an argument could be made that our culture’s attitude is to embrace temptation (while trying to avoid trials!). Common expressions like, “Be your authentic self,” “Be you,” or “Follow your heart,” can all be heard as encouragements to succumb to rather than resist temptations.

5. Why do you think James says, “Do not be deceived,” and then launches into a description of God’s character and purposes in verses 16-18?

There’s likely an allusion here to Genesis 1-3 where the fall of Adam and Eve can be understood as the result of the serpent’s deception about God’s character. It’s no coincidence, then, that James refers to God’s role as Creator and Sustainer of all things and whose character is trustworthy and constant. A firm grasp of God’s nature and purposes for us can be a guard against temptation...

Application: How can a clear and accurate grasp of God’s character and purposes serve us in the fight against temptation?

Nothing can cause us to forget God’s goodness quite like a trial and temptation. We need to know the truth about God’s goodness if we’re going to be able to stand strong against deception and temptation. Temptation is often (if not always) accompanied by a doubt about God’s goodness or purposes.