

Huddle Overview - James Study Week 1

Discipleship Definition:

Learning to love and follow Jesus—together—by His strength, in everyday life.

What are huddles at Foundations?

- Groups of 3-8 people (or 3-4 couples) that meet for one hour per week at a time and location of your choosing. Larger groups should plan for 75 minutes.
- Huddles last for 8 weeks. At the end of each 8-week session, you can stay with your group, add to your group or even change groups and topics.
- While gathering on Sunday is vital to spiritual growth, so is connecting with others to encourage one another, discussing what it means to follow Jesus and praying for one another. These practices are detailed in our **RHYTHMS** course (which is not necessary to take part in huddles, but highly recommended).

Our Mission at Foundations is to bring the extraordinary lifechanging message of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

- Huddles are one way we prepare to do this very thing, and we can't do that unless our lives are being transformed by Him.
- Hence, the goal of every session is that you will grow more like Jesus in some small way.
- In order to do this, we will focus on God's Word, encourage one another and commit to praying for one another.
- Each week, there are *individual rhythms* we encourage that will help you "love and follow Jesus."
- Similarly, there are *corporate rhythms* that help us in our spiritual formation.
- Consistent practice of these rhythms is part of the holistic development of disciples, and this booklet is designed to touch on that development.

Rhythms Overview

The individual rhythms (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Prayer: Talking to God and listening to Him via His Word, His Spirit-Filled people and His creation. If you don't know how to pray, a good place to start is the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5.

Abide in the Word: Reading the Bible and prayerfully asking God to show you who He is and what He wants for you. A good practice is to read with a pen in hand, and write your thoughts in a journal as He leads them.

Silence: Choosing to avoid speaking in order to listen to what He might want to say to us.

Solitude: Avoidance of interaction with others in order to be alone with Him. Silence enhances solitude. Have you intentionally gotten away to be alone (including technology/social media)?

Reflection (especially effective at the end of the day, maybe before sleep): Take some time in stillness to experience His presence. Tell God things you're thankful for. Make note of where you experienced Him today—or where you didn't. Note instances of loving your "neighbor" well—or failure to do so. Ask God for what He may want for you in the day tomorrow.

Other individual rhythms that will likely be practiced less frequently:

Fasting (food; if there's an area you are seeking specific guidance), giving joyfully (financially as an act of worship) and rest (setting aside time to enjoy your life and choosing to refrain from work).

The corporate rhythms (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Worship gathering: A time for our family to be together to participate corporately in the rhythms of worshipping together.

Participation in community: A time to engage in huddle, as well as other forms of being together as a church family (such as concerts, conferences/classes, events, etc.).

Lord's Supper: An opportunity for our family to reflect on the person and work of Jesus and to look forward in hope to His coming again.

Baptism: A one-time action of a declaration of faith in Christ. It is our hope that everyone be baptized, and that they also celebrate others who are being baptized.

Using your gift to serve the Body: We have been given a gift to help the body of Christ come to maturity in faith, and we benefit by your presence.

Having a ministry of love for neighbors: We choose to exemplify the abundant life in order to fulfill our mission of bringing the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

Prayer, Day 1

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude. Talk to God and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for others as an example (Colossians 1:3-12): When praying for others,
 - Be thankful for their faith and changed lives (1:3-4).
 - Ask God to help them know what He wants them to do (1-9).
 - Ask God to give them deep, spiritual understanding (1:9).
 - Ask God to help them live for Him (1:10).
 - Ask God to give them more understanding/knowledge of Himself (1:10).
 - Ask God to give them strength and patience for endurance (1:11).
 - Ask God to fill them with joy, strength and thankfulness (1:11,12).

Time in the Word, Day 1, Read James 1:1

Background and Insights on the Reading:

- The author says nothing about himself other than he is James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The book is usually attributed to James, the Lord's half-brother (Mark 6:3), since he gained distinction as a key leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18). James appears to be the oldest of four half-brothers born to Mary and Joseph (Mathew 13:55; Mark 6:3). He did not believe in Jesus as the Christ until after the resurrection (Acts 1:14) (a).
- James wrote to first-century Jewish Christians who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean world because of persecution (James 1:1). The book was one of the earliest letters, probably written before AD 50. After Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:55-8:3) persecution increased, and Christians in Jerusalem were scattered throughout the Roman world. Because these early believers did not have the support of established Christian churches, James wrote to them as a concerned leader, to encourage them in their faith during those difficult times (b).
- Major subjects include the believer's response to trials, temptation, and suffering; the need for works to be added to faith for spiritual growth; the value of controlling the tongue; a biblical perspective on wealth, worldly possessions, and the poor; the significance of faith in prayer; and a biblical understanding of wisdom. The book is united around the themes of trials and prayer (a).

Questions for Reflection:

- Who is the author? What do you know about him?
- What was the setting (culture, demographics, struggles) of the recipients of this letter?
- How might our culture or your current personal situation make this letter relevant to your spiritual growth and faith walk?

Prayer, Day 2

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray for knowledge and revelation from the Holy Spirit for the scriptures you will be studying today. Or if the verses from James about trials in our lives reminds you of a current struggle, you may want to pray for God's strength and direction...Lord, work Your work in my heart. Don't give me more than I can endure. Show me grace and compassion. You know my weaknesses and frailties. I want to see your loving kindness, but I want you to do your perfecting work. I want you to do whatever it takes in me to make me what you want me to be (e).

Time in the Word, Day 2, Read James 1:2-4

Background and Insights on the Reading:

- We all face trials in our lives. James teaches us that we can profit from these difficult times. He tells us to turn our hardships into times of learning. These tough times can teach us perseverance. It's often easy to say we love God and to be faithful to Him when things are going well. But what about when things become difficult? These are the times that require faith and show our true character. It's during challenging times that some may turn away from God or try to handle things through their own means. Instead, we need to view the trials as an opportunity for us to grow. Though trials are not easy, they are meant for our good (c).
- Consider it pure joy - This is a mindset James encourages his readers to have. Trials are certainly not enjoyable. Yet here we are commanded to be joyful even in the midst of trials. Why? The answer is given in verse 3. Trials test our faith and develop perseverance. When we face trials, we should always try to look for the lessons God wants to teach us (c). Not "why is this happening," but "what can I learn from this?"
- To "Consider;" If you really think about something, if you really process what is happening, you begin to come not only to an understanding of what effect it is having on you, but where it is going to lead. You cannot fully process something in your mind without processing its implications. In processing the trial, you are going through, *think forward*, look ahead to its benefit. Don't get stuck in this moment. *Think forward* to the joyous reality that is beyond (e).
- The testing of your faith produces endurance. We know that God is doing a work in our lives. And the work He is doing is to develop your spiritual strength so that you'll be more useful, more blessed and receive even greater reward. This test is producing. It's achieving. It's accomplishing. It's all part of your spiritual development and maturation (e).

Questions for Reflection:

- What are some practical ways you can have joy in the midst of a trial?
- God wants you to mature slowly and surely. Write down one trial you are facing. Then write down one area you think God wants you to grow in as a result of this trial.
- Is there someone you know who is facing a difficult trial? What can you do to encourage them and support them during this time?

Prayer, Day 3

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray about this week's study using a prayer from Pastor John MacArthur's teaching (a) on James chapter 1. Father, for all the issues of life that all of us face and will face, grant to us this triumphant approach. Give us an attitude of joy, an understanding mind. Lord, help us to see things to a point where we can exercise a submissive will, and for what we can't grasp, a believing heart that comes to You in honest, single-minded prayer and seeks from You the wisdom needed, with confidence that You'll give it generously. Without scolding us, You'll grant everything we need. And by our trials Lord, You will bring us to strength and maturity and usefulness. And once we have suffered a while here, You will have made us strong to the greater glory of our Savior. We pray this in His wonderful name. Amen.

Time in the Word, Day 3, Read James 1:5-8

Background and Insights on the Reading:

- By wisdom James is talking not only about knowledge, but about the ability to make decisions in difficult circumstances. It's a practical understanding of the issues of life; what's going on and why. Proverbs 2:6; 3:5-7, Jeremiah 29:11, Hebrews 11:6
- The wisdom that we need has three distinct characteristics (b).
 1. *It is practical.* The wisdom from God relates to life even during the most trying times. It is not a wisdom isolated from suffering and trials. This wisdom is the tool by which troubles are overcome. An intelligent person may have profound ideas, but a wise person puts profound ideas into action.
 2. *It is divine.* God's wisdom goes beyond common sense. Common sense does not lead us to choose joy in the middle of trials. This wisdom begins with respect for God, leads to living by God's direction, and results in the ability to tell right from wrong.
 3. *It is Christlike.* Asking for wisdom is ultimately asking to be like Christ. The Bible identifies Christ as the "wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24; 2:1-7).
- Double-minded means not completely convinced that God's way is best. It treats God's Word like any human advice, and it retains the option to disobey. Caught between following Christ and the world, the doubter becomes unstable in all his ways (a).

Questions for Reflection:

- Explain the faith mentioned in verse 6. Faith in what? What kind of doubts may this refer to?

- Do you believe that God can and will answer your prayers? Do you believe He is listening? Do you believe He is all powerful and all good? How do these truths help you approach your challenges?

Prayer, Day 4

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the following suggestion for ideas: Give thanks to God for the soul rest He offers through Jesus. Give thanks to Him for daily provisions like food, clothes, shelter, and friends. Thank Him that His presence allows you to endure and overcome hard circumstances this side of eternity. Ask Jesus to teach you more and more how to rest in His presence. Tell Him how excited you are for the perfect and pain-free rest that awaits us in heaven (p).

Time in the Word, Day 4, Read James

Background and Insights on the Reading:

- Notice the parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount (a). James offers a larger number of similarities to the Sermon on the Mount than any other book in the New Testament.

James	Matthew
1:2	5:11-12
1:4	5:48
1:5	7:7
1:17	7:11
1:20	5:22
1:22	7:24
1:23	7:26
2:5	5:3,5
2:10	5:19
2:11	5:21-22
2:13	5:7
2:15	6:25
3:12	7:16
3:18	5:9
4:2	7:7
4:3	7:7-8
4:4	6:24
4:8	6:22
4:11-12	7:1
4:13-14	6:34
5:2	6:19-20
5:9	5:22; 7:1
5:10	5:11-12
5:12	5:34-37

Questions for Reflection:

- Are there certain verses above that really impacted you today?
- Note the verses above are focused on day-to-day life, relationships, and applications of your faith in the world around us. They're first aim appears to be to encourage believers to live godly lives.

Prayer, Day 5

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the ACTS method as an outline (for your own words). **Adoration** - (a time of worship), don't be afraid of "artistic expressions" here, or to use Psalms or hymns or other forms of praise. **Confession** - we all fall short and miss the mark. Confession of sin helps us in our relationship to God. **Thanksgiving** - simply tell God what you're thankful for. **Supplication** - ask God for needs of the world, our country and leaders, our church, and anything and everything else. God wants to hear from you.

Time in the Word, Day 5, Read James 1:9-11

Background and Insights on the Reading:

- Verse 9 – Although a person's economic position may be poor, his position in Christ is high (Galatians 3:28). He may be physically poor, but spiritually rich. Those who are poor in this world should not focus on their lack of material things. Rather they should focus on their abundant spiritual blessings (c).
- Verses 10-11 – The rich person should realize that in the end he is just like the poor person. His riches will fade away. His life itself will be as short as many of the poor people around him. His riches and materials cannot buy long life nor eternal life. And yet this person, if he trusts in Christ, can also be spiritually rich and full of blessings (a).
- James called both extremes to take stock of what they had coming. He called the poor to look beyond this life *toward* their ultimate position in Christ. He called the rich to look *toward* the end of this life and the futility of earthly riches. In other words, their positions dictated their perspectives (o).

Related Scripture:

- Proverbs 19:1 – Better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.
- Luke 1:52-53 – He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.
- 2 Corinthians 6:10 – Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.
- Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Jeremiah 9:23-24 – This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.
- 1 Timothy 6:17 – Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Questions for Reflection:

- What do these verses tell you about the importance of earthly possessions?
- In what way does a poor believer have a high position?
- In what way will the rich man be humiliated?

Prayer, Day 6: A Time for Reflection

- Traditional time of Examen. This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.
- Become aware of God's presence. Breathe and slow down. Ask God to make you aware of His presence and to bring to mind moments of your day to focus on.
- Review the day with gratitude. Walk through your day and give thanks for areas where you saw God "show up" and for His blessings.
- Pay attention to your emotions. The things you feel when you review often highlight areas where God wants you to focus and what he wants to teach you. Often this results in confession when you see your emotions out of line with walking in the Spirit.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask God to show you moments where you loved others well (or, conversely, He may bring to mind an area you didn't). Give thanks or ask forgiveness as warranted.
- Look toward tomorrow. Think through your day tomorrow and ask God what He may be calling you to do or be in the upcoming day.

Time in the Word, Day 6, Read James 1:12

Background and Insights on the Reading (a):

- Perseverance is hard work. Like an athlete, we need to discipline ourselves. Athletes do not always feel like getting up early and training. Neither do we always feel like praying or studying God's Word. Our emotions are up and down, but following God is a choice we make based on faith.
- Perseverance does not mean perfection. Nobody is perfect, but a righteous person falls seven times and rises again (Proverbs 24:16.) Saints that persevere will emerge from the trial victorious having never lost the faith, and having maintained a positive and grateful attitude towards the Lord.
- Perseverance is a sign that the person's faith is genuine. God's crown of life is not glory and honor here on earth. It is the reward of eternal life – living with God forever. Persevering faith is loving Him and staying faithful even under pressure. The opposite of perseverance is "giving up". Maybe someone grows to doubt God's goodness, His plan, or even His existence. Maybe they still believe in God, but their flesh wins and they give up because it is simply too hard and too painful to persevere. But if you give up, you won't win the prize (c).
- Consider 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (d).

Questions for Reflection:

- What does perseverance represent in the believer's life?
- Based on these verses, how are you blessed when you persevere under trial?
- How can you help others persevere in the midst of trials?

Huddle Meeting:

General Check-In (10 minutes)

Emotional Check-In (10 minutes)

- Using the SACHET wheel, describe how you're doing emotionally right now. You may want to write down some of these to pray for your huddle during the week.



Rhythms Check-In (10 minutes)

- Describe your experience with the individual rhythms this week.
- Describe your experience with the corporate rhythms this week.
- How can the huddle encourage you this week in these areas? Or.....How can you encourage the huddle this week in these areas?

Discussion for Growth (30 Minutes)

- Feel free to discuss any questions from the prior days' studies.
- What is something you feel God truly taught you this week?
- Identify your most pressing personal trial right now. Name three different things you could do with what you're going through - three directions you could take. Consider making one of them obeying James 1:2. Consider the fruit of each of the three directions. What do you believe the five-year ramifications would be for each course of action? While counting our trials as joys because of all of the treasures they can bring may be the hard choice in the beginning, most of us would have to admit that the other options don't pan out as well (o).

Appendix

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