

## **Small Group Study Questions**

**Sermon:** Practical Living as a Disciple

**Passages:** James 1:1

### **Context:**

James, the half-brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem Church, wrote to thousands of Jewish Christians who were scattered by persecution from Jewish and Roman authorities. These Christian refugees in new lands struggled to prosper and settle into their new homes. So James wrote to encourage them to live by the gospel. He assumed these believers knew the gospel and Jesus' teachings; he built on what he believes people ought to know. So his letter is both compassionate and down-to-earth about everyday expressions, habits, and lifestyle choices of our Christian faith.

### **Questions:**

1. What do you know about the author of the epistle, James? How did James' life history impact his later leadership in the Jerusalem church?
2. Why is it significant that James introduced himself as a servant, rather than any other designations? In what way does that servanthood become a foundational ethical principle?
3. To whom was the letter addressed? In what ways was their culture similar to our modern-day culture? In light of the similarity, what do you hope to learn from the epistle? You may wish to quickly preview the epistle in order to begin contemplating your answers.
4. We are reminded in the introductory sermon of the urgency and importance of practical, everyday expressions, habits, and lifestyle choices of our Christian faith. Take a moment to genuinely reflect about our challenges and successes at being "practical, real Christians" in a world that does not understand or honor such actions. Why is it difficult for you to just live out the gospel? When—in what ways—is it so difficult? When is it easier to successively live our faith in a practical way? Since we will ultimately fail if we just try to "gut it out" in our Christian walk, in what ways does the gospel encourage and motivate that practical, everyday expression of faith?
5. In his epistle James describes the manifestations of genuine faith—in other words, the shape of real faith that expresses itself in word and deed according to the gospel. Start now to collect principles from this epistle. You may simply want to call these principles "my ethics when the world disregards and opposes me." What principle or ethic arises from an introduction to the epistle in 1:1? Add to your list every week during our series.