**The Bitterroot Collegium**

Fall 2020

The Epistle of James

Biblical Theology

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 The purpose of “The Bitterroot Collegium” is to provide a comprehensive program of Christian education that equips both the hearts and minds of Christian men and women to be more faithful and fruitful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Program Details**

Classes will meet for an hour per week and will generally continue from 4-8 weeks, sometimes longer, depending upon the topic. Topics/themes will draw from the 4 theological “food groups” including:

1. Biblical Theology
2. Historical Theology
3. Systematic Theology
4. Practical Theology

Classes will alternate between the “food groups,” while topics will be chosen based on the needs and interests of the Collegium, as well as the vision, values and mission of Mosaic Church.

*The Book of James has been one of the most loved (and “hated”), as well as hotly debated books in the Bible. But one thing is certain . . . James is also one of the most convicting books in all of Scripture. So . . . this fall, we’ll embark on an extended 11 week Bible study on the practical wisdom of James.*

***Class Schedule***

Sept 13 - *Intro to James; Trials & Temptations*

 Reading: James 1:1-18

 Focus Questions: 1) Using a *Study Bible* or the Internet, discuss the background of the Book of James. How is

 a *general epistle* (letter) different from a *Pauline epistle*?

 2) Some Bible scholars consider chapter 1 to be the *epitome* (brief summary) of the entire

 letter. Through your own personal study, how and why might this be so?

 3) Many non-believers would consider James 1:2-5 rather shocking. Why can Christians

 consider tests & trials as “pure/all joy?” Give some examples from your own life.

 4)Why is wisdom so vital for the Christian life? What is James’ advice? In what ways have

 you (or do you need to) make the pursuit of God’s wisdom central to your life?

 5)What is the difference between temptation & sin? What teaching does James offer

 regarding this subject? How might Genesis 4:6-7, shed light on the nature of

 temptation?

Sept 20 - *Listening & Doing*

 Reading: James 1:19-27

 Focus Questions: 1) Prayerfully consider, what it means to be “quick to listen & slow to speak.” How might

 this be helpful in becoming more *radically loving* and *radically forgiving?*

 2) Why do you suppose that James considers anger as “moral filth?” Consider examples

 of how anger has harmed you spiritually, as well as others.

 3) What does James mean by “listening to the Word?” How might you become a better

 “listener” of God?

 4) Using a *Bible Dictionary* or the Internet, how were ancient mirrors different from today?

 5) Prayerfully consider James’ understanding of “pure religion” in verse 27.

Sept 27 - *Favoritism Forbidden*

 Reading: James 2:1-13

 Focus Questions: 1) In what ways do Christians (& churches) show favoritism? Why does James refer to this

 as a form of “evil judgment?”

 2) How is dishonoring the poor, also a direct means of dishonoring God Himself? How might

 you personally (& church bodies) better care for and honor the poor?

 3) Reflect on the “Royal Law” in verse 8. How is Jesus’ *Great Commandment* the *epitome* (or

 summation) of the entire Old Testament *Torah* (Law). Compare vv. 8-11 with Jesus’

 teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

 4) What does James mean by being “judged by the law that gives freedom?”

 5) Prayerfully reflect on what James means . . . “Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Oct 4 - *Faith & Deeds*

 Reading: James 2:14-26

 Focus Questions: 1) The “faith & works” debate has raged among Christians for over 500 years. Were Paul and

 James at odds over the subject?

 2) Reflect on St. Francis of Assisi’s words, “At all times & in all places . . . preach the

 Gospel . . . and use words *if you must,”* in light of vv. 15-16.

 3) Why can the demons believe and still be damned? What is the nature of belief according to

 James?

 4) Read Gen. 22 and discuss, in light of vv. 20-24.

 5) Read Joshua 2 and discuss, in light of vv. 25-26 and Biblical attitudes towards prostitutes.

Oct 11 - *Taming the Tongue*

 Reading: James 3:1-12

 Focus Questions: 1) Why is teaching a “dangerous business” according to James? How is it linked with some

 of his previous discussions?

 2) How do bits and rudders steer things? What “bits & rudders” have been most helpful in

 your spiritual life?

 3) Consider Montana fire season in light of James’ teaching. How would you apply “safe

 fire” practices with the spiritual life?

 4) Why do you suppose that James appears to be so negative about the tongue?

 5) Discuss the idea of “blessings & curses” from the Bible, in light of vv. 9-12.

Oct 18 - *Two Kinds of Wisdom*

 Reading: James 3:13-18

 Focus Questions: 1) What does the Book of Proverbs say about wisdom and understanding?

 2) How are wisdom and knowledge similar? How are they different?

 3) How do humble deeds reveal wisdom in the Christian life?

 4) What is demonic “wisdom?” Why is envy so spiritually dangerous?

 5) Prayerfully compare vv. 17-18 with Phil. 4:8-9 & Gal. 5:22-26.

Oct 25 - *Submit Yourself to God*

 Reading: James 4:1-12

 Focus Questions: 1) James frequently uses *word links* in his epistle. How is his discussion of “fights &

 quarrels” in this passage related to previous words, concepts and passages?

 2) Some people dislike James because he appears to be so “negative” at times. In a

 *Bible Dictionary,* dictionary or on the Internet, find out what *diatribe* is as a speech form.

 How is understanding this concept, helpful in understanding James?

 3) James mentions the idea of the “jealousy of God.” In what ways can God be “jealous?”

 Consult the O.T. prophets, as well. How can this idea actually be comforting for the

 Christian?

 4) Prayerfully consider and discuss the “confessional” language of vv. 7-10.

 5) Why is slander so deadly according to James? What can slander do to a church?

Nov 1 -  *Boasting about Tomorrow*

 Reading: James 4:13-17

 Focus Questions: 1) How is boasting the *antithesis* of humility throughout the Epistle of James?

 2) How does the Book of Ecclesiastes confirm the truth of v. 14?

 3) Verse 15 contains what Bible scholars call the *Conditio Jacobae* (The Condition of James).

 How often is this a part of your future “plans.” How is this related to the old German

 proverb, *Mann denkt aber Gott lenkt* (Man thinks, but God leads)?

 4) Where else does the Bible teach on the dangers of boasting?

 5) Prayerfully consider the meaning of v. 17. How is this related to sloth?

Nov 8 - *Warning to Rich Oppressors*

 Reading: James 5:1-6

 Focus Questions: 1) How does knowing that this passage is rhetorical *diatribe* better help you to understand

 this passage?

 2) Jesus talked more about money than hell? Why? What does he say about wealth?

 3) Why is hoarding so spiritually problematic? What does it say about one’s faith in God?

 4) What does the Bible say about “wage justice” or “fair pay for fair work?”

 5) Why are luxury and self-indulgence so dangerous from a spiritual perspective?

Nov 15 - *Patience in Suffering*

 Reading: James 5:7-12

 Focus Questions: 1) Why do people say, “patience is a virtue?” How is this related to James 1:2-18?

 2) How is patience related to the second coming of Christ? What related teaching does

 Paul offer?

 3) Why does James warn against grumbling? Where else in the Bible did God judge &

 punish grumblers and complainers?

 4) Discuss several O.T. prophets and their specific examples of godly patience.

 5) Compare James’ teaching on oaths and Jesus’ in Matthew 5:33-37.

Nov 22 - *The Prayer of Faith*

 Reading: James 5:13-20

 Focus Questions: 1) What is James teaching on sickness and anointing by elders?

 2) How is the importance of confession connected with the issue of healing?

 3) Review the story of Elijah in 1 Kgs 17:1 &18:41-46. How is this story related to

 healing?

 4) How can we help to bring wanderers back to the Lord? Suggestions?

 5) What are 3 key things that you have learned from your study of James?

***Class Notes:***