

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.

MATTHEW 7:13-14

es-sen-tials (ĭ-sĕn'shəlz) – *noun* – those things that are necessary and basic to life. In biochemistry essentials are substances that are required for normal functioning but cannot be synthesized by the body and therefore must be included in the diet. Essentials are those things that are fundamental to the spiritual health of the professing Christian.

The Letter of James

A BIBLE STUDY

SESSION FIVE

James 4:1-17

Questions for Session Five

1. To whom is James addressing the opening question in 4:1? If James is posing this question to the leaders of the early Christian movement, then how relevant would it be to ask this question of the leadership of the twenty-first century Church?
2. In v. 2 James speaks of conflicts within. How do these examples resonate with you regarding the inner conflicts of your personal life and the inner conflicts that seem to always be present within the Church?
3. In v. 3 James addresses the fact that many times we ask for things with the wrong motives. How can we be sure we are asking for the right stuff? How can we be certain of asking for what God wants us to have in our lives?

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4. Consider vv. 4-5. Where is your allegiance? Is it with the world or with the LORD? How much more plainly could James write about the envious nature of the Holy Spirit? Our relationship with God must be an *either/or*—not a *both/and*.

5. In v. 6 we read that God stands against the proud and favors the humble. How does v. 7 relate to v. 6, with respect to the idea that Satan inhabits the proud, and the Holy Spirit dwells within the humble? Explain the connection of the two verses.

6. In relating vv. 6-7 to your own life experiences, how have you seen this example of the proud and the humble played out? Have you known people in either camp?

7. V. 8 teaches that for us to more completely experience God, we must draw near to God. Does this mean that we should intentionally put ourselves in places where we can be found by God—*where God can best connect with us*? Explain.

8. What does James believe in v. 9? What is the writer teaching the hearer/reader of the Word in this verse? Does this teaching lend itself to our having not only a change of heart, but a change of behavior, as we transition from a life of pride to a life of humility? Think of times in your life when this may have applied to you.

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9. What is James teaching in vv. 11-12? What do we know about judging the behavior of a person, versus judging the person? Why is it best for us to leave the judgment of another person up to the Judge?
10. In vv. 13-17 James teaches that our lives are but the mist or the smoke that appear for a brief time and disappear forever. How do you make the plans for your life? How sure are you of your plans? Think of just one instance when your plans were dramatically altered (1) by God, (2) by others, or (3) by circumstances. How can we plan more effectively as we search the will of God for our lives?

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