

Discussion Starter

On those occasions when you need someone to talk to about a problem or concern, what are the most important personality traits or characteristics that you would look for in somebody that you might open up to?

Worship Together

We are going to hear three readings, one from the Bible, one a poem and then a prayer, which we shall all read together. Please don't rush these, but allow time for reflection between them, and possibly time for further prayer after you have read all of them.

Ask someone to read Matthew 18:1-5

Ask someone to read the following poem:

I was once a child
But now I am grown,
I need to be shown.

I once was happy
Just to trust;
now proof is a must!

I used to believe
what I could not see;
how could that be?

I used to follow
wherever you'd go;
now I need to know.
Pat Turner

Pray this prayer together:

Father God, give us joy to laugh as children laugh.
Give us eyes to see as children see.
Give us hope to dream as children dream.
Give us boldness to ask as children ask.
Give us curiosity to seek as children seek.
Give us humility to learn as children learn.
Give us faith to trust as children trust.
Give us grace not to be childish – but childlike,
for your glory. Amen.

Bible Study

Read James 1:19-27 and discuss...

- Is it reasonable for James to tell us to be slow to become angry? To what extent is our anger under our own control?
- Is all anger wrong? If not, what are the differences between good and bad anger?
- What do you think it means, in practice, to “humbly accept the word planted in you”? Alternatively, what would it mean to *reject* the word planted in you?
- What is the nature of the self-deceit that James describes? Is there a role for the group in protecting one another from slipping into kidding ourselves about our faith?
- In what ways does God's law give freedom to those who look into it?
- Why do you think James is so critical of Christians who fail to keep their tongue on a short leash?
- In James's day, widows and orphans would often have been the poorest of the poor, with no means of income and no social security system. How would you rephrase James's definition of religion which is acceptable to God for our own time and culture?
- James depicts “keeping oneself from being polluted by the world” as an ongoing battle rather than a once-for-all decision. As a group, how can we support each other in this struggle?

Pray Together

In pairs, share one thing from the passage we have been studying which has spoken to you or challenged you and for which you would like to ask for God's help at the moment. You don't need to give any details! Take a few minutes to pray for each other. You might want to agree to continue praying for each other throughout the coming week or fortnight until the group meets again.

Meditations

A few brief thoughts to ponder on before your group discussion.

Read James 1:19

Are you a good listener? In a normal conversation with someone, do you usually do more or less than half the talking? In a debate or argument, do you generally find it more important to understand the other person's point of view, or to put forward your own? If you sometimes need God's help in being slower to speak or quicker to listen, bring that to him in prayer.

Read James 1:19-20

Is your temper under control? When things or people get on your nerves, does your anger rule you or do you rule it? Ask God to bring about in you more of "the righteous life that [He] desires."

Read James 1:21

Are you someone who humbly accepts God's word? When you read the Bible, or study it at Home-Group, or hear it preached on Sunday, is it your normal attitude that you *want* to allow God's word to change the way you think or act?

Read James 1:25

In what ways have you experienced God setting you free? Has there been a link between this and you "looking intently" into his law? Do you think that there are other ways in which God wants to give you freedom?

Read James 1:26

What kind of rein do you have on your tongue? How often do you have cause to regret something that you have said in haste? Later on James says that anyone who is never at fault in the area of what they say is perfect! (James 3:2) Why not ask God to help you today to put a guard on what comes out of your mouth.

Read James 1:27

Meditate for a few minutes on what it means to become "polluted by the world". Ask God to speak to you about any areas of your life where you might be in danger of this happening. What can you do to keep yourself from such pollution?