

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY — GENERATIONS & NEW STREAMS

A discovery Bible study on 1 Corinthians 3, and another on James 1, will offer insights into the ways in which healthy (or unhealthy) churches are established. Before and after the study, ask the Lord, “Open our minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:35). As you go through the study, and afterwards, ask the Lord (then write down and discuss):

- What do You want us to learn from this?
- What does this passage show us about Your character, Your values, and Your priorities?
- How would the principles in this passage look lived out in our own local context?
- How do You say it should impact our approach to ministry overall?
- How do You want it to inform leadership development, discipleship, the culture of the emerging Church, etc.?
- How might it inform our next steps?
- How were You involved in the churches and communities James addresses? What wisdom did You offer in challenges? How can we pray accordingly for the work here?
- Invite the Lord’s counsel into steps or changes that we consider.

James 1:1-27

James 1 deals with several issues that tend to accelerate during the Generations & New Streams stage. Persecution often increases as more people come to faith, and James starts off with guidance for responding to persecution. He emphasizes the ways that testing produces perseverance and perseverance produces maturity.

James emphasizes the need to ask God for wisdom. As movements expand, the growth quickly becomes more challenging to deal with. God's wisdom is needed at every stage, but particularly at this time when things become more complicated. DMM is often called “simple” in terms of making disciples and starting groups. However, managing a growing movement is far more complicated and needs greater wisdom.

James also deals with things like temptation and interpersonal relationships—areas where Satan often attacks new churches and leaders. A reminder to obey and not just listen is also included to avoid slipping into a less dynamic spiritual life. Finally, the reminder is helpful that religion is not just personal faith but it is also helping take care of orphans and widows and maintaining purity. These are always important in the Church, but the wider growth at this stage requires fresh focus and commitment to maintain the core of their faith.

Do a prayerful discovery Bible study with this Scripture passage, inviting the Holy Spirit’s counsel using some or all of the questions suggested above. This can be done by an individual, but a team or church doing it together brings the possibility of agreement and community response.

James 1:1-27 [NIV]

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:
Greetings.

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶ Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.