

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times.

Today's topic is: A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM JAMES 1-5.

(S) **SHARING FROM JAMES 1-5**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from James 1-5. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from James chapter 1.

(T) I want to share from James 1:13-15 about the human will.

James teaches about the relationship between God's will and the human will. There is a contrast between verse 13-15 on the one hand and verse 16-18 on the other hand. Verse 14-15 says, "Each person is tempted when by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death". This describes the will of man. *When I am tempted to sin, my very first reaction is the most important.* My human will must decide to either resist the temptation or to give in to the temptation. James uses the example of human birth. The act of procreation leads to conception, conception to gestation, gestation to birth. Once the process is set in motion, it takes over and inevitably continues to its end. The end of the process was already implicit in the beginning. You will reap what you sow!

Temptation to sin works in the same way. If I choose to give place for a sinful desire in my life, then it will inevitably lead to doing the sin. And doing the sin leads to disintegration and death in my life. Therefore, my very first reaction to a temptation to sin is the most important.

(S) I want to share from James 1:16-18 about the divine will.

Verse 17-18 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change ...". "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth ...". This describes the abundance of God, the changeless nature of God and the gracious will of God. The source of every good gift is the God of the Bible. He is the source of every good thing in my life and he is therefore also the source of my salvation. Just as the God of the Bible called the heavenly lights into existence by his spoken word, "Let there be light!", so certainly he calls me to eternal life by saying, "Let there be life!" But while the heavenly lights are subject to variation, the Creator never changes the fact or intensity of his goodness. He never alters his eternal plan and will. As Ephesians 1:11 says, "He works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will". When the God of the Bible calls me to salvation, he calls me effectively to salvation, because he chose to give me birth through the word of truth. James refers to regeneration exactly like Jesus Christ did in John 3:3-8. Jesus taught, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit". The Holy Spirit goes out on a mission from God the Father in heaven to those people whom God the Father has willed to bring to the new birth or birth from above. Likewise the Word of truth is spoken by God the Father in heaven as the instrument whereby he brings those people to new birth. The God of the Bible speaks the powerful word of the gospel in two ways: He speaks his word inwardly to my dead spirit (Eph 2:1), whereby he gives me a new spirit and new life (2 Cor 5:17) and he speaks his word outwardly through the preaching of the gospel. His work inside me responds to his work coming from the outside of me. Because the God of the Bible works with his Holy Spirit in me, my heart is able to respond and makes a personal and believing response. I am born again, because God chose to regenerate me. I am born again through the work of the Holy Spirit and the God's words written in the Bible. The fact that God chose me, makes my choice of him possible and real. God's will to renew my dead spirit comes first. After he has regenerated my human spirit, my human will becomes alive. When I am regenerated, then I not only *can* choose to do God's will, but I also *will* choose to do his will (Phil 2: 12-13)! James 1 clearly teaches the relationship between God's sovereign will and my personal will.

Sharing quiet times from James chapter 2.

(T) We want to share from James 2:12-13 about the law that gives freedom.

First. Freedom is often regarded as freedom from all laws. Young people throughout history have been seeking freedom. They look at their own generation and see themselves surrounded by a whole array of inherited laws and customs. They regard these as real restrictions and bondage and so they cast them on one side. They say that they want to be themselves, free from the cramping restrictions of former people and earlier days. So a generation of

experimenters grows up, trying to find a life-style that would enable them to be themselves or free as they call it. But the practical reality shows that being ourselves so often leads to a new bondage! For example, note the devastating results from sexual freedom, the use of drugs and the violence of terrorism.

(S) Second. True freedom is to be bound to Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be truly free? After the fall into sin, man degenerated. Sin in many forms became a tyrant that destroyed man's life. Man without God was in bondage to some kind of sin and totally lost. The true human nature without God is a fallen nature, a degenerated nature, a nature in bondage. Man free from God is bound by sin. Man without God is lost. However, Jesus Christ came to seek and to save people who acknowledge that they are lost (Lk 5:32). A person who receives Jesus Christ, receives a new nature and becomes truly free from the tyranny of sin.

(T) Third. Obedience to the law expresses the life of true freedom.

James 2:12-13 says, "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by *the law that gives freedom*, because judgement without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgement". The law is called the law that gives freedom. James teaches that true freedom is experienced by living according to the law that gives freedom. James brings together the two things that people generally think as opposites, namely, the law and freedom! The law is the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and not all kinds of religious laws that religious leaders and teachers have made. While the law of the non-Christian religions make people slaves of religious leaders and their teachings, the Ten Commandments in the Bible safeguard the freedom of Christians. The Ten Commandments only come *after* people have been saved from their bondage to sin. The Ten Commandments are never an instrument *to gain righteousness* with the God of the Bible, but they are an instrument *to express true freedom*. You are first saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, you gain righteousness by faith in the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ. Thereafter you express your new life by obeying the Ten Commandments. True freedom is therefore never freedom from the law. True freedom depends on discovering how we can give expression to our new and true nature in Jesus Christ.

(S) Fourth. The law is a revelation of what God is like and how he wants us to live.

The law describes the true nature of God in terms of commandments. The commandments say, "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour." And the true nature of God is that he is the eternal living God, holy and pure, righteous and honest, truthful and faithful to his Word. When we obey the law, that is, when we obey the Ten Commandments, we behave like God himself is! We behave truthfully, because the God of the Bible is the Truth through Jesus Christ. We behave in love and mercy, because the God of the Bible is love and full of mercy. When we obey the Ten Commandments, we are really expressing the image of the God of the Bible! People express what they really believe. People, who express hatred and violence, believe in a god that is full of hatred and violence. That god is not the God of the Bible! People, who believe in the God of the Bible, express love and mercy and will never express hatred and violence. Only people who behave like the God of the Bible are truly free. Thus, the law as contained in the Ten Commandments describes the life of true freedom.

(T) Fifth. The law is God's instrument of true personal freedom.

In Ezekiel 36:26 God says, "I will give them a new heart" and "I will put my laws in their heart". The reality of the new covenant is that God has given to Christians a new heart that matches the requirements of the law! James 1:18 says the same, namely, that God has brought us to new birth by the word of truth that God speaks. God's word of truth in all its aspects lives in our new nature, and waits to come into action by the commandments of his law. Christians are called to obey. Because God's law corresponds to the wishes and capacities of the new heart, Christians *can* obey the law. Acts 5:32 teaches that the very act of obeying is the key to receive God's transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

(S) Sixth. The law is also God's instrument of government.

James 2:8 says, "Keep *the royal law* found in the Scripture." It is Jesus' summary of the Ten Commandments, namely, we should love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and we should love our neighbours as ourselves. It is called the royal law because it has been given by the King of kings and because it is designed to govern the lives of Christians in God's kingdom.

Sharing quiet times from James chapter 3.

(T) In James 3:13-18, James contrasts worldly wisdom with Godly wisdom. James 3:13-18 says, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by *deeds done in the humility* that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice". But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace, raise a harvest of righteousness".

I want to share especially from James 3:13-16 about learning wisdom in human relationships. The Bible teaches that there are two kinds of wisdom: the wisdom of the earth produces all the divisiveness and worthlessness of sin, but the wisdom of God brings a harvest of righteousness. Wisdom is shown in good conduct. James tells us *what kind of people we ought to be whatever we do!* Whatever we do, we ought to be humble or meek. Meekness means gentleness in which vehemence, violence and outbursts of anger is subdued. It means being considerate towards God and people under all circumstances. It is that kind of wisdom that puts an end to jealousy, selfish ambition and disorder (16). It is therefore very clear that wisdom can only be expressed in *the context of relationships*. For example, only when there is somebody who is jealous of other's affections and accomplishments, can I learn to be forgiving and *merciful*. Only when there is somebody who is selfish and ambitious and causes divisions, can I learn to be a *peacemaker*. Only when there is somebody who is authoritarian and demanding, can I learn to be *yielding and gracious*, rather than standing on my rights. Wisdom is needed in all human relationships! Wisdom is learned only in human relationships!

(S) I want to share from James 3:17 about the characteristics of wisdom. James writes that God's wisdom promotes relationships among people. Wisdom is pure, that is, *keeping clear from hurting others* through jealous self-concern. Wisdom is peaceloving, that is, *keeping away from strife* with others and *making peace* with the opposition. Wisdom is considerate, that is, *yielding* wherever yielding is possible rather than standing up for one's rights. It is *being gracious* by not pressing the letter of the law. Wisdom is submissive, that is, not necessarily easily persuaded, but certainly *willing to yield to persuasion* when convinced that he must change his mind. Wisdom is full of mercy, that is, *being conscious of the other's needs and helplessness*. It is *being willing to forgive* the wrongs of the opposition and quick to welcome him back into the fellowship. Wisdom is full of good fruit, that is, *always committed to good results* like building others up instead of tearing them down. Wisdom is impartial, that is, *refusing to favour* the rich, powerful or famous. It is being *unwavering in doing what is right* in God's eyes to everyone without respect for persons. Wisdom is sincere, that is, I does not pretend to be someone else for the sake of appearance.

Sharing quiet times from James chapter 4.

(T) In chapter 4, James teaches about the areas of high risk in the Christian's life. In James 4:1-10, he condemns inner sinful desires. He teaches that Christians should reform their lives totally: they should purify their hearts, change their actions, submit to God and resist the devil. In James 4:11-12, he condemns defamation, the sin of talking with arrogance to other people. In James 4:13-17 he condemns presumption. And in James 5:1-6 he condemns another high risk in the Christian's life: covetousness.

I want to share especially from James 4:13-17 about the sin of presumption. By a wrong understanding of myself, I can commit the sin of presumption. Presumption is *talking with arrogance to myself!* Presumption is a breach of humility. I am presumptuous when I boast about my plans for the future. Often I say, "Today or tomorrow I will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money". I assure myself that time is on my side and that I have plenty of time at my disposal. I make my plans as if my personal ability to trade and the profit motive were the only issues to take into account. I take my life, my choices and my abilities for granted and forget that God warns me that my life is as frail as a flower of the field (1:11) and as short as the morning mist (4:14). Christians may not take "tomorrow" for granted, thinking that tomorrow will always come as sure as today came. In the Bible the years do not go around in a circle, but go in a straight line from eternity to eternity. On that time-line I receive another day, neither by natural necessity, nor by earned right, but only by the undeserved mercies of God. Therefore, I should foster an attitude of humility concerning my daily life and activities. I should never for one moment forget my frailty and my utter dependence on God. I should say, "If it is the Lord's will, then I will do this or that". James 4:17 warns that if I forget how dependent I am and act in mere self-will, then I sin.

Sharing quiet times from James chapter 5.

(S) I want to share from James 5:1-6 about covetousness. By a wrong understanding of the material things like money, I commit the sin of covetousness. Covetousness is *acting with arrogance towards other people*. James is addressing Christians who have been so drawn off course by the power wealth bestows on them that they have turned to oppress their fellow-believers (cf. 4:13; 5:1). James calls them to weep and wail as an expression of repentance. The references to the judgement day in these verses function as a sharp reminder to Christians to mend their ways while there is still opportunity to do so. James shows the various pits of materialism, so that Christians would not fall into them.

In James 5:2-3, James condemns hoarding of wealth. When he says that the rich Christians were hoarding things in the last days, he means that they were living without watching God's clock. They stored earthly goods as if there was nothing to expect but this life and its needs. They lived their lives as if there would be no second coming and no judgement day. They planned to live forever - on earth! Why is hoarding wrong? If I hoard money and possessions, then according to Luke 12:33 I do not make proper use of it. If I hoard money and possessions, then according to 1 Timothy 6:17-19 I do not share it with the needy, as God expects me to do.

In James 5:5, James denounces wealth that is used for living in luxury and in self-indulgence. He is not speaking of rich people who gain their wealth through corruption. He is speaking of Christians, who are rich and who are living a life without self-denial. Like the rich man in Luke 16, they disregarded the needs of Lazarus. They forgot that if they do not repent and reform their ways, they too will suffer agony in hell. Their faith was a dead faith; a faith without works! He warns these rich Christians to see the folly of wealth. They were living like many unthinking cattle on rich pastures. Day after day they grow fat without realising that every hour brings the butcher and abattoir nearer. Wealth that is spent only on living in luxury and in self-indulgence is foolish! I do not wish to be foolish, but wise in God's eyes! Therefore I will resist covetousness.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.**

First. Divide 1 Peter 1-5 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net.

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".