

Reading Schedule for January 7-13, 2019

Welcome all newcomers to a daily Bible reading schedule, as I usually focus on one verse in the context of our total reading. But the sections that we read are shorter, and built for reflection and application as we begin the New Year eager to become more like Christ. The Book of James will help us in that endeavor.

January 7 – James 3:13-18: “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.” (v.17) Who doesn’t want wisdom? Wisdom helps us sort out the things that go on in our lives that are confusing. We already read about God giving wisdom to those who pray for it (1:5). Wisdom points us to many wonderful qualities like peace, gentleness, discernment, mercy . . . Solomon was insightful enough to ask God for wisdom, and the LORD was happy to give it. I think you could do the same. If you sincerely want God to be glorified, and for him to direct your life, why not ask him for wisdom!?! How do you understand wisdom from this paragraph?

January 8 – James 4:1-10: “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” (v.3) Jesus told us to ask and we would receive, but here James gives us a qualifier. It seems to me that answered prayer is connected to abiding in Christ. In John 15 we read about asking the LORD for anything, but the qualifier is to want what He wants. Those who remain in Christ will ask what Christ is urging them to pray. Not every request is granted. Some answered requests would be very harmful for us. Others would actually cause us to weaken our connection to the LORD. Your prayers will become powerful when you allow God to change your desires so that they match his will for you. How do you respond to this clarification about asking God in prayer? What else stands out to you in these powerful and practical verses?

January 9 – James 4:11-17: “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?” (v.12) This reminds me of the words of Jesus when he challenged his disciples about judging. He told them to make sure they took the log out of their own eye before they pointed out the speck in someone else’s eye. He is seemingly addressing a critical spirit. Who are we to judge others? We cannot see inside their minds or hearts. There are so many messages in God’s Word that come to mind as I think about this, like, the Lord will judge appropriately and repay in the right way. Do not take revenge. Do not judge your neighbor. Why? What does this tell us about judging others? Verse 17 is also very compelling about the sin of omission. How did God speak to you through his Word today?

January 10 – James 5:1-6: “Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.” (v.2) This challenges our materialistic world. These items are not only temporary, but they are worthless in the economy of God. Of course, God’s provision can be his blessing to you, as well as his resources can be funneled through you to help others. But our perspective on possessions, money and wealth is skewed by our American lifestyle. The emphasis here is that money will be worthless when Christ returns, so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will

be worthwhile in God’s eternal kingdom. Money is not the problem; it’s how you view money. We need money to live and support our family. Missionaries need money. The church operates with the necessary resources to be effective. The problem seems to be the idea of the love on money, as is mentioned in 1 Timothy 6:10. Let’s take Jesus’ challenge to treasure up things in heaven, where moth and rust will not destroy. Does this make sense? How do you respond to this challenging paragraph?

January 11 – James 5:7-12: “Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.” (v.7) I have not encouraged people to pray for patience, even though I think it is a godly virtue. Patience is closely connected to perseverance. The way to really experience deep patience is to have an eternal perspective, as is mentioned in the words, “until the LORD’S coming.” Faithful service in the midst of a challenging life is promised future reward from the LORD himself. Don’t live as if Christ will never come. Work faithfully to build his kingdom. The king will come when the time is right. How do you understand patience from these verses? How was Job patient?

January 12 – James 5:13-20: “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (v.16) I have prayed for many people over the years for the common challenges of physical illness, relational breakdown, and financial difficulty. Sometimes when I am praying for someone, I wonder how their relationship is with the LORD. I cannot know what is going on in the mind and the heart of an individual, but I do sense at times that there is underlying issues that are blocking God’s answer to the prayers I offer for others. That’s why James highlights confession in the context of community. Part of the healing process is the vulnerability to confess sin. When we are honest with God and each other, there is release, and it seems that God is more ready to work on our behalf. How do you understand confession of sin as it is outlined here? What does it mean to have the prayer of faith? What does this teach you about prayer?

January 13 – Ephesians 1:1-14: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” (v.3) I have chosen for us to move into the Book of Ephesians, which has many important truths about spiritual growth. But the foundation of spiritual growth is what God has done for us through Christ. This is how he begins this letter. Ephesians is known as a circular letter that was sent to many churches in the area. In the original Greek, this section is one long eloquent sentence. God’s plan was to initiate reconciliation and redemption for this broken world, all to the praise of his glory. This is a high point in the New Testament and monumental to understanding of salvation in Christ. What stands out to you? What blessing do you appreciate the most? You can look forward to our journey through Ephesians for the next two weeks. What a great way to begin the New Year.

PRAYER: Pray that God’s purposes for you in 2019 will be accomplished according to his good pleasure.