

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON JAMES 1:13-18

OPEN

- Have you ever felt that God was pulling you into temptation? If so, what gave you that impression? Do you still feel that way? Why or why not?

What do you think were the real sources of that temptation? How might you have acted differently if you had known this?

- In what ways have you received good gifts from God?

STUDY

James is interested in practical faith, but he knows that the practical must be rooted in true beliefs. When trials come from without, we may be ruined by not understanding God's loving purpose to mature us (1:1-12). Likewise, when evil tempts us, we may wrongly believe that God is out to get us. Godly practice can be grounded only in a true perception of God's nature and our own.

Remember that although temptation, trial, and testing all reflect the same Greek word-group, the Bible distinguishes among them. God led Israel into the wilderness to test the people's faith (Ex. 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16), and God also tested Abraham's faith by commanding him to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22:1). The Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Matt. 4:1). Satan tempted Jesus to evil, but God permitted it for good – as a test and refining of Jesus' faith (Heb. 2:10, 18; 4:15-16; James 1:2-4). Job had the same experience (Job 1:6-2:10; 42:1-6).

- **1:13.** God is never the source of temptation to evil. Of what things is He the source (1:5, 16-18).

From what you know about God, why is it impossible that God could be responsible for your being tempted to do evil? (See 1 John 1:5; 4:8-10)

Why is it personally important to you that temptations do not come from God? Why do you think a person would blame God for sending temptations?

- **1:14.** What is the real source of temptation to sin?

In 1:14, is James denying that the Devil tempts us? Why or why not? (See James 4:7-8)

- **1:15.** What is the ultimate result (1:15)? The truth of 1:15 is unavoidable. Think about the source of life. Why must desiring evil lead to death? (See Isaiah 59:2; 1 John 1:5-7; 5:11-13)

Notice the 2 alternate progressions of life that James described:

Faith > trials that test it > perseverance > maturity (1:2-4)

Desire > temptation > sin > death (1:14-15)

We can go from tested faith to maturity, or from indulged desire to death. Each process is a slow series of choices made daily. Choices lead to habits, and habits set a character turned either toward or against God.

What can we do about many evil desires (2 Tim. 2:22; James 4:7-8)?

See the progression from desire to sin to death in Eve's life (Gen. 3:6-22). How did Jesus urge His disciples to deal with temptation (Matt. 6:13; 26:41)? How might this apply to you?

- **1:17.** God is the source of "every good and perfect gift." What gifts would be helpful in dealing with evil desires? (James 1:5; Luke 11:11-12).

Have you ever had to depend on someone who changed like shifting shadows, so you could never be sure what he or she might do? Why is it important to you that God isn't like that?

- **1:18.** What do you think "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth" means? (Is James talking about natural birth [Gen. 1:26-27; 2:4-7] or spiritual rebirth [1 Pet. 1:23-25]?)

What difference should it make to your life that you are "a kind of firstfruits of all He created"?

- From 1:1-18, how would you summarize the difference between trials and temptations?

APPLY

- What one insight from 1:13-18 seems most significant to you right now? How do you see this truth already affecting your life? How do you fall short or need to grow in this area? (Be specific as possible.)
- Meditate on God's constancy. How does it affect your attitudes, feelings, and choices?

PERSONAL

- Have you experienced what James describes in 1:14-15? Think of an example and confess it to God.
- What can you do this week to act on the insights you discovered? How can you make sure you remember to do this?