

Adult Teaching Resources

August 30, 2015



The Trouble with Kings

“You’re the Man!” — 2 Samuel 11:26-12:15a

Paying the Price — 2 Samuel 18:1-33

Redeeming a Shaky Start — 1 Kings 2:1-12, 3:3-14

Prayers for Now and Later — 1 Kings 8:1-53

Serious Church

Real Religion — James 1:17-27

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: Prepare video equipment for the Transformational Exercise. And, Kleenex.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

How much did you spend on groceries the last time you went to the store?

What is the best intangible gift you have received in the last week?

Information

[Lead class members in the game, “Things people believe in, but do not do.”]

In teams of 2-3, come up with as many of these things as you can in two minutes. For example, many people believe that vacations should be taken, but they don’t take the vacation time they are given.

[Give class members a couple of minutes to share answers, jotting each one on the board, one per group until all are finished. Put check marks beside duplicates. Determine which team had the most answers. Declare the winner and say, “Congratulations! I believe winners should be rewarded. Don’t you? (Pause for answers.) Yes, I really do *believe* that. But I’m not going to do anything about that belief today.”]

A Christian’s acts are based on beliefs — but belief by itself does not always motivate behavior.

[Have a class member read James 1:17-18.]

What attitudes does James encourages us to have? (awareness of where good things come from; gratitude to God for every good gift; joy that God gave us a spiritual birth, etc.)

How might these attitudes motivate us to move from mere belief to action?

Sometimes, our behavior is counterproductive to a faithful lifestyle. Obviously, there are the “big sins” that physically harm persons. But James warns us about other sinful behaviors, as well.

Information *continued*

[Have a class member read James 1:19-21.]

What are some of the sinful behaviors that James warns are counterproductive to a faithful lifestyle? Why do you think James puts so much stress on listening and on our conversation?

“Man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires,” James says. How would you elaborate on what James is saying here? Do you know of situations/illustrations when a person’s anger spiritually harmed themselves or others?

When James speaks of “the word” in verse 21 (and in upcoming verses), he is not speaking of the New Testament, because it was not yet compiled and published. It may be that he is speaking, rather, of the “truth” of the Christian message or of the “gospel” — the stories about Jesus that the Holy Spirit uses to draw us to God.

How do you interpret “humbly accept the word planted in you”?

James wants action. The action is based on belief, but also on gratitude, respect for others, civility and humility.

I was on the debate team in high school. Team members would be given a topic, research it for the affirmative and negative sides of the topic and prepare to present either side as called upon by the coach. Whether or not you believed in the side you were to present did not matter, though you needed to present your case as if it mattered the world to you. So, whether the topic was abortion, gun rights or round versus rectangular tables for the school cafeteria, when you gave your case, you used the best logic, charm and emotional tug you could to win the day. To my knowledge, none of us on the debate team ever did anything about any particular topic. But we knew how to talk about it.

The author of the book of James is frustrated with persons who know how to talk about being followers of Jesus, but only talk.

[Have a class member read James 1:22-25.]

As your teacher, how do I know if I have taught a good lesson/class? If you were the teacher, how would you judge your success?

As your teacher, if the lesson has challenged me to act more faithfully to “the word” or the gospel, it is good. If I actually do something based on what I have been challenged to do, only then is it a successful lesson. Sometimes, the scriptures affirm my current behavior. Sometimes, they challenge me to change. Coming to a class, listening to a sermon — those are good, but really, they are just words unless we apply them.

How has a lesson or a sermon reinforced your faithful life? How has a lesson or sermon challenged you to change something in your life?

“The perfect law” was summed up by Jesus when he was asked about the greatest commandment. What was Jesus’ answer to that challenge? (“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your

Information *continued*

strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:30-31)

How does that perfect law guide our behavior as well as our beliefs?

James urges us to have a religious life that is judged not by what we know but by how we behave.

[Have a class member read James 1:26.]

Again, talk about bad talk. This will be a theme throughout the book of James. But here, unbridled tongues are a fruit of “worthless religion.” Outward demonstrations of religion (worship, public prayers, fasting, tithing, etc.) are trumped by our speech, if this speech is not faithful to the perfect law. What kind of speech ruins a Christian’s witness? (name-calling; using hateful terms to refer to others; gossip; words spoken from hate; abusive language, etc.)

If impure language is a sign of a worthless religion, what is a sign of a worthwhile religion?

[Have a class member read James 1:27.]

“God, the Father” is here painted as the model father. How was God the Father described in verse 17? (“the giver of every perfect gift.”) How is God the Father described in this verse, verse 27? (God provides, through us, for those in need; pure and undefiled lives are in sync with who God is; God cares about those who have the most need and the fewest resources, etc.)

The verb, *episkeptomai*, should be translated “not merely as ‘visit’ (KJV, RSV, NASB) but as ‘look after’ (NIV). It is the same verb used by Matthew in Jesus’ warning about the future separation of people for blessing and cursing. When the Son of Man comes in his glory, some will be welcomed into blessing because ‘I was sick and you looked after me,’ while others will be sent into the eternal fire because ‘I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me’ (Mt 25:36, 43).” [Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Jas/Practice-Pure-Religion>]

Caring for the needy is the ultimate sign of pure religion.

There are people who say, “I am spiritual but not religious.” How would you have a conversation with such a person, based on James 1:26-27?

Transformational Exercise

Even small things done for others can remind them about God’s goodness and love.

[Show the 7 minute YouTube video, “Man pays for stranger’s groceries” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs_sbBxYHCE Be sure to show it to the end! And, you may want to see that Kleenex is close by for the last scene.]

Transformational Exercise *continued*

What marks of real religion did you see in the video?

In silence, consider what you could do this week as a disciple with pure religion.

[Close in a prayer something like this: *You give us every good and perfect gift, O God. You are so generous. You give us language. You give us health. You give us resources. Give us a giving heart, as you have. Act out your love through us in this new week. Amen.]*

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Just wages — In late 2014, fast food workers in 190 cities walked off the job, pleading for higher pay. The “Fight for \$15” movement, which began in 2012, has helped move some cities to establish minimum wages higher than the federal standard of \$7.25.

Research by the Center for Poverty Research at the University of California, Davis, offers a helpful perspective. Relying on the federal government’s own figures, they showed that a full-time worker making the minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour would make \$15,080 annually. The government calculates that the “poverty level” for a single person is \$11,945 — but if that person heads up a family of four, the “poverty line” rises to \$22,283.

When a full-time worker with a family who makes the current minimum wage still falls beneath the poverty level and needs government assistance, something is wrong. It’s hard not to have sympathy for hard-working people who seek at least a living wage — or to be critical of large corporations who jigger the system with part-time and low-paying jobs so that taxpayers subsidize their businesses by providing needed benefits to their employees.

Rank growth? — The term translated as “rank growth” in the NRSV (*hrupos*) has the basic meaning of “filthiness.” In some ancient medical texts, it was also used to describe earwax that has to be cleaned out before one can hear. Given James’ earlier charge to be “quick to listen” (v. 19), that is an apt way to understand its use here (Ralph C. Martin, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary [Thomas Nelson, 1988], p. 48).

Meaning and doing — Pastors and preachers know the experience of having someone stop on the way out of worship and say “That sermon meant a lot to me.” It sometimes takes an effort to keep from responding “That remains to be seen.”

Religion — Three times in vv. 26-27, James uses terms that we translate as “religious” (*threskos*) or “religion” (*threskeia*). The word was used in Greek to describe both the beliefs and practice of those who were devoted to a god. “Religion” and “piety” are equivalent words in English.

Widows and orphans — Who are the widows and orphans of our day — the people who need our love the most?

Could it be the children from India or Southeast Asia who are sold or tricked into slavery to work in brothels or vegetable fields or fishing boats?

Could it be the innocent victims of misguided wars or power struggles that have forced them out of their homes and into refugee camps?

Digging Deeper *continued*

Could it be the fringe people who have no home and roam the streets of our cities, some of them mentally ill and some just down on their luck?

Could it be the woman down the street who keeps to herself and seems to have no friends?

Could it be a room full of boisterous 5-year-olds who are still waiting for some patient and caring adult to teach them about God's love this next year?

James's comment that "real religion" is demonstrated in our care for widows and orphans has to be understood in a broader context: Anyone in need is a candidate for care.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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What does James mean by “the Father of lights”?

Today’s text begins with a reference to God as “the Father of lights.” What does that mean? On the one hand, it recalls the story of creation in Genesis 1, where God is said to have created light itself (Gen. 1:3), as well as the sun, moon, and stars as perceived sources of light. Note that the author uses the terms “greater light to rule the day” and “lesser light to rule the night.” In this way he avoids the terms for sun and moon, which were similar to names for astral deities in other religions (Gen. 1:14-18).

But James clearly has more than creation in mind. We may assume that he would have been familiar with other imagery involving God and light.

John’s gospel speaks of Jesus as the “true light that gives light to every person” (1:9). Jesus spoke of himself as the “light of the world” (8:12), and “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (9:5). Knowing that he would not always be physically present in this world, Jesus called his followers to draw upon him as their source of illumination and then to share it. He said to his followers “you are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

We think of God and Jesus in a Father-Son relationship, and we also call God our father. As we trust in the light of the world and allow Christ’s light to shine through us, we also become mediums of light in the dark places where it is needed. James noted that God is not subject to “variation or shadow due to change” — unlike the heavenly sources of light that wax and wane, God’s light-giving presence is constant.

We know that in a physical sense, light is a form of energy. If we are to be children of the “Father of lights” who want to shine in this world, it will require effort. It takes work. And work, by definition, is not easy.

James challenges us to consider whether we have accepted the light of God, the implanted Word of God, that is the source of your salvation and life — and whether our lives really reflect that.