



Contents

Session	Title	Page
1	Formula of Faith Devotions for Session One	6 11
2	Hear It and Do It Devotions for Session Two	21 27
3	Faith and Works Devotions for Session Three	37 41
4	Developing Godly Wisdom Devotions for Session Four	51 57
5	Finding God's Will Devotions for Session Five	67 73
6	Divine Healing	83
	Leader's Guide	89

How To Use This Book

Small Groups are a vital part of how we do ministry at Fellowship Church, just as they are in many churches around the world. There are a number of different theories on how small groups should work and they are all great in different ways. The book you are holding is written with our model in mind. So take a minute to read the following explanation, then feel free to adapt as necessary.

Each of our small groups practices a three part agenda in every meeting. That agenda includes a social time, a discussion time, and a praise and prayer time. Each of these elements share equal importance, but not necessarily equal time. To help you get the most out of this book we have included an explanation of each of the parts.

The first element of every small group meeting should be a time of socializing. This phase of the meeting should be about 30% of your time together. Welcome everyone as they arrive at the host home by introducing yourself. Make sure that visitors feel that you have a genuine interest in them. Enjoy some snacks, or if your group prefers, a meal together. Then move on with the second part of the meeting, the lesson.

The lesson itself may take as much as 50% of your group's meeting time, but remember it is not the most important element. You may want to start this phase of your meeting with a short "icebreaker" to get everyone talking. The questions in the Start It Up section of each chapter are what we refer to as "level the playing field" questions that everyone should be able to participate in, regardless of their level of spiritual maturity or Bible knowledge. As your group moves through the Talk It Up section, remember that it is more important to finish on time than to finish each and every question. It is okay to skip some to be sure you allow enough time to take care of the third phase of the small group time: Lift It Up.

This praise and prayer time is a vital part of every small group meeting and should be about 20% of the meeting. During this time you will be able to share with the group what God is doing in your life as well as ask the group to support you in specific prayers. To help focus this time there are one or two questions at the end of each study that will prompt prayers based on the material you have just talked about. There is also a space for you to write down your prayer request(s) so you don't forget them and so you can communicate them clearly when it is your turn. Below that is a place to write down the prayer requests of the people in your group so you can remember and pray for each request throughout the week.

As an additional tool to assist you in your journey of spiritual development there are ten devotionals leading up to chapters two through six. These will help you develop a daily quiet time with God. To get the absolute most from this book I challenge you to take five or ten minutes a day to read and apply these devotionals to your life.

God's best!

EA



A while back, I decided that I was going to take my children to an extreme sports event. The X-Trials, a preliminary round to the X-Games, was coming to town and I thought it would be a lot of fun for us to go. We found out that Tony Hawk, the Michael Jordan of extreme sports, was going to be there, so the kids wanted to take their skateboards to have them autographed. But they told me that before we could go, I needed to tweak my wardrobe.

So, we went out and bought all the right gear – the baggy shorts, the oversized shirts, the skateboarding shoes – everything. We even got these funky blue sunglasses with a visor. We had everything that we needed to fit in at the X-Trials. My children told me, “Dad, you look the part. You look cool!” So off we went.

While we were at the event, a girl who was working there came up to me and asked, “Aren’t you one of the skateboarders?” I just laughed and said, “Excuse me?” She said it again. “You’re one of the skateboarders, aren’t you?” I politely told her that she was mistaken, and my family and I went on our way.

What had happened in that brief encounter? She had mistaken me for one of the participants in the X-Trials simply because I looked the part. So many times, that same thing happens in the spiritual lives of Christians. A lot of Christians seem to have it together on the outside but, on the inside, the way they live their lives does not jive. Too many of us in the church look the part but don’t live it. God’s Word doesn’t change our lifestyle.

Well, it’s time to revolutionize that. We live in extreme times. And in these extreme days, we need to do more than just “look” like we have it together. We need to demonstrate from the inside out that we have extreme faith, by hearing God’s Word and doing what it says. That’s what the New Testament book of James is all about.



Ed Young

In this study, we’re going to dive into James and learn how to apply God’s truth to our daily lives so that we can live the extreme life that God has planned for us. We are going to stop just “looking the part,” and, through the Holy Spirit’s octane, we are going to become X-treme Christians with X-treme faith.

James

SESSION ONE

Formula of Faith - **James 1:1-12**

Have you ever caught yourself trying to put over an image that isn't the real you? If we are honest, we'll all have to say yes. We try to have an exterior that looks okay to everyone else. We try to look the part, and all along the interior doesn't match. The lifestyle and the look don't connect. Over the next few weeks, we are going to be studying what could easily be called the most practical book in the New Testament, a book that deals with lifestyle change. The book of James isn't hard to understand. But, we may wish it was before we finish because James hits where it hurts. James is all about God taking us higher. He is telling us how to be extreme Christians, the ones who live a lifestyle to match the image.

Start It Up

Even though we don't always think about it this way, almost every walk of life comes with its own "uniform." When we see someone dressed a certain way, we expect that person to act a certain way. Sometimes, we get a surprise when we see that the "uniform" doesn't match the person.

1. *Share with the group about a time when you have experienced this "identity crisis," when your outside appearance didn't match who you were or how you felt on the inside.*

2. *Can you describe a time when someone was surprised to find what you are really like?*

Talk It Up

The whole book of James is talking basically about one thing: getting real with your faith. God is not interested in a lot of good looking uniforms or great talk. What God wants to see is Christ-followers who not only wear the outfit, but can run the race. Are you running for real, or are you just hanging around on the sidelines trying to look the part?

No one looks at a great athlete and says, "Cool, he just happened to be really strong." No, we know that the athlete had to go through major training. An athlete has to take bruises and aches and endurance tests before reaching the top. It is the same for the Christian life. No one reaches maturity by accident. It takes bruises and aches and endurance tests. We have to develop and mature so that we can become extreme people with extreme faith in extreme days.

This week, we are going to look at James 1:1-12 in terms of a formula—just like a math formula, only this time it is a faith formula: $EIC^2=M$. We'll look at what each of these symbols stands for, and see what James has to say about how to work out our faith for real in our lives.

Read James 1:1-12

$EIC^2=M$

Think of our lives like a plain, white, T-shirt—an empty canvas waiting to be designed. You take this T-shirt and put it through a tie-dyeing process. Tie-dyeing requires that you twist up the fabric and hold it with rubber bands. Then you put the T-shirt into boiling dye. When it comes out, you have a beautiful design. In our lives, the rubber bands and boiling dye are the trials and challenges that we face. Even though they are tough, these trials are the very things that make us into what God wants.

It is really pretty odd to consider trials joy, but this is the first part of our formula. The word "consider" is a word that means evaluation. It's an accounting term. As we see trials through the eyes of faith, we can credit our spiritual portfolio. Conversely, if we don't see the trials through the eyes of faith, it can end up being a debit. We don't gain anything. In fact, we lose something. So, the E in the formula stands for evaluation. We must evaluate whether a trial is a debit or a credit in our spiritual portfolio.

Let's go back to the tie-dyed T-shirt. It is like God is tie-dying us. As the trials come into our lives, the rubber bands start to twist, and the dye starts to boil. The T-shirt that comes out is one-of-a-kind. No two tie-dyed T-shirts are going to ever look exactly the same. The rejoicing is because we know that we will be beautiful when God is done.

The second part of the formula is I for information. What is the information? It's that the testing of my faith—all these trials—will work together and build real character in my life. Romans 8:28 gives this to us in a neat package: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

3. Joy is not the same as happiness. What is the difference between them?

4. In what areas of your life have you had to persevere? What was the result or reward?

Take a look at verse four. "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything." This brings us to the first C of the faith formula: cooperation. We have got to cooperate with God's maturing process. We have got to cooperate with the trials. *God, I am not God. You are. I trust you God. I don't understand it. I cannot explain it. I trust you.* We can all think of times when we have blown it, when we have not cooperated with the trials. Instead of evaluating them on the credit side, we whine and try to do our own thing. As Christians, we should welcome trials, and say, "I don't understand it. This is tough. This is hard. But God is going to use it. He is tie-dyeing me, and I am going to be something beautiful."

Evaluation+Information+Cooperation+Conversation=Maturity

Verse five takes us one step further. James tells us that when we lack wisdom, when we don't understand what is going on, to ask God. We have got to engage in conversation with God. This is the second C of the faith formula. James also tells us to ask without doubting. Don't be afraid to ask God; He has the answers. His book has been picked apart for thousands of years, and it is still the number one best-seller.

5. What characteristics do you think should be seen in the life of a mature believer?

6. *In what area of your life do you need wisdom from God right now?*

James doesn't stop with a new way of looking at trials. He goes on to address our favorite subject: finances. As you might expect, he turns things upside down here too. The poor are to rejoice in their high position, and the rich in their humility. He is simply saying that when the poor man faces a trial, the poor man, if he is doing the right thing, welcomes the trial and he knows it is building his spiritual portfolio. He knows he doesn't have any worldly wealth, but he says, "My riches are in Christ Jesus."

James also tells us that when the rich man handles a trial correctly, he says, "I welcome you trial. I know I have a lot of stuff, toys and trinkets, on this earth, but that is nothing compared to my spiritual riches in my spiritual account with God. I am ready for the trial because I know what matters." This is how the mature believer handles it.

The reward is found in verse 12. The favor of God will be on our lives, and ultimately, we receive the crown of life.

7. *Consider your attitudes about money and finances. How do these attitudes need to change?*

Lift It Up

Listen to the faith formula again. We start with evaluation considering whether or not our trials are a true deposit in our accounts. Then we multiply that with information, knowing that God is working on something beautiful. On top of that, if we factor in cooperation and conversation, then what? We are going to be spiritually mature. So when people check us out, what are they going to see? Will they see people who kind of look the part of a Christian, or will they say, "There goes someone whose look and lifestyle match. There goes someone who is applying the formula of faith."?

8. *How can this group pray about trials you are facing right now?*

9. *How can this group pray for your ministry to those who are experiencing trials?*

SESSION ONE

*Temptation and Relationships***DAY 1: James 1:13**

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

If we are going to be victorious, right up front we have got to understand one thing about temptation and sin. We have got to recognize the one who is tethered to temptation. When you have that dark desire in your life that begins to go haywire—that desire to lie, to lust, to exaggerate, to steal something, to take that materialistic trip, to rev up those envy engines, James says there is one thing you should not do. You should not lay the blame on God. God tests us to make us strong. Satan tempts us to make us do wrong. Can a person in this day and age actually believe that Satan is real? In a word, yes.

You know how a fisherman makes up a fishing lure? He researches his fish, he finds out what makes this fish get excited, and he makes his lure to look just like the fish's favorite food. When this fish sees dinner floating along, he goes for it. But what this fish doesn't know is that this tasty morsel has strings attached. It has got a hook and barb, and there is a guy on the other end of that line who has a sad ending in mind for that fish. Satan is the guy holding the other end of the line of temptation, and he has a sad ending in mind for us. When we "bite" we are playing right into his hands.

What temptations are you facing today? What hidden hooks await you if you take the bait?
