

Last week, we were reminded not to boast about wealth because it will wither and fade like grass. We also learned that God will meet every need, just as he cares for the birds, he will care for us!

As God shares his wisdom through James, He challenges us to pause and think about temptation and sin. Read: James 1:12-15

Earlier in James, we were told that we would face trials of various kinds, and now we learn that we will also face temptation. Where does temptation originate? James is clear. Temptation comes from our own sinful desires. He is also clear in saying that God never tempts us to do wrong. Our sin comes from our hearts and is the result of our desire to have what we want.

In our world today, it is common to hear, “follow your heart,” but that is not what God’s Word says. Read: Galatians 5:16-18

We are to follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance, not our hearts! There is a constant battle going on within us between what God wants us to do and what we want to do. If we rely on our hearts to guide us, then we may well end up deceived and trapped in sin. *Parents should be aware that the next passage to read may contain topics that are not age-appropriate for your student. You may wish to read a few of the sins from the list and skip over others, as I did in class. I felt it important to share the whole list with our 13+ students, who are hearing mixed messages from the world about right and wrong.* Read: Galatians 5:19-21

We live in confusing times. There are things on the list that you just read that are completely acceptable in the world today, but to our Holy God, they are heart breaking, and separate us from him. God can not look on sin, accept it, or celebrate it. Unfortunately, our culture is terribly deceived. Without God’s wisdom from scripture, we will be caught in worldly deception, too.

If I want to make hot tea, I need hot water. As I steep my tea bag in the hot water, it becomes what it is supposed to be: tea. If I made my tea with hot Coca-Cola, it wouldn’t turn out very much like tea. It would be a weird Coca-Cola-ish drink. The Coca-Cola would dominate the flavor, and while the flavor might seem bit tea-ish, it is radically different from what hot tea should be.

If we steep ourselves in the “wisdom of the world,” we will end up confused, anxious, and on the wrong path. Our sin entangles us and separates us from God. That is why Jesus died in our place as our Savior! We have to recognize our sin, ask for forgiveness, and turn from it. As we turn away from sin, we need to steep in God’s Word, asking the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts. Read: Galatians 5:22-23.

We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. Romans 3:22-24 (NLT)

