



*ANCHORED IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST  
COMMITTED TO GOD'S MISSION  
TRANSFORMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT*

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*A CHALLENGE TO SOCIAL DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION  
FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES*

We look at some of the most hard-hitting passages from the fiery writings of James and seek to apply their challenge to our lives as we look to live out the life of the Kingdom of God in a world which is deeply entangled in godless values.

## 1 ANGLICANS ACT: BORN TO ACTION (JAMES 1:1, 16-18, 22-25)

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.*

*Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.*

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.*

1. In what ways does your journey of faith illustrate James' words, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth"? Who makes the choice? How does he give us birth? What is the role of the word of truth?
2. The mission statement of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa is: "Anchored in the love of Christ; Committed to God's mission; Transformed by the Holy Spirit" and this forms the basis on which we are called to "act". Can you see these three elements addressed in this passage?
3. How does James' picture of looking in the mirror challenge our approach to obedient discipleship? What is this mirror? What are the areas we are most prone to "forget" even though we cannot deny that Jesus gives clear instructions about them? How do we experience blessing through obedience?
4. In our lived-out context, what is the mirror alerting us to as a group and how will we ensure that we turn conviction into action? How can we help one another to be accountable as disciples of Jesus? Are there any resolves we need to commit ourselves to before we close?

## 2 ANGLICANS ACT: CONFRONTING PRIVILEGE AND SOCIAL DIVISION (JAMES 2:1-9)

*My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

*Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?*

*If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers.*

1. Share a time when you were the object of prejudice on the basis of race, religion, social standing, physical appearance, intelligence, etc. How did it make you feel?
2. What motivation is at work in our hearts making us show favour to the rich and influential? Then, what causes us to ignore or insult the poor and socially insignificant? How do we see these motivations continuing to be expressed in our nation? Where do they lurk, undetected in our church?
3. In what way does favouritism make us judges with "evil thoughts"? If we honestly examine our lives and underlying prejudices, how do we see this dynamic at work in us and how can we lay it before the Lord?
4. One of the terms used by Liberation Theologians that provoked most opposition from much of the Church in the West was, "God's preferential option for the poor." Is that what this passage is saying? If not, what is it saying about God's perspective on the rich and the poor?
5. How can we, as individuals and as a group, be more active in identifying, challenging and acting to redress privilege and social division?

### 3 ANGLICANS ACT: GRAPPLING WITH FALSE IDOLS (JAMES 4:1-10)

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

*You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.'*

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

1. James uses very strong language in this passage, literally “warring and battling”; who is he directing these comments to – those in the world or those in the church? When have you seen one or another form of covetousness spark fierce rivalry and strife? How is covetousness linked with idolatry? Can you recognise this in your own heart?
2. In our social context, what factors make us more susceptible to asserting the priority of our own cause and fiercely defending what we perceive to be our rights? How can we thoroughly check our motives before God? How much of this is illustrated by our South African history, even though we are a majority Christian country?
3. The footnotes of the NIV give two variant readings for verse 6, in the light of what James is saying, which do you think is the most accurate translation of the somewhat obscure original Greek?
4. We all live in a service-demanding, privileged, consumer culture. We have been described as the “me generation”, and this makes it difficult for us to embrace the very counter-cultural message James is giving us here. What

might it look like for us as a group and as a church to live far more simply, humbly and counter-culturally and how can we help one another to do so?

#### 4 ANGLICANS ACT: ECONOMIC JUSTICE (JAMES 5:1-9)

*Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.*

*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. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!*

1. As you were growing up, what was the first time you were struck by economic injustice and someone being unfairly treated? How did it make you feel?
2. Almost all of us would be numbered among the world's wealthiest 5% (Google will help you assess your wealth level if you want to check). On top of this South Africa has almost the highest disparity between rich and poor in the world (check the Gini Index). This places a particular burden of responsibility on our shoulders. What are the perils that endanger those who are wealthy?
3. To what extent do we struggle to really hear the strong language James uses in this passage? Do you find yourself opposing it; resenting it; trying to water it down; ignoring it; or stirred to find ways of acting in response to it? What does your reaction show you about the values you live by? How does being anchored in the love of Christ, Committed to God's mission and Transformed by the Holy Spirit help us to step into the place of radical obedience?
4. Perhaps Carl Marx wouldn't have been so quick to write off Christianity as "the opiate of the people" if the Church of his day had been speaking in the tones of James against economic injustice. So, what might it mean for us to be more active in challenging society's economic assumptions with God's justice and compassion for the poor?

## 5 ANGLICANS ACT: BOLD FAITH (JAMES 5:13-20)

*Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 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.*

*Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

*My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

1. What testimony do you have of seeing God answer prayer in miraculous ways?
2. In your experience, to what extent does health or disorder in one area of life (physical, emotional, spiritual) flow over into other areas of life?
3. Just as James is uncomfortably bold in tackling issues of our witness in society, so he is also uncomfortably bold in calling us to radical faith in the miraculous power and authority of the Lord. In terms of a full understanding of the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God, how are these two spheres linked?
4. How can you as a group commit yourselves more wholeheartedly to praying in expectant faith for one another's needs, particularly in areas of ill health or distress of soul? How can that confidence in the power of the Lord open new mission horizons for your group?

## Lenten photo a day practice

As we journey through this season of Lent, will you join us on this photo-a-day challenge and share with the community how you perceive each word of the day? No explanation needed.

After all, a picture is worth a thousand words. Tag us on your instagram photos with @cckenilworth & @rethinkchurch or on twitter [@ CCKenilworth & @umrethinkchurch] with #rethinkchurch & #lensonlent2016

You don't have to be a great photographer. This project is more about the practice of paying attention and being intentional, than it is using the right filter or getting the perfect shot [though we totally encourage you to get creative!]. If you don't have instagram or twitter, we'd still love for you to share your photos. Just share them on our facebook wall, [www.facebook.com/cckenilworth](http://www.facebook.com/cckenilworth) each day.

Let's start this 40-day journey together, sharing glimpses of our lives with one another. Let this be an intentional time, even for a few minutes a day, to pause, remember and reflect.

### *February*

10 gather  
11 voice  
12 look  
13 injustice  
14 celebrate  
15 settle  
16 go  
17 mighty  
18 refuge  
19 love  
20 life  
21 celebrate  
22 vision  
23 covenant  
24 shelter  
25 joy  
26 see  
27 heal  
28 celebrate  
29 thirst

### *March*

1 witness  
2 found  
3 power  
4 help  
5 endure  
6 celebrate  
7 spirit  
8 silence  
9 faithful  
10 surround  
11 world  
12 listen  
13 celebrate  
14 path  
15 remember  
16 people  
17 restore  
18 beloved  
19 have  
20 celebrate  
21 thanks  
22 steadfast  
23 rejected  
24 need  
25 path  
26 enter  
27 celebrate