

Living a life of faith is meant to be all encompassing. It is meant to color everything we think about, it is to invade every decision we make. However, even the sincerest of us can find ourselves not enjoying a crisp, God-centered focus. Why is this? It is because each of us slouches toward the "stuff of life" to find our satisfaction. Things like pleasure, possessions, or our life plans can quickly steer us toward self-centered living. Let's face it, we are constantly being pushed to go out-of-focus. Our perspective gets fuzzy; our decisions get blurred by a mixture of self-serving motives that cloud our vision, and we find ourselves out of focus. Today you will find out how to regularly adjust your focus back on Jesus Christ, the core of our faith.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

A. Focus in _____ – v.13

B. Focus in _____ – v.14-15

C. Focus as a _____ – v.16-18

Flow of Thought:

I. Testing our trust in God:

A. In Trials – v.2.12

B. In Temptation – v.13-17

C. In Life – v.18-21

II. Testing our focus – 2:1-4:17

A. In how we relate within the community of faith:

1. Favoritism? – 2:1-7

2. Love! – 2:8-13

3. Faith? Works! – 2:14-26

4. Speech – 3:1-18

5. World-like living – 4:1-5:6

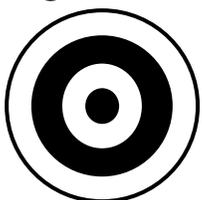
III. Testing our character – 5:7-12

A. In our response to persecution – 5:7-11

B. In how we view making a commitment – 5:12

IV. Testing our faith – 5:13-18

Target Practice: Use this resource to dig deeper in your personal or family devotions during the week.



Describe how "life" tries to push us to not focus on the things that truly matter.

How does James encourage his readers to foster a God-centered vision in v.13?

Why call for the elders? Why use oil? What is the "prayer of faith?" What is the role of forgiveness?

How does community in a church guard us against getting out of focus? How does this relate to being a "righteous person?" Why does James use Elijah as an example?