

Reflection Questions: James 1:13-15

For the message, "The Heart of the Problem" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on March 1, 2020

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: James 1:13-15

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. **14** But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. **15** Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Let's get started...

- What initially grabbed your attention in this passage? What questions or thoughts arise as you reflect on what it's saying?

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- What is it about humans that makes us slow to own our faults, wanting to blame someone else—even God—for our temptations, shortcomings, and sins? Why do you think we are so quick to shift blame and justify ourselves?
- James says that we are tempted when we are lured and enticed by our own desire. How does this help you think about the dynamics of the human heart? What questions might you like to ask him about this?
- Reflect on this quote by the Christian author Paul David Tripp: "People, locations, situations, don't cause me to sin; they're where the sin of my heart gets revealed.... Sin is a matter of the heart before it is ever an issue of behavior. This means that your and my biggest problem in life exists inside us and not outside us. It's the evil inside me that connects me to the evil outside me. So I must confess that I am my biggest problem."
 - What do you find helpful from this explanation? What further questions does this raise for you?
- How does this text help you to understand the good news of Jesus? How does this text show you your need for the cleansing, renewing, transforming grace of God?

2. Let's think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus' followers.

- How might a full grasp at what James the brother of Jesus is teaching here help form Mercy Hill into a community of humble yet hopeful people?
- How might we humbly yet boldly encourage one another to “abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul” (2 Peter 2:11)? And what role does reminding one another that Jesus is far, far better play in this encouragement?

3. Let's think about how this text applies to our city.

- How do these words from James serve as good news for those outside the faith? Is it good news? Or is there more to the message of Christianity?
- How do you think humble Christians might be able to explain that the heart of the human problem is a problem of the human heart, while avoiding self-righteousness?