

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

**September 22-23**

**The Elephants in the Room**

**By Kelly Archer, Pastoral Assistant**

## What Is This?

This brief guide is intended for use individually, or in small groups. It's your chance to dive deeper into the issues raised in the weekend sermon and to connect a Biblical story with your daily life.

## Revisit the Text

James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a; <https://bit.ly/2lednZh>

## Big Ideas Raised

- The Book of James is not without its critics. Most famously, Martin Luther called James “an epistle of straw”. If he had his way, this book would not be included in our Bibles today.
- Difference is biblical! Our New Testament is full of stories and Jesus’ examples of casting nets wide to be inclusive of our differences. Jews eating with Gentiles. Samaritans and Nazarenes talking to one another. Widows and orphans, blind men and bleeding women, all included in God’s vision of community!
- Within The Epistles we encounter specific instructions written to churches who were struggling with various topics. When our own worshipping community struggles, we can turn to these biblical resources for wisdom.

## Questions Meant to Dig Deeper

- James uses the binary of “earthly wisdom” and “wisdom from above” in this text. Earthly wisdom isn’t optimal, as it is motivated by greed and power, whereas the wisdom from above is full of peace and gentleness. And James certainly isn’t the only one to use the adjective “earthly” or “worldly” in a pejorative sense. Now read Genesis 1:31 and also John 3:16 and hold those scriptures in conversation with James’ uses of the term “earthly.”
- Both the author of James, and Paul, the author of much of the New Testament, speak of gentleness as a fruit of the spirit. And yet in our context, gentleness is perceived and portrayed as feminine. Dolls still aren’t mass marketed to boys. Ballet classes still aren’t brimming with boys, not even 50/50. Implicit messages that boys need to be rough (the opposite of gentle) is detrimental to everyone in a societal sense and limiting in a spiritual sense for boys/men according to James and Paul. What are some ways we can nurture and celebrate gentleness in all of God’s beloved children?
- Will you pray with me? *God of Infinite Wisdom, we are thankful for your wise and wonderful ways. For the living wisdom of your Holy Word, and the ancient wisdom of our ancestors in this faith, we stand in awe. Guide us by your heavenly wisdom, so that we may live good lives and reap fruits of mercy and peace. Show us your ways of compassion, so that we may tend to ourselves and to each other with gentleness in every season. Pour out your wisdom and your will for St. Lucas and draw near to us and we draw near to you. In times of confusion or unease, tether our hearts always to thee. We pray, as followers of Christ, who taught us to pray: Our Father...*

## Revisit the Sermon

For a recording or a manuscript of this weekend’s sermon, please visit:

<https://www.stlucasucc.org/sermons-resources>