



FAITH IN THE RING

TURNING WISDOM INTO ACTION

FAIRDALE CHRISTIAN CHURCHWIDE STUDY
SPRING 2024



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Faith in the Ring**, a journey through the dynamic teachings of the Book of James. Like a skilled boxer in the ring, James challenges us to live out our faith with boldness, resilience, and purpose. In this these Life Groups, we will explore how to turn the wisdom found in James into tangible action in our everyday lives.

The title **Faith in the Ring** captures the essence of James's message: faith is not passive but active, not theoretical but practical. James invites us into the arena of life, where our faith is tested, refined, and ultimately revealed through our actions. As we navigate trials, seek wisdom, and demonstrate love, James provides us with a blueprint for living as authentic disciples of Christ.

Through engaging discussions, reflective exercises, and heartfelt prayer, we will delve into the transformative truths of James's letter. Each session will challenge us to apply God's wisdom in our decisions, relationships, and responses to adversity.

Faith in the Ring is more than just a study—it's an invitation to embrace the fullness of our faith and live boldly for Christ. So let's step into the ring of faith together and discover the incredible journey that awaits us in the Book of James- where wisdom meets action, and faith becomes a vibrant and courageous force in our lives.

—Brandon Hatfield

TIPS FOR LIFE GROUP LEADERS

1. Pray for group members by name every day.

The number one way to grow your group is to pray for each participant. Ask God to bless their families, strengthen their faith, and produce fruit in their lives.

2. Enlist a Co-leader at the beginning of the semester.

The final command Jesus gave to the church included, “go and make disciples.” One practical way to do this is to invite one other group member to lead with you. A Co-leader can help keep the group on schedule, pray for members, and facilitate the discussion.

3. Create an open and safe environment at every meeting.

Trust is a key factor in any group. The more comfortable a person feels, the more transparent they will share. You can help create an environment of trust by encouraging others when they talk or help with group tasks.

4. Encourage each participant take the Next Step in their faith journey.

Spiritual growth rarely happens all at once. Over the course of the next six weeks, find out where each group member is in their faith journey then help them take the “next step.” It could be baptism, giving, serving, praying, leading, teaching, or signing up for “Starting Point” at Fairdale Christian.

GET TO KNOW YOUR GROUP

Use this space to write down names and contact info of the members of your group.

NAME

CONTACT

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This guide is designed to be used for individual or group study. Included you will find Scripture references (you will need a Bible), as well as Group Discussion questions to help apply the material to daily life. Discussion questions are segmented into 4 sections:

- **Break Ground** to introduce the topic.
- **Sow Seeds** to explore the text.
- **Add Water** to reflect on key ideas.
- **Grow Roots** to apply the lesson throughout the week.

BEFORE EVERY MEETING

To get the most out of this study, you will need to prepare before you participate in a discussion. Before meeting with the other members of your group take time to read through the text. As you read, pay attention to words that are used more than once. Repeated words are called key words and help unlock the meaning of the passage. Next, answer the group discussion questions on your own.

DURING EVERY MEETING

This study is not designed to be a lecture, but a discussion. When you meet as a group be ready to join the conversation. Ask someone or several people to read the text and then dive into the questions. Remember, we are growing together.

Be sure to allow every member the opportunity to speak.

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

Finding James in the Bible

The Bible is more than a book; it is a library of 66 different books, written over a couple thousand years, in multiple languages, by numerous authors, to multiple audiences. The first step in studying any book of the Bible is knowing where it is located.

Here is where James fits in the roadmap of the Bible:

- **The Bible is broken into 2 sections: Old and New Testament**

◇ The Old Testament is written in Hebrew and is about how God created a nation called Israel to be his chosen people. He chose them not because they were special, but because they weren't. They were as sinful, stubborn, and rebellious as any people group. He chose them so that He could teach them who He was, and so that they could be a lighthouse to the nations. He chose them, because it was part of His plan of redemption, a plan that culminates in the New Testament.

◇ The New Testament is written in Greek and is about two things: Jesus and the Church. The New Testament tells how a man named Jesus was born in Israel, how He taught and performed miracles, how He was crucified, how He was seen alive 3 days later, and how His followers saw that the resurrection of Jesus was the culmination of God's promise of Redemption.

- ◇ **James is in the New Testament.**

It is a letter that was written by James to a general audience of both Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

AUTHOR

There are five men in the New Testament who go by the name of James, but only two of these might have written this letter. These are James the apostle and James the Just, the half-brother of Jesus. Since it is almost certain that James the apostle (Mark 10:35) was killed by Herod in AD 44 (before the letter could have been written), tradition holds the author to be James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19) and half-brother of Jesus.

AUDIENCE

James led the church in Jerusalem during a very difficult time, but his letter was directed to the Jews living outside the land of Palestine. James sent his letter to Christian Jews, addressing them as brethren (which indicated they were brothers in Christ Jesus). Christian Jews were scattered throughout the Roman Empire and had needs and problems unique to their situation. As Jews, they were rejected by Gentiles; and as Christian Jews, they were rejected by their own countrymen.

PURPOSE

As you read the epistle, you will discover that these Jewish Christians were having some problems in their personal lives and in their church. They were going through difficult trials and facing many temptations. One of the major problems in the church was a failure on the part of many to live what they professed to believe. They also had problems with divisions caused by careless words, and many were dealing with

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES CONTINUED...

James wrote to people like us who had similar fears, doubts, and hardships. He affirmed that Christianity can work in a world that includes both rich and poor; where instability surrounds us, and find ourselves being fueled more and more by fear and anger, rather than grace and love. No matter how dark the world may seem, there is hope available. We will find that no matter where we are in life, James has something important to say to all of us.



WEEK ONE

Faith that Fights back in Trials



WEEK ONE FAITH THAT FIGHTS BACK IN TRIALS

BREAK GROUND

What's one thing on your bucket list that you're determined to accomplish?

What needs to happen for you to get it done?

SOW SEEDS

Read James 1:1-18

- What stands out to you from this passage?
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement-

“Life is 10 percent what happens to you, and 90 percent how you respond to it.” Why or why not?

In the space below recall one trial you faced recently. What good or growth came as a result?

TRIAL

RESULT



ADD WATER

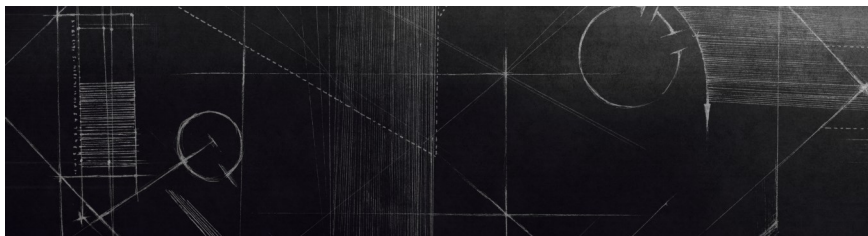
Think back over the message Brandon shared on James 1:1-18.

We have all found ourselves saying things like “Why is this happening to me?” or “Wouldn’t it be easier if...?” We have wondered why some terrible thing has happened to us. Sometimes we phrase the question, “Why did God let this happen to me?” Sometimes we are so desperate that we will do anything to be out of the situation. We want it to be over; we want to be out of it.

That kind of suffering can cause us to doubt God, doubt He cares about us, and doubt He is in control. It can lead us to try to manage as best as we can. It might even tempt us to do things we might not normally do. James doesn’t mince any words. He doesn’t beat around the bush or build up to his main point. He starts off with a direct challenge not to give up. His advice is to do something unexpected— find joy.

- What stood out to you from the sermon? Any new insights?
 - What was the most inspiring part of the service for you? Something you saw, a song, a special moment?
-

- What is the difference between being happy about trials, and being joyful in trials?
- How can a trial turn into a temptation? (Vs. 13-15)
- Have you ever seen God use a trial to build up spiritual muscle in you? What was that like?



- Have you ever wanted God to get you out of a trial but realized that He wanted to get you through it? How can we learn to seek His perspective instead of the escape hatch?
- Why do you think God requires that we do not doubt before He gives us His wisdom?

GROW ROOTS

When it comes to temptation there are some powerful promises found in God's Word. Read the following passages and underline the phrase or sentence that is most encouraging or meaningful for you today.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we were – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

HEBREWS 4:15-16

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

JAMES 1:12



SERMON NOTES

[illegible]

The background is a dark, textured surface with a complex grid of dashed white lines. A central figure, possibly a person, is visible through a semi-transparent rectangular area. The figure appears to be in a dynamic pose, possibly dancing or moving. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

WEEK TWO

Faith that Fights Back Against Anger



WEEK TWO

FAITH THAT FIGHTS BACK AGAINST ANGER

BREAK GROUND

What's the most adventurous thing you've ever done, and would you do it again?

What made you decide to try that “adventurous thing”?

SOW SEEDS

Read James 1:19-27

- What stands out to you from this passage?
- Hearing and listening are skills that we can develop. When it comes to hearing and listening to others, which phrase describes you best:
 - a. I'm fully engaged when others are speaking and pick up details easily.
 - b. I'm a good at listening when I want to be.
 - c. I have to really work at focusing on what others are saying.
 - d. What was the question?
- How would you describe the difference between “being religious” and “true religion” (see James 1:26-27)? Who might be the “widows” and “orphans” in your life today?



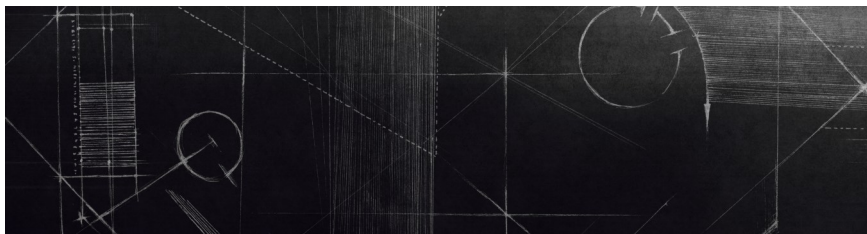
ADD WATER

Think back over the message shared on James 1:19-27.

Obedience is often viewed as something nice and necessary for children or dogs, but stifling for individuality and independence. According to James, true belief causes Christians to live out their faith in obedience to God's Word. We don't passively hear the Word. Rather, action should always follow genuine heart change. As Christians we are called to humbly accept what we hear in God's Word and put it into practice; hearing and doing result in living from freedom and blessing.

- What stood out to you from the sermon? Any new insights?
 - What was the most inspiring part of the service for you? Something you saw, a song, a special moment?
-

- Who are the people we feel justified in hating? How do we attempt to justify our anger?
- How can learning Bible facts and increasing our theological knowledge become false religion?
- Why is self-control so hard? How do we attempt to justify our lack of self-control? What does it mean "to discipline" our bodies and make them our slaves? How can we do that?



The Christian life is one of active obedience. When you hear God's Word, respond in faith. All the Bible study in the world is meaningless if it doesn't transform your affections and attitudes. How would you evaluate yourself on the challenges James makes in this passage? Rate yourself on the following scales by placing an "X" on each line.

QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK

QUICK TO SPEAK, SLOW TO LISTEN

SLOW TO BECOME ANGRY

QUICK TO BECOME ANGRY

ATTENTIVE TO GOD'S WORD

NEGLECTFUL OF GOD'S WORD

COMPASSIONATE TOWARD THE NEEDY

CALLOUS TOWARD THE NEEDY

UNPOLLUTED BY THE WORLD

POLLUTED BY THE WORLD

GROW ROOTS

Using the chart below evaluate your listening skills for one week. Track the moments you were able to hear the still small voice of God and put your faith in action.

WHAT DID GOD SAY?

HOW DID I OBEY?

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday



TURNING WISDOM INTO ACTION

[illegible]



WEEK THREE

Faith that Fights Favoritism & Laziness



WEEK THREE— FAITH THAT FIGHTS FAVORITISM & LAZINESS

BREAK GROUND

Share a memorable travel experience that broadened your perspective or changed your outlook.

How did that opportunity come up for you?

SOW SEEDS

Read James 2:1-26

- What stands out to you from this passage?
- Go back together and count— how many times does the phrase “brothers and sister” appear?

The church is a family. Because we share the same name as Christ we are brothers and sisters born again into the family of God through faith in His Only Son. Due to the fact that the early believers were “scattered among the nations” (see 1:1) the church would have been filled with people of various ethnic groups, nationalities and religious backgrounds. This is the way God designed the church to be and opens the door for believers to truly live out their faith.

- What categories do we divide people into? What does favoritism look like in the world? In the church?



ADD WATER

Think back over the message Brandon shared on James 2:1-26

The truest sign of what is in someone's heart isn't what comes out of their mouth but what comes out of their lives. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 7:20-21 "you shall know them by their fruits. Not everyone who SAYS to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who DOES the will of My Father who is in heaven. (Caps added for emphasis)"

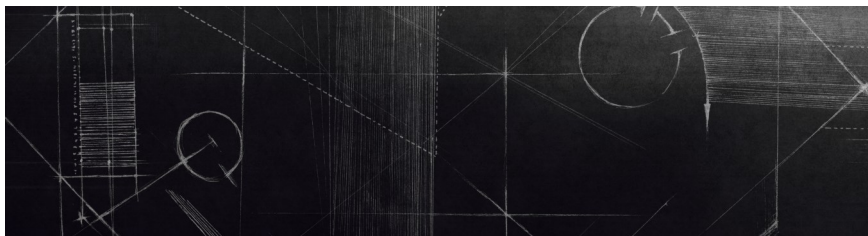
It is true that we don't know what is going on in a person's heart. Because of that, we are told not to be judges condemning others. But Jesus does tell us to be aware, looking for proof of what kind of a tree a person is by looking at what kind of fruit it produces.

- What stood out to you from the sermon? Any new insights?
- What was the most inspiring part of the service for you? Something you saw, a song, a special moment?

•How can we discern when we are judging people with evil motives? What are some evil motives we use to judge others?

•What excuses do we give for compromising with sin? What are some "respectable sins" that we often tolerate in the church?

•James makes some extremely strong statements about faith (see 2:14-19); which one left the greatest impression on you? Explain.



- What is the tension between faith and works?
- What is James talking about and how is it different than telling people they have to earn their salvation by doing good works?

GROW ROOTS

- One form of favoritism we might struggle with is looking at people in terms of what they can do for us. Do you tend to view relationships in terms of what you can GET or what you can GIVE?
- Who is one person you can show genuine love to this week without any expectation of getting anything in return?
- Do a quick assessment of your faith. Is yours more of an intellectual based faith or an action based faith? What is one area you would like to see your faith grow a little more as a result of this study?

James 5:13 says, “Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.”

At this time give everyone a chance to share a praise or a prayer request.



SERMON NOTES

[illegible]



WEEK FOUR

Faith that Fights a Wild Mouth



WEEK FOUR— FAITH THAT FIGHTS A WILD MOUTH

BREAK GROUND

What's one talent or hobby you've always wanted to pursue but haven't yet?

What's holding you back?

SOW SEEDS

Read James 3:1-12

•What stands out to you from this passage?

If you could hear a tape recording of everything you said last week, how would you feel about it?

- a. I would feel pretty good about how encouraging and helpful I was toward others.
- b. I would feel okay – I don't remember being mean to anyone.
- c. I would like to delete a few lines.
- d. I would like you to throw the tape away

James uses three metaphors to describe the power of the tongue (see 3:3-6). What are they and which one do you relate to the most?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)



ADD WATER

Think back over the message Brandon shared on James 3:1-12.

For James, talk was cheap. Empty claims to faith that didn't result in action didn't impress him. And yet he appreciated the awesome power of the human tongue. Baseless claims of faith created one kind of danger, but James was also concerned about the destructiveness of out-of-control speech.

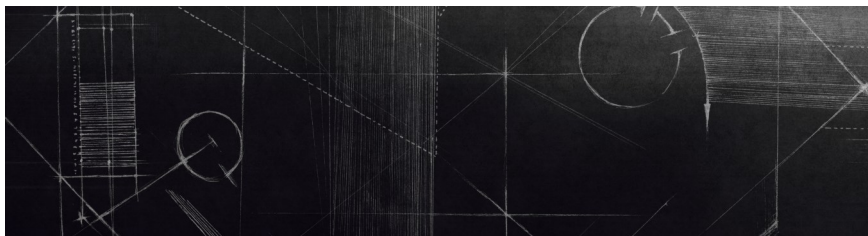
- What stood out to you from the sermon? Any new insights?
 - What was the most inspiring part of the service for you? Something you saw, a song, a special moment?
-

- How do we sometimes excuse our inability to control our tongues? What justification do we give when we hurt people with our careless words?

- What part of James's critique of our speech is hardest for you to hear? Why?

- How does our society not take words seriously?

- How can we use words to diagnose our heart?



- James tells us that the tongue is “full of deadly poison,” but Jesus reveals where the poison originates. Read **Matthew 12:33-37** and answer the following questions.
- What did Jesus say ultimately controls and drives our words?
- How did Jesus say our words could impact eternity?

GROW ROOTS

Around what people or in what situations are you likely to sin with your words? What type of speech is hardest for you to control?

How can we pray for you today in the area of:

☐ Cursing

☐ Gossip

☐ Lying

☐ Boasting

☐ Crudeness

☐ Other

Jesus taught that you should take hatred in your heart and hurtful words so seriously that you stop in the middle of whatever you're doing – even worship at church – to go make amends, confessing your sin to whomever you've offended. Is there someone you need to reach out to and ask forgiveness from as it relates to words you spoke to them in a moment of carelessness or anger? If so, make a point to touch base with them this week.



SERMON NOTES

[illegible]



WEEK FIVE

Faith that Fights Pride



WEEK FIVE FAITH THAT FIGHTS PRIDE

BREAK GROUND

What's the most valuable lesson you've learned from a difficult experience in your life?

What advice would you give the rest of the group?

SOW SEEDS

Read James 4:1-10

- What stands out to you from this passage?

When you don't get something you want, how do you usually respond?

- a. I blow it off.
- b. I work harder.
- c. I pout or throw a tantrum.
- d. I get resentful.
- e. Other: _____

- James writes that "friendship with the world is hatred toward God." Is friendship with the world the same thing as sin? Explain.



ADD WATER

Think back over the message shared on James 4:1-10

- In this passage, James calls out conflicts fueled by selfish desires and pride. It challenges us to choose humility, resist worldly traps, and get close to God. Embrace repentance, cleanse your heart, and align with God's will. True humility brings divine grace, deep connection with God, and victory over worldly distractions.

- What stood out to you from the sermon? Any new insights?

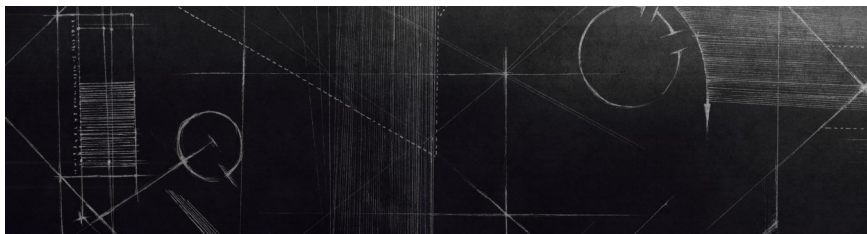
- What was the most inspiring part of the service for you?
Something you saw, a song, a special moment?

- Have you ever found yourself envious of someone else and ended up quarrelling with them? How do we blame others for our anger or envy? How can we learn to analyze our motives?

- What is the difference between acting in response to what God has done and acting because we think it is all up to us?

- What incredible promise do we find in James 4:10? How does that promise encourage you today?

- Humility takes many forms – why does James remind us it's important that we don't take tomorrow (see 4:13-17) for granted? How should we approach making plans for our lives?



- When Jesus told us not to worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34), he was not rejecting the importance of planning. In fact worrying is sometimes an indication we have not planned enough. James's counsel is to humbly prepare for what we can; acknowledging God is in control and trusting Him.
- What is one area you are actively seeking God's will be done?

GROW ROOTS

This week reflect on the two concepts of pride and humility. Evaluate when you tend to be “a friend of the world” compared to being “a friend of God.” Schedule your time this week to purposely and intentionally draw close to God.

Each chapter of James takes around 5 minutes to read. This would be a great opportunity to spend a few minutes each day in the Word, and a few minutes in prayer.

⇒ Day 1– Read James 1

⇒ Day 2– Read James 2

⇒ Day 3– Read James 3

⇒ Day 4– Read James 4

⇒ Day 5– Read James 5




TURNING WISDOM INTO ACTION

[illegible]



WEEK SIX

Faith that Fights Suffering



WEEK SIX— RELATIONSHIPS THAT ENCOURAGE

BREAK GROUND

Describe a challenge or obstacle you've overcome that made you stronger.

What did you learn along the way?

SOW SEEDS

Read James 5:7-20

- What stands out to you from this passage?

Practical all the way to the end, James brings his letter to a close. With the reality of Christ's return before us, he urges us to press on in our faith walk with patience and prayer, knowing that our God is full of compassion and mercy.

The first step in learning to wait on God is to trust His timing. Sometimes we think we know all the answers and see all the variables. We think God needs to speed up and catch up to us. Waiting on God doesn't mean God is somehow late or running behind. It means we don't know all the variables and don't have all the answers. That is why waiting on God is an aspect of humility.

- Share one area of life where you tend to be very impatient (and make it quick, will ya? ☺).



ADD WATER

Think back over the message shared on James 5:7-20

- In this passage, James encourages patience and prayer amidst trials. It highlights the power of persistence in waiting for Christ's return and the effectiveness of fervent prayer. James emphasizes confession, healing, and restoration within the community, urging believers to support and forgive one another. Active faith and prayer transform lives and relationships.

- What stood out to you from the sermon? Any new insights?

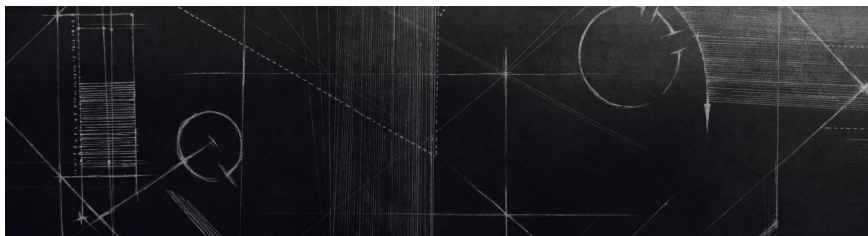
- What was the most inspiring part of the service for you? Something you saw, a song, a special moment?

- What example did James use to describe the importance of patience? What feelings or emotions might the farmer experience the longer the season progresses? How can living in an instant-gratification world influence our ability to be patient?

- What does it mean to wait on God? What are some situations when you have found yourself waiting on God?

- Why is it hard to wait on God? What are some bad ways of coping with waiting?

- What does it mean to trust God's timing? Have you ever tried to get ahead of God and ultimately seen God show how is timing is best?



- Why do we sometimes run away from God when we are suffering? How can we learn to turn to God in our pain?
- How can we learn to both pray for physical healing and trust God in every circumstance? How can we learn to value spiritual healing as much as physical healing?
- Do you really believe prayer changes things? How do we sometimes leave God an “out” or pray timid prayers because we don’t want to be disappointed in God? How is this a misunderstanding of what prayer is?

GROW ROOTS

James tells us to be patient in three key areas. Read through each statement on the following page and share the one that resonates most with you today.

- Be patient with the process; God is accomplishing something in you.
- Be patient with others; God will judge.
- Be patient with God’s promises; God has not forgotten you.
- Do you know someone who has wandered away from the faith? How can you begin to pray for them?



TURNING WISDOM INTO ACTION

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Notes

[illegible]

Notes

[illegible]

