

In this section of this letter from James, the writer exhorts his readers not to be deceived and then tells them of the goodness and changelessness of God and gives an amazing and dramatic example of God's demonstrated goodness.

- In looking at the whole context of this passage, from 1:13-18, what were some of the ways in which the readers of this epistle might have been deceived? Make a list of the possible wrong ideas that are evidenced in these verses. (This will come both from James' instruction in vv. 13-15 and in the doctrines he teaches in vv. 17-18.)
- I am using the word "deceived" here in a broad sense to mean "to be led into wrong thinking or wrong doctrine." What are some examples of wrong thinking that some professing evangelical Christians have today?
- How do you know that this thinking you identified (above) is wrong?
- The opposite of "deceived" is "discerning." Discuss within your group how we as Christians can be more discerning and less easily deceived. Share with the group your personal strategy for discerning truth from error and for recognizing false teaching.
- James goes on in this passage to tell his readers that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." (Think about Romans 8:28 in this context.) What is James telling his readers about the nature of God and about the things that God gives to His creatures? Do you ever struggle with believing that everything that God sends to us is a good and perfect gift? Why do you think that is difficult to believe? Can you share a time when it was (or is) particularly difficult to believe that God's "gift" was good? How did you work through that? After that experience, would you conclude that what God gives us is good or are you still a little unsure?
- The writer concludes this passage with another doctrinal truth that supports what he has just said about God's goodness. The ESV uses the phrase "Of his own will," but a better translation would be "After deciding." What doctrinal truth related to salvation is declared here? (Election) What was the result of God's decree? How does that affect you personally? Consider what James says about God's will, about being brought forth and about "first-fruits" and explain what that says about God's goodness.