

*study guide*

# *FAITH WORKS*

*a study in the book of james*



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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard someone say: “Practice what you preach”? In a sense, when someone communicates this to another, they are telling them to back up their words, thoughts, and beliefs with their actions. This is the central principle of the book of James. James writes this letter to believers emphasizing the importance of their faith in action, particularly in social action, much like the Old Testament prophets and Jesus taught. We must not see any tension between correct belief (orthodoxy) and correct behavior (orthopraxy). Historically some have seen the book of James to be theologically at odds with the apostle Paul’s teaching. While it may sound different, James’ letter does not contradict the rest of Scripture. He outlines how to follow Christ, obey Christ, and become like Christ, calling believers to live obediently to the Word of God and not a life of reactivity to the world around us.

Within the 108 verses found in the book of James, there are over 59 commands. The book of James is extremely practical; thus it is often referred to as the “Proverbs of the New Testament.” Closely linked to and influenced by the teaching of Jesus, James brings encouragement to those suffering in trials and tribulations, while also providing exhortation and reproof against the religious hypocrisy he observes in the disconnect of belief and behavior.

## AUTHOR + DATE

James is the author cited at the very beginning of the book (1:1), however we are posed with the question, which James?!? Is it James, John’s brother? James the Son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18)? Or is it James, the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55) and leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15; 21:18). Most likely it is Jesus’ brother who penned this book. While James did not follow Christ during his earthly ministry (John 7:3-5), after Jesus’ resurrection James became a believer (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:7) and a pillar of the early church (Gal. 2:9, 12).

Most scholars agree that James would have penned this book sometime between AD 45-49. There are a few things that lend itself to this thinking. First, according to Josephus (a Jewish historian) James died in AD 62. Second, the book of James is one of the most Jewish writings within the New Testament. In fact, there is no reference to the Gentiles at all. Considering James’ influential role in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) which met regarding the assimilation of Gentiles into the church in AD 49, this letter was likely written before this took place.

# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF STUDY

From the contents of the letter, we can gather that James is writing to a Jewish audience dispersed throughout Syria and Antioch who were facing internal strife and external trials. James addresses issues such as the suffering of hardships in the world (*James 1:2,12*) and the temptation to compromise and befriend the world (*James 4:4*) by offering encouragement and the pathway to wisdom; each verse providing guidance for us today as we face the same challenges in our day-to-day lives.

## MAJOR THEMES

The practice of living out one's faith is the main theme woven throughout the entirety of James' letter. No other New Testament book raises as many ethical questions as the book of James, which contains many imperatives or "laws." Much of James' letter carries language and teaching similar to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. James encourages believers to stop compromising with worldly values and behaviors; exhorting them to commit themselves fully to the Lord.

Trials and suffering produce endurance and shape one's character. Seven times throughout the letter James speaks to how these situations are used by God to make us whole and perfect.

Four out of the five chapters provide teaching and instruction on the relationship between wealth and poverty. Socioeconomic disparity in the world and the church are on the forefront of James' mind. Ultimately he leads the reader to see that one's financial resources (or lack thereof) are irrelevant to our standing before God, and should not impact how fellow believers engage and live with one another.

## OUTLINE OF JAMES

- I. Opening Greeting - *James 1:1*
- II. Trials and Testing of Faith - *James 1:2-18*
- III. The Works of True Faith - *James 1:19-2:26*
- IV. Wisdom and the Christian Community - *James 3:1-4:12*
- V. Implications of Wisdom - *James 4:13-5:11*
- VI. Concluding Exhortations - *James 5:12-20*

# INTRODUCTION

## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

### BOOKS



*Exalting Jesus in James* By David Platt

<https://amzn.to/3umoXrq>

### VIDEO



*Bible Project: James Overview*

<https://youtu.be/qn-hLHWwRYY>

### RIGHT NOW MEDIA



*Book of James*  
With Francis Chan

[https://www.rightnowmedia.org/  
Content/Series/159923](https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/159923)



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# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been specifically prepared with you in mind. There are two main ways to use it: in a group setting and for personal devotion.

***In a group setting,*** you will have a chance to dig deeper by looking directly at Scripture, hear stories from real people in our church, and together answer questions, discuss God's truth, and grow in our faith.

We truly believe that studying the Scriptures together will help develop deep roots in relationship with God and one another. Each week's study begins with conversation starters, followed by questions for discussion based on the text, and wraps up with personal applications and prayer prompts to help you grow spiritually.

Use this resource as a guide, not as a straitjacket. We realize you may not be able to get to every question. Pick the ones that work best for your group. If you think of a better question, ask it! If you approach each gathering time with a prayer and preparation, this guide will be easy to use. Obviously, you are more than welcome to pull in other resources, or highlights from the sermons each week. Our hope is that by participating in this study, you will have a firmer grasp on the Scriptures and a stronger connection with Christ.

***For personal devotion,*** consider using this guide to direct your mind and heart in your times with God throughout the week to help you reflect upon the previous week, or prepare yourself for the coming weekend.



**FAITH WORKS**



## INTRODUCTION

What makes you happy? Where does joy come from? James begins his letter with a perplexing command, "Count it all joy my brothers [and sisters] when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." (*James 1:2*). Joy and trials seem to be at odds—normally we think we have one or the other—definitely not joy while suffering! However, James gives a reason for joy in the testing; he points out the testing of our faith has purpose. Our trials, or tests, shape us into the image of Christ. Knowing our trials have purpose gives us hope, and hope in turn grants us the ability to be resolute and endure.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

- Q** How familiar are you with the book of James? Have you read or studied it before? Are there any hopes or expectations you have for studying the book of James?
- Q** What is a nickname or fact that provides a good summary of who you are?

### MAIN IDEA

Trials are inevitable;  
God intends to use  
them to deepen our  
faith.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 1:1-12

### READ PSALM 121

- Q** Read James 1:1. How does James identify himself in relationship to Jesus? What is the significance of that? Assuming that this book was written by Jesus' half-brother, why do you think he does not mention this connection? Does it speak to anything about James' character or understanding of his call in life?
- Q** Read verses 2-4. As we will see throughout our study, James is continually concerned about believers living out the faith they have. The first way this is done, as addressed by James, is by how we live in response to trials. According to James, what should our attitude be when falling into various trials in life? Describe what this attitude looks like.

**Follow Up:** How does a trial reveal what's inside our hearts? Is the joy James speaks of here what you often find within yourself?

**Follow Up:** According to James, what are the benefits that we receive from trials? How do trials provide a pathway to maturity?



## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 1:1-12

**Q** In your own words, how would you describe what James says at the end of verse four: “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”?

**Q** Read verses 5-8. Have you ever felt at a loss for what to do or where to turn for input and advice in difficult times? Where do you often find yourself turning? In these verses James makes a wonderful promise; what is it? Why should we ask for wisdom from God and why do we need it?

**Follow Up:** What does Proverbs 9:10-12 tell us about wisdom?

**Follow Up:** What are the conditions James gives about receiving the promise in verse 5? (See verse 6.)

**Q** Read verses 9-12. In these verses James provides an exhortation to the poor and the wealthy in the church. James calls the poor to “boast in their exaltation,” meaning to revel in what God in Christ has done for them. The rich person is to “boast in their humiliation,” referring to their connection to a suffering Savior, for that will remain with them forever, not their wealth. Both are called to overlook present circumstances and find their identity in Christ. James urges them to build their lives on the spiritual resources God provides, not the physical ones. Why is this so difficult?

**Follow Up:** How much of your identity and contentment in life comes from your possessions and status? (For further reflection consider reading: Luke 12:22-23; 1 Tim. 6:9-10.)

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 5:7-12

James revisits the topic of trials later in the letter. We’ll turn there briefly to connect some dots across the book as a whole. James speaks to the need for patience in the midst of trials and suffering, and provides some examples of patience.

**Q** Read James 5:7-12. James talks repeatedly about patience here (using the word four times in four verses). In your own words, what is James telling us to be patient for?

**Follow Up:** In verse 11, James mentions those who are steadfast in the midst of suffering are “blessed.” What does that mean? How is this contrary to what public opinion says about that today?

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 5:7-12

**Follow Up:** How does remembering the impending return of our Lord (verses 7-8) and that “the Judge” is at the door (verse 9) impact our ability to have patience? How does it impact your ability to have patience with one another?

### REFLECTION & PERSONAL APPLICATION

James bookends his letter with the topic of suffering. He calls us to have a proper perspective, living joyfully and patiently with it. James calls us to “establish our hearts.” The same verb James uses here (*stērizō*) appears in Luke 9:51, where Jesus “set his face” to go to Jerusalem and face all that awaited him. There must be determination, resolution, and persistence of heart in clinging to Christ until He returns. Spend time praying for the ability to endure the suffering and trials you will face this week, month, year, lifetime. Do not forget that Jesus will return soon (Rev. 22:20) to right all wrongs and alleviate all these afflictions we face day in and day out.



# IN HIS HANDS



## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Q

What are sponges used for, or what do they do?

- Do we ever get “squeezed” in life? If so, how?
- If we get “squeezed,” what comes out?

Whatever is in the sponge or in us, that which has been soaked up, will be what comes out.

## MAIN IDEA

Trials are inevitable;  
God intends to use them  
to deepen our faith.

## BIG IDEAS

- We are to have joy, even during trials and suffering.  
That does not mean we should pretend that trials are easy to bear, but that we should look beyond the current difficulty to the spiritual gain.
- God does not allow troubles for trouble’s sake. God has a goal in mind.  
There is a good purpose (Rom. 8:28). We can know that God is working out something specific in our lives.

This does not always mean that we will understand what purpose God has in it, but it should change the attitude of our heart toward our trouble.

- What are some of the general reasons that we will have trials and suffering?

*It shows genuine faith.*

When a new plane is built, it is not immediately sold to an airline. A test pilot must put the plane through different tests in the air. When the plane has proven to be all that the maker said it is, there is confidence in the plane and the airlines will buy it.

Likewise, God puts our faith to the test to prove that it is genuine.

*It produces patience in our lives*

Just like people go through physical stages (we’re a baby, a child, a teenager, and then an adult), believers grow from being spiritual babies to spiritual adults.

God allows trials and suffering to produce patience in our lives so we might become spiritual adults (or full-grown children of God).

### BIG IDEAS

- What do we do when we have trials and suffering?

#### *Seek wisdom.*

We have a Heavenly Father who can supply the wisdom that we need.

#### *Have faith.*

Though we may believe that Jesus is the Son of God that rescues us from our sins, we may not trust Him enough to give our problems to Him and trust that He will work it out for our good (and His glory).

If we are going to work out our problem for ourselves, then God cannot work it out for us.

#### *Be encouraged.*

People who have suffered are brought into a closer relationship with God. We can look forward to the day when we will be brought before God and given the crown of life when we are in Heaven (1 Corinthians 9:25).

- God has a purpose for our trials and suffering—for His glory and our good. God can help us through them when we believe (faith), when we ask (wisdom), and when we wait (patience).

### MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

*James 1:12*

### GOING DEEPER

There are certain passages in the Bible that are a “stair-step” list of virtues, where the last virtue in the list is especially important. It is the goal to which all the others lead. Explore the following passages:

**JAMES 13-4 / ROMANS 53-4 / 2 PETER 15-7**

## GROUP DISCUSSION

In James 1:2, James says that we should count our trials as a joyous occasion. He tells us this is so we would be perfect and lacking nothing. Few of us are happy when we go through challenging times.

Q

What is the biggest difference between joy and happiness?

In school there is usually information that you learn, time to study the information, and then a calculated test that will be graded so you know how you did. However, we all know this is not how life works. Life is in real time and when our faith is being tested it is not always announced.

Q

When your faith is tested, how do you know if you “passed”?

The Bible speaks a lot about wisdom. King Solomon, King David’s son, was said to be the wisest man who ever lived. He gave us a few books of the Bible that we call “The Wisdom Literature.” Read 1 Kings 3:1-15.

Q

As we are called to pursue the wisdom of God, what is the difference between wisdom and understanding?

James ends his letter in James 5:7 urging the people of God to be patient—specifically patient for the second coming of Jesus.

Q

When you consider what James addressed in the beginning of his letter (joy in trials and wisdom), what does it look like for God’s people to live lives of patience?

joy, faith, wisdom, patience.





### INTRODUCTION

The way we respond to tests and trials reveals a lot about the inner workings of our hearts. Do you give in, blame, or play the victim? Or do you take a step back to look at what's going on? Unfortunately, it's quite natural to blame others, and even to blame God. However, James tells us that God tempts no one to sin. Ever. To tempt is to be deceitful, and there is no deceit in God. We are tempted when our desire is contrary to God's will; we think we can find satisfaction outside of His will. It's literally the oldest trick in the book: "Did God really say...?" (Gen. 3:1). God knows just what we need and He doesn't withhold it from us because He is a good Father who cares for His children.

### CONVERSATION STARTER



Thinking back to your childhood, what is one of the earliest memories you have of doing something you knew you shouldn't be doing? What was it, and what was the outcome?

### MAIN IDEA

Knowing where temptation comes from helps us resist it

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 1:13-18



Read verses 13-15. Earlier James spoke to God's use of trials in our lives and how they help us grow; however he shifts topics here to speak about temptation. What is the difference?



As Christians, how should we respond in the face of temptation? What example did Jesus set for us in the midst of His temptation? (See *Matthew 4:1-11*; *Hebrews 2:18*; *4:15*.)

**Follow Up:** Why is it important to distinguish the difference between temptation and sin?

**Follow Up:** Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does this verse teach us about God's involvement in our lives when we face temptation? Can you think of a time where He has provided you a way of escape?



Thomas Chalmers in his book *'The Expulsive Power of a New Affection'* writes: "Misplaced affections need to be replaced by the far greater power of the affection of the gospel." Why could one say temptations and sin come from a place of misplaced affections? Is sin just a legal infraction of God's law or is it something more than that?

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 1:13-18

**Follow Up:** Read Romans 6:11-13. How do Paul's instructions here relate to what James is saying? Are there any differences?

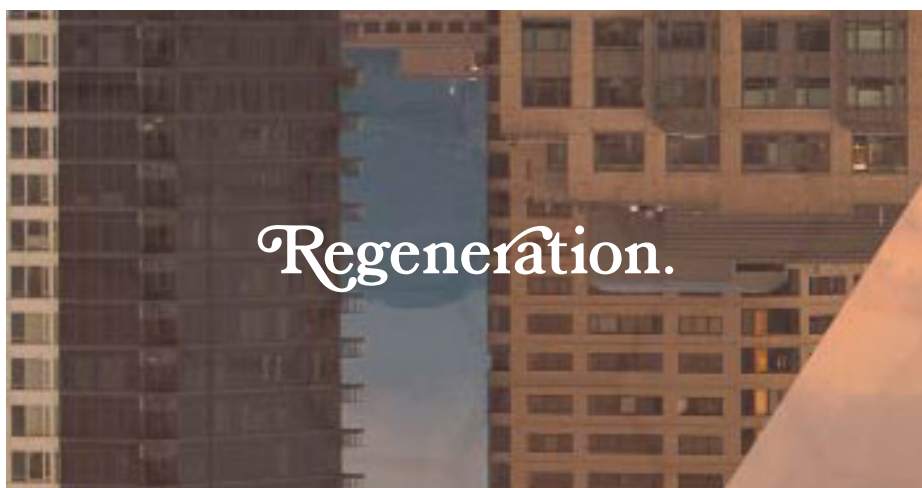
**Q** Read verses 16-18. What are two things that God never does according to this passage? (*Hint: see verse 13 and 17.*)

**Follow Up:** How should these two truths about God impact our ability to withstand the various trials and temptations that we may face in this life?

**Q** What do you consider a “good and perfect” gift? How does this proper understanding help you realize that what God gives you is better than what might be tempting you?

**Follow Up:** As a way to praise God what are some of the good and perfect gifts God has given you recently?

**Q** James concludes this section by saying we have been “birthed by the word of truth.” Other New Testament writers call this “new birth” (see John 3:7; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3), referencing the fact that these believers have been experienced the work of “regeneration,” meaning that one is born again, transitioned from death to life. Why do you think that James would want to remind us of the work God has done on our behalf after speaking about trials and temptation?

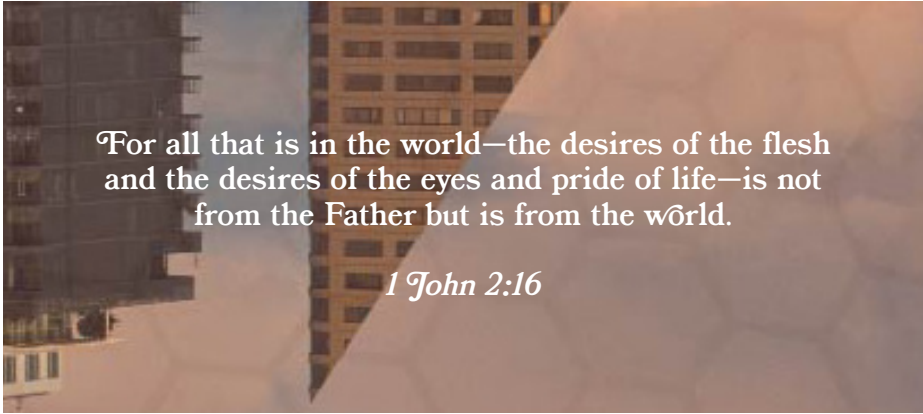


### REFLECTION & PERSONAL APPLICATION

Thomas Brooks in his book titled '*Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*' writes of the seductive and terrible power Satan uses to draw sin to one's soul. In regard to temptation, Brooks writes:

*Satan...present[s] the bait—and hide the hook; to present the golden cup—and hide the poison; to present the sweet, the pleasure, and the profit that may flow in upon the soul by yielding to sin—and to hide from the soul the wrath and misery that will certainly follow the committing of sin... Here is the bait, the sweet, the pleasure, the profit. Oh—but he hides the hook—the shame, the wrath, and the loss that would certainly follow!*

According to 1 John 2:16 there are three main areas of temptation: lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride. This means there are physical temptations to do what feels right, emotional temptations to question God's love or find love elsewhere, and a temptation of control- replacing God from His throne. Take some time this week to inventory areas within your life where you face temptation and ask God to reveal where Satan may be hiding the hook. Ask God for help in these areas. Consider confessing these areas to a close friend or fellow group member so they may help pray for you.



**For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.**

*1 John 2:16*

# FAITH IN TEMPTATION

## JAMES 1:13-18

## NOTES

## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Q

Who did Adam blame for his sin? Who did Eve blame for her sin?

Q

Have you ever played the “blame game”- blaming someone else for “making” you do something wrong?

## MAIN IDEA

Trials are inevitable;  
God intends to use them  
to deepen our faith.

## BIG IDEAS

- God does bring trials to His people, but God does not tempt His people. People often say that God tempted them when it wasn't God at all. There is no evil in God. In Him all is goodness and light (1 John 1:5). God wants to rescue us *from* sin, not tempt us *to* sin.
- What causes us to give into temptation to sin? The trouble is within us. No outside thing or influence can make us sin. Sin always begins in our heart. Our own inner “wanting” joins with the outward temptation that faces us and becomes sin.
- Being tempted is not sin. But when the thought in the heart is carried out into action—that becomes sin. Many things are not bad within themselves, but the use we make of them is wrong. For example, food is good, but you can become a glutton.
- Temptation is attractive or alluring. Think of a fisherman. He uses bait to attract and catch the fish. No fish will knowingly bite a hook. The fisherman hides the hook with yummy things. The bait keeps us from seeing the consequences.
- When a believer sins, his fellowship with God is broken. There is a separation (1 John 1:6). You cannot have fellowship with God and permit sin to happen continually in your life.

### BIG IDEAS

- So what do we do when we are tempted?

When you know God's Word, you can see the "bait" for what it is.

We can resist temptation as we focus on God's goodness, and unchanging character.

Living a life that follows Jesus, is not based on feelings: "I don't feel like reading the Bible right now."

Don't let your feeling make the decision, let God work in you and through you (*Philippians 2:13*).

- God does not tempt His people, but He does give His people good and perfect gifts.

God knows just what we need and He doesn't keep it from us because He is a good Father who cares for His children.

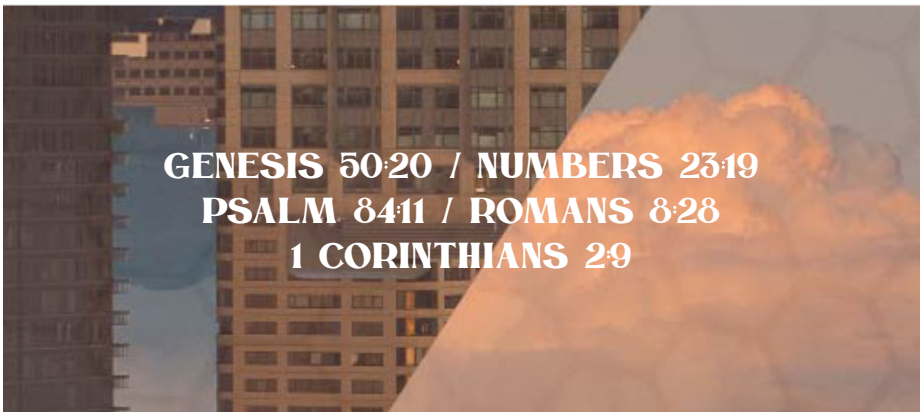
### MEMORY VERSE

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

*James 1:12*

### GOING DEEPER

One of the serious challenges believers under trial face is temptation: temptation to question God's goodness or even His very existence. James reminds us that regardless of how difficult things are, God is always working for our good.



**GENESIS 50:20 / NUMBERS 23:19**  
**PSALM 84:11 / ROMANS 8:28**  
**1 CORINTHIANS 2:9**

## GROUP DISCUSSION

James 1:13 clarifies that God does not tempt people, nor can He be tempted Himself. This means that God is not the source of temptation, sin, or evil. God is good and righteous.

**Q** How does this affirmation of God's character shape our perspective of God and sin?

**Q** In what ways does this understanding of God help us as we grapple with our own temptation?

1 Corinthians 10:13 is another passage that addresses temptation in the Christian's life:

*"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."*

This passage highlights both our need for God's help to say "no" to sin and our need to actively resist temptation.

**Q** Why is it important to recognize BOTH our need for God's help and our need to actively resist temptation?

**Q** Think of sin that you see regularly in your life. What are some practical ways that you can resist temptation to sin in that way?

**Q** How does understanding why we sin help us combat it?

**Q** In what ways can God meet the needs that we look to have met by sinning?

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.

*James 1:13*





### INTRODUCTION

Our lives reflect what we actually believe. When we encounter tests and trials and recognize them for what they are, we can experience them with joy in our hearts because we know we are being transformed into the image of Christ. This knowledge allows us to respond, not in anger, but in meekness and humility because we trust God is at work in us. Our lives are to be lived in a way that displays the Word of God; belief in action. As recipients of the Word, we are to be the Word in motion—guarding our speech, loving others as Christ loved us, and keeping ourselves from being conformed to the world. Any other way is absurd. We believe, therefore, we live by the Word. This is the practical outworking of a life led by the Spirit, thus displaying its fruit as we live, encounter trials, and interact with others.

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q** There is a large market for faux products, ranging from plants, jewelry, clothing - the list goes on. One can purchase something cheap that gives off the appearance of being real. Often times we can be fooled by imitation. What are the dangers of having a “faux faith”?

### MAIN IDEA

We are to receive, remember, and obey the Word of God

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 1:19-27

**Q** Read James 1:19-21. James instructs us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. However, many of us operate in the reverse; slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to anger. What does it say about our hearts when we struggle to listen instead of expressing our opinion?

**Follow Up:** How does one grow in ability to live a Scripturally informed life?

**Q** Are we capable of putting on a display of God’s righteousness through anger? Why or why not? (*For further reflection read Ephesians 4:26-27; Romans 12:19-21.*)

**Follow Up:** What would be the difference between sinful and righteous anger?

**Q** According to these verses, what should we be quick to listen to? Is hearing from God a priority of yours? When we say priority, we are not talking about in theory or in an idealized sense. If you were to take an inventory of the time you have spent this week actively hearing from God in prayer, the Word, church, community, or to an outsider, would it seem as if it was a real priority?

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 1:19-27

**Q** Read James 1:22-25. Verse 22 could be considered the summative verse for the entire book of James; the whole book easily ties back to this statement. According to verse 22, what is happening if you hear the Word, but don't do what it says? What does James mean when he says we deceive ourselves? What are some of the reasons this happens?

**Follow Up:** Can you think of a time when you disregarded a clear command from Scripture? Can you think of a time you were blessed by God when you chose to respond to a situation with obedience?

**Follow Up:** Why is it easier to *know* than to *do* in some circumstances?

**Q** In this section, James presents the contrast between a person who looks in the mirror and forgets what he sees and another who looks intensely and acts accordingly. How does this relate to God's Word?

**Follow Up:** Which person do you find yourself to be more like?

**Q** How does James' call for obedience here differ from an attempt to gain a right standing before God? (*Hint: Faith in Jesus is the source of salvation, obedience is a fruit of that grace act work in us.*)

**Q** Read James 1:26-27. In these verses, James gives four examples of what it means to respond to the Word; what are they? (*Hint: Verse 26 has one and Verse 27 has 3.*)

**Follow Up:** Who are the "widows and orphans" in our community that we may be prone to overlooking?

**Q** When you hear the word "religion," what comes to mind? Do you think it's the same thing James speaks of when he refers to it as "pure and undefiled?"

**Follow Up:** James describes a life that is devoted to God and pleasing Him. Does that impact your view on the word "religion?"



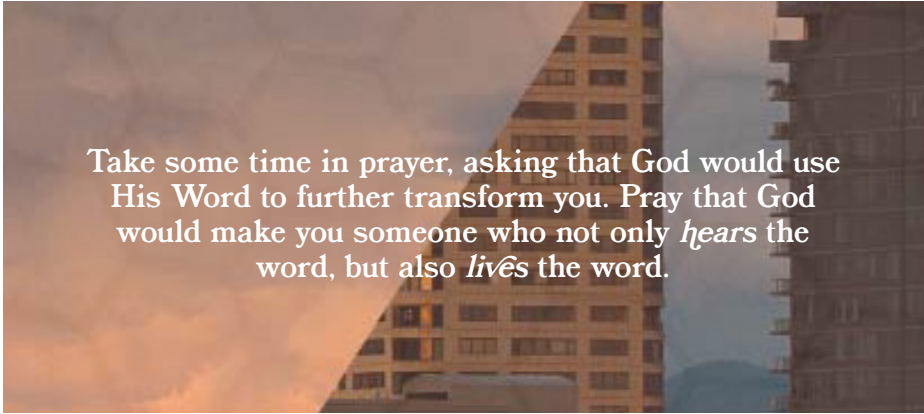
Recieve, Remember, Obey.

### REFLECTION & PERSONAL APPLICATION

All the time we spend in studying the Scriptures, whether personally or in a Bible study corporately, is meaningless if it does not produce any transformation within one's life. Each time we encounter the Word our affections and actions should be impacted. Paul Tripp, in a devotional titled *'Why Do I Need the Bible'* writes:

*"The Word of God has as its primary purpose the transformation of our hearts, and in the transformation of our hearts, the transformation of our lives. Not that we become bigger and better of what we are, but we become fundamentally different than we could ever have been apart from the Word of God...When the Word of God is brought to you by the Spirit of God, propelled by the grace of God, the result should be heart and life transformation."*

*You need the Word of God in your life because you need to be transformed. All of us still have the artifacts of sin inside of us. All of us still need the power of transforming grace. If you're not satisfied with who you are, you're not satisfied with everything you say, everything you choose, everything that you decide, the ways that you act, then you need the Word of God every day in your life. It's God's powerful tool of personal transformation."*



Take some time in prayer, asking that God would use His Word to further transform you. Pray that God would make you someone who not only *hears* the word, but also *lives* the word.

# FAITH IN REAL TIME

## JAMES 1:19-27

## NOTES

## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Q What is the purpose of a mirror?

Q Do these make sense:

- Looking at ourselves in the mirror—to see our hair all messed up, or bits of food stuck in our teeth—and not do anything about it?
- Looking at ourselves in the mirror and not liking what we see, so we break the mirror?
- Looking at ourselves in the mirror and then forgetting what we look like when we walk away?

## MAIN IDEA

We are to receive,  
remember, and obey  
the Word of God.

## BIG IDEAS

- Receive the Word.

After we have been rescued from sin, we are to “receive” the Word of God. The Bible shows us how to live life as a follower of Jesus.

Imagine God’s Word as a seed and our heart is the soil. We need God’s Word to be planted in our hearts (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23).

To grow, we need to “do.” This is more than just “hearing” it. We not only hear the Word, but we do it.

- Practice the Word.

The Word of God is like a mirror that when we look in it, we see a reflection of ourselves—seeing ourselves as we really are.

There is a danger of looking into that mirror, seeing the flaw(s), but doing nothing about it.

Do not be quick when looking into the mirror. In other words, don’t go over the Word of God hurriedly; don’t treat it casually.

If we do, we are like a man who sees his face in the mirror, but when he steps away from it, forgets what he looks like.

There is a reason many read the Bible too fast, or only read certain sections, or don’t read it at all—for the Bible tells us we are sinners.

## BIG IDEAS

This would be like breaking the mirror when we don't like what we see.

- Share the Word.

We share God's Word with others through our speech, through serving others, and through separation from "the world."

The world today may not be reading the Bible, but they are "reading" you and me (*2 Corinthians 3:2-3*).

Just like we must not only hear the Word, but "do the Word," we must see the needs of others, and "do" (*love in action*).

### MEMORY VERSE

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

*James 1:12*

## GOING DEEPER

When the seed of God's Word is planted in the soil of our hearts, we will see fruit. Read the following verses:



**ROMANS 6:22 / GALATIANS 5:22-23**  
**COLOSSIANS 1:10 / HEBREWS 13:15**  
**JOHN 15:1-5**




## GROUP DISCUSSION

- Q On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being most often, how often do you read your Bible?
- Q Using the same scale, how often are you transformed or convicted to action by what you read in your Bible?
- Q In a section where James calls his audience to be doers and not just hearers of God's word, why does he begin by telling them to be slow to speak and to become angry?
- Q How can pausing to meditate on God's Word bring about a richer and more fruitful experience?

In James 1:23-24, James gives his readers a practical illustration of what it means to hear the word and not do what it says.

- Do you look in the mirror for the sake of forgetting what you look like?
- Why approach God's Word this way?
- What is the danger of strictly being a reader of God's Word?
- What is the outcome of a doer of God's word? (See verse 25.)

- Q How does verse 21 reveal James is not selling a "works = rewards" religion? Check out 1 Corinthians 15:2 and Ephesians 1:13.



works  $\neq$  rewards



## INTRODUCTION

Throughout Scripture, we see that God hates partiality; He gives many commands to care for the weak and oppressed. The ways we treat others reveal how well we understand God's love for us. We have been called to love as Christ loved us, to love others as we love ourselves. We are undoubtedly quick to look after our own needs, but do we do this for those around us? More specifically, do we do this for those who cannot pay us back or grant us similar favors in return? A believer's life should be marked by courtesy, compassion, and consistency toward all. We are called to show mercy because we have been shown mercy. Partiality is the opposite action to what God has shown each and every person who calls on the name of Jesus Christ. Simply put, our partiality reveals what, or who, we really worship.

## CONVERSATION STARTER



There's an old saying "Don't judge a book by its cover." Have you ever made a quick judgement against someone that was wrong based upon a first impression?

## MAIN IDEA

Partiality reveals our hearts.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 2:1-13



Read James 2:1-4. What is the problem that James addresses among the believers? What do you think would lead people to act in such a way?

**Follow Up:** Do you think showing partiality to the rich and powerful is still an issue today? An issue in the church today? An issue in your life?

**Follow Up:** Can you think of a time where you have been hurt by partiality and/or exclusiveness in the church? If so, has that experience motivated you to ensure others are always included?



Why does James warn against making "distinctions" among one another? (See *Ephesians 4:1-3* and *1 Peter 3:8* for more insight.)

**Follow Up:** James warns against creating a homogeneous environment within the church. When have you benefited from a relationship with someone in the church who was very different than you? If you haven't, how can you change that?

DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 2:1-13

**Q** Read James 2:5-7. Also read: Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Colossians 3:25, Deuteronomy 1:17, and Deuteronomy 16:19. What do these verses teach us about the character and nature of God?

**Q** Does it appear here that James is encouraging a reverse favoritism between the rich and the poor? (*Hint – for insight, re-read James 2:1.*)

**Q** Read James 2:8-13. James states that the commandment Jesus gave His people in “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” is a summary of the law. Why does James pick that particular commandment? (*Hint: consider reading Matthew 22:36-40.*)

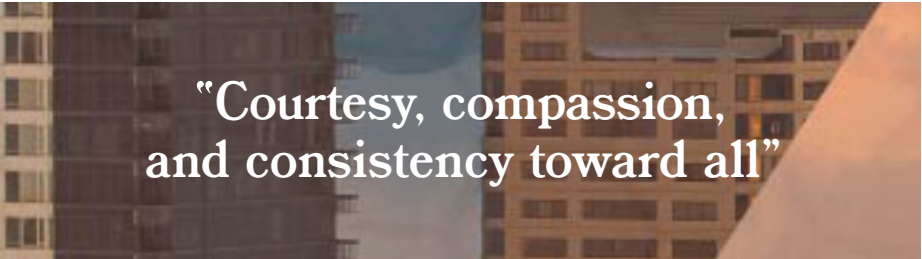
**Follow Up:** What are some modern-day examples and applications of this “royal law?” How would your week look different if you obeyed this command more?

**Q** James seems to make the argument that the sin of favoritism and discrimination is just as serious as other sins we often give more credence to. What are they (*see verse 11*)? Would you agree?

**Follow Up:** Do you classify sins into different “categories” and view some as less significant than others? What does James say about even our “smallest” sins?

**Q** James paints a picture of a Christian community where everyone is treated with dignity and practices showing love and mercy to one another, because Christ has shown love and mercy to us. How merciful do you think you are in the different spheres of your life (home, work, recreation, heart)?

**Follow Up:** Is there anyone you are unwilling to show mercy to? How do these verses challenge you?




“Courtesy, compassion,  
and consistency toward all”

## REFLECTION &amp; PERSONAL APPLICATION

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (*Matthew 5:3*). One of the biggest ways to increase our affections for Christ is to truly understand our spiritual poverty before Him. Augustus Toplady wrote of this spiritual poverty in a well-known hymn, saying:

*“Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to the cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless look to Thee for grace.”*

Let Jesus’ words and James’ instruction sink deep into your heart and mind. Ask God to eliminate any prejudice you may have in your heart. Ask God to remind you of your need for grace and mercy, and to empower you to show the same mercy to others that Christ has shown to you.



Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Matthew 5:3

NOTES

## FAMILY DISCUSSION

- Q How might some people treat a rich man?  
How might some people treat a poor man?
- Q What are some other distinctions often made about people? (*Hint: Jew/Gentile, rich/poor, etc.*)

## MAIN IDEA

The way we treat others  
reveals how well we  
understand God's love for us.

## BIG IDEAS

- One of the tests of the sincerity of our belief in Jesus is how we treat other people. We are quick to take care of our own needs, but do we do this for those around us? Do we do this for those around us who cannot pay us back or grant us such favor in return?  
True faith will produce loving actions towards others.
- We need to be careful that as followers of Jesus we are not spiritual snobs. All believers are part of the body of Christ, whatever their differences.  
Rich/poor, Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female, young/old...  
If you belong to God and another person belongs to God, they are your brother or sister.  
If a person comes to your church, and you see him as a sinner, remember you also are a sinner and that Jesus died for him as well.
- There is a danger in emphasizing money, clothes, and appearances. When we see how we compare and contrast people, we realize that we are being partial towards others, making distinctions among ourselves, and judging others.  
A believer who is poor financially, may be a spiritually rich man. A believer who is rich, may be spiritually poor.  
Jesus did not look at the outward appearance, He looked at the heart.
- We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.  
Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). What is His commandment? "That you love one another, as I have loved you"



## BIG IDEAS

(John 15:12). (See also Matthew 22:34-40.)

We need to recognize that it is sinful to think we are better than someone else.

When we classify and single out people or groups (*like between rich and poor*), we begin to look down on others.

No matter what another person is/does, before God they are the same as you. We all stand before God as sinners.

We are to treat others the way God has treated us.

Love always builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1); dislike always tears down.

- We are called to show mercy because we have been shown mercy. God has shown mercy to each and every person who believes in Jesus. (See Matthew 5:7; Matthew 23:35; Zechariah 7:9-10.)

### MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

*James 1:12*

## GOING DEEPER

- Spiritually poor is different than “poor in Spirit.”  
**Spiritually Poor** – If we were to use a baby/child/teenager/adult illustration, a spiritually poor person is one who spiritually is a baby—one who needs to grow and mature in the Word. It is not something we want to aspire to, but something we start out as and seek to grow from.  
**Poor in Spirit** – This is something to which we want to aspire. These people are humble and meek, and recognize their own weakness and dependence on God. (See Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3.)

If you love me, keep my commandments  
John 14:15

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Merriam-Webster defines being partial as, “Inclined to favor one party (*group of people*) more than the other.” If we are partial, we give attention or kindness to some people, but not others.

Q What are some ways that you see partiality today at church, school, with friends, etc.?

Q What do you think are some reasons, we as people, show partiality?

Q According to James 2:1-13, what does God think about partiality?

Q How does God’s treatment of us shape how we should treat other people?



The way we treat others reveals how well  
we understand God’s love for us.



### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge without action backing it up is worthless. Our works do not save us. Faith in Christ alone is what saves us. But if we have a faith that never expresses itself, never bears fruit—if there is no evidence of being led by the Holy Spirit—what good is it? We must not rely on our works to save us; at the same time, the way we live should be proof of the faith we claim. Our actions are a witness to the world of our beliefs. It is absolutely vital to understand that James' point here is that works must not be added to faith, but that genuine faith includes works. This is the true religion James has been speaking about.

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q** When you hear someone say: “that person doesn’t practice what they preach,” what is it they are saying about that person? Are there similar sayings that communicate the same thing?

### MAIN IDEA

Our actions reveal where we place our faith.

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 2:14-26

**Q** Read James 2:14-17. Based upon this passage, how would you define “works?”

**Follow Up:** What are some of the “works” that you are doing?

**Q** Three times in these four verses, James uses the word “faith.” In this context however, it doesn’t appear to be highlighted as a genuine faith. In your own words, how would you describe a genuine faith? *(For help, consider looking at Hebrews 11:1, 6.)*

**Q** Based upon these few verses, how would James describe faith that has no works accompanying it?

**Q** Read James 2:18-26. The summary of James’ argument in these verses is that faith is not merely an intellectual assent, nor an emotional response. Faith involves obedience. How do these statements challenge the way you view Christianity? How does it impact the way you tell people about the gospel?

**Q** James makes a pretty incredible statement in verse 19, stating that even demons believe in God. What is your reaction to that?

**Follow Up:** Based upon James’ argument, do you think it is possible many people have a similar faith today? What then is the difference between having correct theology and genuine living out faith?

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 2:14-26

**Q** In verse 20, James calls a faith without works useless. What would you consider to be a useless faith? Is it unloving to question the level of another person's faith?

**Q** Over 500 years ago, the Protestant Reformation was birthed out of a deep conviction that the Bible teaches justification (being made right with God) is by faith alone. Justification by faith alone means we can do nothing in and of ourselves to merit eternal life. Since then, protestant churches have clung to this truth. Do these verses contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Why or why not? *(For help, consider reading Romans 3:8; Ephesians 2:8-9.)*

**Follow Up:** John Calvin, an important theologian to the Protestant Reformation once wrote: *"[it is] **faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone:** just as it is the heat alone of the sun which warms the earth, and yet in the sun it is not alone, because it is constantly conjoined with light."* Martin Luther, who is seen as the forefather of the Protestant Reformation said: *"Faith is a living, restless thing. It cannot be inoperative. **We are not saved by works; but if there be no works, there must be something amiss with faith.**"* Do these two statements help you clarify the tension between faith and works?

It is essential that we refrain from pitting James against Paul and the other writers in the New Testament. James, Peter, and Paul agreed on this central point and even shook hands on it (see Acts 15; Galatians 2:9).

**Q** What are the lessons from Abraham and Rahab's lives that set forth the example James is highlighting here? *(Consider reading Hebrews 11:17-19, 31 for additional insight.)*

*For further study: To dig deeper in the lives of Abraham and Rahab as taught in this passage, consider reading Genesis 22 and Joshua 2 and 6:17-27.*

*For further study on this passage overall, consider reading & listening to: "What Does it Mean that "We're Justified By Works?"*

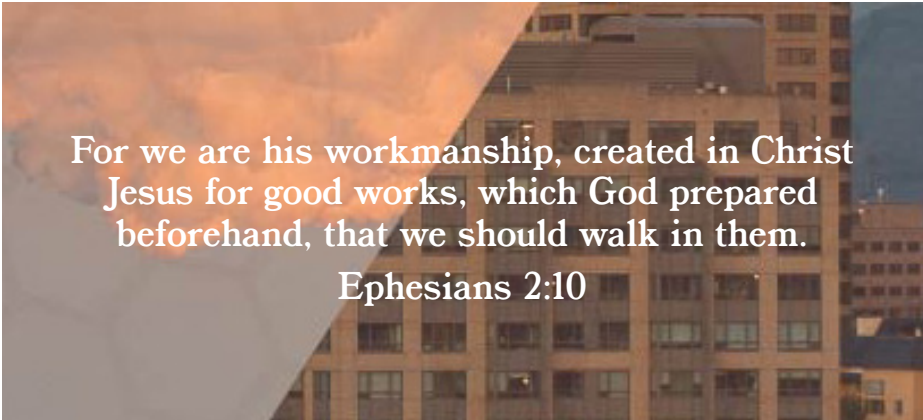
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/are-we-justified-by-grace-or-by-works>

## REFLECTION & PERSONAL APPLICATION

Martin Luther in his commentary from the book of Romans writes:

*[Faith] is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing. Anyone who does not do good works in this manner is an unbeliever. He stumbles around and looks for faith and good works, even though he does not know what faith or good works are. Yet he gossips and chatters about faith and good works with many words. Faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain of God's favor that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures.... Ask God to work faith in you, or you will remain forever without faith, no matter what you wish, say or can do.*

Spend some time in prayer asking God to do this work in you. If you have yet to come to belief in Jesus Christ, ask God to do that work. If you have felt your affections dwindle and your passion for the Gospel dissipate, pray for God to do a work in you. Ask God to reveal the works in which He has prepared for you to walk (*Ephesians 2:10*).



For we are his workmanship, created in Christ  
Jesus for good works, which God prepared  
beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Ephesians 2:10**



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

- Q** Have you ever brought a “Show and Tell” item to school? What did you bring?
- Q** We can tell people that we love God, but how can we show it?
- Q** Jesus loved to show AND tell about God! Can you think of a time Jesus showed God’s love to others?

#### MAIN IDEA

True faith will reveal itself in good works.

### BIG IDEAS

- Faith is full of action.  
Have you ever heard the saying, “Actions speak louder than words?” If a friend falls down and scrapes their knee, which shows that you care for them best: 1) saying, “sorry you hurt yourself, hope you feel better soon!” or 2) getting them a band aid. Which one would you rather have someone do for you?  
We can say we believe all kinds of things, but what we DO shows others what we really believe. James wants us to know the importance of having what we say about our faith and what we do should show the same thing; loving God and loving people.
- Faith is alive.  
Do you have a toy that uses batteries? Let’s pretend that your toy is like faith, and the batteries are like good works. Would you want the toy without any batteries? Would you want the batteries, but no toy to put them in?  
James is saying in this passage that some people want to separate the two. But James tells us that we need both to work together!
- Genuine (true) faith is more than just belief – constant trust in God is shown in obedient action and love towards God and others.  
Abraham showed everyone that he really did have faith and trust in God. He proved his faith by obeying God, even though it was hard.  
Rahab is another example of someone who proved her faith through good works. She showed she trusted God by her actions: keeping the Israelite spies safe from capture!



### GOING DEEPER

The Bible teaches us about faith and action working together in more than just the book of James. Jesus teaches us about this (*maybe that's where James learned it!*), and Paul wrote about it too. Explore these verses to see what they said about faith and works.

- Ephesians 2:8-10  
For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- Matthew 5:16  
"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."
- Matthew 7:21-27  
"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

### MEMORY VERSE

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

*James 1:22*

**Faith & action work together!**

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- Q According to James 2:14-18, what are the two parts of a complete faith in Jesus?
- Q Paul writes a lot in his letters about the grace of God—that it is free and a gift. He writes to the church in Ephesus that it is by grace that we have been saved through faith, not by our work but the work of Christ (*Ephesians* 2:8-9). If salvation comes from Christ alone and not by works, what does James mean in verse 14?
- Q Read the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Faith requires follow through. Why was Abraham counted as a righteous man? What is the relationship between works and faith that you observe from the story of Abraham?
- Q There is a dangerous line of thinking in our American culture; many want Jesus to be Savior but not Lord of their life. God deserves and demands all areas of your life be submitted to Him. If you have faith in Jesus but nothing in your life is different, can you still claim faith in Jesus?



Savior & Lord.



### INTRODUCTION

In a world filled with hurtful speech, God speaks a better Word. God invites His people to use words which match what they believe. Proverbs 18:21 tells us: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” There is power in our speech. We proclaim with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and we confess our sin to one another. Why? Our words reveal who or what we worship; they are truly a window into the depth of our heart. Therefore, our words and actions should be in alignment with what we say we believe. We simply cannot love God and curse His children, who are made in the very image of God. No one can fully control their tongue; we all fail. But there is hope! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can bring our tongues under submission. As we allow the Spirit to transform us, our desires to use our words to praise and uplift increase as we grow in thankfulness and as a result our faith is strengthened.

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q** We have all heard, and perhaps even recited, the expression, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” which we have all most likely experienced as untrue. Why is this little idiom dangerous to believe?

### MAIN IDEA

Our words signal where our hearts are at.

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 3:1-12

**Q** James closes the previous chapter by stating, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (2:26). What is the relationship between our speech and our faith? What is the connection between works (what we do, or how we live) and our speech?

**Q** Read James 3:1-2. Why does James address teachers (or leaders) about their speech first? Do his words here only apply to teachers, or does this instruction apply to all who follow Christ? Why or why not?

**Follow Up:** We all lead or influence someone. In your life, where are the areas God has blessed you with influence? What do your words reveal to those you influence? What is one change you can make this week to develop self-control in your speech?

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 3:1-12

**Q** Spiritual maturity requires a tamed tongue; James points out in 3:2 that whoever does not stumble in what they say is perfect. Only Christ is perfect, so how do we grow in our discipline of speech?

**Follow Up:** Do you think James is speaking literally or figuratively about our tongue? Why? Read Luke 6:45. Why should we keep this in mind when reading this passage? What do our words reveal about us?

**Q** Read James 3:3-8. What hope do we have of taming our own tongues? If we can tame dogs or even cats to submit to us, but not our tongues, what are we to do? Are we to try and wrangle our tongues on our own? Read John 14:16. What help do we have? Is this a comfort to you? Why or why not? Note: If you answered no, there is still hope! You may want to check out our Empowered Series to grow in your understanding of the Holy Spirit.

**Q** Read James 3:9. Why does God care about what we say? Read Genesis 1:27 and then read James 3:9 again. How does understanding how God created humanity in His image impact your view of your speech?

**Q** “Garbage in, garbage out.” Read James 3:10-12. What we consume not only influences what we think, but what we say. We cannot spend time filling ourselves with worldly ideas and passions and expect the fruit of the Spirit to flow from us. What are you consuming regularly? Are you filling yourself with the real nourishment of God’s word, or are you constantly filling yourself up with what the world offers (Netflix, social media, a constant stream of news updates, etc.)?

**Follow Up:** What changes do you need to make to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit so it overflows from your life?

**Follow Up:** Read Galatians 5:22-24 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 while thinking specifically about your manner of speech this last week.

**Q** Keeping in mind what James says in 3:2 - that we all stumble in many ways- how should you view your interactions on social media?

**Follow Up:** Do your words, posted for hundreds, if not thousands to see, reveal a deep love of Christ? What do your words reveal to the world about where your heart is?

## NOTES

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

*James 3:1-12*

### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q** Have you ever heard the phrase “sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me”? Do you think that is true; that words could never hurt?

#### MAIN IDEA

Our words signal where our hearts are at.

Have you ever been hurt by the words someone has said to you?

Have you hurt someone else with the words that YOU have said?

Is it easy or hard to control what you say? Why?

### OBJECT LESSON ACTIVITY

**Supplies Needed:** tube(s) of toothpaste, bowl(s).

Take turns squeezing the full tube of toothpaste into the bowl. Wow! All that toothpaste came out very easily! Now, let's try to put it all back in. Not so easy huh? That is just like our words! They come out of our mouths very easily. Once they come dancing off our tongues, there is no taking them back! Good or bad, they are out of our mouths and have been heard by the people listening. If this bowl were full of mean and hurtful words that we couldn't take back, that would be terrible.

If this bowl were full of words that were praising God, loving words to our families, and encouraging words to our friends and neighbors, do you think that would be much better? Yes! That is why we need to be careful and learn to control our tongues.

James tells us that this is not easy. In fact in James 3:2, he says that our tongues are the hardest thing to control, but with the help of the power of the Holy Spirit we can learn to tame our tongues!

### BIG IDEAS

- Words can bring destruction, or they can bring life.
- Our words hold the power to either build up or destroy.
- A single word can cause serious damage to a person or a situation. We should be aware of how much hurt one thoughtless word can cause.
- When we speak kindness or hope these words can build a person up.

MEMORY VERSE / JAMES 1:22



### BIG IDEAS

- It is possible to learn to control our words so that they reflect our beliefs and God's mission for our lives.

James uses an example of a horse.

Horses don't start out their lives as gentle trained animals. They are wild creatures with huge powerful bodies. With some training and something as small as a bit in their mouths, we can control the direction the horse's huge body will go.

Another example James uses is a sailing ship.

They are very large and can cross big bodies of water. These ships are driven by winds, but they can be directed by a tiny little rudder, steered by a single person.

By controlling our words, we can control the power and direction of our lives.

- Our tongues are tiny but mighty and can be the most dangerous part of our bodies! Have you ever heard of a forest fire? They are usually started by tiny little sparks and quickly spread, causing massive destruction. Just like that tiny little spark, a single evil word the tongue spits out can cause unimaginable damage.

- Our words should honor God.

Good and evil cannot come from the same place.

Can you grow olives from a fig tree or figs on a grapevine? *No.*

Can a saltwater pond produce fresh water? *No.*

A Christian should not use evil words. Our words should honor God.

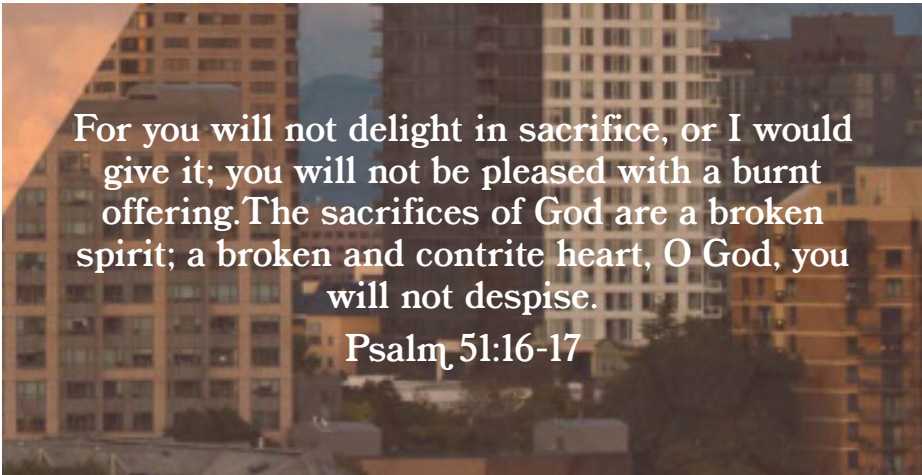
Remembering God's purpose for our lives can help us to choose every word carefully.

### GOING DEEPER

- We must think before we speak and ask ourselves and God if what we are about to say is holy, truthful, positive, and uplifting (Phil. 4:8).
- Here are a couple more verses about God's plan for our lives when it comes to the words we speak and how we use them. *James 1:26, Ephesians 4:19, Proverbs 18:21, Proverbs 15:4, Proverbs 11:9, Proverbs 25:18, Proverbs 12:18, Proverbs 16:24, Psalm 34:13.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- Q How do your words open a window to your heart?
- Q James gives great comparison to small implements controlling large and powerful forces. Why does he spend so much time drawing out these illustrations for his audience?
- Q Have you ever thought about exercising your words? In the same way that you build up other skills or traits, you develop the way you communicate. How has your communication been influenced by those around you? Are there certain phrases you say when you're with certain people? How can others have an impact on your Christ-honoring communication?
- Q Words are not just the things we say anymore. When was the last time you posted or texted something that you would never say out loud? What impact did it have on others? On yourself?
- Q What you believe will come out in the things you say. God doesn't want our words unless He has our heart (*Psalms 51:16-17*). What work do you need to do in your heart to bring God glory and prevent yourself from causing greater harm to yourself or others? Who will you bring along with you on this journey?



**For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

**Psalms 51:16-17**



### INTRODUCTION

Wisdom comes from God. Our lives, when lived according to His wisdom reflects His character. Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a life lived in full submission to God's will, displaying heavenly wisdom. A mind fully submitted to God will always seek the true good of others, while a heart ruled by the self seeks the good of self, leading to disorder. If everyone seeks good according to what they themselves determine is good, our ideals inevitably conflict and we clash with one another, either literally or figuratively. James says you have a choice. Are you following wisdom from above? Or are you following that which has come from below—that anti-wisdom—earthly, unspiritual, and demonic, causing strife and conflict. Make your choice. Are you following God's wisdom, or are you following earthly wisdom?

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q** We all love to be known for something. What is it that you love to be known for? What motivates you?

### MAIN IDEA

A life that displays wisdom reveals a mind submitted to God's will.

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 3:13-18

**Q** Read James 3:13. How are we to reveal our wisdom and understanding? What does this look like practically? Look at what Paul says about Jesus in Philippians 2:3-7. How does Jesus' example help you better understand what wisdom looks like in real life?

**Follow Up:** What is "meekness of wisdom?"

**Follow Up:** How does submitting to heavenly wisdom change the way you interact with others?

**Q** Why does James teach that our conduct should reveal our wisdom (v. 14)? For help, read Romans 2:6-11. What is said about our conduct here?

**Q** According to James, earthy wisdom leads to disorder (v. 16) while wisdom from above leads to peace. Why does this distinction matter? Do a self-inventory; which do you see more of in your life? What does that say about which type of wisdom is leading you? What are some steps you can take this week to grow in wisdom from above?

**Follow Up:** For more examples of earthly wisdom, check out Galatians 5:19-20 and compare them to James 3:16. What do you see?

# WHAT FAITH PRODUCES

## JAMES 3:13-18

7

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 3:13-18

**Q** What is the fruit of heavenly wisdom (v.17)? Can you think of another place in the Scriptures that tell us about the fruit in our lives? (*Hint: Galatians 5:22-23*).

**Follow Up:** What happens when we submit our mind to the leading of the Holy Spirit?

**Q** Take a moment to consider the world around you. Where does it say you can find wisdom and understanding? Using James' statements in verses 15-17, where does it look like the world's wisdom comes from?

**Follow Up:** How does taking the time to recognize the origin of wisdom help you practically in your life?

**Follow Up:** How should the church be a beacon of hope in the chaos? What part can you play in being that hope?

**Q** Read 3:18. Define righteousness. Why does it matter? What is a harvest of righteousness? For help, read Isaiah 32:16-17.

**Q** Heavenly wisdom can often feel counter-intuitive to us. Why do you think that is?

**Q** Now that you have read through verses 13-18, let's look at what Jesus says about wisdom. Read Matthew 5:3-12 and compare it to what James says. What similarities do you find? How does this in-depth look give you a better understanding of wisdom that is from above?

### REFLECTION & PERSONAL APPLICATION

Chaos and disorder are good sign posts for the believer to recognize where our lives are not fully submitted to Christ. Our God is not a God of disorder, but one of order. As you go about the week, take time to notice where you bump into feelings of jealousy and selfish ambition. You might be surprised how often these emotions creep in. Instead of beating yourself up, remember, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1)! Stop and take a moment to confess and repent. But don't forget before you go on your way to thank God for setting you free!

## FAMILY DISCUSSION

To help us understand the wisdom from God and the wisdom from the world, finish these scenarios (*the first one is an example*):

**Rose could never understand her Bible, so:**

God's wisdom: *she asked her teacher on Sunday to help her.*

Worldly wisdom: *she stopped reading it.*

**Ian knew he was wrong when he stole his friend's money, so:**

God's wisdom:

Worldly wisdom:

**Dean wasn't prepared for the test, so:**

God's wisdom:

Worldly wisdom:

**While Jill was at a friend's house, the friend started playing a video game that Jills mom would not have liked, so:**

God's wisdom:

Worldly wisdom:

MAIN  
IDEA

A life that  
displays wisdom  
reveals a mind  
submitted to  
God's will.

## BIG IDEAS

- False Wisdom

Wisdom that does not come from God

Is from the world

Comes from reason

It may look good/sound good, but it will fail.

Evidence of envy and selfish ambition:

Are glad when others fail.

Criticizes others.

Exalts self and robs God of glory.

Strife and competition (creates rivalry and division).

Boasting and lies (gives self praise; is proud).

Hard, stubborn, and disagreeable.

MEMORY VERSE / JAMES 1:22

### BIG IDEAS

- True Wisdom  
This wisdom comes from God:  
Heavenly wisdom (it is from above).  
Comes from revelation.  
Endures forever.  
Evidence of esteeming others more than themselves.  
Rejoicing when others succeed.  
Feeling burdened when they fail.  
Unity.  
Meekness and humility (gives God the glory).  
Peace, gentleness, and mercy.
- Worldly wisdom produces trouble and confusion or disorder. It is unstable. The Tower of Babel is a good example. The people thought building the tower was a wise thing. What happened? Confusion. We still use the word “babble” today for confusion.
- God’s wisdom produces fruit that bears more fruit. We reap God’s blessings.

### GOING DEEPER

In these three chapters, James has shown various ways in which God tests our faith to prove that it is genuine.

God tests faith by trials. (*Week 1, James 1:1-12*)

God does not test faith with evil. (*Week 2, James 1:13-18*)

God tests faith by the Word. (*Week 3, James 1:19-27*)

God tests faith by attitude and action in respect of persons. (*Week 4, James 2:1-13*)

God tests faith by good works. (*Week 5, James 2:14-26*)

God tests faith by the tongue. (*Week 6, James 3:1-12*)

Genuine faith will be evident in the life of the believer.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

- Q James uses “meekness” for the second time in 3:13, *(1:21 being the first)*. What does meekness mean, and why would James call his audience show “works in the meekness of wisdom?”
- Q Is wisdom something that should be talked about or shown through actions?
- Q According to 3:15-17, how does James contrast earthly wisdom and godly wisdom?
- Q Have you ever debated someone who used earthly wisdom? How did it go? What was the outcome? How do these two wisdoms relate to one another?
- Q Are you following earthly wisdom or godly wisdom?



A life that displays wisdom reveals a mind  
submitted to God's will.





### INTRODUCTION

Jesus sums up the Law and Prophets in four simple words, “Love God, love others” (*Matthew 22:40*). It sounds simple enough but is tragically difficult to do. Why is this so? James puts it quite simply; our passions are at war within us. Rather than love selflessly, we desire to be served, we struggle for recognition, and wrestle for power and prestige—we judge and condemn rather than walking in humility, filled with mercy and grace. To act in such a manner makes us enemies of God; we cannot love God if we are constantly fighting to sit on His throne. The solution to resisting love of self, or worldliness, is to draw near to God. Proximity to God changes us from the inside out. As we draw near to God, our attitude toward others should also be one of humility. God has not put us on an exalted throne; the way we interact with Him and others reveals what we believe.

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q** What comes to mind when you hear the word “enemy”?

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 4:1-12

**Q** Let’s start with James’ question in 4:1. What causes quarrels and fights among you? When you quarrel and fight with someone, what does it reveal about your heart and your desires?

**Q** When “our passions are at war within us,” our flesh is literally battling our faith. How does this perspective help you evaluate why you fight with others to have your way?

**Follow Up:** James says we either want something with the wrong motive, which is idolatry (4:2-3), or we don’t have enough faith to even ask God. This is a pretty strong statement; why do you think he uses such strong language?

**Follow Up:** Read Philippians 2:3-7. What are Paul’s instructions, and how do they counterbalance our warring passions?

**Q** Read James 4:4. What does it mean to be an enemy of God? Take stock of your life in the last six months. What do your actions towards others reveal about your heart; are you loyal to the world, or to the Lord? What do you need to confess? Are there people you need to ask forgiveness of and seek reconciliation due to your actions? If so, share this with someone you trust and make a plan to seek peace and pursue it (*Psalms 34:14*).

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 4:1-12

**Q** How does intentionally engaging unbelievers differ from friendship with the world? How do you know if you've crossed the line? *(For help, check out Matthew 5:13-14.)*

### MAIN IDEA

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

**Q** Read 4:5. God wants our undivided hearts. What does this verse mean and why is it so important to our walk with Him? *If you struggle with thinking of God as jealous, imagine the jealousy a spouse would feel if their partner was unfaithful. This gives us insight into the jealousy of God.*

**Q** What do you think it means to submit to God? What does Scripture say about it *(for help check out Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 6:10, 11:29; Romans 12:2; Psalm 37:4)?*

**Q** How does one "resist the devil" (4:7)? What practical steps do you need to take to become aware of the devil's schemes so you can resist him?

**Q** Read 4:11-12. When is the last time you spoke evil of someone? Why does James instruct against this?

**Follow Up:** What does the Bible tell us about our ability to discern motive *(for help, check out 1 Samuel 16:7, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Matthew 7:1-5)?*

**Q** Why is it important to remember there is one lawgiver and one judge (4:12), and it isn't you?

### REFLECTION & PERSONAL APPLICATION

How intentional are you in taking time to draw near to God? Do you make time with Him a priority? Five to ten minutes in the morning is a good start, but it can't sustain you or help you fend off the schemes of the devil all day long. What can you do to take steps to draw near to God throughout the day?

### FAMILY DISCUSSION

Many wars over the centuries have started over small incidents. Look up:

- War of the Whiskers (not the video game)
- War of the Oaken Bucket
- War of Jenkins' Ear

### MAIN IDEA

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

### BIG IDEAS

- **We are at war with each other.**  
Fighting between status (*rich/poor, master/slave, worker/employer*) and within groups (*church*).
- **We are at war with ourselves.**  
When we are at war with ourselves, it inevitably leads to warring with one another. It begins with our heart. We are selfish. Selfish desires lead to selfish actions and can lead to selfish prayer!  
We seek some “thing” that we are sure will make our lives better—but the real problem is within our hearts.
- **We are war with God.**  
At the root of it all, war with others and ourselves is rebellion against God. To disrupt peace with God, we live to please:  
The world  
Our old nature  
The Devil  
When we believe in Jesus, we take on a “new” self. But our “old” self, or old nature is still there and causes an inner battle.
- How do we overcome war with others, ourselves, and God? How do we enjoy peace instead of war?

#### Submit to God.

Submit – *a voluntary yielding to one who has authority.*

Submission is not blind obedience.

Soldiers follow their commanders, members of the church yield to their pastors /elders, and all people submit to the government.

### MEMORY VERSE

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

**James 1:22**

### BIG IDEAS

Submission involves subduing pride and selfish pursuits.

You are not going to be able to resist the world, your old nature, or the Devil on your own strength.

God comes to the door of your heart. He knocks; you must be the one to let Him in.

#### **Draw near to God.**

We should not treat sin lightly. The sin in our lives keeps God at a distance. The double-minded person can never be close to God—thinking we can be friends of the world and committed believers at the same time (4:4).

Trust in God absolutely and go to Him in prayer. Show Him what is in your heart and confess.

Imagine a shepherd out in the fields with his sheep. The wolf never attacks a sheep as long as it is with the rest of the sheep and with the shepherd. The closer the sheep is to the shepherd, the safer it is. Remember, He is our Shepherd.

#### **Humble ourselves before God.**

We recognize the seriousness of our sin and disobedience.

Look carefully at ourselves, seeking to uncover any hint of love of the world that is competing with our love for God.

If we are willing to humble ourselves and get down to where God can lift us up, He will lift us up.

A person who is drowning will fight the person who is trying to save them. Lifeguards are trained to knock the person out, if needed. They cannot help another until they give up. We need to give up and let God take over.

### GOING DEEPER

A believer can get caught up “in the world” in stages:

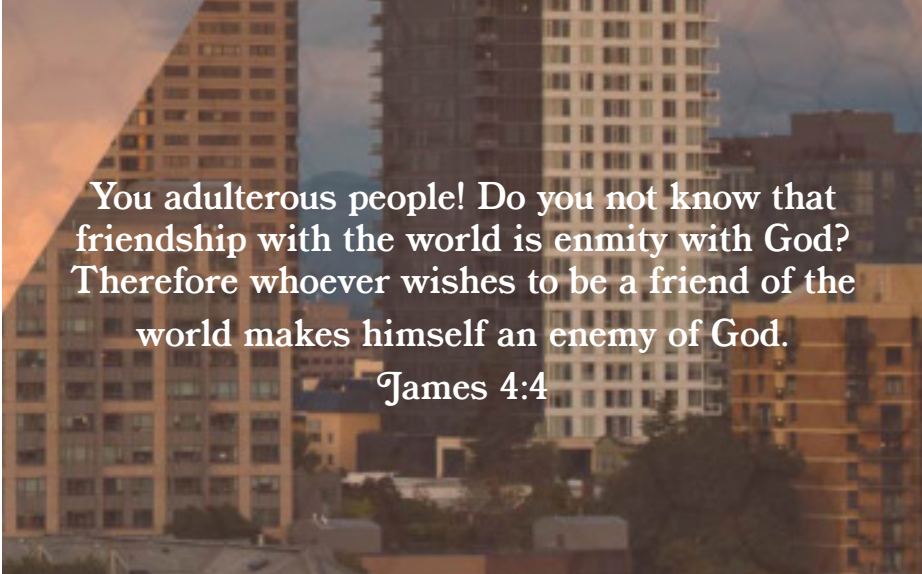
Friendship with the world (James 4:4)

Friendship with the world leads to loving the world (1 John 2:15-17)

Which makes it easy to conform to the world (Romans 12:2)

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- Q Have you ever stopped to think about what motivates you in your life, or why you feel the way you feel? What does James offer as the reason we fight and stir up division?
- Q In Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17 he repeatedly references unity and gives glory to the Father for what He is doing and orchestrating. He asks the Father not to take us out of the world but to keep us from evil. How does James 4:4 correlate to Jesus' prayer that we are called to be *IN* the world but not *OF* the world?
- Q Our culture celebrates pride. As a country we are proud of our culture. We stand by it; we fight for it. We are right, and everyone else is wrong. But what if we are not right? What does a life of humility look like in submission to God?
- Q James teaches us that if we resist the devil he will flee from you. How do you know you are being attacked by the devil? Do you know how to resist him?



**You adulterous people! Do you not know that  
friendship with the world is enmity with God?  
Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the  
world makes himself an enemy of God.**

**James 4:4**



### INTRODUCTION

#### MAIN IDEA

Eternal perspective keeps our hearts and actions in line with the truth.

In this section, James addresses two categories of sin: sins of omission and sins of commission. A sin of omission is the failure to act while sins of commission are sinful actions. Christians are called to live directed by the knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, He is currently ruling and reigning, and He will return one day for His Bride, the Church. What does sin have to do with this?

When we lose eternal perspective, we tend to stop acting the way we should (sins of omission) and start acting in ways we should not (sins of commission). Is your life guided by personal pursuit of happiness, or is it motivated by Christ's return? Our planning, amassing of goods, and our treatment of others should all be driven by the truth. God sees our motives, our lack of action and outright sin, and holds us accountable for it all. This should serve to both urge us to evaluate where we place our hope and what drives our hearts, as well as comfort those who are overlooked. God sees, He is in control, and Christ is returning for His Church!

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q** Are you a planner by nature, or do you enjoy spontaneity? What were the best plans you ever made, and what is the most spontaneous thing you have ever done?

### DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 4:13 - 5:6

**Q** Read 4:13-15. How would you describe the difference between planning for the future and keeping an eternal perspective? Can you do both? How should these be balanced and what does it look like when these are out of alignment?

**Follow Up:** Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-21. Why do you think both James and Jesus warn against placing our faith in things that can be taken from us?

**Q** Do you live practically with eternity in mind? How do you gauge whether or not you are?

**Q** How do our priorities shape our perspective? Read 4:16-17. What does eternal perspective have to do with sin? A good gauge of our priorities is where we spend our time and our money, what we talk about, and how we treat others. Take a moment to take stock of your life in these specific areas. What does your life say about your priorities?



## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 4:13 - 5:6

**Q** Look at James 4:17. Do you have a hard time believing something you choose not to do can be sin? Why? Why is it easier to admit sins of commission but deny sins of omission?

**Follow Up:** Read Jeremiah 17:9. How does this verse aid your understanding of sins of omission?

**Q** Read 5:1-6. James gives us a vivid illustration of how trust in temporal things is seen by God. Read 5:1 carefully. James is addressing the rich. Do you believe this applies to you? For greater perspective,

*If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep... then you are richer than 75 per cent of this world.  
If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace... then you are among the top eight per cent of the world's wealthy.*

Even if your bank account isn't as large as you would like it to be, we are far richer than most in the world. How does your answer change with this in view?

**Q** Do you consider yourself to be a greedy person? What happens in your heart when someone is given something, either a material possession or recognition, you feel you deserve?

**Follow Up:** How does greed blind us to the eternal perspective James wants us to have? Is it hard for you to trust that God sees what you need and will care for you?


**Q** Where do you feel tension when it comes to materialism? Is it in amassing items for yourself, or covetousness (jealousy to the extent that if you can't have it, no one else should have it either)?

**Q** Read 5:5-6. To think, "I haven't done anything that bad," would be to dismiss the strong language James uses here. Instead, focus on the root issue James addresses. We often can overlook or ignore people in material need for our benefit or comfort (5:5), or we can be guilty of not stepping in to help the innocent (5:6). Keeping James 4:17 in mind, where have you seen your desire for ease keep you from doing what was right?

## REFLECTION &amp; PERSONAL APPLICATION

These words can be very hard to hear if we take them to heart and apply them. But there is good news! For those who are in Christ, there is no condemnation (*Romans 8:1*)! When we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us from sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (*1 John 1:9*). When Jesus interacted with people who needed healing, He would often leave them with the parting words, “Go and sin no more.”

As we are forgiven, we are invited to walk in freedom from sin. Praise God! Spend some time in confession and repentance for your sins of both commission and omission, asking the Holy Spirit to give you greater sensitivity to these in your life. Be sure to close your time in prayer praising God for His faithful forgiveness and the freedom you now walk in!



As we are forgiven, we are invited to walk in  
freedom from sin.

# FAITH FOR TOMORROW

## JAMES 4:13 - 5:6

## NOTES

### FAMILY DISCUSSION

- Q** Would we sail the ocean without a compass, or hike in the middle of nowhere with no map or GPS? How is the Bible like a map for believers?
- Q** How would your life be different if you knew the future? Would you live your life differently?

### MAIN IDEA

Eternal perspective keeps our hearts and actions in line with the truth.

### BIG IDEAS

- We like to make big plans for the future, but we do not know what tomorrow holds. God is all wise. He knows what will happen and when. Because He loves us, He wants the very best for us, His children.

- The will of God**

God's will is not something we can pick and choose.

Ignoring God's will is foolish:

Because (for us) life is short and uncertain.

Disobeying God's will

Those who ignore God's will may do so because they don't know the will of God—they don't spend time in His Word. Those who know, but deliberately disobey are saying, "I know more about this than God does!"

We have a real relationship with God; when we disobey, we do not destroy that relationship, nor is it a "one time and you're out." It's not even "three strikes, you're out." When we disobey, we will be disciplined, but it is not the end of the story. There are consequences, but when we repent and seek God's will, He acts and draws us to Himself.

Obedying God's will

An attitude of our heart.

We grow in our relationship with God and into knowing and obeying the will of God.

### MEMORY VERSE

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

*James 1:22*

### BIG IDEAS

- During the time James lived, the people were ruled by the Romans. People were either very rich or very, very rich, or they were very poor or very, very poor. When James talks about riches, he is not saying money is bad, or rich people are bad.

The problem is not money, but the heart.

It can be a problem with how one *gets* their money.

It can be a problem with how one *uses* their money.

We should not store it up—everything we have is from God and we are to be good stewards of it.

We should not keep others from benefiting from it—we should use what God gives us for the good of others and for the glory of God.

It's important to remember that life is short and we cannot take our money (our treasures) with us when we die.

### GOING DEEPER

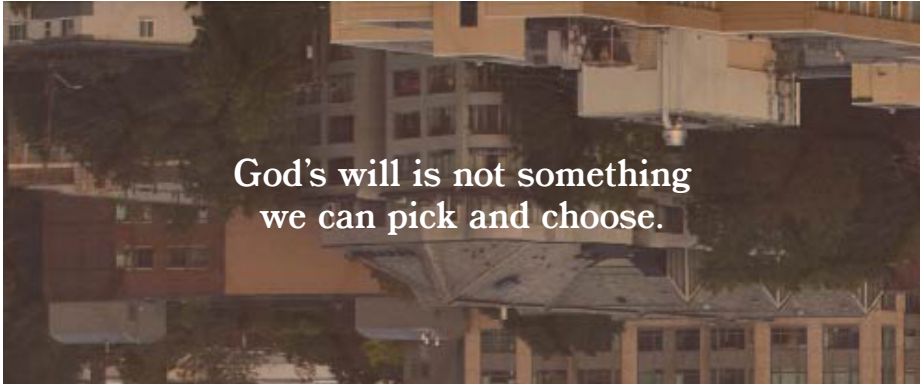
Benefits of doing God's will:

A deeper relationship with Jesus (*Mark 3:35*)

Advantage of knowing God's truth (*John 7:17*)

Knowing what to pray for—aligning our prayers with His will (*1 John 5:14-15*)

Expectation of reward (*Matthew 25:34*)



God's will is not something  
we can pick and choose.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

James 4:13-17 speaks about believing that we can control what will happen in the future.

**Q** Why do you think verse 16 calls this boasting? When we do this, what does it reveal about our perspectives of ourselves and our lives?

Read Proverbs 6:6–11. This passage exhorts people to be diligent to work with the future in mind.

**Q** What's the difference between the boasting of James 4 and the diligence of Proverbs 6?

**Q** Why is it important to understand and learn from the principles of both passages?

James 5:1-6 address people who over-indulge in luxury and comforts right now in this physical world. Rather than seeing wealth as a resource from God to be used for His glory, they see wealth and comfort in this world as the source of true satisfaction.

**Q** What are some material things in our lives that we can care about too much?

**Q** What are some practical ways that we can steward wealth in a way that honors God?

**Q** In what ways are the sin of boasting from 4:13-17 and the sin of over-indulgence in 5:1-6 similar?

**Q** How can a true perspective of God and ourselves help to correct both sins?

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

James 4:13-17



## INTRODUCTION

The act of praying helps us remember Who is in control (*hint, it isn't us*) and strengthens our faith. If you remember, James instructs his fellow believers to pray when facing trials, trusting fully that God will answer and provide what they need (1:5). But he doesn't stop at prayer during trials. James ends his letter by urging readers to sing praises when they are cheerful. We give thanks to God for what He has done, which strengthens our endurance as we remember His faithfulness to us. As we rejoice in the hope of God's goodness, we are increasingly able to find patience in our trials because our eyes are on Jesus. We are also called to pray with others when we are sick or find that our faith is weak; the encouragement of believers gathered together in Jesus' name asking God for healing and strength, is a great help to the one in need. Prayer is powerful because God is all-powerful. God hears our prayers.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

Q Would you describe yourself as a disciplined person?

## MAIN IDEA

Steadfast prayer fuels endurance.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 5:13-20

Q What comes to mind when you think of prayer? Do you see prayer as something only people in need do? Read 5:13-4. What four instances does James prescribe prayer for?

Q God has blessed us with amazing access to Him through prayer! Stop for a moment and think about how you have been given access to the God of the universe! In fact, He invites us to come before Him with both our needs and praise. Knowing this, why is prayer so hard?

**Follow Up:** Read Ephesians 6:18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Why do you think Paul gives these instructions? What benefit is it to us practically? Spiritually?

Q What benefit is prayer when things are going well? Why does James instruct us to sing praise (pray) when we're cheerful?

Q James instructs in 5:14 to ask the elders for prayer. Is it easy or difficult for you to ask someone to pray for you? Why or why not?

**Follow Up:** What role does the body play in praying for one another?

**Follow Up:** How can you become an encouragement to someone else through prayer?



## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 5:13-20

**Q** In verses 14-15, the word “sick” (*greek, astheneo*), can reference a physical ailment, or can also mean “to be weak,” as in spiritual weakness. Have you ever felt weak spiritually? What did you do?

**Q** Looking back to chapter 1:2 where James instructs the reader to “count it all joy,” why do you think James suggests asking for prayer from the elders when they are sick/weak spiritually? (*Elders are pastors/overseers known for their maturity and spiritual wisdom.*)

**Follow Up:** Have you ever experienced the faith of another believer strengthen and encourage you? Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 to help you understand God’s desire for believers to pursue authentic, encouraging community. Who can you comfort and encourage today?

**Follow Up:** James very well may have been referring to physical ailments; sometimes pursuing a lifestyle of sin does lead to physical ramifications. Why would James prescribe confession in this case? *Note, not all physical ailments are caused by sin. Because we live in a fallen, broken world, not all is as it was meant to be. While we praise God for the miracle of medicine, we also believe in the power of prayer. If you are suffering, let us know! We would love to pray with you (info@summitview.net)!*

**Q** Read James 5:17-18. What do you know about Elijah? Check out the beginning of his story in 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah was a prophet in the Old Testament; James’ point here is that God used an ordinary man to showcase his incredible might—this prayer stopped the rain for three and a half years. Let that sink in! How can you use this truth as an encouragement?

**Follow Up:** We often put the people mentioned in the Bible on a pedestal for their great faith while forgetting that God chooses ordinary people to accomplish the unthinkable. Elijah’s faith started small, just like ours. What steps can you take this week to begin strengthening your faith?

**Follow Up:** Why do you think James directs the reader’s attention to Elijah’s faith as he closes his letter? Look back to chapter 1 for help!



We would love to pray with you.  
[info@summitview.net](mailto:info@summitview.net)

## DIG INTO THE TEXT - JAMES 5:13-20

**Q** Read James 5:19-20. What an encouragement this should be to us! We are to be a community that looks out for one another and takes each other's faith as seriously as we take our own. What does this reveal to you about God and how He has designed the church?

**Follow Up:** What part does love and forgiveness play in bringing someone back from their wandering?

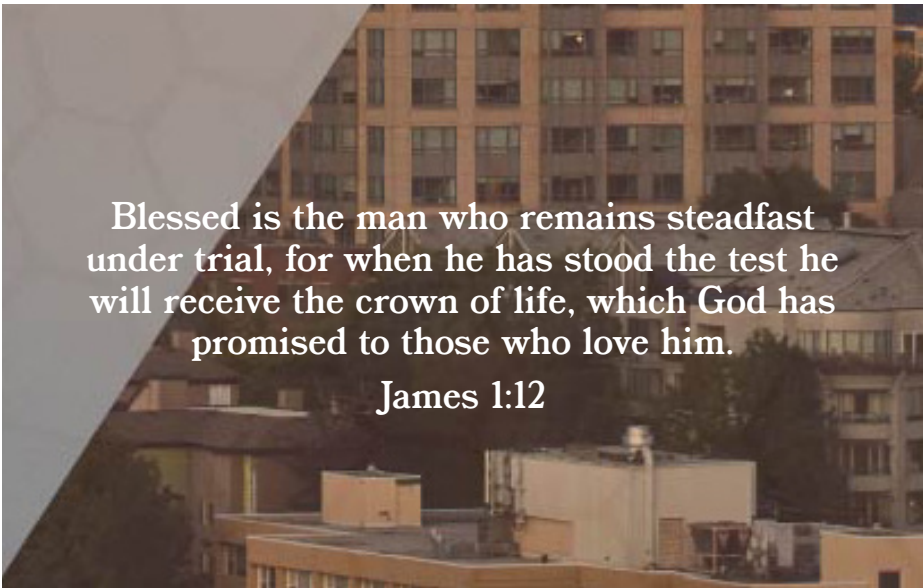
**Follow Up:** What part should prayer play in bringing someone back from wandering?

**Q** Think back over the last ten weeks. We have learned about right perspective and endurance in trials; God shapes our thoughts, words, and actions as we surrender to His will. We are transformed by the Holy Spirit as we live obediently to the will of God. Our works reveal where our faith is placed. Keeping the entirety of James' letter in mind, how has he been leading his readers to this moment in 5:19-20?

## REFLECTION &amp; PERSONAL APPLICATION

Read James 1:12. Prayer is vital to remain steadfast in trials, by reminding us who is in control and shapes our love. What we love reveals where we find satisfaction. As you pray this week, take time to praise God that He is in control and that He is faithful to do what He says He will do.

Ask the Holy Spirit for patient endurance in your trials, as you look to Jesus as your example. Keep your eyes open for who you can pray for and encourage, asking for eyes to see like God sees.



Blessed is the man who remains steadfast  
under trial, for when he has stood the test he  
will receive the crown of life, which God has  
promised to those who love him.

James 1:12

## NOTES

## FAMILY DISCUSSION

- Q When should you pray? When is it easiest to pray?  
When is it hardest for you to pray?
- Q What steps can you take as a family to include prayer time in your day?
- Q What is one thing you want to talk to God about right now?

**MAIN IDEA**  
Steadfast prayer fuels endurance.

## BIG IDEAS

- God hears our prayers.
- Prayer is important for our relationship with Jesus. It's how we communicate with Him!
- Prayer is helpful for:
  - Those who are suffering in difficult circumstances
  - The sick
  - The nation
  - Those who wander from God's truth
  - To praise and thank God
- Any time is a great time to pray.  
If you think that prayer is hard because you don't know what to say or what to tell God, remember this: God knows you! He made you, He already knows your thoughts, and He wants to hear from you! He doesn't care if you know all the right words, if you have long or short prayers, or if you're praying about big or little things!
- We should be praying for others.
- We need to confess our sins to God in prayer.
- Prayer is powerful because God is all-powerful.

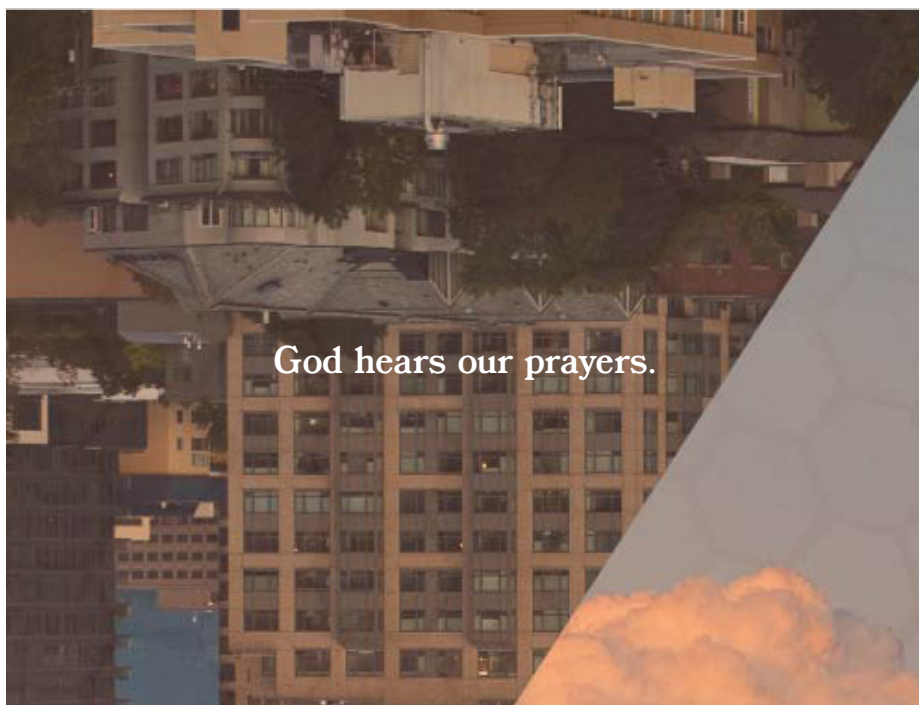
## MEMORY VERSE

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."  
*James 1:22*

### GOING DEEPER

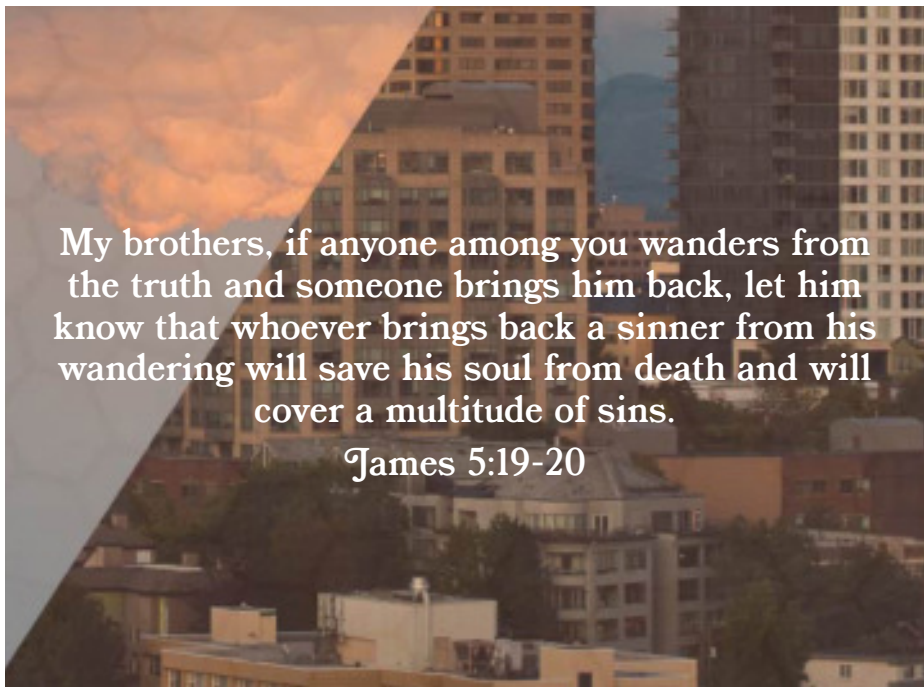
Jesus says in Matthew 21:21-22 that, “if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And whatever you ask for in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

- Q What are some “mountains” (*big things*) in your life that you should be praying about?
- Q Do you think that Matthew and James meant that God will give you whatever you want if you pray about it? Why or why not?
- Q What are some examples in the Bible about the power of prayer?
- Q What are some examples of answered prayer that you have seen in your life or in the lives of your family and friends?



## GROUP DISCUSSION

- Q** As James writes this section, he asks a few rhetorical questions. Is anyone suffering? Anyone cheerful? Anyone sick? Of course! We are to respond properly based on our state of being. Do you feel comfortable expressing great joy or sadness? Are you willing to humble yourself and ask for prayer?
- Q** This question requires a bit of self-reflection and honesty: do you believe God is able to heal through prayer?
- Q** Weakness is something that is not celebrated in our culture. Why is the confession of sin so hard and yet so necessary as Christ followers?
- Q** We all have people in our lives who either do not believe in Jesus or have walked away from faith in Jesus. In 5:19-20, James makes it very clear that we are to pursue these people. Who are those in your life you need to pursue? Start praying for them now.



**My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.**

**James 5:19-20**





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