

The Book of James

The book of James is the first of what are called the General Epistles. These include: James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude. These books are called the General Epistles because they are not being addressed to any particular church or individual. This book was written by James, the half-brother of the Lord (not James the Apostle). As we see from Acts 15, James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. James is perhaps the most practical book in the New Testament. It could be considered a “*how to book*,” on Christian living. Confrontations, challenges, and a call to commitment await you in its pages. Become a doer of the Word. The proof of the reality of our faith is a changed life.

Chapter 1

1. Take heed in verse 1 that James identifies himself as James a bondservant (which means slave) of the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't at all mention in the epistle that he was the Lord's half-brother. That says a lot about this man James. He came to know the Lord Jesus not only as his blood brother but as his own Savior and then he became His bond slave.
2. James uses the Lord's entire title, name, and mission: “The Lord Jesus Christ.” Do you refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as just Jesus or is He the Lord of your life? Are you giving Him the respect He deserves? If God the Father called Jesus “*God*” (Hebrews 1:8, 9) then how can you call Him anything less?
3. God will put us to the test in various ways. He will test our faith, devotion, and abilities. (to name a few) According to verse 2: How are we to respond to testing? What will be produced if we respond in obedience?
4. In verse 5 James talks about the lack of wisdom. He is referring to the wisdom needed for the various trials we will fall into. We may ask such questions as: “*How am I going to solve this problem?*” or “*How am I going to meet this need or issue?*” What do verses 5 and 6 tell us to do?
5. In verse 6 we see the phrase “*with no doubting*,” which refers to our faith. If we are not convinced that God's way is the best then we treat God's Word like any human advice which gives us the option to disobey. Doubt waivers back and forth from God's commands to the world's nonsense. How is your stability? Do you find that your prayer life is wavering or doubtful? Caleb said regarding his relationship and trust in God, “*I wholly followed the Lord my God.*”
6. Verses 9-11 teach us the perspective of rich and poor. In our society today wealth, power, and status attribute so much importance. To God it means nothing. Our true wealth is found in a relationship with the Lord Jesus the Christ. He is interested in what is lasting (our salvation) not what is temporary. (our money and possessions) Are your material possessions possessing you? It's what you have in your heart, not your bank account that matters to God.

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7. Verse 12 begins with the word “*blessed*” which simply means “*oh how happy.*” What will we receive if we endure temptation faithfully even under pressure?
8. Temptation in and of itself is not sin. We all have an evil nature and a weakness in the flesh. Today we rationalize sin, bad tempers, gossip, drunkenness, and even gross immorality. But the King of Kings calls them sins. Temptation comes from our own evil desires which are not from God. It becomes sin when we dwell on an evil thought and allow it to become an action. How does James describe temptation in verses 14 and 15?
9. The antidote for us that talk too much and listen too little is found in verses 19-20. For when we are in this mode we are communicating to others that we think our ideas are much more important than theirs. When people talk to you do they feel that their viewpoints, suggestions, ideas, and opinions have value?
10. In verse 21 James exhorts us to get rid of all that is wrong in our life and to humbly accept the message of salvation. Why?
11. Verses 21-27 talk about being doers and not hearers only. It’s important to listen to God’s Word. It is more important to obey it and do what it says. We can measure our growth in the Lord by our Bible study time and the effect it has on our behavior and attitudes. Are you putting into action what you have been studying?

Chapter 2

1. In our society we often treat a well-dressed, impressive looking person better than someone who looks mangy and down at the heels. We would rather identify with the prosperous people than with the presumable failures. In verses 1-7 Pastor James rebukes acts of favoritism and prejudice. Here are 8 reasons why showing favoritism to the rich is wrong:
 - a. It is contrary to the teachings of the Lord.
 - b. It results from evil thoughts.
 - c. It insults people made in God’s image.
 - d. It’s a by-product of selfish motives.
 - e. It’s contrary to the Biblical identification of love.
 - f. It shows lack of mercy to the down trodden.
 - g. It’s sin.Are you easily impressed by status, wealth, or fame? Are you partial to the “*haves*” while paying no attention the “*have nots*?”
2. God views all people as equals. Before Him we all stand on one level. By honoring someone just because he or she wears expensive clothes and drives a fancy vehicle we are making appearances more important than character. Does poverty make you uncomfortable? The Lord tells us a parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9). The Pharisee said, “*God, I thank you that I am not like other men.*” Do you ever have

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- the point of view that you are superior to the poor person? As Christians, we must live as the Lord requires. We are not to be playing with the lifestyles of the rich and famous but to love all people regardless of whether they are rich or poor.
3. The Lord Jesus taught us the golden rule in Matthew 7:12, “*Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.*” In verse 8, how do we fulfill the royal law in the scripture?
 4. Verse 13 is a powerful verse. In essence, there will be no mercy for you if you have not been merciful to others. We should not withhold mercy and forgiveness from others after having received it ourselves. Is there someone you are withholding forgiveness to? Turn to Matthew 6:14, 15 and Ephesians 4:31, 32.
 5. Verses 14-26 can be summed up by “*faith without works is dead.*” James is telling us that true faith transforms our behavior as well as our mind. True faith always results in good deeds. Our simple faith brought us to salvation and our active obedience proves that our faith is genuine. Are you someone who professes to be a Christian but does not minister deeds of loving service?

Chapter 3

1. In verse 1, James begins with a warning to anyone who aspires to be a teacher of God’s Word. What is the warning?
2. In the Bible, the ministry of pastor-teacher carries a tremendous responsibility to teach what God’s Word says and not offer any opinions. Where the Bible is silent, it is important that we are silent. Where the Bible speaks, it is important that we speak. Are you in a teaching or leadership role? If so, how are you affecting those you lead?
3. Continuing through to verse 12, James teaches us how destructive our tongues can be. He uses very familiar illustrations in verses 3-5 to show us that even though the tongue is small, it boasts great things. In verse 6, he says the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, it defiles the whole body, and it is set on fire by Hell! In other words, the tongues wickedness has its source in Hell itself. Verse 8 tells us that “*no man can tame the tongue.*” Here are some examples of an untamed tongue: manipulating, flattery, complaining, false teaching, exaggerating, and lying. The acronym T.H.I.N.K. will help you before you speak. Ask yourself is it true? Honest? Intelligent? Necessary? And Kind? If what you are about to say is missing just one of these ingredients then keep your tongue in between your wisdom teeth.
4. Our flesh tells us, “*If no man can tame the tongue then why even bother trying?*” We will never achieve perfect control of our tongue. Even so, the Lord Jesus promises us that the Holy Spirit “*may abide with us forever.*” We cannot fight the fire of our tongue in our own strength but the fruit of self-control can. Are you reacting in a hateful manner when you get offended? Are you lashing out when you are criticized? Remember Christian, you have the Holy Spirit, the Mighty Counselor.

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5. In verses 13-18, James teaches us the contrast between wisdom from God and the wisdom from Satan. As a Christian, wisdom's question to us is, "*How much have I come to agree with God?*" We can measure wisdom by a person's character and the way they act. The devil inspires things like foolishness that leads to disorder, gossip that leads to conflict and strife, and self-seeking that leads to greed. The wisdom from God leads to peace and goodness. Our society today says, "*Go for it, assert yourself, set high goals to attain, and you are the captain of your own ship.*" God says, "*No man can serve two masters.*" Are you tempted by the wisdom of the world? Remember God loves peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9)

Chapter 4

1. James tells us that our desires for more (i.e.: more money, more possessions, more recognition, etc.) come from evil desires that war within us. When we don't get what we want we fight in order to possess it. So in order to get rid of selfish desires we must submit to God and trust Him to give us what we really need. Are you finding yourself aggressively pursuing the things that God says won't make you happy?
2. In verse 4, James is as straight forward as he can be. You are either living in the Kingdom of God and the Lord rules your life or you're living in the Kingdom of darkness and Satan rules your life....You choose!
3. In verses 7-10, James gives us five ways to draw near to God and He will draw near to you. What are the five ways?
4. Verses 11-12 deal with judging others. Jesus said that Christians are to love God and their neighbor. So consequently when we fail to love we are actually breaking God's Law. If you began to examine your attitude what would you find? Are you critical of somebody? Ask God to help you say something loving instead.
5. No matter how many years we may think we have left to live, the reality is...life is so short. The future is in God's hands and He should be included in all our plans. Are you seeking his guidance in your planning? If not, how will you react if God steps in and rearranges those plans? Seek His will and you will never be disappointed.
6. We know that doing wrong is sin but James tell us in verse 17 that not doing what is right is sin. These are commonly called sins of commission and sins of omission. God tells us that lying is a sin. It can also be a sin to know the truth and not tell it. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*" Are you regularly asking the Holy Spirit to help you share the Lord with people? The Lord Jesus is the truth!

Chapter 5

1. In verses 1-6, James is not condemning people just because they were rich. He was condemning them for their wrong attitude toward their riches. He is concerned with how they got their money and what they

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- did with it when they got it. Remember it's not money in itself that is evil but it's the love of money that is the root of all evil. Are you living God's standards as He said in Romans 12:12?
2. Like the farmer we as Christians live by faith and we must be patient until the Lord Jesus comes. While the farmer is waiting for his crop, he is continually working the fields, and looking toward the future reward. How are we to be living while we are waiting? Turn to the Book of Titus 2:11-13.
 3. Verse 9 deals with grumbling. It's a sinful and destructive attitude because we blame others instead of owning our own behavior. We are commanded, "*Do not grumble.*" Before you judge others' shortcomings remember the Lord's words, "*He who is without sin cast the first stone.*" The next time you are tempted to grumble, remember He will not let you get away with shifting the blame. Have you been in the habit of blame shifting?
 4. Do you want to be known as a trustworthy person? Always be honest so others will believe your simple yes or no. Have you ever found yourself using God as an excuse to avoid responding with a definite yes or no? In other words, have you ever said to someone, "*Let me pray on it?*" (When you really mean no from the onset.) Let your yes be yes and your no be no and leave the Lord out of it.
 5. Verses 13-18 are about meeting specific needs through the power of prayer. Prayer is our most powerful resource in communion with God. It's not our last resort. Is your prayer life an example of the one described in verse 16?
 6. Anyone who falls away from the truth is in serious trouble and needs to repent. We are urged to help backsliders return to God. Do you know someone who has backslid? Pray to the Lord to help you be an instrument in helping this person repent.
 7. Remember that the Book of James is a "*how to book of the faith.*" Be encouraged to live out what James has written as he was moved upon by the Holy Spirit. If we truly believe God's Word we will live it day by day. We merely don't think about it or read about it....We better do it. Grace and peace to you.