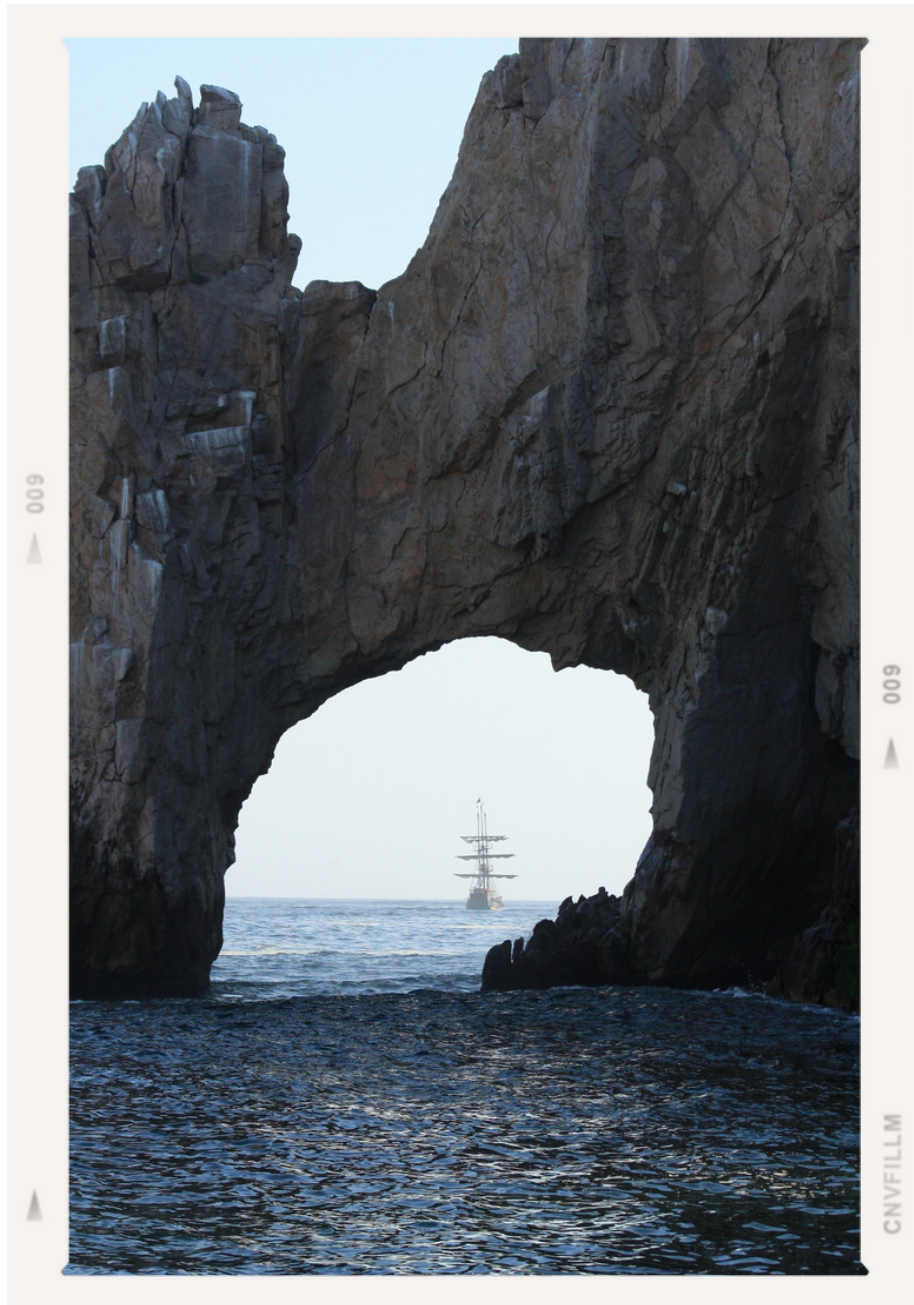


SET APART



A NINE WEEK STUDY THROUGH
THE BOOK OF JAMES

JAMES 1:1



JAMES, A SERVANT OF GOD AND OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

James was the younger brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55). According to Scripture, James was not a follower of Jesus during his earthly ministry (Mark 3:21) however after Jesus' resurrection, he appeared to his brother, James and that's when he believed (1 Corinthians 15:7).

James was a prominent figure among the communities of the followers of Jesus living in Palestine in the first century. We see James in various places in Paul's letters in the New Testament. After Paul was called by God, he states that he took time to get acquainted with Peter and Lord's brother, James (Galatians 1:19) Paul, acknowledged James as "pillar" of the Jerusalem community (Galatians 2:9). Acts tells us that James is the only one whom Peter wanted informed about his release from prison (Acts 12:17). James chaired the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21), and Paul visited him and took advice from him on his final visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:18).

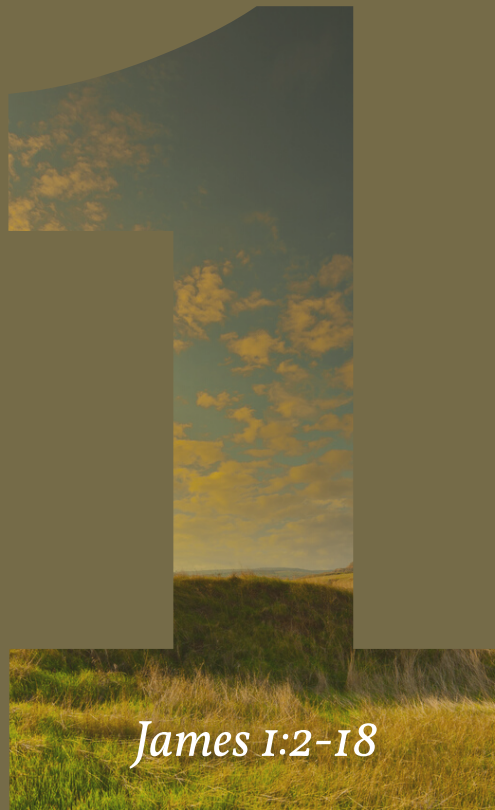
TO THE TWELVE TRIBES SCATTERED AMONG THE NATIONS

The Greek word used here for a scattering is diaspora, which refers to the Jews scattered outside their homeland of Palestine -

The purpose of the Book of James was to do three things for these displaced peoples

- To encourage Jewish believers who were suffering for their faith
- To correct false ideas about the nature of saving faith
- To teach his readers how faith shows itself in righteous living and good deeds





James 1:2-18

James encourages his readers to realize that one important mark of being ***set apart*** as a Christian is to trust God rather than self—even when life seems unbearably hard. If you do that, he says, God will use your trials to make you a more faithful follower of Jesus.

James 1:2-18

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. 9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. 12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16 Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Verse 3—

The word “testing” in James 1:3 translates to a rare Greek word (*dokimion*) which is used to describe the process of how one would refine silver or gold.

Verse 6—

The word translated “doubt” in James 1:6 literally means “dispute.” It is used in many different contexts to refer to a dispute with another person. Here, though, James uses the word to refer to a person disputing within one’s own self!

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

What is the reward that James promises will come to those who endure trials?

What is the difference between a trial and temptation?

How does God see our trials in this life? How is that different from the way we are tempted to see them? If we could understand our trials as God understands them, how would we act differently?

APPLICATION

Boasting in our wealth is the same as taking all the credit for our prosperity. In truth, our prosperity comes from the grace of God. What else do you rely on, or boast about, in order to find a sense of well-being and security, rather than on God?"

How has God been "refining" you? Has He been burning away some impurities in order to make you like silver and gold? Has it been a painful process? How have you been growing through that process?

Name some specific trials that you have experienced, and consider the sins that you were tempted to fall into because of those trials.

In what ways do you "dispute" within yourself while facing a trial or temptation? In those moments, have you ever asked God into the situation to help you solve that dispute? Why or why not?

LIVING ROOTED

Write about your struggles/temptations. Don't hold back. Complain all you want. But then go back to your journal the next day and jot some notes in the margins about how God might be making you "mature and complete."

After spending time doing this, look for others you can share your struggles with. Can you arrange to meet with them every week or two, and let them know how you're doing? Fighting temptation can be a lonely business, but it doesn't have to be. When you know there's someone else holding you accountable, it might give you additional strength.



Christianity is so much more than just believing certain things or claiming to have faith; it is having your life transformed by the gospel. To be **set apart** is not just about hearing God's word, but also doing it.

James 1:19-27

James' original readers typically regarded alms-giving, prayer, fasting, regular attendance at worship services, and the observance of holy days and feasts—as signs of true spirituality.

Verses 25—

The "perfect law" to which James referred is the revelation of God's will contained in Scripture. It is perfect because it is the perfect will of a perfect God. "Unlike the imperfect metal mirror, this law is able to give the beholder a true and undistorted revelation of himself. It is a law "of liberty" because, by obeying it, we find true freedom from sin and its consequences

Verse 26—

The word "religious" describes someone who fears or worships God. In particular, it refers to the outward consequences of what one believes, rather than to what he believes, or the fact that he believes deeply.

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. 26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Matthew 15:8-9

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Matthew 21:28-32

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 29 And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. 30 And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I will, sir,' but did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him."

Matthew 23:1-3

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, 3 so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice."

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

What does James say about anger?

What metaphor does James use to describe a person who only hears the word, but does not do it?

How do we “deceive ourselves” by just listening to God’s Word?

APPLICATION

What kind of mindset does it take to receive the word of God? How would “slowness to hear, quickness to speak, and quickness to anger hinder” the word from taking root in a person’s heart?

What kinds of things characterize a person who would look in a mirror and then immediately forget what he sees?

Do you think it’s really “worthless” to hear God’s Word without doing it? Why or why not?

LIVING ROOTED

This week, take some time to be doers of the Word. Get a journal or notebook and put 4 headings on them that say “Read. Think. Pray. Do!” then pick some passages of Scripture to read each day this week. As you do, record your thoughts on the text, write out keywords of a prayer, and then figure out something God would like you to do in response to that text.



James uses these passages to address his readers who have fallen into showing favoritism to the rich and powerful. These believers' behavior puts them at odds with God's law, and therefore with God himself. To be **set apart** is to view your relationships with other people radically different than the rest of the world.

James 2:1-13

In its early days the Church was predominantly poor and humble; and therefore if a rich man was converted, and did come to the Christian gathering, there could have been a temptation to make a fuss of him, and to treat him as someone who was extra special.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Luke 14:1-14

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. 2 There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. 3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" 4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

5 Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" 6 And they had nothing to say.

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. 11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

In James 2:5-7, what does it say about the poor and the rich?

Two key words appear in verse 13. Define them. What is judgment? What is mercy?

How does the idea of mercy bring us back to the idea of showing favoritism?

APPLICATION

Suppose the scene described in verses 2-3 were to happen in church. What do you think would happen? How would we treat the two people differently?

In the same way, how do you see this play out on campus? What do you think favoritism might look like at Yale?

According to verses 10-12, how would James respond to someone who said, "I've kept seven of the Ten Commandments. That's a passing grade, right?"

According to that standard, are you a "transgressor" of the law? How do you feel about that? Does that seem harsh to you?

LIVING ROOTED

Reflect on your response to new students that come to Chi Alpha. Is there a specific type of student you are drawn to? Do you show favoritism within your Core Group? Go out of your way this week to build a relationship with someone you wouldn't normally think you could be friends with.



In the same way that we need to be doers of the word. James argues in these verses that faith always results in a life of obedience and good works and a “faith” that does not do so is not saving faith at all; it is, rather, dead faith. James states that to be **set apart** means that our faith in the Lord will produce life change.

James 2:14-26

Verse 21-23 —

James refers to a story from Genesis 22. God tells Abraham to take his son, Isaac, up a mountain, to build an altar, and then to sacrifice him. Isaac, you may recall, was a miracle baby, born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Imagine how Abraham would feel about killing him. The story begins by saying that God was testing Abraham. It was quite a test. Abraham did as instructed, and he got as far as raising the knife to slay his son on the altar, but then God sent an angel to stop him. Abraham passed the test.

Verse 25—

Rahab was a prostitute in the Canaanite city of Jericho. She sheltered the Israelite spies and aided in the conquest of the city. In the process, she expressed faith in the God of Israel.

Verse 26—

The word “spirit” is a translation of the Greek word *pneuma*. This word refers to that which gives life to the body. In some places *pneuma* is translated “breath.”

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Matthew 7:16-23

16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. 21 “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. 22 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?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

What's the answer to the question in verse 16? What good is it to offer good wishes but no practical help?

In verse 18, we see two kinds of faith. How are they described?

Verse 19 is referring to the "without works" kind of faith. What does it say about that kind of faith?

APPLICATION

What's the difference between correct theology and genuine, living faith?

In James 2:20-24, there's reference to Abraham as proof of the point. What's the argument here? How does Abraham prove that "faith without works is useless"?

Do you think it's significant that the faith of Genesis 15 came several chapters before the works of Genesis 22? Does faith generally come first?

LIVING ROOTED

Talk with God about your own faith. Do you have "faith with works" or "faith without works"? Ask Him to give you the power you need to put your faith into action. After bringing it to God, talk with at least one other close Christian friend about this question. Ask them "Where does my faith manifest the most? On the inside or the outside?" Both are good. Both are important. But if you just feel your faith and don't show it, you're out of balance. (It's also possible to tilt the other way, doing stuff for God, but not taking time for personal growth.)

FAITH VS WORKS



James 2:24 has caused significant confusion among Christians, because it seems to formally contradict Paul's teaching that we are in fact justified by faith alone. Justification, however, has two different meanings in Scripture.

On the one hand is Paul's somewhat technical use of the word to mean "a judicial declaration, an acquittal and declaration that a person is to be regarded as righteous." And Paul says that this justification happens through faith alone, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone. On the other hand, however, is an older and more common meaning of justification as "a public presentation of a person as being righteous".

Think of it as the difference between a wedding minister's pronouncement that a couple are man and wife and his public presentation of them to the congregation as people who are acting in a way that is consonant with the pronouncement he has just made.

In Romans 4, the apostle Paul uses the exact same verse from Genesis that James uses to make what seems to be the opposite point, that Abraham was considered righteous because of his faith, not his works. This has led many people to assume that James and Paul were in sharp disagreement on this matter. But what was Paul talking about, and what is James saying here?

Paul makes the point that, when Abraham was "considered righteous" in Genesis 15, the Jewish law had not yet been given, nor was the ritual of circumcision observed yet. So this code of conduct and ritual that would later define righteousness for the Jews—it didn't exist yet. There was only his faith.

But what kind of faith was it? That's what James wants to know. Was it just believing that God existed? No, it also involved acting on that belief. It was faith with works. But James isn't talking about following rituals or keeping the law. He's talking about letting your faith propel you to feed the hungry. Faith brings you into a relationship with God—He becomes your "friend"—and so you do the things that express your love for God.

Now you can get wrapped up in theological debates about whether faith or works is more important, but that misses the point. Romans emphasizes that we are saved by faith in our hearts. James emphasizes that when faith is in the heart, we can see it in tangible actions.

Faith and works are two sides of the same coin. True faith changes you. Faith flows into works. The two are inseparable.





In this chapter, James considers how his readers are using their tongues to tear one another down. To be ***set apart*** is to be people of meekness and wisdom, who use their voice to speak life into others.

James 3:1-18

Verse 2 –

Don't get thrown off by the word perfect. It can also be translated as "mature" or "complete." It's the same word used in James 1:4 for the person who develops patience through trials. So James is not saying that people who control their tongues are sinless. In fact, he has just said that we all stumble in many ways. It's just that the one who avoids stumbling in speech is apparently a mature believer.

Verse 13 –

Meekness can be described as humble assurance under all circumstances, founded on a deep trust in God's will and providence. Such trust results in a peaceful and gentle disposition even in the face of persecution or difficulty. It frees a person from the temptations of self-reliance and pride.

Verse 17 –

The word the ESV translates as "open to reason" is from the Greek, *eupeithes*. This word occurs only once in the New Testament. The literal translation means "easily persuaded," but we shouldn't read this as being a push-over or gullible. Instead, *eupeithes* describes a person who is willing to listen to others and willing to defer to the wishes or desires of others. It is a disposition opposite of the "selfish ambition" (*eritheia*) in verse 16.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 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. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 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. 5 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! 6 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. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and saltwater? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Matthew 5:21-22

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister[b][c] will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:3-10

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons] of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Why do you think James starts the section with the exhortation that “not many of you should become teachers”? Why do you think teachers will be judged with greater strictness?

James uses three examples to explain the power of the tongue, despite its physical smallness. What are the three examples? Explain James’s point in your own words. Do you think these comparisons make more sense regarding individual behavior or regarding leadership of a church? Or perhaps both?

Who is James talking about in verses 9-12? What can we guess about these people?

Why is meekness part of true wisdom?

In James 3:16-17 we see descriptions of the “fruits” of true wisdom and false wisdom. What’s the difference? How can we tell them apart?

APPLICATION

Do you think it’s really impossible to “tame the tongue,” as it says in verse 8?

How would a person do this? If you tried to tame your speaking habits, how would you go about it?

How can you be a person of meekness and wisdom, who uses your tongue to speak life to others?

LIVING ROOTED

This week, think of three people you can encourage this week, and do so. Be as specific as possible. Can you bolster their confidence or their faith?



James opens this chapter discussing what happens when we desire something we cannot get, the result of this is animosity between believers. This can also cause tension between you and God because you ask for your own desires instead of what God's will is for you. To be **set apart** is to submit yourself to God and come to Him humbly asking for your desires to match His.

James 4:1-12

Verse 2—

The Greek words translated “murder” (*phoneuo*), “covet” (*zeloo*), and “adulterous” (*moichalis*) are the same words (or forms of the same words) found in the Ten Commandments in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint)—the version of the Bible that James’ readers would have known.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 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. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. 11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Matthew 6:24

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Matthew 7:1-5

“Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

When they did ask God for things, what do you think they were asking for? What can this teach us about prayer?

What does James say is the antidote to the prideful desires that cause quarrels?

In James 4:7-10, James exhorts believers to do seven things in order to counteract pride in their lives. List those seven exhortations, and explain what James means by each of them.

APPLICATION

What do verses 2-3 tell us about the spiritual life of James's audience? When have you experienced these things in your life?

Is every desire a good desire? How do you tell the difference between a good desire and a bad one?

When you know what the law says and deliberately decide not to obey it, but rather to violate it, what are you implicitly saying about that law? What right do you have to say such things about God's law?

LIVING ROOTED

In biblical times they wore rough sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on themselves to come humbly before God. What could you do to show God (and remind yourself of) your humility? The specifics don't matter as much as your attitude. Take a good long time to listen to God. Ask about the things He cares about. Ask what He wants for you. Confess your sins and receive His forgiveness. Ask again for wisdom.



James 4:13-5:6

James addresses two groups of people who are falling into the sin of pride, in different ways. He addresses those who would forget that their lives are completely in the hand of the Lord and those who would use their wealth and power in ways that go against God. To be ***set apart*** is to recognize that none of us fully control the circumstances and outcomes of our lives, no matter how much we might set ourselves up for success.

James 4:13-5:6

13 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”— 14 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. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Verse 1 –

The wealthy that James is talking about in these verses are the wealthy landowners. This is a class of people who were frequently criticized in the Old Testament very frequently. They were known for their greedy acquisition of land and exploitation of those forced to work for them. They can be recognized for selfishly hoarding wealth, cheating their workers and living a self-indulgent lifestyle.

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. 4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Luke 12:22-26

22 And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?[a] 26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?”

Matthew 6:33-34

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

What does James say should be a Christian's frame of mind when thinking about the future? Is James saying that planning or investing for the future is wrong? If not, what then is he saying?

What value do you get from reminding yourself that your plans ultimately depend on God? Does that change what you do, or how you do it?

In James 5:1, what's the first thing James wants the "rich" people to do? How do you think this compares with their current attitude?

APPLICATION

Do you think you should actually say the phrase "if the Lord wills" when you talk about the future? Even if it's not necessary to say it every time, how can you work to cultivate that kind of dependence on God in your own life and thinking?

We know God loves justice and hates the exploitation of the poor. So as you participate in our world economy, how can you advance the cause of justice?

Where are you storing your treasure? How can you break free from the idolatry of money and all the things it buys? How can you seek first God's kingdom?

LIVING ROOTED

Look back through your life and choose 1 to 3 plans that you made long enough ago to see them develop. Then trace the development of those plans. Did things turn out as you wanted or expected? How did you interact with God through all of that? Did He lead in a certain way and then change directions? Map this process out as creatively as you can, and then examine that "map" of your life. What can you learn from that?

Parallels between James and Jesus' teachings

Whenever you face trials of any kind,
consider it nothing but joy
James 1:2

When people revile you and persecute
you and utter all kinds of evil against
you. . . . Rejoice and be glad
Matthew 5:11-12

You may be mature [teleioi] and
complete, lacking in nothing
James 1:4

Be perfect [teleioi] . . . as your
heavenly Father is perfect
Matthew 5:48

Ask God . . . and it will be given you
James 1:5

Ask, and it will be given you
Matthew 7:7

Be doers of the word, and not merely
hearers
James 1:22

"Everyone then who hears these
words . . . and acts on them will be
like a wise man
Matthew 7:24

Whoever keeps the whole law but fails
in one point has become accountable
for all of it
James 2:10

Whoever breaks one of the least of
these commandments . . . will be
called least in the kingdom of heaven
Matthew 5:19

What good is it . . . if you say you
have faith, but do not have works?
Can faith save you?
James 2:14

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord,
Lord,' will enter the kingdom of
heaven, but only the one who does
the will of my Father
Matthew 7:21

Who, then, are you to judge your
neighbor?
James 4:12

Do not judge, so that you may not be
judged
Matthew 7:1

Whenever you face trials of any kind,
Your riches have rotted, and your
clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold
and silver have rusted
James 5:2-3

Do not store up for yourselves
treasures on earth, where moth and
rust consume and where thieves break
in and steal
Matthew 6:19

Do not grumble against one another,
so that you may not be judged"
James 5:9

Do not judge, so that you may not be
judged
Matthew 7:1

Do not swear, either by heaven or by
earth or by any other oath, but let
your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no
James 5:12

Do not swear at all, either by heaven .
. . . or by the earth. . . . Let your word
be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'
Matthew 5:34-37



The original readers of this passage, faced extreme persecution and oppression. James uses these passages to remind his readers and us of God's faithfulness in times of suffering. To be **set apart** is to be patient in the waiting and trust God's promises.

James 5:7-12

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. 12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Verse 9—

The word for “grumble” in verse 9 (*stenazo*) is used elsewhere for a similar situation. Paul talks about all creation “groaning” with us in anticipation of God’s final redemption and about our own “groaning” as we look forward to our heavenly home (Romans 8:22-3; 2 Corinthians 5:2,4). It’s the same word that’s translated “grumbling” in James. It’s a deep longing for a better future, but when we turn it “against one another,” it can become toxic.

Verse 10—

The word James uses for patience is *makrothumia*, which literally means something like “long-tempered.” You know what it’s like to be short-tempered, when any little thing can set you off. Patience is the opposite.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Matthew 5:33-37

33 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

In James 5:11, James mentions two things that should give believers comfort and encouragement to stand fast in their trials. What are those two things?

James says that “the prophets” are “an example of suffering and patience.” Who do you think James is talking to? What examples from the Old Testament can you think of in which someone endured suffering with patience?

APPLICATION

What illustration does James use to show his readers the meaning of patience? How would that illustration help them understand what he is exhorting them to do?

Are there circumstances in your life under which you need to be patient? What are they? What truths help you to be patient under those trials?

Why does James warn about grumbling? How could a heart that is not “established” lead a person to grumble? What lies at the root of most grumbling, and how could having an established heart cut that root?

LIVING ROOTED

Find out someone else’s story. People become resilient through perseverance. When someone is going through a terrible time of suffering, it may seem like it’s never going to end and hopelessness takes over. Even Job asked God to crush him and cut off his life so that his pain and misery would end. But Job persevered, and so have many, many people. Go to someone in your family, someone in your church, or someone else you know who has come through suffering. Ask to hear that person’s story.



One of the main points James has been making throughout his letter has been that Christians should not just profess faith in God, but they should live lives that reflect the reality of their profession. In other words, they should live in a way that shows their declaration that God really exists. One of the main ways to be ***set apart*** and to live for God, is to pray to Him.

James 5:13-20

Verse 17—

James uses the word *homoioopathes* to describe Elijah (the ESV translates as “with a nature like”). The first part of that word means similar and the last part (*pathos*) has to do with feelings or passion. So Elijah was a person who experienced similar feelings and circumstances to all of us. Barnabas and Paul used this same word in Lystra when the locals thought they were Greek gods (Acts 14:15). “We also are men, of like nature with you...”

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 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.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES

Mark 2:1-12

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ 10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, 11 “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Without yet getting hung up on some of the more difficult details in this passage, what do you think is the main point James is trying to make to his readers? How is he trying to encourage them?

Is there more value in praying with other believers than in praying by yourself? Why or why not?

Why do you think “confessing your sins to each other” is so important for healing and answered prayers?

As you look at the last two verses of James, how do they connect to the rest of this chapter? Can you make any sense of it?

APPLICATION

What does James mean by saying that “the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick?” What is the prayer of faith? Does he mean that if you simply have enough faith, God will always heal—and that if God doesn’t heal, it’s your fault for not having enough faith?

Do you pray with the understanding that God desires to answer our prayers, or do you pray with the expectation that he won’t answer them?

LIVING ROOTED

Sometimes when you’re suffering, praying can be difficult—especially if you’re trying to mind your manners with God and pray correctly. Remember that prayer is open and honest communication with God. Take Job’s example and let God know just how miserable you are, just how angry, sad, scared, or confused you may be. Tell Him exactly how you feel. You aren’t fooling Him by trying to keep a secret from Him. Begin keeping a prayer journal, in which you record the things you pray for. Plan to check back periodically to see how God is changing the situation, and how He’s changing you.



*"Draw near to God, and he will draw
near to you..."*
James 4:8