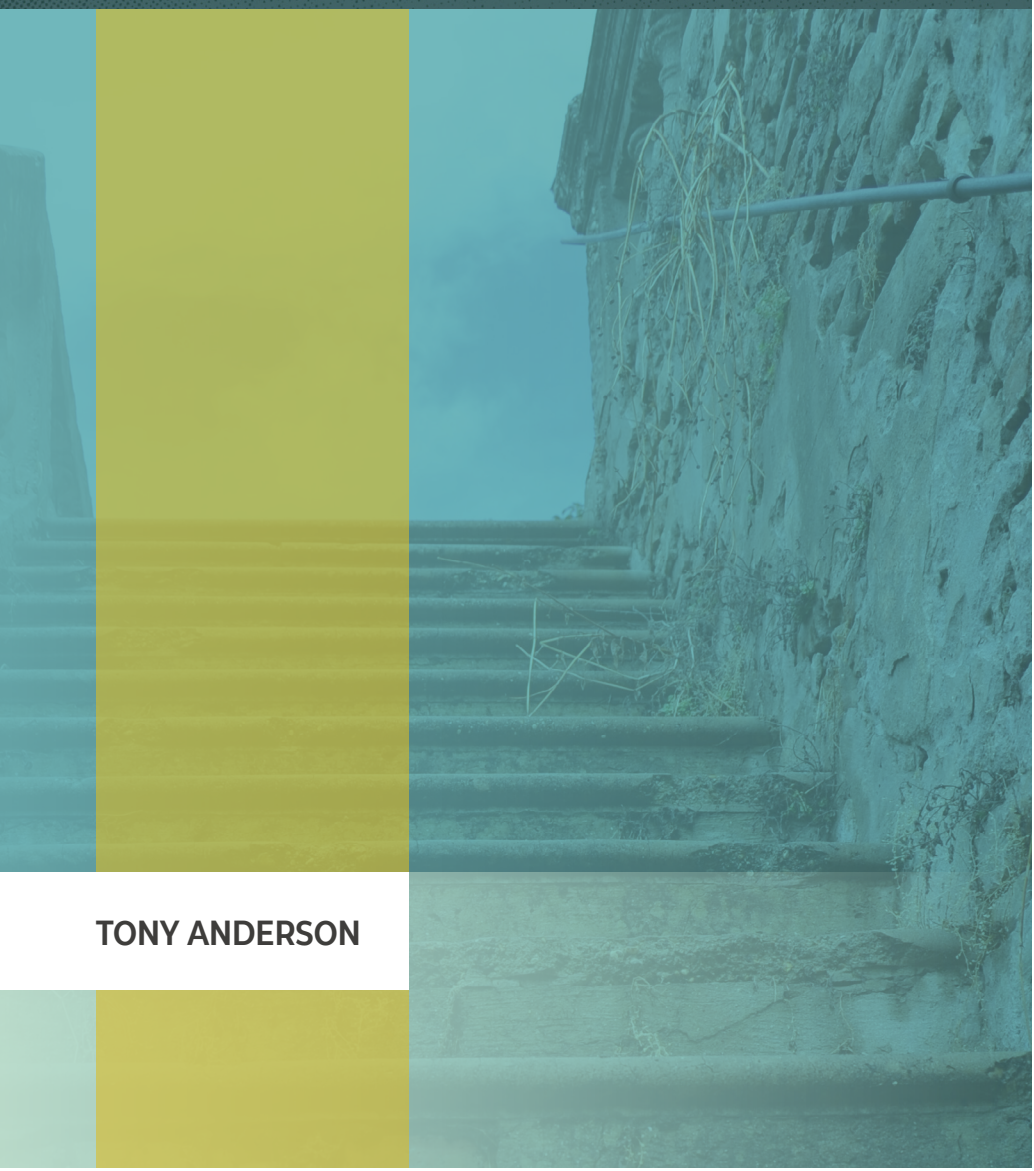
CHRISTIAN FAMILY CHAPEL HOPE CENTER

THE BOOK OF JAMES



TONY ANDERSON

JAMES
BIBLE STUDY

Chapter 1

Tony Anderson

James is generally believed to be written by Jesus' half-brother James. James was the leader of the Church in Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection. James is a book of wisdom. James takes the truth of Jesus' teaching and shows how to apply that truth to real life situations. It is a book calling for action. However, James points out that the action called for flows out of a genuine faith in Christ as our Savior. James tells us that if we have genuine "faith" it will "look like something". James is calling us to take action because a person is saved, not in order to get saved. James also has a desire for a believer to grow in holiness which is difficult. Therefore, James teaches what a believer needs in order to meet his deficiencies as he seeks to grow in holiness so that the believer will be "whole and complete lacking in nothing".

Note that some of the commentary and explanation below is adopted from The Christian Counselor's Commentary by Jay E. Adams.

Day 1 (James 1:1-4)

1. James was the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Yet, how did he describe himself in verse 1? How did he describe Jesus?

2. The term "bond-servant" or "servant" is actually better translated as "slave". What does the term "slave" convey to you?

3. A slave was a person with no inherent rights, who was bought and owned by his master, and who did only the will of his master. Do you see yourself as a slave of Jesus Christ?

4. Where are you currently choosing to do your own will rather than the will of Jesus?

5. In James 1: 2-4, James starts his letter with teaching about trials. What is James teaching your thinking should be about your own trials? Why?

The words James uses in these verses are very important, especially these:

CONSIDER: means "to lead oneself to think" or to "Count it or deem it". It calls the reader to think a certain way not feel a certain way.

JOY: James McDonald defines this well as "a supernatural delight in the person of God, the purposes of God and the people of God."

TRIALS: painful circumstances allowed by God designed to transform your character and conduct (James McDonald).

ENDURANCE (OR STEADFASTNESS): means the ability to remain under the trial.

6. How do you view the past trials of your life? How do you view the current trial(s) in your life?

7. God says here in James, that His purpose for trials is to make you whole and complete so that you have everything you need to be more righteous and Christ-like. God knows your heart perfectly and which trials are needed to change your heart and thinking. Knowing that, can you honestly tell the Lord that enduring the trial and becoming more like Jesus is more important to you than having the trial end? Or, do you value ending the trial over becoming more like Jesus? Write out your thoughts to these questions in the form of a prayer to God below.

Day 2 (James 1:5-11)

From James 1:5, what does James imply will be needed by a Christian as he seeks to endure during the trial?

If a person needs wisdom, what should he do to obtain wisdom?

How will God respond to the request for wisdom?

Today, how can you receive God's wisdom?

James makes clear, that if you ask, God will grant you wisdom. How regularly do you ask God for His wisdom to handle your trials God's way?

Based upon James 1:6, a believer should ask for wisdom "without any doubting". What do you think "without any doubting" means?

From James 1:6-8, describe the man who doubts.

Jay Adams describes a "double minded man" as one who *mixes unbelief with faith*. He has a diluted faith. It describes a man who can't agree with himself. He is undecided. He carries on a self-debate that causes vacillation. This results in unstableness. Does this describe you in any way? What must you do, based upon these verses and James 4:8-10, to not be double minded in your current circumstances?

Until a person determines not to be a double minded man, what should he expect from the Lord (v7)?

In James 1: 9-11, James addresses attitudes toward wealth and finances which can greatly influence our attitudes toward trials. In verse 9, James addresses a Christian ("brother") who is poor ("humble circumstances"). What is the brother of humble circumstances to boast in?

How does a *brother* (a Christian) of humble circumstances have a high position?

James 1:10 simply refers to a rich man (not a Christian). Why based upon James 1:10-11 is the rich man to boast in his humiliation (or humble circumstances)?

Why is the rich man (an unbeliever) considered to be in humble circumstances?

These verses make it clear that God will provide all the Christian needs but a rich man who does not know the Lord is dead despite his wealth. Therefore we should boast in the Lord not boast in our wealth or trust in our wealth for security and happiness. Is your love of wealth contributing to your current trials and circumstances by tempting you not to be

obedient to the Lord? If so, how?

Day 3 (James 1:12-16)

James 1:12 is rich with meaning. What are the rewards for the man who perseveres under trial (think present reward and future reward)?

God has promised the crown of life (i.e. eternal life) "to those who love Him". Therefore, from James 1:12 it is clear that a Christian will persevere under trial and pass the test. That doesn't mean that during the race (life), a Christian may not fall (sin), but a true believer will get up (repent) and complete the race in reliance on Jesus' strength. Do you love Jesus? Does Jesus' death for your sins move you to hang in there even in the face of trials and temptations? Why or Why not?

James 1:12 promises present blessings and happiness and (future) eternal life to the believer who perseveres during a trial. How will these blessings encourage you for future trials?

From James 1:13, does God ever tempt you to sin?

In James 1:13 James turns to address temptation. He anticipates that some false teachers may blame temptation on God. In James 1:2-4, we studied God allows trials, yet in James 1:13 James says God does not tempt us. How would you reconcile these 2 truths?

Explanation: Facts and circumstances (trials) are allowed by God in order to develop perseverance and steadfastness with

the goal that the believer will be whole and complete lacking in nothing. However, during those trials our own lusts/ strong desires tempt us to sin and not persevere. God is sovereign and in control over the circumstances and His goal is our growth in Christ-likeness. It is not God's goal or motive to tempt us to sin.

From James 1:14, from where does temptation start?

Desires are not sinful per se. Some become sinful because we want a good thing too much or in the wrong context (food or sex outside of marriage). Other desires are sinful per se because they are sinful in all contexts. Can you identify 2 desires that are currently tempting you to sin

Describe the 3 step process in James 1:14-15 from desires to

death.

Temptation itself is not sin. However, the sin process can be described this way. It starts when a person in his mind agrees to give in to the temptation and commit the act (lust has conceived)-Note that IS SIN because the person's heart has agreed to sin. Second, the sinful heart overflows and the person commits the sinful action (gives birth to sin). Finally, sin will lead to eternal death (apart from our Savior).

Based upon the above explanation, where is it best to attack your sin problem (at what point in the process)?

Think about a current or past temptation that resulted in

sin. How can you (or could you have) specifically attack your sin problem applying your answer from question #30?

In James 1:16, James says "Do not be deceived". After studying James 1:13-15, to what types of deception do you think James could be referring?

Day 4 (James 1:17-27)

From James 1:17:

How is God described?

How are His gifts described?

If you want something that is not of God or from God, can it be good? How do you know?

James 1:19-21 deal with sinful anger. Anger is sinful if (1) it does not center on things that offend God (sin offends God) or (2) it is wrongly expressed by blowing up or clamming up.

What does your sinful anger (wrath) not accomplish?

Upon reading James 1:19-21 together, to what should you be quick to listen?

Why should you be slow to speak and slow to anger (see Proverbs 14:29 and 15:18)?

From James 1:22-25, how can you deceive or delude yourself?

Is there currently an area in your life where you are deceiving yourself because you know what the Bible says in that area but you are not doing what it says? If so write that area down. Will you also write out a prayer of confession and repentance asking God to forgive you and to give you strength to do what the Bible says?

What is the promise in James 1:25 to the person who is an effectual doer of God's Word?

Can you identify a time where God blessed you when you chose to be obedient to God in a hard circumstance?

James 1:26 describes another way you could be deceived. What is it? How is such a person's religion described?

James 1:27 states that pure an undefiled religion is to care for widows and orphans in their distress and to keep yourself *unstained* by the world. How can you keep yourself unstained by the World?

James Chapter 2

Day 1 (James 2:1-13)

What sin does James warn against in James 2:1?

From James 2:1, who does James indicate is to be favored and esteemed above all? Explain your answer.

Favoritism is when you prefer a person for the sake of your own advantage because of some characteristic or trait that

person possesses. It is possible to favor the poor because your motive is to receive praise for your generosity.

Identify if and where you display favoritism.

James 2:8-9 addresses your motives for how you treat people. Based upon these verses what is a good motive? What is a bad motive?

From James 2:8-9 what is the standard you are to use in evaluating your motives?

From James 2:9, what are you doing if you are playing favorites or showing partiality?

From James 2:10-11, are some sins worse than others? Explain your answer.

The "law of freedom" in James 2:12 refers to the truth that if you are a Christian you will no longer be judged by whether or not you kept the entire law, but you have been forgiven by faith in Christ and the grace and mercy poured out upon you. How should a person who will be judged by such law of freedom speak and act (i.e. what would such speech and action look like)?

Day 2 (James 2:14-26)

From James 2: 14-17, describe “saving faith” (faith that leads to salvation) and dead faith.

Jay Adams points out that the saying in James 2:16, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled”, is used in Palestine to convey the thought “God help you, but don’t expect me to”. In many ways it is similar to when a person today may see a need and simply reply “I’ll pray for you” or “I’ll pray about it”, when that person has the ability to meet the need.

In what circumstances are you inclined or tempted to respond to a need with a dismissive “I’ll pray for you”? What is your thinking or motive when you respond that way?

How is faith without works described in James 2:20? What do you think that means?

Explanation: James is teaching us that real faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will result in good works in the life of the believer. James is NOT teaching that performing good works is how you are saved. Salvation is by faith alone that you are a sinner (a breaker of God's commands) that deserve eternal death in hell, but you believe that Jesus lived a perfect life and died on the cross to pay the penalty of your sins and that God resurrected Him thus demonstrating that Jesus death was accepted by God as punishment for your sins and that Jesus now lives so that you too may live a life pleasing to God through the power of His Spirit within you.

Evaluate your faith. Do you have saving faith in Jesus Christ? Is your faith shown to be alive by acts that show your love for God and your love for others?

J a m e s

Chapter 3

Day 1 (James 3:1-12)

From James 3:1, what is the warning to those Christians who seek to teach or counsel others? What will you do as a result of this warning?

The world "stumble" in James 3:2 refers to sin. Why do you think James say, if a man does not stumble (sin) in what he says he is a perfect man (*see also Matthew 15:19)*?

In James 3:3-6, James uses 3 illustrations regarding words and their effect. What is the teaching from these illustrations?

Describe below a time where a small word of yours was used for great good? Great harm?

Based upon James 3:8, who can tame his tongue?

Based upon your answer to the question above, how will you be able to tame your tongue?

In James 3:9-12, James uses illustrations of inconsistencies such as a fig tree producing olives. What is James warning against by these illustrations?

Your words can be dishonest and unkind or kind and truthful. Remember, being kind and truthful is more than NOT being dishonest or unkind. How does your speech need to change in order to be more Christ-like? Be specific. Maybe it involves certain people or certain situations.

Day 2 (James 3:13-18)

Biblical wisdom can be thought of as "biblical knowledge that is applied or lived out". Based upon James 3:13, how can you know if you are wise and understanding?

Based upon James 3:14-15, how can you know if you are not exercising Godly wisdom?

What is the warning to you in James 3:14, and why do you think James would need to extend that warning to you?

What can bitter jealousy and selfish ambition do to relationships?

The type of "wisdom" that would act with bitter jealousy or selfish ambition comes from where?

From James 3:17, how is godly wisdom from above described?

Note: "pure" in James 3:17 refers to motive.

Are you currently thinking or acting with bitter jealousy and selfish ambition? If so, will you ask God for forgiveness and repent and begin acting with godly wisdom? Write your prayer of confession and repentance below.

J a m e s
Chapter 4

Day 1 (James 4:1-3)

Note: When James wrote his letter, there were no chapter headings. The first 3 verses of Chapter 4 are a continuation of James' teaching from the end of Chapter 3, where James points out that Godly wisdom is peaceable, gentle, full of

mercy, and the person who seeks righteousness seeks peace. However, James addresses the fact that as believers we don't always seek peace.

From James 4:1, where does James say quarrels and conflicts "among you" (Christians) come from?

These "pleasures" (also translated "passions", "desires" or "lusts") wage war in your (bodily) members. What do you think that means? What are these pleasures "warring" against?

In James 4:2, James points out that you want something, but what happens when you don't get it?

At a minimum, how many people does it take for a fight and quarrel?

James is not saying desires are sinful, unless of course a person's desire is for something that is sinful in and of itself (such as a desire to view pornography). However, James points out that fights and quarrels (which are sinful, unloving, and hurt the testimony of Christians) are a result of a person wanting something so badly that his desire for it wages a war in his heart against God's instruction (to love others and consider the interest of others as more important than yourself-*see Philippians 2*) to the point that he decides that he "wants" this desire more than pleasing God. He will then fight to get it or fight when he doesn't get it. Such a desire is an "idol".

Brad Bigney describes an idol as “anything or anyone that captures our heart, minds or affections more than God”.

In James 4:2-3, how does James describe the prayer life of the person who will fight and quarrel for one of his desires/idols?

James teaches that we will have problems when (1) we don’t pray with right motives or (2) we pray with wrong motives. As a Christian, our primary motive in prayer must be that in the asking, God will be pleased and glorified. This doesn’t mean we can’t ask for something specific, just that we must trust God if He says “no” or “wait” (which will seem like “no”) and believe that His answer is best.

Is there a circumstance in your life where you are currently not praying or praying with a wrong motive? If so, please write a prayer of confession and repentance to the Lord below.

Day 2 (James 4:4-10)

"Worldliness" is defined by Jay Adams as a matter of one's orientation. It is finding guidance, meaning and satisfaction in the world rather than from God.

How is "worldliness" or "friendship with world" described in James 4:4?

What are the two descriptions of the person who seeks friendship with the world found in James 4:4?

In James 4:4, the term translated "wishes" means chooses, resolves, or determines. It is thus a deliberate act. The same can be said for the verb "makes" as in he makes himself an enemy of God. Can you identify areas or decisions in your life where you have determined to pursue guidance, meaning or satisfaction from the ways of the world and therefore act like an enemy of God? If so, write down a few below.

Pride is a mindset that says everything should exist for me or be about me. It is self-seeking and self-elevating. What does God do to the proud?

The term "resist" is a military term that means come against. If you are proudly seeking your own way and the way of the world, what are your chances of long term success (peace, hope and blessing)? Why?

From James 4:7-10, describe what repentance from pride (seeking your own will) involves.

From James 4:6-10, when you repent as James describe what will God do for you?

These verses speak of the need for a believer to be humble. Look up and write out the definition of humble. What does it look like to humble yourself to God? To other people? Be specific about attitude and action.

Is there currently an area in your life where you are proudly seeking your own way and the ways of the world? Are you experiencing resistance from the all-powerful, all-knowing God? If so, will you write a prayer of confession and repentance below and identify ways you can live differently?

Day 3 (James 4:11-17)

What are you commanded not to do in James 4:11? What are some other common terms for the behavior forbidden in this verse?

Why does it say that if you speak against your brother you are actually speaking against the (God's) law and are judg-

ing the law (see Leviticus 19:16)?

From James 4:12, who is the only Lawgiver and Judge?

Based upon your answer to question 18, whose role are you trying to play if you speak against the law and seek to judge the law?

James 4:12, makes clear that you are not to judge your brother. What type of judgment is prohibited in this verse?

Explanation: God alone is the Judge and determines what is right or wrong. God has revealed to us in His Word behaviors and actions that are sinful (like murder, theft etc.). Therefore, it is not sin to say that someone's known behavior is sinful (such as adultery). In that case, you are not judging the action sinful; God has already done that. However, in these passages, James warns us against speaking against and judging someone's motives or motivation for doing things because only God knows a man's heart and intentions (absent the man expressing his true motives). As Jay Adams points out, sometimes if we knew a man's true motive, what may look like sin may not be sin at all. Conversely, an action that seems acceptable may be sinful if done from an improper motive.

From James 4:13-16, should you as a Christian make plans? Explain your answer.

In making plans, what two realities are pointed out in James 4:14? How should those realities affect your planning?

What is the instruction to you in James 4:15 about planning?

How do you respond when God changes your plans? What does that reveal about what and how you think about God?

In James 4:16, “all such boasting” is evil. To what is “all such boasting” referring to in this context?

James’ statement in James 4:17 refers back to all he has written but also has universal application. What is the teaching in this verse?

Is there something you are not doing that you know you should? Will you do it as soon as possible?

J a m e s
Chapter 5

Day 1 (James 5:1-12)

Note: Calvin, Jay Adams and others believe the reference to the rich in James 5:1 is probably to the unsaved rich similar to Chapter 1, verse 10. There is also no call to repentance for the rich is this section.

The warnings to the rich unbeliever should be heeded by the rich Christian. What will become of a person's material blessings?

What becomes of the rich man who mistreats the poor (v3)?

The cries of poor that are mistreated by the rich reach whom?

What instruction do you receive from James 5:1-6 on how to handle to your wealth?

James 5:7-13 address periods of suffering. In verses 7-8, what is the believer instructed "to do" during periods of trial and suffering?

How would you "strengthen your heart" in periods of trial and suffering?

What is the believer commanded not to do during periods of trial and suffering? Why do you think this would be a temptation?

What does James say about the character of God to offer encouragement to believers in times of trial and suffering? Write down a time where you have experienced that aspect of God's character.

Day 2 (James 5:13-20)

From James 5:13 what else is a believer to do if he is suffering (notice it is a command, not a suggestion)? Have you found this difficult to do in times of your suffering? Why?

Also from James 5:13 what is a believer commanded to do if she is cheerful? Have you found this difficult to do? Why?

What is the believer commanded to do if he is sick (note the context indicates that James is speaking of some type of debilitating illness)? Who is to take the initiative in this process?

What is the promise in James 5:15?

What is the command to believers in James 5:16?

Explanation: James 5:14 calls for the elders to anoint the sick person with oil. Although some believe this is to represent the Holy Spirit, the better interpretation is that the oil in this case was a reference to the medicine of the time. Ultimate healing comes from God and He at times uses medicine. So we are to use medicine but our trust should be in God not the medicine. Also, verses 15-16 speak to the person who is experiencing illness as a consequence of his sin. In those cases, if that person repents, he will be healed. However, we know from Scripture that not all illness is a direct consequence of the individual's sin (*See John 9-healing of the blind man*). Neither the sick person nor the elders can know that any particular illness is a direct consequence of sin. However, it is always wise to evaluate while you are experiencing an illness if there is any unrepentant sin that needs to be confessed and forgiveness sought.

Also, the command to confess sins to one another is a universal command not just in the context of illness. Our confession of sin must be to those who are hurt by the sin and who have

witnessed or are aware of the sin. There may also be wisdom to confess your sin to a pastor or counselor to help with repentance and sanctification.

The ESV translates the last sentence of James 5:16 as "*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working*". Jay Adams translates this sentence as "*The petition of a righteous person has very powerful effects.*" Knowing that no one is sinless, how would you describe a "righteous person"?

What must you do on a regular basis to be a righteous person (See Psalm 66:18)?

What should you do if you see that one of your brothers or sisters in Christ is straying from the truth (i.e. sinning in thought

or action)?

By implication, what will happen to the straying brother if he does not turn from the error of his ways?

Note: Some scholars believe the straying brother in James 5:19-20 is a true believer and that by turning him from the errors of this way, you are saving him from physical death which is often a consequence of rebellion and that once he turns, the forgiveness granted by God through Christ blood "covers" the sin. Others believe the person never was truly saved and that if he is not turned to Christ for salvation he will experience eternal death. Both interpretations provide instruction.

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