

CHRISTIAN FAMILY CHAPEL HOPE CENTER

THE BOOK OF JAMES

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JAMES BIBLE STUDY

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Chapter 1

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 word 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.

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

17. 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?

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

19. 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)?

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

21. 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?

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

26. 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.

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

28. Desires are not sinful per se. Some become sinful

because we want a good thing too much or in the wrong context (i.e. 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

29. 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).

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

Day 4 (James 1:17-27)

33. From James 1:17:

a. How is God described?

b. How are His gifts described?

c. 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.

34. What does your sinful anger (wrath) not accomplish?

35. Upon reading James 1:19-21 together, to what should you be quick to listen?
36. Why should you be slow to speak and slow to anger (see Proverbs 14:29 and 15:18)?
37. From James 1:22-25, how can you deceive or delude yourself?
38. 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?

39. What is the promise in James 1:25 to the person who is an effectual doer of God's Word?
40. Can you identify a time where God blessed you when you chose to be obedient to God in a hard circumstance?
41. James 1:26 describes another way you could be deceived. What is it? How is such a person's religion described?
42. James 1:27 states that pure and 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?

12. 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 deserves 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.

13. 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?

8. 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.

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

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

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

15. 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.

4. 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".

5. 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.

6. 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.

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

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

9. 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.

20. 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.

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

22. In making plans, what two realities are pointed out in James 4:14? How should those realities affect your planning?
23. What is the instruction to you in James 4:15 about planning?
24. How do you respond when God changes your plans? What does that reveal about what and how you think about God?
25. In James 4:16, "all such boasting" is evil. To what is "all such boasting" referring to in this context?

26. 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?

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

13. 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.

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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