

Genuine Faith

A Study of the Book of James

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As with all people, all fruit has a specific DNA. Orange trees do not produce apples nor can “a fig tree bear olives, or a grape vine bear figs,” as James says in his letter.

So what does fruit have to do with the letter of James? A lot. As we read this letter it’s easy to see the ethics James passionately writes about and assume “just trying harder” is the route to handling trials with joy, never showing favoritism, mastering the use of one’s tongue, combining faith with deeds, etc. However, more resolve usually gets you nowhere, particularly over the long haul. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. A question we might ask as we approach the study of James is this, “What presupposition does James have that makes it logical to expect these ethical ‘mountain tops’ in believers of Jesus Christ?”

Might I suggest it’s in the DNA of the fruit!

I think a way to understand why James writes the way he writes is in James 1:18, “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”

Interestingly, James mixes the metaphors of birth and firstfruits, but each has the same result. That which gives birth brings forth the same likeness. Fathers beget children that have their DNA and trees bring forth fruit that have their DNA.

No child is different from his or her father who created them, so the old sayings are true, “Like father like son,” or “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” It is also that way with God’s children. We are His image bearers and as believers in Christ we are predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son (Jesus, our elder brother).

This is why James can say, “Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials.” Not because he is promoting a superior moralism or works righteousness or salvation by works, but because those who are born of God are the firstfruits from His loins and as His fruit we are wired in our DNA through the life of our older brother Jesus to handle trials with joy.

Will we ever arrive at this perfectly? Not until we see Jesus face to face. But in our failure, Jesus becomes ever so beautiful. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died so that in our sin and failure we are covered by His perfect life and atoned for by His perfect death.

James can tell us not to show favoritism because when we do, Christ covers our sin and continues to call us to a life of no favoritism. In the gospel we are covered and called.

As we study James, keep in mind he calls us to the life of a child of God and as a child we are therefore a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. James knows we’ve been born of Him, we’ve got the DNA, the fruit can be produced in our lives all because the Father

of the heavenly lights has chosen to give us new birth. With this new birth is the powerful provision of Christ. Whereby the fruit of the gospel can bud, bloom, and harvest right out of our lives. As it is natural for the vine to bring forth grapes, so it is natural through the Spirit, for the child of God to bring forth fruit as a servant of Christ.

Reading James is crushing. Anyone who feels confident after a quick read of this letter is delusional. How will we not run to try harder to produce fruit by willpower (the works of the flesh)? By asking these two questions as we study, "How is Jesus the ultimate embodiment of the one who lived out the truth of this letter?" and "How is Jesus' death on the cross the ultimate payment for this sin and need of mine?"

If the writings of James throws us toward the beauty of Jesus and the good news of the gospel then the fruit of the word that has been planted in us will be born in our lives. And in the end, isn't that what we are ultimately hungry for... a love of Jesus and a life as His servant.

Angel Richard
July 6, 2006

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Suggested commentary options:

- Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, New Testament Commentary, Baker Books
- Alec Motyer, *The Message of James*, The Bible Speaks Today Series, InterVarsity Press
- George M. Stulac, *James*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, InterVarsity Press

Internet resource:

- www.biblegateway.com

Historical Background

As with many a good movie or book, the author gives his audience just enough information in the trailer or book cover to entice them on and to give them sure footing as the story begins. Here is a brief description of a few characters and settings so that as we begin our study of James, we too will be drawn to lean in with open ears and to see the horizon of the letter's historical setting.

Most scholars attribute the book of James to Jesus' half brother. James was referred to as James, the Just, because he was a 'pious man' and Camel Knees, as it was reported that he was continually on his knees in prayer and worship causing them to grow hard like a camel.

James became the leader of the Jerusalem church in A.D. 44 after the death of Peter and died a martyr's death in A.D. 62. Many date this letter between A.D. 44 and A.D. 49 because there is no mention of the Jerusalem Council that met in A.D. 49. Therefore, A.D. 45 is a suggested date making James the earliest book written in the New Testament.

This letter is a general epistle meaning that it was not written to a specific church. The reference to the 'twelve tribes' is a synonym for Israel. The internal evidence in the letter points to an audience of Jewish believers who were scattered after the great persecution that followed Stephen's death.

This letter is characterized as an 'ethical epistle' and not a book primarily about what one must know, but rather about the outworking of a personal acquaintance. As a believer in Christ, James points to the logical overflowing character that is consistent with those who would call themselves "a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." What James offers us is a pastor's concern of his people regarding their faith and the sin that so easily entangles them. There is a wealth of wisdom and encouragement in this letter.

Enjoy the journey into the heart and mind of James, the Just. Oh, may our knees become hard like a camels' as we study these rich words!

Lesson One

Author and Readers – James 1:1

“His purpose in this letter does not require that he assert his apostleship or his eldership. James’ identity is already known to the church at large. It is only his servanthood to the Lord Jesus Christ that matters to him here, for this is the theme of his letter: How shall we live as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

George M. Stulac, *James*

As we begin our study of James it is helpful to start by looking at the historical context or setting of the author and the readers of the letter. This lesson focuses on who the author was and what prompted the writing of this letter.

Find It

- **Author**

Read through the letter of James in one sitting and answer these questions.

1. Who wrote this letter?
2. Picture him writing this letter, what is the tone behind his words, his heart for the readers, and his emotions toward the topics he writes about?

In verse one we see the author identify himself as James. But which James is it? Scholars typically list five men who are called James in the New Testament. They are:

- The son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Acts 1:13)
- James the younger (Mark 15:40)
- James, the disciple, the son of Zebedee (Matt. 10:2; Acts 1:13; 12:2)
- The father of Judas (not Iscariot [Luke 6:16; Acts 12:17])
- The half brother of Jesus who became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; I Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9,12)

Most commentaries and the traditions of church history point to James the half brother of Jesus as the author of this letter.

3. To gather a fuller picture of James look up these passages and write down what these New Testament writers tell us about him and his brother Jesus. Describe the historical context we find them in.

- Matthew 13:53-58

- John 7:1-5

- I Corinthians 15:3-8

- Galatians 1:13-20 (the apostle Paul is writing this)

After reading what these authors have written about James go back to James 1:1 again and see what he says about himself.

4. What does he call himself?

5. What does that tell us about how he thinks of himself?

6. What does it tell you that he calls his half brother “the Lord Jesus Christ”?

- **Readers**

7. Who received this letter?

8. Using the internal evidence from this letter are they believers in Christ or unbelievers? How can you tell?
9. Think about people groups that you hear about through today's news that are displaced or "scattered" from their homes. What are the circumstances of those who have been forced to leave their homeland and dispersed throughout other countries?
10. From the themes and topics James addresses, what picture can you put together about some of the situations and circumstances these people deal with? Describe them.

To read more about the historical context, pick up your commentary and look in the introduction section and the chapter covering James 1: 1. If you have time, find out what "the twelve tribes" means. Note anything you specifically want to remember.

Apply It

Describe in a few sentences one thing that stood out to you in this lesson and why it resonated with you.

Look At Him

What would it have been like to grow up with Jesus, observe His earthly ministry as an unbeliever, watch His crucifixion, and then meet Him after He had risen from the tomb?

Think about how John described the attitude of Jesus' brothers (John 7:1-5). Now, take a few minutes to picture in your mind the meeting between James and his brother, the resurrected Jesus. What might have taken place at this reunion? What words could have been exchanged? What emotions shared?

This meeting between brothers changed everything. James moved from a continuing attitude of unbelief to calling himself the servant of a great King. He becomes James the Just, the leader of the church in Jerusalem. The resurrected Jesus became beautiful to James he became his Lord.

If you are exploring Christianity or are a new Christian you may want to look up Acts 2:22-39 (the apostle Peter is speaking in this passage) and spend 5-10 minutes pondering over the beauty of the resurrected Jesus.

If you are familiar with the Bible and Christianity, go to a passage that you like or remember in your mind what you know of the resurrected Christ and meditate on Him.

As your heart is stirred, tell Jesus why He is amazing. Tell Him what you enjoy about Him. Tell Him how you are humbled by Him. Tell Him what you are thankful for about Him. Let Him be beautiful to you rather than useful. Let the heart of a servant rise up in you rather than you demanding that He do your bidding.

Oh to say as James did, "we are the servants of our God and Lord Jesus Christ!"

Lesson Two

Trials and Temptations - James 1:2-18

*"However reluctant we may be to embrace it, we know that suffering rightly received is one of the Christian's supreme means of grace."
John Wenham, *The Goodness of God**

Find It

- **Trials**

1. From what James writes in verses 2-12, describe the journey trials take us on.
2. What attitude does he implore us to have?
3. Using an English dictionary, commentary, or Greek dictionary, find out what the word "consider" means.
4. There is something we are to know in the midst of trials. What is it and how does it relate to the word "consider"?
5. Even though it seems as if James has started a new topic in verse 5, he hasn't. The lack of wisdom and the attitude we have in the midst of trials are intertwined. Think through why James connects these subjects and write down your thoughts.

6. Look at verses 9-11, how do these connect with the passage above it and the one below regarding temptation? What are the specific trials and temptations of individuals facing these two situations?

7. What is the hope he gives us? (v. 5 and 12)

- **Temptation**

8. After reading through James 1:13-18, write down the progression James describes to his readers about temptation.

9. What does it birth?

10. Compare this birth to the birth described in verses 17-18. Map out the progression of this new birth.

For further insight, read over this section of James in your commentary. Note anything you want to particularly remember or any question that arose for you.

Apply It

What attitude most often characterizes you in the midst of the trials and suffering you face?

What do you tend to forget about God, yourself, and life when you experience trials?

In what ways are your understanding of sin and temptation different after studying what James teaches the church?

Take a recent scenario where you were tempted and sinned. Using the progression in verses 13-15 describe how the temptation and sin played itself out in your life.

Look At Him

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. After you have read it, place this passage alongside James 1:2-12. Observe the similar terms and phrases between the two passages in the New International Version. Look at how Jesus embodies and lives out what James writes about trials and temptations. See what the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus “considered” in the midst of His trials.

As you see Jesus in Hebrews 12:1-3, what of His beauty resonates with you? Take a few minutes to worship and enjoy Him. Write your thoughts out in a prayer if you like.

Lesson Three

The Birth, Growth, and Evidence of Real Religion James 1:16-27

“James is not merely a moralist. A moralist has a list of ethical guidelines by which to live a happy and respectable life. A Christian has a person, Jesus Christ, to whom the Christian owes everything, to whom the Christian surrenders everything, for whom the Christian lives in everything. Because of that relationship with Christ the Christian becomes a person of deep moral commitment...Therefore, what [James] writes is now not a gathering of moralisms...but about life in Christ.”
George M. Stulac, *James*

It is an amazing thing that God brings sinners into His family and calls them His children. Not only does He “birth” them but also over the long journey of life, He conforms them into the image of His Son. Throughout the New Testament different writers contribute to our understanding of this process of becoming God’s child and in this portion of James’ letter he likewise gives us a rich contribution of insight into the birth, growth, and evidence of a child of God.

Find It

Read James 1:16-27

- **The Birth -1:16-18**

1. What do we learn about our Father?
2. How are His children born?
3. Why are they born?
4. What does the phrase, “that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created” imply about the nature of this new birth?

- **The Growth - 1:19-25**

5. What is the connection between 1:16-18 and 1:19-25? (Hint: It has to do with 'the word.')
 6. What is to be our attitude toward God's word? Why is that important? What are the possible consequences if we don't?
 7. According to these verses, what role is Scripture to have in our lives?
 8. As we look at the phrase "the perfect law that gives us freedom," what does it tell us about God's law and real freedom? How does that differ from the way God's law and freedom are typically understood?
 9. Keeping with the context of this passage, how will we "get rid of all the moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent"?
 10. How do we "humbly accept the word planted" in us?
- **The Evidence - 1:26-27**
11. List the three things that James says are "pure and faultless religion"?
 12. James uses an interesting word in verses 26-27. When he says "religious" and "religion" what picture usually comes to our mind? Describe it.
 13. How does that differ from James' picture?

The Greek word James uses here actually means, *the external manifestation of faith or spirituality*. The word religion is used as a “comprehensive word for the specific ways in which a heart relationship to God is expressed in our lives” (Moyter p. 75). In North America, we tend to hear the term religion or religious and picture the activities done toward God to earn His favor or it is “the conforming of one’s outward behavior to a ‘religious’ pattern” (Moyter p.79). However, when James uses this word the focus is actually outward and inward not upward. There is no hint of earning something in James’ use of religious or some external conforming but rather, expressing something that is true of an individual’s nature.

Pick up your commentary at this point and search out answers to any questions you have.

Apply It

In what way has your understanding of the new birth changed or been renewed after studying this passage?

When do you typically listen to God’s word but don’t do what it says?

How have you seen that affect your growth in Christ?

Has your picture of authentic faith been the same as the one James teaches us?
Where do you need to see God change you?

Look At Him

Read 1:26-27 again. Jesus embodies and expresses everything that is pure and faultless religion. He is the hero of this picture James portrays and we, by His life, death, and resurrection, get credit for the perfect ways He bridled His tongue, cared for the widows and orphans, and kept Himself unpolluted by the world. He was fully acceptable to God.

Take 5-10 minutes and enjoy this about Him. Sit and gaze upon Him and let the word of God take root in you. We only become “doers” of the word in proportion to our experience of the beauty of Christ and His love for us. So don’t rush away to the next thing on your agenda and miss the moment.

Lesson Four

Caring for the Needy - James 2:1-26

“The sin of partiality is the sin of judging by accidentals and externals and, as James noted, it always bears down on the poor and disadvantaged.”
Alec Motyer, *The Message of James*

In the preceding verses (1:26-27) James touched on that which he now elaborates. We will see over the course of these next five lessons what he means about caring for the needy, taming the tongue, and living a life of personal purity. This lesson will focus on Chapter 2 so that we might understand what James tells us about the ways in which genuine faith pours out in our relationships with the poor and how we are tempted to sin.

Find It

Read James 2:1-26 to grasp the whole picture.

- **Favoritism**

1. How does God relate to the poor?
2. How are we to relate to the poor?
3. How are we tempted to sin in this relationship?
4. What are you doing when you show favoritism? What wrong values lie behind it?
5. What does James teach the church about the poor?
6. How is favoritism breaking the royal law?

7. What does James teach the church about race and class in this passage and what motivation does he give to end this practice in the church?

- **Faith and Deeds**

8. From what is written in this passage, explain the relationship between faith and deeds.

9. James states in verse 24 “that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” Paul says in Romans 3:28, “We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” How shall we resolve the apparent conflict between these verses? (Hint: Think about how their key words might be defined differently.)

10. Take a closer look at Abraham and think through the chronology of Abraham’s faith, his being considered righteous, his works, his being credited righteous. How do they fit together? In what ways does this help us to understand the relationship between faith and deeds?

11. What does this passage tell us about the works of faith that are to be stirred up in us?

Read the commentary and note any insight you would like to remember about this section of James.

Apply It

Do you perceive the scenario (which can take different forms) of favoritism occurring in our church? If so, how does it manifest itself?

How do you find yourself engaging in favoritism? How would James tell you to go about fighting this tendency?

What would your life look like if these passages were powerfully real in your life? (Ask God for it!)

Look At Him

How is Jesus the ultimate picture of someone who never showed favoritism?

If you are not sure how to answer that question, take a few minutes to look up any of these passages and enjoy watching Jesus live in situations where He could have showed favoritism but didn't. Luke 7:36-50; Luke 19:1-10; John 4:1-42

What can you praise Him for from the passage(s) you read?

Let His beauty melt your heart in such a way that the Spirit changes the hidden and obvious places you embody favoritism.

Lesson Five

The Key – James 3:1-12

“The control of the tongue is more than an evidence of spiritual maturity; it is the means to it.” Alec Motyer, The Message of James

*“There are few sins people commit in which the tongue is not involved.”
Donald Burdick*

In this lesson we are going to ask James a question. “How important is taming the tongue?”

Find It

To help gather our thoughts we will look at *the power of the tongue, the source of its evil, and the sin that it produces.*

Read James 3:1-12

- **The Power Of The Tongue**

1. Look at verse 2 and state the two general principles.

2. What are the two examples James uses to illustrate the relationship between the tongue and the body?

3. From these pictures what power does the tongue have?

- **The Source Of Its Evil**

4. Using verses 5-6, write down everything you learn about the tongue and its effects.

5. James gives us insight to the source of the tongue's evil. He says it "is itself set on fire by hell." Dr. Kistemaker in his commentary on James states that, "Satan himself sets man's tongue on fire." (pg. 112) Why not add the input that Jesus gives us by reading Mark 7:17-25. What do you learn from this passage?

6. One commentary stated that verse 6 is one of the most difficult to interpret in James' letter so don't dismay if you are asking more questions than there seem to be answers for. Look into your commentary for help and write down what you want to remember.

- **The Sin It Produces**
Re-read verses 7-12

7. What does James teach us about taming the tongue?

8. What does verse 8 tell us is the reason?

9. James gives us another principle in verses 9-10. Write it down in a sentence.

10. What are the illustrations he gives to show the logical absurdity of this sin?

11. Looking back at verses 2 and 6, why does James say that taming the tongue is the key to spiritual maturity?

*After all this crushing news do not our hearts cry out,
"Oh God, save us from our tongues!"*

Apply It

How can we as a church not ask ourselves the painful but honest questions James prompts us to? Here are a few that come to mind:

What do others hear coming out of your mouth? How would they describe the conversations they have with you (the topics you discuss)?

When do you typically abuse the power of your tongue? When are you unguarded with your speech?

If it is moral and logical nonsense to have praise of God and cursing of men coming out of our mouths, what do we need to ask ourselves when we do see the inconsistency?

If what comes out of your mouth shows what's in your heart then describe your heart?

How are humility and the use of our tongues interrelated?

Look At Him

This section of James' letter has left us crying out to find the power to tame our tongues. Rather than run to a quick fix, why not let the weight of our need sit heavy on us this week. News is only good in proportion to the need we have for it. May our hearts increase in need this week as we wait for James to tell us the source, the problem, and the solution.

The answer always lies with Jesus and we will finish out this week by seeing His beauty once again. Read I Peter 2:21-24. As if it was a portrait to gaze at or a story to watch, spend as much time as you like reading, re-reading, and thinking through every word in this passage. Stay here until your heart is ablaze over Christ and His righteous life. Stay until you are humbled and overwhelmed by His love for you in verse 24. Stay until you find yourself authentically crying out that you want Him to change your tongue.

Lesson 6

The Problem and the Source of Change James 3:13-4:10

"Pride shuts out grace." Dr. Simon Kistemaker, James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude

"To You, O Lord, I offer my heart promptly and sincerely." John Calvin

There are a few things to keep in mind as we study this section. First, James is not addressing those outside the church; he is directly speaking to the believers in the scattered churches who are falling away from living lives of love in their relationships with one another.

Second, starting with 2:1 through the rest of the letter James is elaborating on the instruction he gave back in 1:26-27 where he told them to keep "a tight rein on their tongues," "care for the needy," and "keep themselves from being polluted by the world." These themes weave themselves throughout the letter, and as a shepherd cares over the ills of his sheep, to apply the ointments of healing. So, James goes beyond generalities to confront specific sin and direct them toward the promise of God's grace.

Find It

Read James 3:13-4:10

- **The Problem**

Where do you get your wisdom? 3:13-18

Describe earthly wisdom by using these questions:

1. Where does it come from?
2. What is the fruit of earthly wisdom?
3. How does it affect our relationships and behavior?

4. Why would earthly wisdom produce fights and quarrels, greed and selfish ambition?

Compare this with the “wisdom that comes from heaven.”

5. What is the fruit of this wisdom?

6. What does it mean to do deeds in “humility that comes from wisdom?”

7. How does James’ view of wisdom compare with our culture’s view of wisdom?

What is going on inside you? 4:1-3

8. Describe the battle within.

9. How does it influence your relationships?

10. How is prayer not used or misused in this battle?

Who is your friend? 4:4-5

11. What does James call these people? Why is such a strong word justified here?

12. Describe what is happening with the church. How serious is this sin?

13. What do you share when you have a friendship with someone? (Hint: values, etc.)

14. In Davids' commentary on James he states that the word "world" represents, "the whole system of humanity as organized without God." This would include its institutions, values, mores, and institutional and cultural structures. Given this definition, describe in concrete ways, how "friendship with the world" looks in your life.

The Source of Change

George M. Stulac describes this portion of James' letter as a "portrait of repentance." Let us take a closer look at God's heart toward His children and the response born out of such a relationship.

- But God... 4:6

15. What does this verse tell us about God? What does it tell us about the nature of His grace?

- Our Response 4:7-10

16. What does James tell the church to do in the midst of this strong admonishment?

17. What are the promises in verses 6, 8, and 10? What does this tell you about God's heart toward His children even when they have fallen?
18. What does it mean practically to "submit to God?" Why do you think this was James' first instruction to these stumbling believers?
19. What does it mean to "resist the devil?"
20. What do verses 8 and 9 teach us about the nature of authentic repentance? How does your own repentance compare to this description?

Remember you can pick up your commentary at any point to help with the questions that arise.

Apply It

Given the length of this lesson and the fact that application was woven into the above questions here is just one thing to help you gather all your study together. In one or two sentences write down what the primary problem is and the solution James gives us for change.

Look At Him

Speaking of 4:6, Alec Motyer in his commentary says, "What comfort there is in this verse! It tells us that God is tirelessly on our side." Does not our hearts ache to hear so? Again James leaves us crying out for God to save us from the problems deep in our hearts. Take time to read Isaiah 53:4-12 and let the words of this passage wash over your mind. Hear how "tirelessly" Jesus is on your side as He takes on your sin to bring you peace. May the truth of Christ break through out blinded eyes and capture us with His splendor!

Lesson Seven

The Three “You-Who’s” – James 4:11-5:5

“Slander issues from the heart of the person who fails to consider others above himself.”

“Man makes plans and talks as if he were the master of his life and God does not exist...James has overheard this preposterous talk, records it, and shows his readers the senselessness of living a life of practical atheism.”

“...when wealth is devoid of the Lord’s blessing, trouble accompanies it in the form of envy, injustice, oppression, theft, murder, abuse, and misuse.”

Dr. Simon Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*

Find It

- **You who judge your neighbor – 4:11-12**

1. What does it mean to slander someone? Describe a practical example.
2. George M. Stulac defines judging in James’ context “to refer to the act of setting oneself up as a judge and lawgiver, as if one had the authority to determine what is right and wrong about another person’s life.” (p.155) Why is judging so wrong and how does it break the “royal law” James previously wrote about?

- **You who forget God – 4:13-17**

3. When James uses the word “say” he is not referring to the words that proceed from the mouth but rather the attitude that resides in the heart. So, after re-reading this passage, describe and compare the two attitudes James writes about.
4. What is the perspective we are to remember about our lives?

5. Why is the boasting and bragging of self-sufficiency evil?
 - **You who are rich and use people – 5:1-6**
6. Describe what these people have valued and how they have lived.
7. What does this teach us about the danger of riches?
8. What makes all these behaviors offensive to God? What does this tell you about God's nature and His concerns?
9. What is going to happen to their treasures and to them?
10. How have they abused and misused people?
11. Who is hearing all this? What does that tell you about his nature?

Apply It

How does judging happen in our churches today?

Consider these three areas where we tend to judge people:

- The motives behind others actions and words
- The way individuals spend money
- The way families parent their children

Describe a situation where you have judged someone in one of these categories. How did it affect your relationship with them? Did you use your mouth to sin against them? If so, how?

When in life do you tend to live like a practical atheist even though you say you believe in God?

When you read 5:1-6 what is your response? Are you angry, convicted, uncomfortable, or something else? Why do you think you feel that way?

In light of these passages how do you think God is leading you to live differently?

Look At Him

Throughout this section of James' letter he refers to God as the Lawgiver and Judge. This ought to humble and comfort us. He is able to "save and destroy." Read John 12:44-50 allowing the words of Christ to express His beauty. What can you praise God for from this passage? What can you thank Jesus for? Take 5-10 minutes to enjoy the One who came to save the world. The One who came to save you.

Lesson Eight

Patience and Prayer – 5:7-18

*“We neither drift into holiness nor are we wafted there by some heavenly visitation;
we grow to holiness and, like every harvest, it is a process.”*
Alec Motyer, *The Message of James*

Find It

- **Patience – 5:7-12**

For the Lord’s Coming

1. What are we to learn from the illustration James uses about patience?
2. Describe how the aspects (mindset, perspective, emotions, etc.) of a farmer waiting for his crop parallel a believer waiting for the Lord’s coming.
3. How are believers to treat one another as we wait for Christ’s return? Why do you think we would sin against each other in this way?

In Suffering

4. Who are we to take courage from as we suffer?

Alec Motyer, in his commentary *The Message of James*, states, “The story of Job is an example of faithful steadfastness, but even more of divine purpose...It was the objective of God from the start: above all it was the enrichment of knowing God more fully.” (p. 183)

5. If you have the time, go back to the book of Job to see “what the Lord finally brought about.” Read Job 1:6-2:10 and Job 38:1-42:17 to look at the beginning and end of the story. As you consider Job, what about his life and his interaction with God encourage you toward patience and persevering? How would his story motivate you to stop grumbling?

6. What is the general principle James teaches the church about their word in verse 12?
 - **Prayer – 5:13-20**

7. In what circumstances are we to pray?

8. What variety of prayers are we to pray?

9. How are we to pray?

10. Why are we to pray? (v. 15-18)

11. What is the general principle about prayer in this passage?

12. Dr. Kistemaker comments that these passages are “among the most neglected and misunderstood in the church today.” In what ways are they neglected? In what ways are they misunderstood?

13. What do verses 19-20 suggest about our relationship with the truth when it uses the word “wander”? What does James give as the motivation for someone to pursue a believer that has wandered away? What fears and obstacles come to your mind as you think of what James is asking us to do with one another?

Pick up a commentary to glean more insight into this portion of the letter. Note anything that helps you see the connections of James' teaching or that helps answer other questions you had.

Apply It

Do you find yourself thinking about the second coming of Christ frequently? If not, why?

Are there circumstances in your life where you are being asked by God to exercise patience and not grumble? If so, how do you see this passage giving you insight for handling it?

How does this passage encourage you to pray?

What kind of prayer do you find most difficult to participate in and why?

Look At Him

From the beginning, the trajectory of this study was to answer this question “How shall we live as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?” It has already been stated that reading through James leaves one crushed under the weight of such high ethics. We find ourselves crying out, “Oh God, save us from the letter of James!”

In an effort to avoid applying James’ teaching as an external moralism that we try harder to attain we have been gazing at the beauty of Jesus with each lesson. He is the hero of this letter. With every imperative command we can see that Jesus did it. With every honest comment about sin we see that Jesus lived a perfect life. With every sentence of this letter we can be drawn to envision Jesus as the one who perfectly embodies all James implores and takes on all the gross sin we see so readily in our lives. He is the champion! Jesus is the one who lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died so that we could be credited with His perfect life. Through Him we become alive unto God and spend our lives being conformed into His image.

So, how shall we live as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ? Only by Christ living through us in the power of the Holy Spirit as we live by faith in the One who loves us and gave Himself up for us. And over time as the farmer begins to see the evidence of his coming harvest, those around us will see the buds of a harvest of righteousness springing forth in the way we use our tongue, the way we care for the needy, and the way purity is forming in our character. They will see and experience Christ. What an amazing thing that God has done! What a grand Savior we have! What a powerful Spirit! The news of the gospel of the Kingdom really is good.

May we be awestruck with the fullness of the redemption and restoration that has been done in us, and that is to be done through us in the world. May our hearts ache for holiness to be worked deeply into our lives. And may our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be given all the applause for His work in His brothers and sisters. Amazing!

Spend some time expressing your wonder to Jesus. What would you like to thank Him for? Tell Him what you love about Him. Enjoy Him.

Lesson Nine

James Recap

1. Re-read the whole letter and write a description of the historical setting (context) of James' letter.
2. What life and/or church situations are addressed in James' letter?
3. As a way to remember the main thoughts of this letter, answer this question:
What is genuine faith and how does it evidence its authenticity?
4. What is the letter of James' contribution to the New Testament?
5. What stood out to you in this letter that has stayed with you throughout the whole study? How have you seen God impact your life with it?

James 1 (NIV)

1James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. 2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

9The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

12Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

13When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16Don't be

deceived, my dear brothers. 17Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

19My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

23Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. 26If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 2

1My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3If you show special attention to the man

wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

14What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does

nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. 20You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. 25In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James 3

1Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. 3When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder

wherever the pilot wants to go. 5Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

6The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

13Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

James 4

1What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

11Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? 13Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the

Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. 17Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

James 5

1Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

7Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

13Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

17Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.