

James

Lesson 1 Faith and Life James 1

Memorize the TRUTH!

**Do not merely listen to the word,
and so deceive yourselves.
Do what it says.
James 1:22**

Being God's Servant — James 1:1

Day 1

1. Who is James and what was his position in the church?
Acts 21:17-18

Galatians 1:19

2. How did James describe himself?
3. Do you think of yourself as a servant? How do you show it?

Learn the TRUTH!

Victory begins with understanding and perspective. If you understand how God works, and change your perspective as a result, you will be blessed. As you learn about trials, wisdom and temptation this week, ask God to give you understanding and a godly perspective.

Tests for Believers — James 1:2-8

Day 2

4. a. Why should we "consider it pure joy" when we face trials?

b. What do you think it means to be "mature, complete not lacking in anything"?

c. Think of the trials in your own life. What can you do to view them as "pure joy"?
5. a. How can we receive wisdom from God?

b. How did James describe the person who doubts?

c. What has been your experience of asking for wisdom, with or without faith?

A Winning Perspective
James 1:9-15

Day 3

6. a. Why do you think the one in "humble circumstances" should take *pride* in his "high position," while the rich one should take *pride* in his "low position"?
- b. Do you think these "positions" are financial? If not, then what are the "high" and "low" positions?

Galatians 3:26-29

7. What does verse 12 tell you about trials?
8. a. Why can't we blame God when we are tempted?
- b. Describe the downward spiral of temptation. vv. 14-15

Gratitude and Obedience **Day 4**
James 1:16-21

9. a. What might we be tempted to be deceived about?
- b. What did God give us? vv. 16-18
10. a. Why is anger such a dangerous emotion?
- b. Why would it be helpful to be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry?"
11. What message is God giving believers in verse 21?

The Righteous Life
James 1:22-27

Day 5

12. a. Why are we "deceived" if we merely listen to the Word?
- b. How is the Word like a mirror?
13. a. What do our tongues have the power to do?
- Proverbs 18:21
- b. What kind of religion does God accept as pure and faultless?

Live the Truth!

Faith is not just a one time decision. It is something we must choose to walk in every day of our lives. If we do, it changes who we are because we know who God really is. Faith helps us view life with understanding rather than lies. What you believe in your heart directly affects your perspective, and your perspective dictates your behavior.

Commentary James Lesson 1

The book of James has been called a series of short sermons or a collection of sermon notes. In five chapters the author introduces a variety of subjects. Although the style can be abrupt, the vocabulary, illustrations, and appeal to action make the book unique. Many Bible scholars think James addressed his message primarily to Jewish Christians. Because the essence of Jewish theology is practicality, his practical approach to the life of faith would appeal to Jewish Christians. Western philosophy is more abstract, and these approaches to life and thought have influenced our practice of faith. James provides balance as he urges a practical approach to living our faith.

James, a teacher with integrity, acknowledges that the people he writes to were hurting. God's people live in an ungodly world and have problems caused by an unfriendly environment. However, the writer does not see that as negative. Instead, he encourages them to rejoice in the midst of their difficulties because of the positive results that would follow. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (1:2-3).

As our wise and loving Father, God permits tests — experiences that mature our faith in Jesus. The word *trials* (Greek: *peirasmo*) means both outward tests and inward temptations. The varieties of tests for the Christian are great. So is God's grace. To benefit from trials, the Christian must depend on God's strength in difficult times (Psalm 27:1) and rely on the Holy Spirit to overcome temptations (Galatians 5:16-24), remembering that God does not tempt anyone (1:13). This process results in maturity in Christ. James writes, "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (1:4). The word *perseverance* means "continuing despite opposition." It is the ability to stay calm in dangerous, hard situations. The word *mature* implies ultimate destiny and fulfillment — life has purpose. The person who recognizes God's purpose will experience joy even in difficult times.

Struggling Christians need godly wisdom. In verse 5, James offers aid: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God ... and it will be given to him." In the Old Testament, wisdom is equated with understanding, comprehension, insight, and foresight. For James, a Jewish Christian, wisdom is practical knowledge, the God-given ability to see things as God sees them. This knowledge is not the worldly kind that equips us to earn money or pass tests at school. Rather, it gives us the ability to pass the tests of life; it equips us for life. It contains a wonderful promise—that we will be able to see things from God's perspective. Wisdom helps us make sense of things that happen to us and others. James warns us not to be "double-minded" (1:8), trying to make the best of both worlds. Such a person's life is unsettled and "unstable".

The teaching on riches and poverty in James's letter is thought-provoking. The poor brother is to "take pride in his high position" and the rich one "in his low position" (1:9). The point is that, in heaven, all believers in Christ are "fellow citizens with God's people" (Ephesians 2:19) regardless of what positions they hold on earth. Life is like a tender plant in an unpredictable, harsh climate. God's sovereignty and their own human frailties, believers should humble

Check It Out:

THINK ABOUT how New Testament writers agree that believers are not exempt from trouble. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). But He also said that He had overcome the world and that He would send His Spirit to help us to be overcomers. Paul insists that *anything* that God allows in our lives He can use for good (Romans 8:28-29). Trials help us conform to the image of Christ. It is *because* of the problems, not *in spite* of them, that we mature. Christians are to be optimistic — regardless of the condition of the world!

You and I are called to exercise our faith in Jesus Christ. Our daily lives must reflect the reality, vitality, and practicality of our faith. Hearing the Word of God is necessary and important; our faith begins through hearing (Romans 10:17). We need to hear God's Word in order to know His heart and respond to His love toward us. If we hear but do not act, our spiritual listening becomes dull from lack of use. On the other hand, if — after we have heard — we act, we are blessed as our relationship with the Lord grows. God desires that we be "mature and complete, not lacking anything" (1:4). That is a realistic expectation if we walk closely with Him throughout our lives.

Recognizing God's sovereignty and their own human frailties, believers should humble themselves before the Almighty Creator. Then they can rely on His care and rejoice in their new status in Christ.

In verses 12-18, James returns to the subject of trials. He speaks of the reward for those who not only endure trials and temptations but remain vigorous, productive, and joyful. The "crown of life" will be given to the one who "perseveres." He touches on the secret of victory under stress by saying this crown has been promised to "those who love him." Love for God produces in us the desire and strength to please Him when we face difficulties.

The key thought in the final section of James 1:19-27 is "Do not merely listen to the word ... Do what it says" (v. 22). First, James urges Christians to speak less, listen more, and avoid impulsive anger, which usually comes from self-interest. To be angry and not sin (i.e., to be concerned with the rights of others and the righteousness of God) is possible as we grow in the Spirit of Christ. (See Ephesians 4:26.) James pleads that Christians let the Word of God take root and flourish, so they can be saved from conforming to the evil world system. Blessings are for those who practice the Word (1:25). James then presents a direct challenge: "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless" (1:26). To be religious is to exercise self-control. James reasons that because the tongue is so difficult to control, a believer's control of it gives evidence of self-control in all of life. It is a test of true spirituality. May we, with God's help, learn to bridle our tongues.



Think about how God allows us to be tested. He wants us to resist, succeed, and endure. We need to mature in our reactions to the circumstances life brings, and grow spiritually, for our present and eternal well-being. When we fail, God is grieved because He loves us. The presence of evil and our own self-serving natures are the result of people's choices — from the beginning of His intent, for That which is not good has come about because of man's choices— from Adam and Eve to the present day. Evil is not what God desires for us. When we fail a test, Satan rejoices; when we pass a test, God rejoices. Resist Satan and please God.