

JAMES

EXPLORING YOUR TRUE COLORS

James: Exploring Your True Colors

Week 1/4 — What Do You Do in Secret?

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

Your well-being will rise and fall on your integrity. It'll be the source of your success and the spark of your setbacks. In chapter one, James says, “consider it pure joy” when you face trials. According to Jesus’ brother, we should be thrilled when we face temptation. Not because the temptation is fun, but because it will strengthen our faith. Every time you face temptation, you are given an opportunity to grow stronger. Your response to temptation reveals your true colors. The more you fight temptation, the greater your integrity grows.



BIG IDEA:

You can fight temptation.



SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVE:

We will come up with an escape plan for the temptations in our life.



SCRIPTURE USED:

James 1:2-4
Psalm 50:15

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES:

- Written by James, the younger half brother of Jesus.
- James was the pastor of the church in Jerusalem.
- The church and its people had been broken up and scattered by religious persecution.
- James writes to his former congregation, who likely are now meeting in small house churches in the surrounding area. As a result these churches have been experiencing:
 - Conflict between the small groups and splintering into factions
 - Some had fallen into a worldly lifestyle and had failed to put their faith in to practice
- **The primary theme** of James' letter is to live out your faith, be a doer and not just a hearer, in the midst of social and spiritual conflict.
- Similar to Solomon, James shares short, practical proverbs to help Christians develop a faith that works. His short sayings give us the keys to living a life of integrity.

TENSION / ILLUSTRATION

- It doesn't matter if you seem perfect in public if your private life is full of secrets.
 - Honesty is important. Not just with your words, but with your lifestyle too.
 - Your well-being will rise and fall on your integrity. It'll be the source of your success and the spark of your setbacks.
 - We are kicking off a four week series all about the topic of integrity called "Exploring Your True Colors."
 - Have you ever heard someone say something about a person "*showing their true colors*"?
 - This is when someone shows you their real feelings, personality, or character.
 - This phrase originated in the 1700's nautical culture.
 - Ships were required to fly certain flags at sea to show their country of origin, whether they could legally sail, and ensure other sailors that they were safe to pass.
 - Pirates used to deceive other ships by sailing under false flags to avoid raising suspicions.
 - Passing ships, thinking that the pirates were friendly, moved closer to the pirate ship. However, once they were too close to retreat, the pirates would "show their true colors" by flying the famous, black Jolly Roger flag.
 - These evil ships pretended to be something they were not. While you aren't an ancient wooden pirate ship, you can relate to this if...
 - You have lied to earn someone's interest.
 - You use a different vocabulary around certain friends.
 - Your private life and public life don't always align.
 - You have flown a fake flag around school or church to prevent people from knowing the real you — your true colors.
- Over the next four weeks, we are going to explore the Book of James to discover the keys that unlock a life of integrity.
- So, what is integrity? **"Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching."**
- Integrity is tested in private.

- It's what you do when you're alone in your room, inside the privacy of your phone, or hidden within the thoughts of your own mind.
 - James wanted to help his friends thrive in life. So where did he start when writing his book of proverb-like sayings?
 - He didn't start with life hacks or financial advice. Rather, he wanted to show them how to fight temptation.
 - If you win the battle within your mind, then you will be able to win the wars within your life.

BIBLE STUDY:

READ: James 1:2-4 pg. 586

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- In chapter one, James says, "*consider it pure joy*" when you face trials.
- According to Jesus' brother, we should be thrilled when we face temptation.
 - Not because the temptation is fun, but because it will strengthen our faith.
 - Every time you face temptation, you are given an opportunity to grow stronger.
 - Your response to temptation reveals your true colors. The more you fight temptation, the greater your integrity grows.

— TRANSITION —

- We all want to live a life where people know us and trust us. All of this starts with acknowledging that we can grow in the area of integrity. If you commit to owning this process, then your life will immediately begin to improve.
 - The sayings of James are not just spiritual — they are also helpful. James wrote this book 2,000 years ago in order to help people thrive.
- What's the first step towards living a thriving life? You must learn how to overcome temptation. That's where James started in chapter one.
- **Your goal isn't to avoid temptation. It's to fight it.**
- Which brings us to tonight's message.
 - James 1:2-4 gives us practical advice for fighting temptation with integrity. Let's look at the ABC's of integrity:

Acknowledge Your Habits

- Your integrity is the sum of your habits. Your entire life hinges on the habits you hold.
 - If you want to become healthier, then develop a habit of health.
 - If you want to be smarter, then develop a habit of learning.
 - If you want to grow closer to God, then develop a habit of spiritual discipline.
- Your good habits help you, and your bad habits hurt you.
- Temptation rears its ugly head through the habits and routines you already have.
 - Do you regularly return to dangerous relationships?
 - Do you over-indulge to the point of addiction?
 - Do you have angry outbursts that hurt the ones you love?
 - You must become aware of the habits infecting your integrity.
- Here is where we all need to start: Your first step is awareness. Acknowledge your habits.
 - Write down 3-5 good habits that are helping you develop integrity.
 - Write down 3-5 bad habits that are getting in the way of your integrity.

Break the Chain Reaction

- Breaking a habit is hard because it takes many steps. An invisible chain reaction leads you towards your sinful mistakes and shortcomings.
 - Your environment, coping mechanisms, and behavioral patterns all trigger your bad behaviors.
 - A trigger tells your brain, "okay, now is the time to do that thing."
 - Do you know what "that thing" is for you? What triggers you to go there?
 - Every one of your habits is attached to a trigger.
 - Stress often triggers overeating.
 - Loneliness can trigger inappropriate text exchanges.
 - Embarrassment often triggers anger.
 - Sadness can often trigger bad habits like smoking, vaping, and drinking.
- Don't just focus on the habit or action you want to stop; focus on breaking the chain reaction that takes you there.
 - You may need to remove certain friends from your life.
 - You may need to delete a number from your contacts.
 - You may need to put parental controls on your phone.
 - You may need to remove the stuff you're hiding under your bed.

- You will never achieve a life without emotional triggers, but you can break the chain.
 - You need to let that trigger send you down a different path.
 - When you are feeling stressed, go for a run.
 - When you are feeling lonely, FaceTime a good friend.
 - When you are feeling sad, turn on some worship music.
 - You cannot always change your emotional and environmental circumstances, but you can change how you react to them.
 - Your commitment to breaking the chain will “*produce perseverance*,” like James promises.
 - What triggers you to act on your bad habits? Write it down.
 - Examples may include: When I feel bad about myself, I stop eating. When I feel lonely, I text my ex. When I am at a party, I give into peer pressure.

Call Out for Help

- You cannot do this on your own. You will inevitably fail if you try to do this alone.
 - God invites you to, “*Call to me when trouble comes and I will save you*”-Psalm 50:15.
 - Invite God to join you in your struggle.
 - The Holy Spirit will empower you to overcome. If you do fall short, God's grace will pick you up again and again.
- Make an action plan before you face temptation.
 - First, call out to God. These fights are too big for you to tackle on your own.
 - Second, call out to your friends. It's tragic that so many people choose to struggle without support. Tell someone you trust about your destructive habits.
 - Ask them to pray for you, encourage you, and check on you. When the temptation is too much to bear, share the burden with your friends.

As we develop a life of integrity together, we must learn how to overcome temptation. It all starts with your plan of attack. Have an action plan for fighting temptation when it comes.

- How can you reach out to God when you need help fighting temptation?
- Who is a friend you can trust to ask for help?
 - A life of integrity is a life of fulfillment. As you follow this process, you will form good habits and break bad habits.
 - It'll be hard, but it will be worth it.
 - Don't give up.
 - With God, you got this.

— Break for Small Groups —

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- Who is someone you know that is full of integrity? What is it about them makes you think of them?
- Why does James say tell us to “consider it pure joy” to face trials and temptations?
- How is integrity honoring to God?
- How might having integrity help us reduce stress and find more fulfillment in life?
- Do you think God loves you more when you live a life of integrity? Why or why not?
- Can someone be saved because they are a good person?
 - Why is it important to have integrity if that doesn't save us?
- What are some good habits that contribute to the development of integrity?
- What are some common habits that may be harmful to integrity?
 - What are potential triggers to those habits?
- Once bad habits are acknowledged, what can be done to stop the chain reaction?
- When you find yourself struggling with temptation, who can you go to for help?
- What's one temptation that you'd like to acknowledge right now and begin asking God and a trusted friend to help you fight this week? You don't need to share with the group, but you can, however you do need to share with God and at least one trusted friend.

