



JOURNEY
THROUGH

JAMES





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JAMES

DEVELOPED BY

Assemblies of God
National Men's Ministries


Gospel Publishing House

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The Journey Begins

The lessons you are about to engage are meant to strengthen your biblical knowledge, understanding, and application. Studying the culture, land, language, and other background information will produce a broader and deeper understanding of what Scripture is saying to you. These lessons are intended to help provide this.

The lesson format is built on the following five questions that will help you explore the biblical author's intent, your perspective as a modern reader, and how the Holy Spirit can apply the content to you:

1. What did this Scripture mean to the original author and audience?
2. What does this Scripture mean to me today?
3. How can this Scripture apply to my life?
4. How does this Scripture deepen my love for God?
5. How can I demonstrate this Scripture to my family and those around me?

These questions provide the foundation for every lesson, which is divided into four sections: The Author's Lens, My Lens, The Holy Spirit's Lens, and Upward and Outward Focus. These sections will encourage you to wrestle with the text and discover a deeper biblical understanding that will allow you to rightly apply what you've learned. If you have a *Fire Bible®: English Standard Version®*, there is a section that allows you to engage with your *Fire Bible®*.

These lessons utilize several resources to provide you with an in-depth study. While it is not required to purchase all of them, for the most optimal study experience we recommend purchasing the following:

- *Fire Bible®: English Standard Version®*
- Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Fine Point Pen

The ultimate goal of these lessons is to equip you to ascertain what the Holy Spirit and God's Word is saying to you. To do that, it's recommended that you work slowly and methodically through this deep dive into the Scripture.



For Group Leaders

If you intend to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you better utilize these lessons in that setting.

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for making any copies needed, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud The Author's Lens and My Lens sections.
- Before a session begins, the group leader should read through the questions in The Holy Spirit's Lens section. Many lessons have more content than can be covered in one session, so the leader may choose to engage only some of the questions or assign group members to work through them before arrival.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three or four people is the best way to work through selected questions from The Holy Spirit's Lens for thirty to forty minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week.
- If you've divided into smaller groups, rejoin the entire group together after the small group time. Discuss as a large group a few of the selected questions from The Holy Spirit's Lens for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible to hold group members accountable for completing the Scripture reading before each session and ensuring that they are writing in their journals.



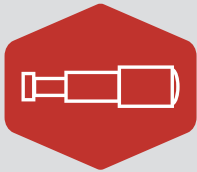
Lesson and Scripture Checklist

- Lesson 1: Introduction
- Lesson 2: James 1:1-6
- Lesson 3: James 1:7-12
- Lesson 4: James 1:13-18
- Lesson 5: James 1:19-27
- Lesson 6: James 2:1-13
- Lesson 7: James 2:14-26
- Lesson 8: James 3:1-12
- Lesson 9: James 3:13-18
- Lesson 10: James 4:1-10
- Lesson 11: James 4:11-17
- Lesson 12: James 5:1-11
- Lesson 13: James 5:12-20



Lesson 1: Introduction

Main Idea: Before you begin to chew the bite-sized pieces of this Gospel, it's best to be familiar with the entirety of the work. This first lesson will provide you with an overview of the entire Book of James that will prepare you for the following lessons.



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

As you begin this study, background knowledge is helpful. Please read the points below. Consider the following synopsis from the *Fire Bible*^{®1}

- Author: James
- Theme: Faith in Action
- Date of Writing: AD 45-49
- Background: This book is classified as a “general letter” because it is not specific to a particular local church but to a wider audience. James was known to his original readers.
- Purpose: James wrote this letter to encourage Jewish Christians who were suffering opposition and experiencing various difficulties that were testing their faith. He also wrote to correct wrong ideas about the nature of true saving faith in Christ and how to live out faith in practical actions.
- Survey: James has six major divisions.
 - » Trials and benefiting from them (1:2-18)

¹ Donald C. Stamps, *Fire Bible*[®]: *English Standard Version*[®], (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2011), 2167-2168.

- » Hearing the Word and doing it (1:19-27)
 - » Being unbiased and showing it (2:1-13)
 - » Professing faith and proving it (2:14-26)
 - » Recognizing pitfalls and avoiding them (3:1-5:6)
 - » Developing Christian qualities and living by them (5:7-20)
- As you read through this introduction, journal any thoughts or questions you may have.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

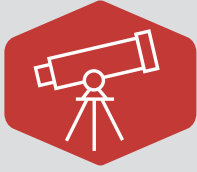
What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- Read the entire Book of James before the first session.
 - » Day 1: chapter 1
 - » Day 2: chapter 2:1-3:13
 - » Day 3: chapter 3:14-4:12
 - » Day 4: chapter 4:13-5:20
 - As you read each day, write down and highlight which verse speaks to you and why.
-
- Read the *Fire Bible*® two-page introduction to the Book of James.
 - » What information did you learn from the introduction?

- Read through Matthew 5–7 and write out the corresponding Scripture from the Sermon on the Mount with the five topics in James. What thoughts come to mind from this comparison?

- James uses everyday life examples to illustrate what he is trying to communicate. Read the following verses and write out the example James is using to communicate:

Scripture	Illustration
James 1:6	
James 1:10-11	
James 1:13-15	
James 1:23-24	
James 3:3	
James 3:4	
James 4:14	
James 5:2	
James 5:3	



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- How can the study of the Book of James help you deepen your love of God?
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the introduction to the Book of James in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

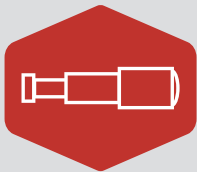
- What are some of the practical topics found in James?
- What is the theme of James?



Lesson 2: Trials: A Means to Grow

Main Idea: In this portion of Scripture, James teaches some practical principles about how to profit during trials. He shows Christians how to live a changed lifestyle, offering a different perspective of trials.

Scripture: James 1:1-6



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

The letter of James is found near the end of the New Testament. James is a smaller letter that deals with the practical dimensions to the Christian faith. Some have felt James taught that salvation is based on what a person does rather than a gift from God based on faith.

James writes as a humble servant of Christ and His Church to fellow believers who are scattered throughout the Roman world as a result of persecution for their faith. These are people who have a deep faith in Jesus Christ. James writes to give them practical counsel regarding how they can follow Christ as the Lord of their lives even more effectively.¹

James understands who he is and who the people of God are within the Christian family. Being a servant of God was James's highest calling. However, where there is faith, there are also behavioral changes. Faith is not just cognitive or intellectual. It is not just checking off the items of a creed and saying, "I agree," as if agreeing will make any difference in how you live or how

¹ Paul A. Cedar and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, vol. 34, The Preacher's Commentary Series, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1984), 34:19.

you talk or how you behave. James points believers to the notion that while salvation comes by grace through faith, Christians demonstrate their faith with a lifestyle characterized by good works. James writes about how to live to please God, showing the difference between faith and deeds. The book of James places an emphasis on the fruit and footprints of faith.²

Five people in the New Testament bear the name James. There is James the son of Zebedee. There is James the son of Alphaeus, who is probably also the son of Mary. There is James the younger and James the father of Judas Thaddaeus. The James who writes this letter is the fifth James of the New Testament. Most believe he was the earthly brother of the Lord. But even though he grew up with Jesus in Nazareth, James did not initially believe in Him. In fact, one time, James came with his brothers and sisters and mother to try to take Jesus away, because they thought he was beside himself or mad (Mark 3:21).

At some point, he came to believe, perhaps after the Resurrection, that His elder brother is the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus, according to 1 Corinthians 15, made a personal appearance to James. James was present in the Upper Room, in Acts 1, when the Spirit is first poured out. He is one of the one hundred and twenty. As we see from Acts 12, Acts 15, and Galatians 1, he becomes the leader of the church at Jerusalem. In Church tradition, he is called Old Camel Knees because he spent so much time in prayer that his knees became leathery.

James identifies himself in a unique way as he begins the letter: simply as James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 1). Notice he does not say James, the brother of the Lord. Nor does he say James, the pillar of the Church. Those would have been true titles he could have used about himself, for he was the brother of the Lord and he was called by Paul and others a pillar of the Church. But he does not refer to himself that way, because true Christian humility does not depend on earned titles or honorary titles. The word that is appropriate for Christian character is the word that James employs here when introducing himself. He simply says, “I am a servant.” The word in the biblical period meant slave. It had more intensity than the word servant has today. A slave was one wholly owned by another and under the total direction and command of another. If you were to ask James who he was, his response would have been, “Count me as one who is owned by another, under another’s direction and control. A slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

James writes to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations (James 1:1). The Greek word for scattered is *diaspora*, which means scattered seed. Israel was scattered away from its land among the nations, beginning with the captivity of Assyria in the eighth century before Christ, then the Babylonian captivity

² McGhee, Quentin, General Epistles, Faith in Action Series. (Springfield, MO: Faith and Action Team, 2014), 22.

in the sixth century BC, and the Diaspora continues to this day. Three out of every four Jews in the world is still a Jew in the Diaspora, the dispersion away from Israel. But James uses the word *diaspora* and the title “twelve tribes of Israel” the same way Paul does in Galatians 6:16 when he calls the Church the “Israel of God.” So we know James is not writing to his fellow Israelites. He is writing to the redeemed Body of Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile, the new Israel of God. He addresses them as “scattered among the nations,” not because they had sinned as ancient Israel had, but because that is where they lived.

James, in the first six verses of his letter, begins talking about trials. Normal people do not enjoy trials. In fact, most do everything within their power to avoid trials. In the English language today, the words “test” and “temptation” are synonymous with “trial.” Because of its sinister, negative connotation, “temptation” is probably not the right word to employ when discussing James 1. Generally, when you think of temptation, you think about being sucked under or pulled down or perhaps falling into sin. In contrast, the Greek word for trial or test speaks of someone who is going to come through a difficult time with triumph, who is going to emerge stronger and purer as a result of the test. The Greek word for trial is *peirasmós*. The root of this word means “to assay, to examine, or to put to the proof.” A good biblical and theological definition might be “an external adversity which provides a testing towards an end.”³ The idea is not one of seduction into sin, but of being proven, like a young bird testing its wings. The kind of test James is referencing will give you something you have not had in your life before, new strength and power.

Most of the people James addresses had lost their homes, their jobs, and security within their community. James encourages them to respond to these trials with pure joy. The verb translated “consider” is in the imperative form and could mean “to think,” “to regard,” or “to consider”; it calls for the readers to look at their circumstances from an unexpected vantage point.⁴ Pure joy is the idea that joy should be the result of a changed perspective, which is that trials will produce endurance in you. The Old Testament is filled with powerful examples of the positive effects upon individuals going through trials. Here is what one author says: “The productivity of faith under fire can be seen in great figures of the Old Testament such as Joseph, Abraham, and Job who, resolute in their trust in God and commitment to walking in his ways despite opposition, received the spiritual dividends of the experience.”⁵

3 Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:20.

4 George H. Guthrie, “James,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 13. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 13:213.

5 Guthrie, “James,” 13:213.

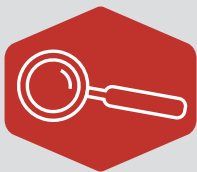


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

The believer must meet trials with joy, for testing will develop persevering faith, proven character, and mature hope. Your faith can only reach full maturity when faced with difficulties and opposition. James calls these trials a “testing of your faith.” Trials are sometimes brought into believers’ lives so that God can test the sincerity of their faith. Scripture nowhere teaches that troubles in life are always an indication that God is displeased with us. In fact, they can be a sign that He recognizes our firm commitment to Him. (Job 1-2). Consider these things James says about tests:

- Tests or trials are inevitable (1:2).
- Tests or trails come in many different kinds (1:2).
- Test or trials arise unexpectedly (1:2).
- Test or trials test faith (1:3).
- Test or trials develop staying power (1:3).
- Test or trials need to be responded to properly (1:3).
- Tests or trials properly responded to makes a believer productive (1:4).
- Test or trials provide an opportunity for God to provide help (1:5).
- Test or trials provide an opportunity for you to ask God for help in faith (1:6).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

- » Where is this passage taking place?

- » When is this passage occurring?

- » Why is this passage important?

- » What is happening in this passage?

- » How does this passage apply to my life?

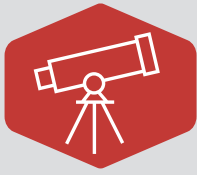
- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- What is the purpose of trials?

- How have you seen patience/perseverance develop in your life through trials?

- Describe a time in your life when you asked God for wisdom.

- Is there a situation you are facing now where you need God's wisdom?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 1:2. What are three things you can glean about trials?

- James 1:4. How does a mature believer who is growing in Christ walk out their Christianity?

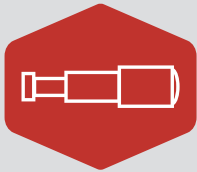
- James 1:5. What is biblical wisdom?



Lesson 3: Trials: The Great Equalizer

Main Idea: This portion of James teaches the believer that trials equalize all classes of people and point to a better future.

Scripture: James 1:7-12



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In verses 1-6, James begins by telling his readers that they will have trials or tests. In verses 7-12, James continues with the thought, offering rules for facing trials. Faith is a prominent theme in James. He uses the Greek word in some form 14 times. For James, faith was a strong commitment to action toward the right things. One author comments, "Faith is not simply a state of mind but rather a posture of trust in God that expresses itself in action."¹ If a believer fails to take an active stance of trust in the Lord, the natural consequence is a hesitation in spiritual commitments.

James instructs the reader not to be double minded. The meaning for double minded is to have a double psyche, a split personality, to have two minds or two souls. One author states, "In the Old Testament the idea was expressed as being double-tongued or 'two-faced,' or having two hearts rather than a single heart of integrity (Nystrom, 53; e.g., Psalm 12:2; Deuteronomy. 26:16)."² Such a person is a walking civil war. First, they are inclined to one alternative and then to another. They are never able to settle down and make a firm determination

¹ Guthrie, "James," 13:215.

² Guthrie, "James," 13:215.

to obey God. This person, James says, is in constant agitation and will make no progress because they are like a wave that is being driven by the sea rather than going in a purposeful direction. The wave has no inward ability to chart a course. Such a person, James says, winds up receiving nothing from God and proves to be unstable.

Since James is the younger earthly brother of Jesus, he is familiar with what Jesus taught. In Luke 6, the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus explains what He means by richness and poorness when He says, “Blessed are you who are poor, . . . but woe to you who are rich” (Luke 6:20, 24). “Blessed are you who weep . . . woe to you who laugh” (Luke 6:21, 25). Jesus is talking about people who are spiritually poor, who place themselves in a position of complete dependence upon God and say, “I have absolutely nothing with which to become a child of God or have eternal life. I take my stand before God as a pauper.” This poorness contrasts with those who say, “I’ve got it all together now. I have everything I need, and I don’t need God’s help.” James is saying that trials may bring you to a position of spiritual poverty, a placed of blessedness, which, according to one author, has to do with well-being that flows from the favorable position in which one is rightly related to God (Johnson, 187).”³

When you have stood the trial, you will receive a crown of life. The crown James was referring to meant a laurel wreath, not a tiara such as the queen of England wears. A bride would wear a laurel wreath on her wedding day, and winners of Olympic games would be given laurel wreaths. This type of crown could be given to someone being honored at a banquet and even to a person visiting royalty. The Lord is telling you, in James, that trials bring out and demonstrate all the festive joy, all the victory, all the honor, and all the royalty that is flowing through you, as a follower of Christ. This is what is meant by the crown of life in James. And no matter what you go through in this life, the future will be better as you look down the road toward how everything will end.

³ Guthrie, “James,” 13:219.

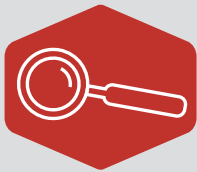


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

In this portion of James, he attempts to encourage the reader that no matter the trials or tests, it will get better.

- Through trials or tests, a Christian should not be double minded (1:8).
- Through trials and tests in life, a Christian can still rejoice (1:10-11).
- Through trials or tests, a Christian will receive the crown of life (1:12).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

- » What is happening in this passage?

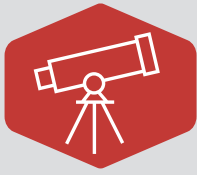
- » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Read James 1:8. What comes to your mind when you read the word “double-minded”?

- Read James 1:10. What does this verse mean to you?

- How can you focus on God in the midst of a problem? Give an example of someone in the Bible who focused on God rather than their problem. What was the result?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 1:6–8. What is the result of not being spiritually mature?

- James 1:9–10. Why are trials and difficulties the great equalizer in life?

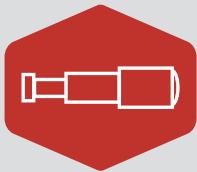
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Lesson 4: Difference between Trials and Temptations

Main Idea: Temptations and trials are two different things. Temptations come to make you fail whereas trials come to strengthen you. Temptations come through fleshly desires. The way to get out of temptations is to learn from them. The way to get out of trials is through perseverance. In this lesson, you will learn the difference between trials and temptations.

Scripture: James 1:13-18



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this section you will discover James uses an interesting word. It is the word “temptation” in verse 13. It is the same word in the Greek that is used and translated as trial in verse 2. In English, two different words are used: “trial” and “temptation.” Temptation has a sinister sound to it whereas trial is morally neutral. Some look at James 1:13 and ask, “Does the Scripture here have an inherent contradiction?” For in Genesis 22:1, we read, “And the Lord God did tempt [or test] Abraham.” How can James say God does not tempt people when He tested Abraham? The difference has to do with that word “test.” Whenever Scripture says God tests someone, the word always has the connotation of a test from which one will emerge successfully. In every biblical passage where God tested somebody, the conclusion is that the person stood the test. The true metal of their faith was proven, as in Abraham’s story.

However, there is also an evil force, both external (the devil), and internal (our evil desires), that pull a person down during the test. It's important to realize God is never using the test to pull you down, nor is He the one sending the test. He is instead seeking to give you His help to overcome the test and emerge stronger.

Therefore, you are not to blame God for your trial. Although the natural response to a difficult situation that tests you is to conclude that God is the author of the temptation, James points out from a theological perspective why that is wrong. One author comments, "The word translated 'cannot be tempted' is an adjective meaning 'without temptation,' and the context makes the author's intention clear: God experiences no effects from evil's enticements."¹ Any test given by God does not have with it an enticement to sin.

Also, it is a good idea not to blame the devil. Notice that James does not even blame the devil. He says the blame lies within your own evil desires, not your environment, not your family, not the devil, not society. Your thought life in a trial can become warped, twisted, and irresponsible, and if it does, it will produce actions that give birth to death. Sin, when it is conceived, brings forth death. When a child is born, it is alive, but James reverses that idea: When sin is born—that is, when the sinful thought or attitude is carried through to its conclusion—it brings forth an action that leads to death. Here is the only biblical analogy that makes a case for abortion, and it's spiritual, not physical. If you have ungodly ideas or wrong attitudes, while they are gestating in you, abort them before they are born in the form of wrong actions. If they come forth as sinful actions, they will wind up destroying us, proving to be deadly. Temptations are not always sexual; many times they are spiritual, having to do with wrong attitudes.

However, in the midst of a trial, God sends you good and perfect gifts. How can that be? James is not saying, "Call everything that happens in your life good and perfect." God is not asking you to be a person who, when a hammer hits your thumb, looks up and says, "O, thank You, Lord, for helping me miss the nail today and for the wonderful sensation that my thumb now feels." James is not saying to play that kind of mental game. He is saying, however, that when bombs are dropping on your life, God is also parachuting down some good and perfect gifts. They are landing in the same field.

One author comments, "The background of James's thought may derive from the Jewish concept of the evil *yēšer*, which at points is associated with adultery (Davids, 84). In Jewish theology of the day, every person had two inclinations—one to do evil and the other to do good. When the former gains the upper hand, a person sins (Neusner and Green, 312)."²

¹ Guthrie, "James," 13:221.

² Guthrie, "James," 13:222.

The language seems to support the idea of someone physically dragging away a victim against their will by some desire or of a lure that is used for bait to entice someone much like a lure used to catch a fish.

James wants to make sure his readers understand that wrong thinking results in living in a wrong manner.

James teaches that every gift from God is good and perfect. One author comments, “The word translated as ‘perfect’ is *téleios*, the same word James uses in 1:4 when he speaks about letting patience ‘have its perfect work, that you may be perfect . . .’”³ (NKJV) He is saying every gift comes from God.

James is writing to Jewish Christians who understood the requirements of the tithe and firstfruits. He is reminding us that as we trust in Christ by faith, we become a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.⁴



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

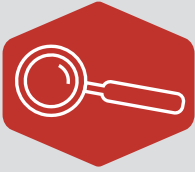
What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.

As you persevere through a trial, you will see what special and wonderful things God is doing inside of you, and sometimes externally as well. As you go through the trial, you will discover that what God gives you will be His good and perfect gifts. These good and perfect gifts will begin to make it possible to get through the trial. He is setting you as a display of His goodness and gifts to those who do not know Him. There are times in life when you may feel absolutely pressed to the wall. When you are going through pain, often the last thing you want is the Word of the Lord to say to you, “Look at the other side.” Yet God is summoning you to take another step and not get stuck in bitterness. Consider these truths to help provide strength to you in the midst of a trial or test:

- God does not send the temptation (1:13).
- Temptation comes from your own desires (1:14).
- Your desires give birth to sin (1:15).
- Sin leads to death (1:15).
- God gives good and perfect gifts (1:16–17).
- God never changes or casts a shifting shadow (1:17).
- You are God’s prized possession (1:18).

³ Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:40.

⁴ Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:41.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

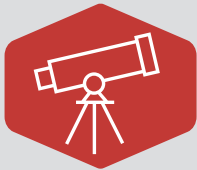
 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Describe in your own words the difference between temptations and trials.

- What are the four words James uses to describe the sequence of sin?
- How can you prevent this sequence from occurring in your life?
- How are temptation and sin connected?
- Read James 1:15. What thoughts come to your mind?
- Read James 1:17-18 and circle the descriptive words James uses. What comes to your mind when you read these words? What makes them different from the words he used in previous verses?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 1:13. Write in your own words the difference between trials and temptations.
- James 1:14. What happens when you follow the pull of your human desire?
- James 1:15. Why do you think James uses the analogy of the birthing process to describe the path to spiritual destruction?
- What happens if you do not break this process?

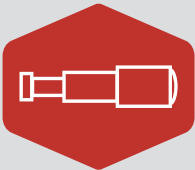
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Lesson 5: Hearing and Doing the Word

Main Idea: In this section, James shows a progression of practically living out Christianity. The progression is first, to be quick to listen; then slow to speak; then slow to become angry; and finally, to do what God is telling you to do. In this lesson, you will explore this progression, which is the center of James' theology and should be the center of yours. In this lesson, you will learn the difference between just hearing God's Word and doing God's Word.

Scripture: James 1:19-27



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

James reminds his readers of the things in life which will create a bottleneck that prevents the external Word of God from moving into our internal lives. He lists several things that cut down on our ability to receive God's Word. There can be strong interference, things in our personal lives, that keeps the Bible from becoming a living force in our life.

James provides the reader with a triple exhortation: "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger," which is proverbial in nature. That is, if you want to be ready to listen, you must be able to control your tongue. Throughout James, he addresses the proper use of the tongue, which is foundational to walking according to the wisdom of God.

When you allow anger to control you, then you will end up spewing out poisonous emotional words. This falls short of how God intends you to relate to others.

The kind of anger James is talking about represents deep-seated, long-lasting, long-standing resentment. When that kind of anger is inside and something triggers it, you become quick to speak and slow to listen. This pattern takes away from being able to live out the Word in your everyday life, to live out what it means to be a Spirit-filled person—full of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

In James 1:21, according to one commentary the term “get rid of” was used at times in the ancient world to refer to taking off clothes, but it occurs in the New Testament in the figurative sense of “laying aside” something spiritually bad, such as lying (Ephesians 4:25), malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander (1 Peter 2:1), or anything that would hold us back from following Christ fully (Hebrews 12:1).¹ These actions and attitudes have the ability to corrupt the righteous standard God desires for you as you walk in community with others.

What James is telling the newly born young Christian is that you have been given a clean slate. God has given you a new nature. But with that new nature, you still sometimes carry baggage from the old one, the leftovers of the life before you came to Christ. It is what you are still working on. Christ has saved you. He has freed you from your sins. He has cleansed you. But you, as Paul puts it in Romans 7, are still struggling with the old, fleshly nature. At the same time, you are being asked to receive the Word of God—to be serious in your purpose to live the Christian life and lay aside things which hinder your reception of God’s Word. What James is really doing is telling you that there are no automatics to the Christian life. It is something to be worked on in partnership with the Holy Spirit. You do not go on cruise control in your spiritual development.

It is important that you become not only knowledgeable about the Word, but that you also live it out. What James is saying is that the Christian cannot settle down into passivity, to remain only in listening mode. Christianity is a life of action. The critical thing is not to merely understand Scripture from a theological, linguistic, hermeneutical, or exegetical standpoint. What is vital is that you have a working, active knowledge of the Bible. The real problems people have with Scripture are not with the hidden and difficult-to-understand theological issues. The real problems are with the plain things, the things which call you to actually obey. That is where your old, sinful nature wants to say no.

¹ Guthrie, “James,” 13:225.

Notice the word “religion” is used a number of times. In the language James uses, the word in this particular context was taken to mean outward performance. But real, pure religion before God involves three basic elements, which can be practically applied.

The first is controlling the tongue. In verses 1-19, James has been addressing the person who is going through trials, someone going through stress. Of course, one thing that can happen when a person is under pressure is that they may erupt. Something may set them off, and they may spew out words they deeply regret. That is why when you are under stress, it is especially important to watch your tongue. It is a matter of putting God’s Word, and His definition of pure religion, into practice. Keeping a tight rein on the tongue requires self-control. This contradicts today’s common advice to “vent.”

The second thing that James tells you to do on a practical level is to have social concern. If we relate that back to verses 1-19, one of the things that happens when people are under stress is they tend to turn inward and become exclusively worried about their own concerns. But the Lord wants to draw you out of yourself. Through His Word, He makes us aware of the needs of others, knowing that when we reach out to bless others, we ourselves find healing.

There is a war between the Christian and the non-Christian lifestyle. Knowing this, James offers the third practical application of God’s Word: to keep yourself unpolluted from the world. This means to maintain inward purity. Again, relating this back to the first 19 verses, people going through relational stress in their families or other close relationships may seek relief from these pressures in escapism, alcohol, drugs, wrongful sex, or in letting all spiritual barriers down. However, Scripture is not calling you to a life of escapism or irresponsibility, but to a life of responsibility and personal purity.

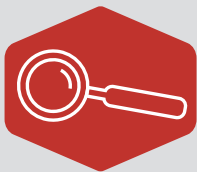


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

One of the things James discusses in this passage is how to allow the Bible to become a living Word in you. He is talking about indispensable actions of a growing Christian, which are all related to this process of taking the external Word and internalizing it.

- A growing Christian is quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry (1:19–20).
- A growing Christian is continually working on their old nature (1:21).
- A growing Christian becomes a doer of God's word (1:22).
- A growing Christian does not settle into a passive lifestyle (1:23–25).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?

3 Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:40.
 4 Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:41.

- » What is happening in this passage?

- » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Describe a time in your life when the Lord revealed something from your old nature that you had to get rid of.

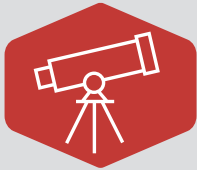
- Describe what your relationships would look like if you would be quick to listen, slow to speak instead of looking for your next response, and slow to get angry?

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being the greatest and 4 being the least, rate yourself on how well you listen. Write out a plan to improve.

- Why do you think James mentions anger as an enemy to hearing God's Word?

- Read James 1:19-21. When you read the word "filthiness," what comes to mind?

- Summarize James 1:20–21 in your own words.
- Read James 1:27. Why do you think practical religion pleases God?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 1:21. Write in your own words the three ideas related to putting away all filthiness.

- What happens when you allow moral filth into your life?

- What does the term “implanted” imply?

- James 1:27. Describe in your own words the two principles that define authentic religion: mercy and purity.

- What questions should you ask yourself in order to make sure you are living out these two principles?

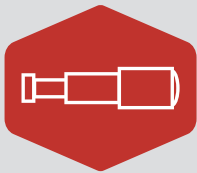
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Lesson 6: Don't Show Partiality

Main Idea: People tend to misjudge other people's motives. The truth is no one knows another person's heart. The tendency most people have is to cast judgment on a person for what they say or do, or because of some external factor or some outward appearance. In this lesson, you'll see how James addresses this vital subject of prejudice, of making superficial judgements. With practical teaching, he instructs believers to demonstrate their faith by their lifestyle, emphasizing right speaking and acting.

Scripture: James 2:1-13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Believers fled from Jerusalem at the persecution of Stephen (Acts 8:1). These believers did not have a permanent place to live, so they had to work at whatever job they could find wherever it was. Unbelieving Jewish leaders hated them, and local people rejected them because they did not participate in the pagan feasts.

When James tells his readers not to show partiality, he uses a Greek phrase which literally means "to receive by face." When you receive a person by face, you are not judging them on the basis of their skin color, clothing, economic status, or any other external thing. James is exhorting believers not to receive people according to the external.

Much of the book of James is based on Leviticus 19:9–18, which deals with justice in judicial situations. A vivid illustration of this justice occurs in 1 Samuel 16, when God rejects Saul and tells Samuel to anoint a successor from the family of Jesse. The sons of Jesse, the brothers of David, all line up. Samuel’s eyes land on the first one and believes God will select him because of his excellent physical appearance. To Samuel, the first son looked like a king. But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).”

Jesus was complimented, even by His enemies, for never showing partiality. They said to Him in Matthew 22:16, “You do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.” Your friendships, as valuable as they may be to you, ought never to become closed groups that shut others out. As a Christian, your perspective on life should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

One commentator suggests, “The word translated ‘favoritism’ speaks of the attitude of partiality by which one person is shown favor, or special consideration, over another. In the Old Testament the concept often refers to unjust judgment against the vulnerable on the part of those in power (e.g., Psalm 82:2; Proverbs. 18:5; 24:23; 28:21; Malachi 2:9–10; so Martin, 59; Nystrom, 114).”¹

People tend to want to spend time with others who are similar in socioeconomic makeup, educational background, etc. While this works sociologically, James teaches that it does not work theologically. Christians should be inclusive, not exclusive. James points out the problems happening in the synagogue at this time, where the rich were oppressing the poor. During this time in history, there was no middle class. James is saying the Church needs to be different from the rest of society. It is in the Church that the rich man and the poor man sit down together. In fact, the poor man might even have spiritual authority over the wealthy person because the Church is the great leveler, where class, social distinction, and economic status means nothing.

James is saying you are to live by God’s royal law if you are a Christian. A royal law was given by a king, and as the king’s subjects, the people lived according the royal manner set forth by that law. The reason this law in James is “royal” is because it comes from God, the King of all believers. As members of His Kingdom, our conduct and motives should be significantly different from those who treat people according to external things rather than spiritual matters. One commentator suggests, “Jewish teachers of the era emphasized

¹ Guthrie, “James,” 13:231.

the unity of God’s law. For example, in 4 Maccabees 5:19–21, Eleazar, upon being commanded by the pagan king to eat unclean food, replies that there are no small sins, for to break the Law in small matters or great is equally serious.”²



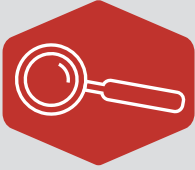
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.

When you see members of another ethnic community in your church, you have a special opportunity to reach out and welcome them. When you see people who are different from you, sit down with them and welcome them, appreciating your differences in Christ. Know that Jesus has made all the ground level around Calvary. All are equal in God’s presence, and He receives you, not by face, but by your hunger for Him. Consider these points:

- Don’t show favoritism (2:1).
- Don’t show partiality (2:2–4).
- God does not judge superficially (2:5).
- The world is partial so Christians should not be (2:6–7).
- Showing partiality is contrary to the command of Scripture (2:8–11).
- Showing mercy means that you understand God’s acceptance of you (2:12–13).

² Guthrie, “James,” 13:236.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Where is this passage taking place?

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 - » Why is this passage important?

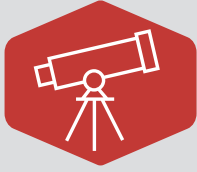
 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- When you hear the word "favoritism," what comes to mind?

- Have you ever had the motive of “what can they do for me?” when you met someone? Why?
- Do you believe that showing favoritism is a sin? Why or why not?
- Read James 2:13. What comes to mind when you read “mercy triumphs over judgement”?
- Read what Jesus said about mercy in Matthew 5:7; 6:12; 7:1-2; 18:21-35; and 25:31-46. How does Jesus say mercy should be displayed?
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, rate yourself on how well you show mercy. Write out a plan to improve.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 2:1. What is favoritism? In your own words, write the three reasons why favoritism is wrong.

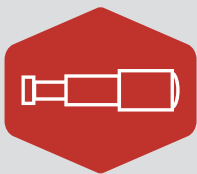
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Lesson 7: Back Your Faith with Action

Main Idea: The contemporary church seems to be in a quest for believers. Jesus was on a quest, not simply for believers, but also for discipleship. He was on a quest for disciples. There is a difference between giving mental assent, which is called salvation, and truly being converted—being changed as you follow Jesus Christ. This lesson explores the bold expression of James' theology of faith and works.

Scripture: James 2:14-26



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

James mainly writes to Jewish Christians. The Jews hold to a doctrine of oneness or unity of God.¹ They use Deuteronomy 6:4 to formulate their doctrine. The unity of God is important, but right doctrine does not save. Belief that affects the head but not the heart, hands, and feet falls short of saving faith. Biblical faith will affect your actions. Faith is not a substitute for works, but a source of works. Faith is the root and works are the fruit. What James is saying in this passage of Scripture is that real faith really works.

Faith and works are like the composition of salt. Sodium is an extremely active element found naturally only in combined form. That is, it must be merged with something else. Chlorine, on the other hand, is a poisonous gas that gives household bleach its offensive odor. But when sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride, common table salt. Faith and works

¹ Nicoll, W. Robertson, *The Expositor's Greek NT, Vol IV.* (Grand Rapids, MI. William B. Eardmans Publishing Co, 1897), 440.

are like sodium and chlorine. Faith without deeds is inactive. Faith without deeds is irresponsible. Faith without deeds is present in church but not in the everyday world. It is pietistic: It sings songs and raises hands but is divorced from ethics and morality. It does not serve the Lord in the real world. Faith without works lacks commitment to discipleship.

On the flip side, works without faith is equally dangerous, because works without faith produce duty rather than joy. They bring legalism and bondage. Faith without works is like trying to drive a car without any gasoline.

James utilizes a couple of rhetorical questions to drive home the point that a person who confesses faith but does not manifest righteous works does not have saving faith. James' idea of "works" is different from Paul's when he rebukes those who depend on "works" for salvation. James is concerned about the person who gives mere lip service to faith but does not live righteously. Such a person offers no advantage to the kingdom of God. James emphasizes that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Three times in verses 17, 20, and 26, he tells the reader his position, and then he illustrates it with three examples.

James 2:22 mentions that in the case of Abraham, faith and actions were working together synergistically. Synergistic is a term which means that when two parts are put together, their power together is greater than their power individually as separate parts. Take sodium and chloride, for example. When you put them together, there is synergism, and their new power together is mightier than each in isolation. Faith and works are also synergistic. Their power together is greater than either one alone.



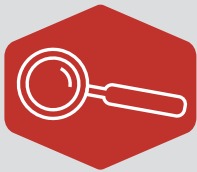
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

Counterfeit money looks like real money to many people. However, there is no value in counterfeit money. Likewise, many people claim to be believers in Jesus but lack evidence to support their claim. What value is a faith that does not reveal itself in a life that pleases God? The Scripture passage in this lesson points to two questions that establish the principle that faith and works go together. The questions are, "What good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" and, "Can such faith save him?" The answer to both questions is negative. James is saying that works (deeds) must complement and

illustrate faith. After establishing this principle in verse 14, he illustrates how faith and works belong together:

- Faith helps people in need (2:14-16).
- True faith always manifests itself in obedience to God and compassionate deeds done for needy people (2:17).
- True faith requires more than belief. Even demons believe (2:18-19).
- True faith will be tested (2:20-24).
- True faith is not just for the big heroes of the Bible but for everyday people too (2:25-26).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?

- » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Read James 2:14-17. What value does James place on faith without deeds?

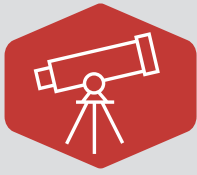
- Read James 2:20-25 and answer the following:
 - » What actions showed that Abraham had biblical faith?

 - » What action showed that Rahab had biblical faith?

 - » What can you glean from these two individuals?

- What have you learned about the importance of backing your faith with practical action in your life?

- What are some practical things you can do for those in your sphere of influence to show them you are a Christian?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 2:14. Why is practical evidence of sincere Christian devotion so vital for a believer?

- James 2:17. What does James teach is needed for true faith?



- James 2:21. Why did James use Abraham as an example of faith?

- James 2:22. Why are faith and actions placed together?

- James 2:24. What is the contrast between James' and Paul's use of the word "works"?

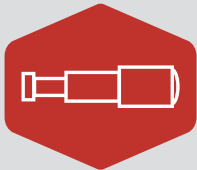
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Lesson 8: Tame Your Tongue

Main Idea: This portion of James teaches another aspect of the practical side of the Christian life: Real, vital faith will affect your words. The greater control you gain over your tongue, the greater control you have altogether. James addresses the seriousness with which you should approach the use of your tongue, driving home the point that the tongue is powerfully destructive and difficult to control, but you as a Christian must master it.

Scripture: James 3:1-12



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Although any sin can keep you from walking in God's ways, the tongue presents an especially difficult challenge for the Christian. In a close parallel to James, the Jewish writer Philo (Posterity, 88) described this challenge well: "But if a man succeeded, as if handling a lyre, in bringing all the notes of the thing that is good into tune, bringing speech into harmony with intent, and intent with deed, such an one would be considered perfect and of a truly harmonious character."¹ James asserts that there is a level of perfection you can attain. By perfect, he means mature or being fully developed in your character.

The Bible itemizes the many sins it is possible for the tongue to commit, but here is a brief overview. One, of course, is gossip, which is perhaps not the

¹ Guthrie, "James," 13:245.

most serious sin that the tongue can commit. Gossip is hearsay information that becomes part of the grapevine. It is passed-along information without malicious intent. The body of information, however, as it is passed along, grows with each telling.

Another sin of speech is slander. Someone once said, “A tongue three inches long can kill a man six foot high.” This is because slander involves character assassination. It is sometimes done with conscious will and sometimes without.

Another sin of the tongue is boasting, which is a false form of self-esteem, where you make yourself out to be better than you are or better than other people. Another is quarreling, when done in anger and continual, needless confrontation with another person.

Then there is cursing, which is more than simply invoking God’s name in vain or using an oath. Cursing can include negative, put-down speech, where you pull someone down rather than build them up. In this way, cursing can even mean fault finding as a way of speaking.

There is foolish speech, which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 5:4. This is a constant, meaningless drivel.

Another sin of the tongue is false teaching. Titus 1:11 says, “They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.”

Finally, there is filthy speech, which has sexual references to it (Ephesians 5:4) and speech which involves lying and perjury, a violation of the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:16).

James likens the out-of-control tongue to something that receives its motivation from hell. An uncontrolled tongue is in direct opposition to the righteous living God desires. James uses the word “restless” to describe the tongue. One commentary suggests, “The word ‘restless’ (*akatastatos*,) also connotes the concept of being ‘unstable’ and occurs in James’s description of the double-minded person of 1:8. In one ancient work, slander is personified as a ‘restless demon’ (Shepherd of Hermas, Mand. 2:3).”²

James explores the significance and influence the tongue has in the life of a Christian, emphasizing that you cannot tame the tongue on your own. The problem is a spiritual one because the tongue is under the influence of the sinful nature. But God through the power of His Holy Spirit gives you the power to control your tongue and your total being.

² Guthrie, “James,” 13:247.



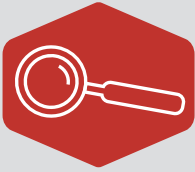
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

The tongue sets a climate of encouragement or discouragement. It uplifts or it tears down. It heals or it hurts. James begins his teaching on the tongue with a reference to the people in the body of Christ who ostensibly use their tongue the most: teachers.

James never tells specifically how to control the tongue; he just gives six illustrations of the damage the tongue can do in verses 3 through 12. Consider the following:

- A teacher's words will be judged by a higher standard (3:1).
- Those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way (3:2).
- Like a bit in a horse's mouth, if you can control your mouth, you command your obedience and determine your direction (3:3).
- Like a ship's small rudder, the tongue controls much larger things (3:4).
- Like a fire, the tongue can do uncontrollable, far-reaching damage (3:5-6).
- No man can tame the tongue; only God can (3:7-8).
- The tongue was given to enhance fellowship and communication (3:9-11).
- The tongue will reveal what is on the inside of you (3:12).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

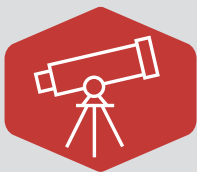
 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.
 - » Describe a time when you talked your way into trouble.

- Think about your personality and disposition. When is it easy for you to sin with your tongue?
- Describe a time when God helped you control your tongue.
- Read Psalm 141:3; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 34:1; and Ephesians 4:29. What are four things Scripture teaches to help you gain control over the tongue?
- Read James 3:9–12 and Matthew 12:33–34; 15:18–19. What can you glean about your heart and its influence on your speech?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 3:6. What are some descriptors of sinful speech?

- How can mature Christians keep their tongue under control?

- James 3:9. What can you learn about the words people say?

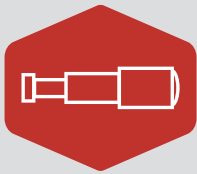
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Lesson 9: Worldly Wisdom

Main Idea: The Bible has a different idea of wisdom than most contemporary definitions. People think somebody who has wisdom must have studied philosophy or have a high IQ. But wisdom, from a biblical point of view, is applying your faith in everyday life. It is acting concretely in your world in the manner to which God calls you. To understand how you should be living and practicing a life of godly wisdom, James poses two questions. First, how do we get godly wisdom? Second, who is actually wise? In this lesson, you will discover that if you possess godly wisdom, you will manifest good conduct in your daily life.

Scripture: James 3:13-18



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

James deals with practical faith and wisdom throughout his letter. It might be helpful to exchange the word “wisdom” in James 3 with the word “lifestyle.” For it is a lifestyle to which believers have been called. What happens a few years into the Christian life, if the wonderful change that took place begins to unravel? What if, instead of continuing to change into the personality of Jesus Christ, you find yourself going back to your old personality? James is facing this problem as he writes this letter, because it has only been a few decades since the resurrection of Christ. He is finding that these first-century believers have the same kinds of struggles we have today. He corrects believers who

have forgotten about becoming more like Christ and have instead been climbing the social ladder of success, neglecting service to Christ and to the needy. And He is addressing believers who have used their tongue in inappropriate, vicious ways.

Verses 13 through 18 are the focal point of the book. James deals with the tension between righteous wisdom and worldly wisdom. He teaches that righteous wisdom is a gift that comes from God and is closely related with righteous living. One commentary has this to say, “In the ancient world, to be ‘wise.’ *Sophos*, could refer to being skilled or experienced (e.g., 1 Corinthians 3:10); but most often in biblical literature, the word communicates an understanding that results in right attitudes and right living, for God himself is wise (Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 1:25) and therefore is the source of divine wisdom.”¹ For James, true wisdom results in good deeds. As James defines earthly wisdom, he makes it clear that jealousy is involved, referring to passionate unhappiness over another person’s achievements or possessions. James is concerned that the Christian who leans towards worldly wisdom will have an immoral bent or a twisted nature. This leads to a disrupted, dysfunctional community that does not walk in God’s righteousness. James identifies two manifestations of earthly wisdom. First, there is confusion. He suggests that there will be instability and disorder rather than peace when earthly wisdom is present. Second, James teaches that every evil thing will be present when earthly wisdom rules. In contrast, true, godly wisdom manifests in healthy interpersonal skills and attitudes, which place a high value on peace.



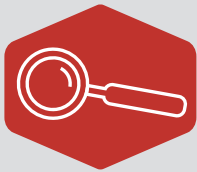
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.

James addresses believers who are in warring camps. Sometimes, the warring camp is within a family, sometimes it is within a friendship, and sometimes it is within the body of Christ. In verses 13–18, James sets before readers two lifestyles—two wisdoms. In verses 14–16, he describes a lifestyle that is not from God. In verses 17–18, he contrasts that with a lifestyle that is from God. Both lifestyles are marked by certain characteristics. Both have a source that can be identified, and both produce specific results. James has a practical application to his teaching. He is concerned that godly wisdom is not just recognized but is lived out daily. Consider what he has to say:

¹ Guthrie, “James,” 13:249

- True wisdom is always meek, mild, and gentle (3:13).
- Earthly wisdom produces selfish ambition (3:14).
- Earthly wisdom’s source is demonic (3:15).
- Earthly wisdom produces instability (3:16).
- The source of heavenly wisdom is owed to God (3:17).
- Heavenly wisdom is pure, peace-loving, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, full of good fruit, impartial, and sincere (3:17).
- Believers who walk in heavenly wisdom will display healing, wholeness, and peace within relationships (3:18).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit’s leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God’s Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?

» How does this passage apply to my life?

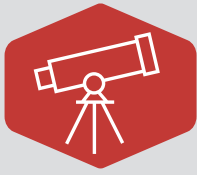
» Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Take a few moments to list eight characteristics of earthly and godly wisdom. After you have finished, what thoughts do you have?

Earthly Wisdom (James 3:13-16)	Godly Wisdom (James 3:17-18)

- For the eight characteristics of godly wisdom, write out your understanding of what each one means.

- Describe a time when you followed after earthly wisdom. What were the results?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 3:14. Write out the meaning of selfish ambition in your own words.

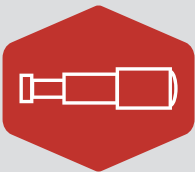
- James 3:17. Describe what heavenly wisdom is in your own words.



Lesson 10: Don't Be Selfish

Main Idea: What is the greatest problem you are having in your relationships? Who is the person with whom you are having the greatest friction? Although you cannot control their responses or take responsibility for their actions, you can examine your own life. Are you in any degree responsible for the relational rupture? James asserts that the root of relational problems is our own desires that battle within us. The cure is threefold: Submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to God. This requires the practical integration of humility into every part our lives.

Scripture: James 4:1-10



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

When James wrote his letter, it had only been a few decades since Christ's resurrection, yet the believers were already becoming cold in their faith.

According to James 4, personal backsliding impacts relationships. James uses strong language to address the disorder and conflict he observed in the church. The Christian community is facing relational discord, and James confronts it forcefully. One commentator suggests, "The word James uses for "war" is *pólemos*, which means just that: war or battle. The word translated as "fights" is *máchē* which can also be correctly translated as strife, struggles, or quarrelings. To be sure, both of these words denote interpersonal conflicts."¹

¹ Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:78.

James uses the word “desire” to refer to evil pleasures that have a negative spiritual effect in the life of a believer and, by extension, the community. The Greek word for desire is one that may be familiar to you: *hedonism*. With forceful language, James states that the root of relational breakdown is the individual’s lust and envy.

James strongly chastises Christians for their prayerlessness as an indicator of their spiritual condition. As a result, there is relational havoc in the church because they have neglected to go to the source of real fulfillment, God himself.

James uses the strong term “adulterous” which would have conjured up passages from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, this language is used whenever people would turn away from the true God and give themselves to serve something else.

James also uses a strong word “enmity.” One commentator suggests, “The Greek word for “enmity” is a very strong word, *échthra*, which is sometimes translated as “hatred.” If that is so, James is saying that anyone who is in love with the world (a friend of the world, *phílos*) hates God.”²

James then provides an answer for relational dysfunction by pointing readers to the path of humility. The first step is to submit to God. This is the act of willfully yielding your preference. Although this idea of submitting may sound cold or nonrelational, it is actually an invitation to submit to God’s love for you.

The second step is to resist the devil. This is knowingly and purposefully putting yourself on the enemy’s opposing side.

The third and final step is to humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. As you recognize your sin, repent, and bow before God in submission, He will lift you up.

2 Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:81.

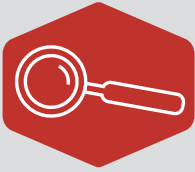


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

Hedonism is a philosophy of life that says, “Me first!” If it feels good, do it. If it brings pain, avoid it. If it makes you walk through conflict, if it makes you work things out, if it calls you to sacrifice, if it calls you to steadfastness—walk away from it. In this portion of Scripture, James provides some powerful thoughts on the results of hedonism. The first six verses of James 4 diagnose why this lifestyle does not lead to inner peace. Verses seven through ten provide the cure.

- Moving away from God causes a higher level of internal and interpersonal friction and hostility (4:1).
- Moving away from God causes you to live a lifestyle that puts you always at another person's throat (4:2).
- Moving away from God causes the door of prayer to be shut (4:2-3).
- Moving away from God causes your relationship with God to be shattered (4:4-6).
- Moving back into relationship with God requires submission to Him (4:7).
- Moving back into relationship with God requires resisting the devil (4:7).
- Moving back into relationship with God requires getting close to God (4:8-10).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Read James 4:8-10. What are the seven commands and corresponding promises given for you to resist the devil?

- What does the word “resist” mean to you?

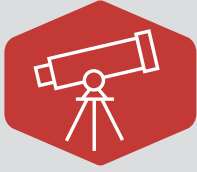
- Read James 4:1-4. Where do fights and quarrels originate?

- Read Matthew 16:24. What does Jesus say about fights and quarrels?

- Describe a time in your life when you got into a quarrel because of your selfish desire.

- Read James 4:4-7. Why do you think James uses the analogy of adultery?

- What are some things that lure you toward friendship with the world?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 4:1. What is the root of most quarrels and fights in the church?

- James 4:3. What prayer will God not answer?

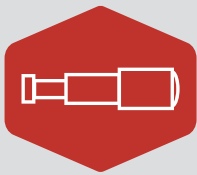
- To what types of prayer will God respond?
- James 4:4. With what does James liken “friendship with the world?”
- Why does James use this imagery?
- James 4:6. Why does God oppose the proud?
- What is the key to receiving grace from God?
- James 4:7. What ten steps are necessary to spiritual victory?



Lesson 11: Slander, Judgement, and Presumptuous Living

Main Idea: In this section, James warns against the sin of speaking evil against others or judging them. And he gives practical advice regarding how to plan for the future. In this lesson, you will discover James' instructions for everyday living.

Scripture: James 4:11-17



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In these verses, James is saying that you, after being cleansed by God, are not to go out and speak ill of another person. If you do that, you are violating God's law in two respects. You are violating the law of love for your neighbor. And secondly, you are violating the law which says God alone is the Judge. You are not in a place to judge another person. When James speaks of slander, he is talking about someone who speaks against his brother or judges him. Someone who is close to God does not speak in a harmful manner about someone else. James opposes this type of speech because he feels it destroys the lives of people with whom you are supposed to be in community. James indicates that slander is a sinful activity which pulls others down rather than building them up in love.

As believer, you are not commissioned to judge others. James tells the reader that only the lawgiver, God himself, can judge. The term *lawgiver* is used

six times in the Old Testament and only once in the New Testament. James teaches that only the lawgiver is qualified to judge the law, quoting from Deuteronomy 32:39 which says that in judging others, we take upon ourselves a role belonging only to God.

This passage in James also considers three specific sins which prevent planning for the future according to God’s will. First is the sin of presumption. Presumption denies who you are, who God is, and how much you need God every day. Second is the sin of commission (errors you commit such as boasting). Here James uses a word that describes a person who boasts of things he is unable to do. This sin is rooted in the thinking you have the ability to control your own destiny. The word “boasting” only appears twice in the New Testament, in James and in 1 John 2:16 where it is translated as “the pride of life.”

Third is the sin of omission (good deeds you omit, without depending on God). This is the sin of failing to do what is right. The last paragraph of chapter 4 is dealing with entrepreneurs and movers, the independent, middle class businessman who is out to get rich quickly. These verses represent the newly rich in quest of more wealth.

But James is not on an anti-rich kick. He simply requires our accountability. It is obvious from these verses that James is speaking to two groups of people: First, the merchant class who are in pursuit of wealth and, second, the wealthy farmers and landowners. James addresses the sin of presumptuousness that causes boasting about their business deals, the money they have, and what they purchase with it. James makes it clear that you have no control over the future. One commentator had this to say about boasting, “In the broader Greco-Roman culture, the ‘braggart who spews forth a vapid arrogance was the subject of much moral discourse, and this denigrated character is also treated in Jewish Wisdom literature as an object of scorn (e.g., Proverbs 21:24; cf. Johnson, 297).”¹ The antidote is to commit yourself to the Lord and to doing His will. And doing His will requires being simultaneously sensitive to the world around you and to the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

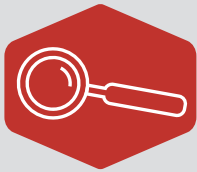
¹ Guthrie, “James,” 13:260



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

- When you slander another person, you are in violation of God's law (4:11-12).
- Your life as a believer should be lived with eternity in focus (4:13-14).
- As a believer, our present and future is in the protective care of the heavenly Father (4:15).
- As a believer, you should not live a presumptuous life, but your life should be lived with the projection of what God's will is for you (4:16).
- As a believer, you sin when you fail to do right (4:17).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Where is this passage taking place?
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 - » Why is this passage important?

- » What is happening in this passage?

- » How does this passage apply to my life?

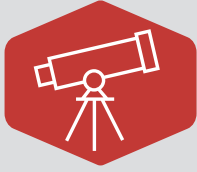
- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Read James 4:13-17. What can you learn about planning?

- Read Luke 12:16-21. What does Jesus teach about wise planning?

- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being great and 4 being poor, rate yourself on how well you plan. Write out a plan to improve.

- Describe a situation in your life when you committed the sins of presumption, commission, and omission. How did the Holy Spirit deal with you? What was the result?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 4:11. What are some things that are essential to spiritual victory and maturity?



- James 4:15. Why should you be committed to God's plan for your life?

- James 4:16. Describe boasting in your own words. Why is it dangerous?

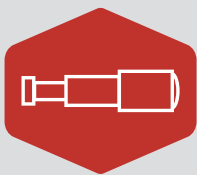
- James 4:17. What are sins of omission?



Lesson 12: Don't Be Driven by Stuff; Be Patient

Main Idea: This passage contains a message from God, that your time is in His hands. All you do is conditioned by His will. Whatever you have done, you are answerable for, including injustice, which you have the opportunity to correct in your heart and life. In this lesson, you will learn how the rich will be called into account one day. James pronounces judgment on the wicked rich while encouraging the righteous poor who are enduring mistreatments. Chasing after material things may cost you priceless relationships with people. In deciding between things or people, Jesus always chooses people.

Scripture: James 5:1-11



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

James 5:1-6 has an Old Testament prophetic flair to it. These verses offer a glimpse of a social structure that is distinctly non-American. James describes the land of Judea in biblical days. There is no middle class. A handful of people control 90 to 95 percent of the wealth in the country. James is addressing this aristocratic group. In his day, wealth was made up of four things—food, clothing, metals (silver and gold), and livestock. James reminds the aristocracy that food spoils, moths destroy clothes, and metals corrode. James uses strong language for those who have placed much hope in riches at the expense of valuing other people.

Next, James challenges believers with three exhortations concerning patience. First, we are to be patient until the Lord’s coming. Second, believers are to be patient in the face of suffering. Third, those who patiently endure will be blessed. Whenever people feel the pressures of life, they tend to stray from the command to love others. James uses illustrations from agricultural to help drive home what it means to wait patiently, even when life is difficult. Part of patience is learning to strengthen your heart. In biblical times, the heart was understood as the seat of all aspects of one’s inner life. James encourages believers to stand firm in their heart because the day of Christ’s return is near. You are live in expectation of that day. Furthermore, God’s blessings await those who endure.

Some scholars believe that this is a general word to the body of Christ, perhaps warning of the judgment of God. Others seem to suggest that this prophetic word was fulfilled after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

Remember, James writes to the twelve tribes of Israel that had been scattered by persecution. They had lost most of their possessions and were forced to flee Jerusalem. Most of the work they could find was in the fields. Rich landowners cheated them of their wages. Although this section was written about rich pagans, James did not expect them to read his letter. His purpose was to comfort the persecuted believers and encourage them to be patient until the Lord comes, at which time He would judge the rich.



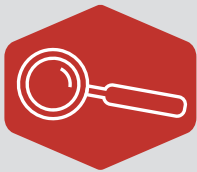
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.

James calls Christians to have a sense of social responsibility, but the Christian solution to social injustice is not a gospel of liberation. In fact, James does not even present a solution except to say to the wealthy, “In that day, God is going to hold you responsible for how you treat the poor.” He’s going to hold everyone accountable. Consider these statements:

- The things you hoard will not sustain you through this life (5:1-4).
- God will hold you accountable for how you use the wealth you have (5:3).
- You should use your wealth as God would have you use it (5:4).

- You should not live a life that totally satisfies yourself and forget all duty to your fellow man (5:5).
- You should not live a life that oppresses the innocent (those who can't defend themselves) (5:6).
- You should maintain an attitude of patience while suffering injustices (5:7-8).
- At Christ's coming, wrongs will be righted, and believers will be rewarded for faithfulness to Christ (5:8).
- God will judge you for your complaining (5:9).
- Jesus is waiting for the signal from the Father to come back (5:9).
- You need to endure suffering with patience and perseverance (5:10-11).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

- » How does this passage apply to my life?
- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.
 - Four times in verses 7-11, you are called to patience. Two times in verse 11, you are called to perseverance. In your own words, how does James want you to be like a farmer, prophet, and Job?
 - Read James 5:3-6. What are the four sins listed?
 - Contrast the above verses with Matthew 6:19-21. What can you learn?
 - As a believer, what are some things you should sacrifice in order to help others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 5:1. What should the Christian attitude be toward possessions?

- James 5:7. What are two characteristics of patience?

- What does patience give to you as you interact with people?

- James 5:11. What does the word “steadfast” mean?

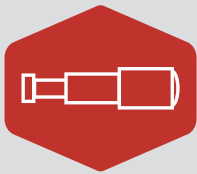
- How is perseverance developed?



Lesson 13: Faith in Prayer

Main Idea: In this section of Scripture, James concludes his letter with a series of appeals on the wise use of one's words in community. He challenges believers to live with mutual accountability in the ways of the Lord. He shows how right actions in daily life display our beliefs. In this lesson, you will learn the effects of righteous living in Christian community.

Scripture: James 5:12-20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this final passage, James proposes a way to reverse the patterns of negative action especially wrong speech by choosing to live by a different kind of wisdom. James also challenges Christians to practice plain speech. Here he proclaims almost word for word the practical teachings of Jesus, quoting from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:37). James challenges believers to pray in times of suffering. Believers tend to pray "why" during suffering rather than "what." We should pray, "Lord, what do you want me to learn?"

Next, James encourages the believer to sing. The idea here is to sing when you are in good spirits. Then James provides a three-part solution to the problem of physical sickness. First, call for church elders to pray for healing. James believes God has entrusted the ministry of healing to church elders. Second, anoint the sick person with oil. Anointing with oil was used for both spiritual

and medicinal purpose. Perhaps James is teaching that God is the source of both spiritual and physical healing. Third, have the church elders pray over the sick individual in person with them. God can be trusted with your life, your body, and all that you have because He is your Lord.

James admonishes believers to rebuke someone in the community who has strayed into sin. He calls upon the church to respond with directness. And when they practice these actions, believers will not fall under judgment. Here Leviticus 19 is again the backdrop for his thoughts.

James reminds readers that integrity lies close to the heart of Kingdom life and ethics. He cautions Christ followers to speak plainly—to say what they mean and mean what they say. Furthermore, James challenges believers to trust God for justice and vindication, not to rely on human reactions to life’s difficulties.

During this time, people used oaths as part of daily conversation. Pharisees, who often used them, claimed that certain oaths were binding while others were not. For instance, an oath based on the temple was not binding, but one based on the gold of the temple was. Jesus in Matthew 23:16–22, rebuked this hypocrisy. In Matthew 5:33–37, Jesus taught His disciples to tell the truth and keep their word without using oaths.



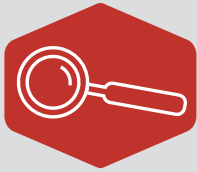
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.

James was written to bring wanderers back during a tough time for Christians. Today, we are also experiencing tough times. There is no believer who has not at some point wandered away from the Lord to some degree, or who is unaware of some disobedience to Him. It may not be intentional or premeditated. You may not consciously think, “I will just wander away from the Lord.” In fact, wandering is quite subtle. It is a soft sliding that comes from being careless. Then suddenly you find yourself away from Him. The letter of James was written to turn the sinner back to the Lord, who covers the multitude of our sins. Consider these important points:

- You should not use God’s name in a reckless manner; and you should be careful to speak the truth (5:12).

- As a believer, you should pray personally (5:13).
- As a believer, you should pray for the sick (5:14-15).
- As a believer, you should pray among fellow believers, which is powerful and effective (5:15-18).
- Do not let your circumstances cause you to wander away from God (5:19-20).



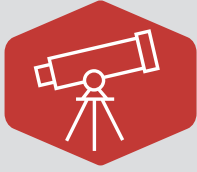
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 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.
- Why are oaths not helpful for honest people?
- From James 5:12–20, what are four keys James gives to praying well?
- Describe a time when God answered your prayer without giving you what you asked.
- Do you think prayer is more vital in times of trial or times of success? Why?
- Why do you think you should unite your prayers with elders or other believers?
- How does your daily living affect your prayers being answered?
- How can you avoid wandering from the truth?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 5:12. What does James warn people to do before they speak? Why is this important?

- James 5:13. What invitation do you have when you face trouble?
- James 5:15. What are four things you should consider when you ask for prayer from church leaders?
- Why should you examine yourself as you seek prayer for your sickness?
- James 5:16. What is an important aspect of healing?
- In the *FireBible* note on verse 16, read the 17 characteristics of the prayers of the righteous, along with the supporting verses for each. What did you learn?



- James 5:18. Why is the concept of “fate” a dangerous teaching you should guard against?

- How does God deal with His children?

- James 5:19–20. What should your priority be regarding Christian community?