

the Book of JAMES

BOLD|humility

WEEK 1

INTRO: It can be hard to know what to believe these days. So much around us is full of contradictions and confusion. James has a cure for us. To be a people who are BOLD in our faith. And he has a powerful tool for us to accomplish this...humility! The book of James makes two points over and over again on a variety of subjects. While James discusses; trials, faith, works, the use of our words, treatment of each other, prayer, wealth, and more: at the heart of every conversation is BOLD obedience to God and the humility required to attain it. In this study you will discover how to live a faith of BOLD humility.

DAY 1

Salutation (1:1)

Faith and Wisdom (1:2–8)

James says to count it nothing but joy. Note he does not say we musts feel this! We cannot control our emotions we can only control our responses. If a situation causes you distress containing to feel anxious is not a spiritual or moral failure. However we can hold to hope! We can trust that even in the bad God can work good for us and produce a more faithful life.

- What is a hardship you have grown from?
- Can you count it as joy?
- How can we do this with the really hard things?

This is not an easy teaching and feeling hurt or sadness over a situation is not wrong but we can still focus on the hope we have and find joy right along with the sorrow. Remember Jesus was know as a man acquainted with many sorrows. But even in the cross he found joy in offering it to the Father.

And remember in verse 5-8 we have a model for how to gain this sort of wisdom. Pray for the wisdom to see God at work even in your hardships today!

Day 2

Poverty and Riches (1:9-11)

- How are the lowly brought up in Christ?
- Think about what the poor must depended upon to get by. How does this impact their faith?
- How are the rich brought low?
- Think about the faith of a rich person. Is it tried as often as the poor?

There are many people in the world who live on less than one American dollar a day! How do you think that would impact your faith?
Pray for God to teach you how to in faith depend upon Him and the wealth of this world. Consider how you might financially show God you trust Him over wealth.

Day 3

Trial and Temptation (1:12–18)

D Day in WW2 was all about establishing a foothold in Europe. Once accomplished the tide of the war began to turn. The beach was the easiest to defend and the hardest to take. If the Allied Forces breached that defense it would become nearly impossible to hold them back. But if Germany would have held that beach it would have been nearly equally impossible for the Allied Forces to win out. It is recorded in the history books that had a single Panzer Division near by been given orders to move in the invasion it would likely have ended differently with America and England and the rest being pushed back rather than gaining a foothold in Europe.

Sin when it first tempts us is at its easiest to defeat. An evil thought, a temptation to the eye. Prayer and a turning of the head can turn the tide of temptation easily. But when we entertain the thought of sin we give it a foothold in our hearts. We let it take the beachhead of our hearts. This is James's point in v14-16. A desire awakes in us greed, pride, rage, lust, laziness, and so on. At the desire stage we can reject it by giving it to God. Cry out NO run away! But when we dwell upon it it grows in our heart like a corrupt child of sin. This is the disturbing imagery James uses. And the maturity of that sin is death. Then we become double minded and as James says we hear God's word but we do not do it. We want to be BOLD in our faith.

- How do you guard the peninsulas of your heart and mind?
- What desire tempts you most?
- How can you find ways to keep yourself from dwelling upon this sin child?
- If this sin were to come to full maturity what death would you experience? A relationship? Wise stewardship? Your integrity? Purity? what would die?
But always remember God brought Jesus back from the dead to gain victory over death and sin for you. In those sin deaths of your life give them to God and He will bring Resurrection through Jesus! This is the powerful point of 17-18. James does not leave us without hope! But in humility we must recognize our weakness to sin and call out to Him!

Day 4

Hearing and Doing the Word (1:19–27)

If we know God's word but do not live it we are not BOLD in our faith.

- What has the power to save our souls in this passage?
- What action described in v19 and 20 hurt or help the work of God's righteousness?
- What do you think it means to welcome with meekness the implanted word?

We need a humble spirit to receive the correction of God's Word. Do not assume you have it right but listen with humility to what God corrects us with in His word!

James is a book famous for imploring us to not just know and accept Jesus and his commands but to live them! Martin Luther disliked James for this reason because he argued faith alone saves us and felt James implied works do. But how can we say we really believe if we do not put into action what God commands?

- If you say you believe but never put God's word into action do you really believe? Verse 26-27 gives a summary of Pure Religion.
- How does James summarize it and how are you living it?

WEEK 2

Day 1

Warning against Partiality (2:1–13)

So we may balk at this blatant display of favoritism. No that's not me! Giving a good seat to the rich. But ask yourself this...in the positions of your heart who do you allow to sit close to you? Do they all look, think, and sit in the same basic income bracket as yourself? Often our social circles reflect less the Kingdom of God and more our personal social and economic position. This is not God's desire for His Kingdom or you!

- What difference would there be in your life if your social circle expanded?
- Would Sunday morning remain the most segregated hour in America if we learned to do this?
- Would we understand the cries of our neighbors better?
- Would they know us and our concerns better?
- Would it bring healing to communities if God's people were committed to sitting next to each other no matter our differences?

Today ask God to help you connect with those outside your social circle. Pray for relationship with fellow Christians who might stretch you a bit! This will take P.S.

2:13 is a powerful passage. Take time to reflect on its impact. What is it to show mercy? And where is it needed most in your own life?

Ask God to show you the mercy you need and to show you the mercy you need to offer. This will take BOLD faith and certainly humility.

Day 2

Faith and Works (2:14–26)

Now we come to the great debate! Faith or works? James leans on works. Its hard to argue with Scripture so lets let Scripture argue with itself!

Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

James 2:20 ESV Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Romans 3:28 ESV For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law

James 1:22 ESV But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Galatians 2:16 ESV Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Titus 3:5 ESV He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit

What do you make of this?

Is one set wrong and another correct?

Can there be an explanation to this contradiction?

Let's think of it this way. If I say I trust you I put my faith in you. But if then I do not accept your word what does that prove? If I say I believe in Jesus but never put his teachings into practice what is really in my heart? So our actions reveal our faith. James certainly would agree with this but we must also note James makes it clear he sees works as essential to salvation. So while there maybe some middle ground here between the writings of Paul and other NT authors James certainly makes this point stronger than any other.

Let's consider one more aspect. You may genuinely believe Jesus is Lord but belief and trust are different. There are many things I believe but do not build my life around. Could this be James's point? We can say all we want that we have faith but if we do not put that faith in to action do we truly trust? This is the BOLD action of faith that James says is necessary of those who have a true faith. And it takes humility to realize we don't always put our convictions into action. Do we really believe that peacemakers are blessed or do we prefer strongmen? Do we trust Jesus enough to truly love our enemies? And if we do are we practice the sort of love Paul told us to have in 1 Cor. 13 to believe, hope, and endure all things? Wow I humbly confess I have some work to do!

Day 3

The Tongue (3:1–12)

Ahh perhaps what James is best known for the rebuke of the human tongue!

First there is a caution not to take on positions that draw judgment. I (Pastor Rob) used to think this meant a harsher judgement from God for those who teach, preach etc. That scared me. Still does. But after nearly 20 years in ministry I realize what James is saying, when you take a leadership position people will judge you. And after all people aren't perfect and to be in leadership means to have flaws revealed and

perhaps judged. Please when you think of your pastor remember James 2:13! So there is this caution for us who would lead.

Like the rudder of a ship moves a giant vessel so the tongue can take us in directions for good or bad.

From verse 5 and on James elaborates on this theme comparing the tongue to a flame. Consider how a poorly timed word or a bit of gossip or judgment can harm. Not only this but the metaphor ends in discussion of fresh or brackish water our tongue pollutes the good in our words. To have evil talk discredits much that is good.

- Is there a place your tongue needs to exercise more caution?
- How can you use your words as a blessing today?

Day 4

The Wisdom from Above (3:13–18)

James says that gentleness is born of wisdom. Why does wisdom bring about gentleness?

When we discern our own flaws we are more likely to show kindness to others. When we fully understand how much mercy God has given us we are not so quick to judge. We grow in our capacity to show sympathy extend mercies. Humility makes us BOLD in our giving of grace.

When we are unwise we think better of ourselves than we ought to. James shares this encourages certain undesirable qualities: envy, selfish ambition, disorder, and wickedness. When we see these creeping in we've lost the wisdom of God.

The wisdom of God brings peace and a willingness to yield, to give mercy, and to produce good fruits. Good fruits being a rightness of heart and actions in our lives. This develops Righteousness in us. And all of it begins with humility, which is gained from knowing God's mercies in your life.

Pray today that God will reveal the many mercies he has shown you through Jesus.

Pray that this will humble your heart and give you deep mercy and gentleness towards others.

WEEK 3

Day 1

Friendship with the World (4:1–10)

James takes us to task in this passage! But notice the source of this strictness. God is jealous for us! It is out of love that we are rebuked. As the Scripture says, God disciplines His children. James is urging us to not be of two minds but be BOLD. We are not to just have faith but we put that faith into action (2:14–26). We aren't meant to just hear scripture but we to go and live it (1:19-25)! We should not only say we believe but we show it by living at peace with those around in humility.

- What do you think it means when James says, Do not be a friend of the world?
- James calls the friend of the world who claims to be of faith 'double minded.' Are there double minded aspects to your faith you need to repent of?
- Again James gives the command to be humble. In humility we are exalt. Why do you believe humility leads to being exalt?
- Who in the Bible can you think of that humbled themselves and it lead to being exalted?

Day 3

Judging a Brother (4:11–10)

We are not to judge. James cannot make it anymore clear.

When we judge who does James imply we are taking the role of?

Yes, it is the judge and who is the Judge of the Law? God is! this is boldness of a terrible kind. But let us be BOLD in our mercies towards one another.

This is a strong warning and a heavy accusation of what we accomplish when we judge. Treat each other with humility and gentleness. This will help you avoid the great sin of placing yourself in the Judge's Seat and as 2:13 reminds us...as we judge we receive no mercy but as we give mercy so we receive it!

Warning against Boasting (4:13–17)

Again James gives us reason to be humble.

Day 4

Warning to the Rich (5:1–6)

This warning is for those who exploit their wealth or influence. Be careful wealth is a subjective thing. It isn't always about cash flow.

Perhaps you have influence over others how are you using it?

Your words may sway people's opinions are you using this wealth wisely?

Be BOLD in how you use all your wealth offering it to God in humility!

Patience and Prayer (5:7–20)

If there is a third theme to James it would be living peaceably with one another. James and many of the early Christian leaders were very concerned with divisions in the church of many sorts. They wished for the church to be one as Jesus prayed for. It is not a new concept that we might be divided in our thinking. But all of us are united in Christ. This is a big take away from James. Humility will allow us to live at peace with one another and being BOLD by living our our faith will accomplish the work of the Gospel AND give you peace.

V 13 and following is another golden passage from James. A call to pray for one

another. Have you prayed for your church today? For those who suffer? If so bless you! If not please take time to pray for your church and those you live in community with today! Be BOLD and in humility thinking of others lift your church up in prayer today!

There is more to James and I hope you will explore the text for yourself further. In a time of division its nice to be reminded we can be a people of peace through humility. And it is comforting to know that when we are BOLD in our faith our lives are simplified to one allegiances the person and teachings of Jesus!

May we go and be not only hearers but doers of the WORD bold and humble! AMEN!