



# Letter of James

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## Introduction

In a brief letter written to a broad audience, James seeks to encourage people to live out an authentic faith in Christ. It is not enough to hear a word or see a truth as in a mirror. Something must be done about it.

The teachings in James draw deeply from those of Jesus and especially parallel the *Sermon on the Mount*. They challenge readers to persevere through trials with joy, resist temptation, love sacrificially, pray diligently, handle money wisely, speak graciously and grow always in wisdom. None of this is easy. But is there anyone who cannot benefit from such practices? Is there a family, a community, a church that would not benefit from lives lived with such maturity and wisdom?

James ends his letter with a challenge to “bring back sinners who wander from the truth.” Perhaps his letter does that for each thoughtful reader.

**LESSON ONE: James 1:1-8**

**OPENING QUESTION:** *Have you ever received a letter with wise counsel?*

Note: Many believe that James was the younger brother of Jesus who was converted after the resurrection. His letter was written to the “twelve tribes”, a dispersed people comprised of Jewish Christians.

1. Whom did James serve?
2. Given the letter’s designated audience, why might it lack the personal comments found in so many other New Testament letters?  
What difference might it make in tone and content to be written to such a diverse audience?
3. What is your usual response to trials and difficulties? Have you experienced that such times have added value to your life?
4. What does God say about the value difficulties and trials may have?

James 1:3-4, 12

Psalm 66:10-12

1 Peter 1:6-9

Recall how you have seen God present in the midst of troubled times.

5. What choices lead to joy in the midst of difficulties?

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Romans 15:13

Hebrews 12:2-3

6. Why do you think maturity is valuable and how can it be obtained? (v.4)

7. What keeps a person immature?

Proverbs 1:29-30

Hebrews 5:13-14

**Read Proverbs 2:1-12 and James 1:5-8**

8. Why is wisdom so important and how can you obtain it?

9. Why do you think James warned so strongly against doubting that God will provide you with wisdom when you ask Him for it?

10. How have you seen God grow you through times of unwelcome difficulty?

11. What resources does God provide to help you trust Him in difficult times?

Isaiah 41:10

John 16:33

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**Memory Verse:** "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." *James 1:5*

**Prayer Guide:** Lord, give me your wisdom.

**LESSON TWO: James 1:9-18**

**OPENING QUESTION:** *Was there a family rule growing up that you were especially tempted to break?*

Note: During the Roman reign of peace there were few opportunities for distinguishing oneself apart from displays of wealth. While ninety percent of people lived below the poverty level, ten percent controlled the wealth. (NIV commentary - Nystrom)

1. Why do you think James turned the positions of *rich* and *poor* upside down?

2. How can both poverty and wealth become stumbling blocks?

Proverbs 30:7-9

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

3. What do you think is the difference between testing and temptation?  
Why can the two be confused?

4. Why are people not to blame God for temptation?

5. What are the sources of temptation?

James 1:14

Matthew 4:1

Ephesians 6:12

6. What happens when people give in to temptation? Describe the progression. (vv. 14-18)

7. How do you resist temptation?

James 1:16

James 4:7-10

Matthew 4:1-11

Romans 6:11-14

Which of these resources do you most need to draw upon in an area of current temptation?

8. What gifts does God give to help you trust Him through trials, testing and temptations?

James 1:5

James 1:12

James 1:13

James 1:17

James 1:18

9. What kind of people does James long for his readers to become? (v.18)  
What does this mean for you?

**Memory Verse:** "...God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone." *James 1:13b*

**Prayer Guide:** Lord deliver me from temptation.

## LESSON THREE: James 1:19-27

**OPENING QUESTION:** *When have you been encouraged by someone's careful listening?*

1. Why do words matter?

James 1:26

Proverbs 15:1

Matthew 12:33-37

What do words reveal about a person?

2. What does listening require? (Proverbs 17:27-28)
3. Why can anger be dangerous? (James 1:20, Proverbs 29:22)
4. What damage has anger done to you or through you?
5. Why is it helpful to have God's Word planted in you?

Deuteronomy 6:4-8

Colossians 3:16

2 Timothy 2:15

Hebrew 4:12

6. What do you need to get rid of to make room for God's word? v. 21

7. What responses are required for God to accomplish His purposes in you and through you?

James 1:21b

James 1:22

James 1:25

James 1:26

James 1:27b, Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 25:34-40

8. When does a mirror prove most helpful?

Have you been tempted to ignore things revealed in the mirror of God's word?  
When have you been motivated to change?

9. Why are God's people to care for the oppressed? (v.27)

**Read Isaiah 55:1-13**

10. How does Isaiah reinforce the message of James?

List the actions that lead to a life of joy and blessing.

<b>Memory Verse:</b>	"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." <i>James 1:22</i>
<b>Prayer Guide:</b>	Lord, help me to listen and obey.



## LESSON FOUR: James 2:1-13

**OPENING QUESTION:** *Have you ever been treated differently because of the way you were dressed?*

1. Why is it so tempting to show favoritism?
2. What difficulties can be created when favoritism is shown?
3. Why does God oppose favoritism? (vv. 3-4, 8-9, see also 1 Samuel 16:7)
4. What is God's view of the rich and the poor?

James 2:5

Mark 10:23-27

Luke 6:20-21

5. What difficulty had the rich been creating? vv.6-7

How did this violate God's law? (Isaiah 10:1-3)

**Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.**

6. How were the rich to bless the community? What blessing would result for them?

7. What was the *Royal Law* and how was it to be obeyed? (Matthew 22:37-39)

Why do you think this law gives freedom? (see also Psalm 119:45, John 8:31-32)

8. How has Christ shown you mercy?

Ephesians 2:4-5

1 Peter 1:3-5

1 Peter 2:9-10

9. Why is mercy so difficult to practice?

Matthew 18:21-35

Luke 6:27-36

10. Where are you showing favoritism or judgment when God would want you to show mercy? Will you ask for His help?

**Memory Verse:** "Mercy triumphs over judgment."  
*James 2:13b*

**Prayer Guide:** Lord, make me merciful

## LESSON FIVE: James 2:14-26

**OPENING QUESTION:** *Have you ever valued something greatly and discovered it was a counterfeit?*

1. What is faith? (Hebrews 11:1, Acts 17:28a)  
Why do you think James speaks so strongly about the need for faith to be accompanied by action?

2. What did Jesus say was the basis for true faith?

John 3:3-7

John 5:24

Have you experienced such faith?

3. What do demons believe about God? Why do you think James speaks of this here? (v. 19, see also Mark 3:11-12)

4. What actions did Jesus say were to accompany faith?

Luke 8:11-15, 21

John 15:12-17

Titus 3:7-8

Are these evident in your life?

5. What happens when faith is not accompanied by works? (James 2:16, 17, 26)

6. What happens when works are not accompanied by faith?

Isaiah 29,13-15

Hebrews 11:6

7. What did Abraham do and how did he display faith?

Genesis 15:1-6

James 2:21-23

8. What did Rahab do and how did she display faith?

Joshua 2:1-14

James 2:25

**Read Ephesians 2:8-10.**

9. What equips you for good works?

What growth have you experienced because you have put your faith into action?

10. In what area is God nudging you to act in love?

**Memory Verse:** "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."  
*James 2:26*

**Prayer Guide:** Almighty God, move me to act in faith.

## LESSON SIX: James 3:1-12

**OPENING QUESTION:** *Did your family raise you with any rules to guide your speech?*

1. What higher standards apply to teachers of God's Word and why?

James 3:1-2

2 Corinthians 4:2-5

2 Timothy 2:14-18

2 Timothy 4:2-5

Do you think there are unique responsibilities for teachers of God's word?

2. Why does your speech matter?

James 1:26

James 3:6

James 3:9-10

Mathew 15:10-19

3. How do you know when your words are doing damage?
4. Why are envy and ambition likely to impact your speech negatively? (vv.14-16)
5. How can even commonly accepted forms of speech, like gossip, destroy?  
Proverbs 16:28

Proverbs 26:20-22

Are you able to recognize and resist the temptation to gossip?

6. What metaphors did James use to describe the destructive power of the tongue?

James 3:4

James 3:5-6

James 3:7-8

James 3:9-11

James 3:12

7. What constructive power did God design the tongue for?

Proverbs 10:21

Isaiah 50:4

Psalms 105:1-2

8. What steps can you take to offer encouraging and healing words instead of destructive ones?

Are there speech habits you need to unlearn in order to do this? (Psalm 141:3)

9. What does earthly wisdom look like and what does it accomplish? (James 3:14-16)

10. What does godly wisdom look like?

James 3:17-18

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Why do you think godly wisdom can lead to peacemaking speech?

**Read Psalm 19:14**

11. Write this prayer out and let it shape your speech in the coming weeks.

**Memory Verse:** "Set a guard over my mouth Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips."  
*Psalm 141:3*

**Prayer Guide:** Almighty God, tame my tongue.

**LESSON SEVEN: James 4:1-17**

**OPENING QUESTION:** *What were the most frequent causes of fights when you were a child?*

1. Contrast James' closing words in Chapter Three with his opening question in Chapter Four.
2. What is the root of human conflict? (vv.1-2)
3. Why do you think Christians sometimes have more difficulty getting along with other Christians than they do with people of the world?
4. According to James, why don't people have what they want? (vv.2-3)
5. What do you think it means to be a friend of the world? (v. 4, see also 1 John 2:15-17)
6. What cure for conflict did James recommend?

James 4:6

James 7a

James 7b

James 8a

James 8b-9

James 4:10

How do you submit to God in ways that makes all this possible? (Psalm 63)

7. What kind of speaking about brothers and sisters is forbidden? (vv.11-13)

Is there a relationship where you need to seek forgiveness because you have spoken in these destructive ways?

8. Why is it dangerous to boast about the future? (vv.14-16, see also Proverbs 27:1)

Are there any adjustments you have made or need to make as you recognize how fragile you are?

9. *"If it is the Lord's will, we will do this or that"*. What are the practical challenges of planning your future with this attitude? (Proverbs 16:9)

10. With what challenge does James end the chapter? (v.17)  
Where is God nudging you to do what you know is right?

**Memory Verse:** "Come near to God and He will come near to you." *James 4:8*

**Prayer Guide:** Lord, draw me close.



## LESSON EIGHT: James 5:1-20

**OPENING QUESTION:** *What do you stockpile or collect?*

Note: Laborers were hired and paid by the day and did not have legal contracts with their employers.

1. Why is it sometimes tempting to hoard?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How did the wealthy misuse their resources?

James 2:6

James 5:3

James 5:4

James 5:5

James 5:6

How do you use your wealth?

3. How does James challenge you to pay those fairly who serve you?

**Read Matthew 6:19-24 and Luke 12:13-21.**

4. What guidance does Jesus provide about wealth?  
Can you enjoy the material wealth that God provides? (Ecclesiastes 5:19)

Note: *Do not swear* -James is not condemning the taking of solemn oaths, rather, he is condemning the flippant use of God's name to back up truth.

5. How are people to wait for the Lord's coming? (vv.7-11, see also Hebrews 10:19-25)  
How do these verses encourage you?

6. What behaviors are to be avoided as you wait? (vv. 9, 12, see also Philippians 2:14-16)
  
7. When is it important to pray and why do you need to pray?  
James 5:13a, Psalm 50:15  
  
James 5:13b  
  
James 5:14  
  
James 5:15b, 16
  
8. How are you to pray in a God-honoring way? (vv.13-18)
  
9. What happens if earnest prayer does not end in healing? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
  
10. Why do you think James ended his letter as he did? What was he urging? (vv.19-20)
  
11. Read Jude 20-25. What is important to remember about bringing “sinners” back?
  
12. What new thing might you pray for God to do in your life  
in your use of money  
  
in your practice of prayer  
  
in your waiting  
  
in your speaking

**Memory Verse:** “To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence.” *Jude 24*

**Prayer Guide:** Lord, keep me from falling.

## REVIEW LESSON

1. What verses do you most want to take with you from this study?
2. What did you learn from James to help you more effectively live out your faith?
3. What warnings will help you to resist temptation?
4. What spiritual resources are you reminded of?
5. What words about living well in the midst of suffering do you want to remember?
6. What adjustments have you made in your prayer life?
7. How has the teachings of James challenged your speech?
8. What are you thankful for?