

The Book of James
“Authentic Faith Produces Authentic Disciples”

Course Introduction

We live in a world filled with inevitable trials, untimely transition, and unexpected turbulence. Since life contains so many unplanned interruptions, it is paramount that we obtain something consistent to hold on to. The Apostle James pens this letter to demonstrate to us that a Genuine relationship with Jesus Christ will provide stability and consistency that transcend whatever circumstances life may bring. James writes this emphatic letter, filled with imperatives that will aid us in developing an *Authentic Faith*. This Authentic Faith will ultimately produce Authentic Disciples that prove themselves to doers of the word, and not merely hearers that delude themselves (Ja. 1:22).

Author

James identifies himself as the author of this epistle (1:1), but the question remains which of the five James mentioned in the New Testament is credited as the author of this Epistle. The writer of this letter is James the half-brother of Jesus, and brother of Jude. James was also the leading elder at the church of Jerusalem, who spoke at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:13-21. (Mk. 6:3, Acts 1:14,12:17, 15:13, 21:18, 1 Cor. 15:7, Gal. 2:9). James was among those that Jesus appeared to after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). Although James grow up in the same household as our Lord and Savior, James did not come to know Christ as Lord and Savior until after His death, burial, and resurrection. And so, some 15 years prior to being martyred for his faith in 62 A.D., James wrote the very first book in the New Testament, this short, practical manual of Christian living.

Historical Background

James wrote this letter around A.D. 45-48 and addressed it specifically to the Jewish Christians of the Diaspora. These Jews were scattered throughout Palestine and had come to faith in Jesus Christ (1:1). The book of James is considered to be a General Epistle because it is not addressed to one specific body of believers. This epistle was written during the mid first century when Christians were experiencing intense persecution at the hands of the Roman government. This persecution caused these Christians to compromise their faith and even abandon Christianity in order to avoid the negative consequences of this intense affliction.

Message and Purpose

James writes this epistle primarily to explain what practical Christianity looks like. James is urging his readers to put their faith in action in spite of life's various circumstances. This is a faith that is lived out in everyday situations with everyday people. James accomplishes his task by writing a straight, in your face letter that contains the highest concentration of imperatives of any book in the New Testament. This guide to practical Christianity is considered by many scholars to be the wisdom literature of the New Testament. Ultimately James demonstrates how an authentic faith in Christ is lived out after you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves- James 1:22

Outline

- I. *Authentic Faith Provides Constant Stability (1:1-27)***
 - a. Responding to Trials (1:1-12)
 - b. Responding to Temptation (1:13-18)
 - c. Responding to Scripture (1:19-27)

- II. *Authentic Faith Demonstrates True Love (2:1-3:12)***
 - a. Partiality and Prejudice (2:1-13)
 - b. Faith and Works (2:14-26)
 - c. Your Words and Your Walk (3:1-12)

- III. *Authentic Faith Cultivates Genuine Humility (3:13-5:6)***
 - a. The Wise and the Unwise (3:13-18)
 - b. Fighting and Forgiveness (4:1-10)
 - c. Warning against Pride (4:11-17)
 - d. Warning to the Wealthy (5:1-6)

- IV. *Authentic Faith Produces Steadfast Patience (5:7-20)***
 - a. Patience through Suffering (5:7-12)
 - b. Patience in Prayer (5:13-18)
 - c. Patience in Correction (5:19-20)

James 1-1:27 (Week 1)
"Constant Stability"

Theme: "Authentic Faith Produces Constant Stability"

The overarching theme of the book of James is ***Authentic Faith produces authentic disciples***. James begins the development of this argument in Chapter 1 by telling us how we should respond to the unexpected troubles that life throws our way. James argues, that when authentic faith is put to the test, it **perseveres**. It ultimately results in **Constant Stability!** To demonstrate this point, James provides us with three primary examples in the first Chapter of His Epistle. First, James advises us that the **trails of life don't destroy authentic faith**, but instead trials develop our faith by **producing endurance** (1:1-12). Next, James cautions us that temptation can only be **overcome through God-given strength** (1:13-18). Lastly, James reminds us that constant stability is ultimately accomplished through **submission to the Word of God** (1:19-27).

Key Terms

1. **ὑπομονή (ὕπομονή)** : "Patient endurance", "Perseverance", "Steadfastness" - This word is derived from two Greek words. "Hypo" (under) and "mino" (abide), with the basic meaning "To abide under". This is the ability to face difficult circumstances with patience and steadfast faith in God. (1:3)
2. **Peirasmos (πειρασμός)**: "Trial" "Test" "Temptation"- This term refers to either tests that challenge the strength of one's faith (1:2-4,12) or temptations that challenge one's Christian morals. James places both meanings in this letter: the test of faith in James 1:2-12 and temptation to sin in 1:13-18
3. **threskia (θρησκεία)**: "religion", "worship", "devout practices"- James is referring to the true Christian belief and doctrine in this section of his letter. He is emphasizing fundamental Christian beliefs and practices that distinguish it from other religions of the day (1:26-27)

I. Responding to Trials (1:1-12) NASB

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

2 Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. **4** And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. **6** But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For that person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, **8** being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

9 Now the brother or sister of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; **10** but the rich person is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. **11** For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so also the rich person, in the midst of his pursuits, will die out.

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Exposition

- (1:1) Although James is the **half-brother of Jesus Christ**, he doesn't use that as a descriptor to introduce himself in this letter. James identifies himself as a **Bond-servant** of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1:1). By using this word, James was proudly asserting that he belonged to God and to Jesus Christ—body and soul. Since an **attitude of service** is what distinguishes biblical leadership, there is no contradiction between service and leadership.
- (1:2) James dives headfirst into the most challenging aspects of the Christian journey.... Suffering through trials. James provides us with a counter cultural perspective as he tells how we ought to view trials. James tells us to "**rejoice**" or "**count it all joy**". We should not run from it, but instead we are to rejoice and allow God to showcase His power as He leads us through the trial.
- A **trial** is a difficult and often **unexpected circumstance** that God allows in our lives. He uses them to shape His people into instruments of His glory. (1:2)
- Trials are inevitable** - James does not say "if" you fall into various trials, but instead "when" you fall into various trials. Trails are inescapable and unavoidable
- Trials are various**- while we can expect trials to come, we have no clue what form they will take! Trials come in all shapes and sizes, as a matter of fact the word various in this verse means "multi- colored". Trails are various.
- (1:3-4) **Trials** are a **test from God**. This test **stretches and strengthens** your faith. Constant faith produces endurance. Ultimately this sequence leads to **Spiritual Maturity!** (1:3-4)
- (1:5-8) James demonstrates that it takes **wisdom from God** in order to handle life's trials effectively. This wisdom is only accessible through **single-minded prayer** that is rooted in faith in God! When we pray for wisdom we must do so without doubting. Doubting while praying leads to **spiritual instability** and you should not expect to receive anything from God.
- (1:9-12) Trials effect everybody, even the wealthy, who can often feel that their wealth and affluence can shield them from the trials of life. **Materially poor** ("humble") believers should derive joy from focusing their thinking on **their spiritual riches ("high position")**. Conversely, the **materially wealthy** ("the rich man") should remember that **riches are temporary** ("will pass away"), and that one's real condition before God is a very humble one ("is to glory in his humiliation"). The "flower" of the "grass" refers to its stage of green, lush growth when it is at the peak of its vitality. Soon, it "withers" and turns brown in the Middle East (cf. Matt. 6:30). Likewise, "the rich man" may "fade" quickly "away" (cf. 4:13). In view of how God uses trials in our lives, we should persevere in the will of God joyfully

II. Responding to Temptation (1:13-18)

13 No one is to say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. **14** But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death. **16** Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters. **17** Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. **18** In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

(1:13-15) James now lays out the origin and purpose of temptations. A **Temptation** is an **outward alluring** bait that entices our **inward desires**.

Temptation is **always present**..... Nobody is exempt from temptation, everyone has the ability to be tempted.

Temptation is **never sent by God**..... God uses trials to mature us and strengthen our faith. God is never the author of temptation. Never!

Temptation can **lead to a downward spiral**..... **Temptation** causes us to be **enticed** by our own **"Lust"**..... Lusting after the temptation will **give birth to sin**..... Sin brings forth **death**.

(1:16-18) James abruptly shifts his argument to urge us not to be deceived, because the lure of temptation can easily cause us to stray away from the truth of God's Word. We are to remain steadfast and not allow our thoughts to stray away from the truth. Lastly, James closes this section by pointing us to the source of victory in the final two verses. God provides the means to victory over temptation and any type of subtle allurements. Every good and perfect gift comes from above! The One who brings forth good and perfect gifts is the one who brings forth the word of truth. As we honor God through active obedience to His word, God honors those who honor His word.

III. Responding to Scripture (1:19-27)

19 You know this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Now everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; **20** for a man's anger does not bring about the righteousness of God. **21** Therefore, ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. **22** But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves. **23** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; **24** for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. **25** But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this person's religion is worthless. **27** Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

(1:19-20) James begins this section with a vivid reminder to his brothers and sisters in Christ as he addresses them as "beloved". Verses 19 and 20 set the stage for every believer to be prepared to "**humbly receive**" the implanted word of God! First, we must be **quick to hear**. This is more than just listen, but rather it is intently discerning what others say. Next, we must be **slow to speak**. This is the other side of listening well. This is the idea of taming the tongue and being intentional with your words. Lastly, we must be **slow to anger**. James calls us to respond in peace because unrighteous anger does not please our righteous God.

(1:21) Verse 21 ties this entire section together. We must rid ourselves of all **filthiness**. The "filthiness" in view seems to refer to all kinds of **unclean behavior that lies outside the will of God**, including anger and wrath. The "remains of wickedness" are those evil habits of life we carry over from the unredeemed world (cf. Ps. 17:4; Luke 6:45). The believer should accept submissively what God has revealed ("in humility receive the word"), and should respond cooperatively to what He commands. The Word of God will then have good soil in which to grow, and it will yield an abundant harvest of righteous conduct in the believer.

(1:22-25) Those who hear without doing, may be guilty of having a "fake faith". Those who hear and do what the word says, prove themselves to have an **authentic faith**. Doing the Word of God, in this context, means persevering in God's will when we experience temptation to depart from it. Hearing God's will is good as far as it goes, and it is indispensable, but **obedience** should follow. Some Christian disciples "delude themselves" by thinking that knowing God's will is all that is needed, but it is only foundational to doing God's will. Obedient adherence to the Word of God is the key to experiencing God's blessing in life now, and it will lead to an eternal reward in the future.

(1:26-27) James closes this section by describing the person that is faithfully adhering to "**true religion**" or authentic Christianity. The first component of authentic faith is the ability to bridle the tongue. The next component of authentic Christianity deals directly with caring for those who are forced to the margins of society; **orphans & widows**. Lastly, authentic faith is rounded out by not allowing the world to shape you into its mold, but rather allow that word of God to transform you each and every day.

Application

1. When trouble comes we must respond with single minded faith in God, and ask Him for wisdom as we endure (1:2-5)
2. God never waists a crisis.... He uses every difficult circumstance to develop us and mold us into the image of Christ (1:9-12)
3. Victory over temptation only comes through dwelling on the Good, intentionally fleeing from evil, and adhering to the truth of God's word (1:13-18)
4. Our actions as Christians should align with what we profess to believe (1:22-25)

James 2:1-3:12 (Week 2)
"Demonstrating True Love"

Theme: "Authentic Faith Demonstrates True Love "

In this second section of his letter, James begins to deal with the nitty gritty of the Christian life. After establishing some very practical themes in his first section, now James dives deeper into this concept of authentic faith. James argues that **Authentic Faith demonstrates True Love!** He develops this argument by burrowing deeply into three primary concepts. First, James addresses the problems of **partiality and prejudice** (2:1-13). Second, James explains the tension that exist between **our faith and our works** (2:14-26). Lastly, he convicts us as he urges his readers to **bridle their tongues**. (3:1-12). This section is meant to transform the readers into authentic disciples that demonstrate consistent love with their **words and treatment of others**.

Key Terms

1. **Pistis (πίστις)**- "faith" "confidence" "reliance", "trust"- James develops this uniquely Christian concept of authentic saving faith that involves unwavering trust in and reliance upon God. This authentic faith manifests itself through faithful actions.
2. **Ergon (ἔργον)** - "work", "deed", "completion of a task"- James expresses "works" as a practical outward expression of one's inward convictions. These are visible manifestations of invisible thoughts
3. **Glossa (γλῶσσα)** "tongue" "language" - this word does refer to the physical organ of the body, but most of its uses are metaphorical for a person's words or language.

I. Partiality and Prejudice (2:1-13)

My brothers and sisters, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and is dressed in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

5 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters: did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 7 Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the Law as violators. 10 For whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles in one point, has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do murder, you have become a violator of the Law. 12 So speak, and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

- (2:1-4) James begins this section by saying essentially that faith in Christ and partiality are incompatible. Personal "favoritism" is hardly a glorious characteristic, and it is inconsistent for a Christian who worships the "glorious Lord Jesus Christ". In this context Favoritism implies an inclination to favor a person or thing based solely on external factors.
- (2:5-11) James explains why prejudice and partiality are unfit for Christians. First, He provides a **Theological reason**. God shows no partiality so neither should His children (2:5). Next, James provides a **logical reason** (2:6-7). Here James ask two rhetorical questions. The rich and powerful were persecuting Christians by dragging them before authorities and the rich were blaspheming the name of the Lord. Lastly, James provides a **Biblical reason** (2:8-11). James points us to an Old Testament text (Lev. 19:18), which is the basis for the Golden Rule (Matt. 19:19). Prejudice and Partiality, which refuses to love all equally - transgresses the greatest commandment.
- (2:12-13) James wraps up this indictment against the sins of prejudice and partiality with an exhortation to apply his teaching and let the Word of God be the standard. **Let Scripture be your standard! Let Love be your law! Let mercy be your message!**

II. **Faith and Works (2:14-26)**

14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? **17** Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." **19** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **20** But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? **22** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; **23** and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. **24** You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. **25** In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **26** For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

- (2:14) This section is the clear apex of the book of James. James ask two rhetorical questions in this verse that highlights the essence of authentic faith. The first questions points to the fact that the evidence of **real faith is the fruit that is bore with their actions.** The second question refers to a quality of faith that produces no fruit. Faith that doesn't produce fruit isn't faith at all.
- (2:15-20) Here James gives us four aspects of active faith. First, active faith is **incarnational** (2:15-16). This simply means that active faith gets involved when others are in need. Second, active faith is **never independent** (2:17). Active faith always accompanied by results(works). Third, active faith is **not invisible**. The Christian demonstrates our faith by their works. Fourth, Active faith is **intentional** and not merely intellectual. This means that our faith must engage our head, hearts, and hands!
- (2:21-25) James drives home his point by point us to two Old Testament examples of active faith! These two examples are polar opposites, but they both exemplified incredible faith. First Abraham, demonstrated his faith through his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, and Rehab demonstrated

her faith by risking her life to receive the messengers of Israel. In both instances, the Bible says that their faith that was demonstrated by their works was credited to them as righteousness. They were justified as a result of these actions. The Apostle Paul and James use the word "justify" in two different ways. Paul is referring to the root of salvation, while James is referring to the fruit of Salvation. Paul speaks about life pre-conversion in Galatians, while James refers to life post conversion.

- (2:26) "Faith without works" is as "dead" as a "body without" a human "spirit." It is of no practical value. This is James' final illustration and affirmation on the subject. Our faith becomes only dead orthodoxy when we stop obeying God.

III. Your Words and Your Walk (3:1-12)

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. 3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. 5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. 7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. 11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

- (3:1-2) James begins this section highlighting the seriousness of the sacred task of teaching God's word! James states that you should be careful about quickly becoming a teacher, instead teachers must be sure to pay careful attention to their personal lives and their public ministry. Everyone stumbles in many ways, but when teachers stumble they run the risk of causing many others to stumble. The tongue is the teacher's indispensable tool and the teacher must be diligent in taming the tongue! The person who speaks much is going to err ("stumble") much in his or her speech, because the "tongue" (vv. 5-12) is the hardest member of the "body" to control. No one has been able to master it yet, except Jesus Christ. Yet spiritual maturity requires a tamed tongue.
- (3:3-6) James illustrates the danger of an unbridled tongue by providing three examples of danger. It is the same with "horses" as it is with humans. If we can control the tongue, we can bring the "whole" animal (or "body") under control. This second illustration adds another element. The controlled tongue can overcome great obstacles. James had observed many "ships" on the Sea of Galilee, and perhaps on the Mediterranean, "driven by strong winds," yet "directed by a very small rudder." The two previous illustrations share a characteristic that James pointed out next. Though small and comparatively insignificant, the tongue can effect great change out of all proportion to its size. The tongue has as much destructive power as a spark ("small fire") that can burn down a large "forest." It is petite but powerful ("small ... yet boasts of great things").
- (3:7-8) Human beings have been able to tame all types of animals, but no one can tame the tongue. Apart from the Holy Spirit's help no one can tame the his or her tongue. We must remain diligent in

seeking the Lords help, because left to our own devices our tongues are restless evil full of poison that can hurt people.

(3:9-12)

This final section highlights the **inconsistency of the tongue**. We honor God with our words, while at the same time using our words to hurt others. Not only is this contradictory phenomenon ("from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing") contrary to the will of God, it is also contrary to the natural order of things. Illustrations highlight this natural inconsistency (cf. Matt. 7:16). A water source ("fountain") can yield only one kind of water (fresh or not fresh). A "tree" can only produce fruit of its own kind. A "salt" spring cannot produce "fresh" water, any more than a fallen human nature can naturally produce pure words. A fountain, a tree, and the tongue all have power to delight (cf. vv. 5, 8).

Application

1. Let the Scriptures be your standard and let love be your law (2:1-12)
2. Be sure that your actions align with what you say that you believe (2:14-18)
3. Your words are an indication of your spiritual maturity (3:1-12)

James 3:13-5:6 (Week 3)
“Cultivates Genuine Humility”

Theme: "Authentic Faith Cultivates Genuine Humility"

In this third section of the book of James, he reminds us that **Authentic Faith cultivates Genuine Humility**. Humility is aggression for God, while pride is aggression for self. Humility is the idea of having an accurate view of yourself, while seeking to view the world from a Biblical perspective. First, James reminds us that our goodness comes from God-given wisdom, not our own (3:13-18). He calls us to turn to God, not ourselves for peaceful relationships (4:1-10). He warns us against boasting (4:11-17). Lastly James warns us of the danger of pride (5:1-6)

Key Terms

1. **Krino (κρίνω)**: "to judge" "to divide", "to assess" – the literal meaning of this word is “to sift or separate” in order to isolate the components of a mixture. When this verb is used with a person it is used to describe someone that is sifting through the details of one’s life in order to come to an accurate conclusion.
2. **Tapeinoō (ταπεινώνω)**: “to humble”, “to lower” “Submit”- the concept of humbling yourself means to lower oneself to a lower status than usual. In the ancient culture humbling oneself was often associated with bowing down.
3. **Zelos (ζήλος)**- : "jealousy" "zeal"- in the book of James this term is closely related to selfish ambition. James does not speak of positive zeal but "zelos" that is misguided and misplaced is self-centered zeal that always leads to acts of jealousy (James 3:14,16)

I. The Wise and the Unwise (3:13-18)

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. **15** This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. **18** And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

(3:13) These initial four verses in this section paint the ugly picture of one who fails to adhere to Godly wisdom. James begins this section by asking a rhetorical question that begins the contrast between the wise and the unwise. The wise person is to demonstrate their wisdom through, "good behavior" and "deeds in gentleness".

(3:14-16) The unwise demonstrate their fleshly folly by showcasing the following negative attributes. First, is **bitter jealousy (3:14)**... This is jealousy that harbors hard feelings toward others. Second, selfish ambition (3:14) is the idea of this is the self-centered desire to push oneself to the top by pulling others down along the way. Third, arrogance (3:14) is the manifestation of jealousy and

selfish ambition. It is a distorted view of oneself that proudly justifies one's own sinful actions... it is the opposite of humility. Fourth, is the concept of "lying against the truth"(3:14). This is the idea of changing the standard of truth in order to match your own personal agenda. Fifth, "Earthly" (3:15), is the idea of drawing your wisdom merely from earthly measures of the truth, worldly standards of success, material motives and temporal priorities. Sixth, natural (3:15) is the idea that the source of our wisdom our thoughts, pursuits, and understanding, not the Spirits wisdom that points us to God's word. Lastly, demonic (3:15) is the idea of placing an emphasis on a philosophy or pattern of thinking that is so clearly contrary to the truth of God's Word that it could endorsed by Satan.

(3:16) Jealousy and selfish ambition always result in disorder. Where disorder exist, it gives way to every evil thing simply because you are now out of alignment with Gods will and operating contrary to Gods word!

(3:17-18) Verse 17, begins to vividly paint the picture of a person who truly embodies "wisdom from above". This section includes 8 attributes that highlight the fruit of wisdom. First, **Pure...** Purity is funnel through all of God's wisdom flows. It is the idea of have Christ centered internal motives and external actions. Second, **Peaceable** is the idea of seeking peace with all people and in all relationships. Third, **Gentle...** Is a Godly kindness that handles people with compassion, grace, and mercy? Fourth, **Reasonable...** this is idea of a person that is teachable and flexible and open to change as long as it aligns with the truth of God's word. Fifth, this is **Mercy...** This is the idea of looking on someone with compassion when they probably deserve punishment. Sixth, **"good fruits"...** This is a person whose actions align with their words and they bear the fruit of the Spirit. Seventh, **Unwavering...** A person who upholds their morals and remains true to their Christ-Centered principles regardless of the situation. Eighth, **Sincere...** This is simply a person who is not a hypocrite!

II. Fighting and Forgiveness (4:1-10)

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

(4:1) James begins this section by addressing the issue of fighting among Christians. Once again, he asks a rhetorical question that exposes the real source of the negative actions that are on display. James states that the primary cause for the disputes among believers are "pleasures that wage war in your members". The pleasures of life become the sources of conflict when we allow the desire to please our fleshly desires supersede our desire to please God. When something steps in lies in the way of us fulfilling those desires it can cause us to fight until we get our way!

(4:2-4) The ultimate end of "lust," a strong desire that a person might or might not satisfy, is "murder." This is of jealousy often fail to ask God for what they need. James leans in a bit further and gets at the true heart of the quarrels. That is that you are envious and cannot obtain the very thing that is causing your envy, so in response to the ungodly emotion, you fight and quarrel.

God's promise of answering our prayers and giving us what we ask for must be governed by everything the Bible has to say about prayer. James warns us against pleasure motivated prayer that is rooted in self-centeredness. We must engage in God pleasing prayer. Prayers that are in alignment with God's character and God's will, not for things that fuel our own envious and selfish desires.

Lastly, James issues a warning to those whom he accuses of committing spiritual adultery. You have to decide as to which one you will love... God or the World. In this context, the word "world" refers to the world's system of doing things that is opposed to the things of God. To be in love with a system of thought and action that is opposed to the Word of God, ultimately results in hostility toward God.

(4:5-6) James provides the prescription for the symptoms that he diagnoses in verses 2-4. In this verse, James gave scriptural support for what he just asserted. However, he did not quote a particular verse, but instead evidently summarized the scriptural teaching on God's jealousy (cf. Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Ps. 42:1; 84:2; Zech. 8:2) in a new statement. Now, since God's people who love the world have committed **spiritual adultery** against Him (v. 4), God still "**jealously longs for (desires)**" their love (v. 5). God gives "**greater grace**" and His grace is sufficient to pull those who have strayed away from God back into the fold. James closes this verse by alluding to Proverbs 3:34, God Gives grace to the humble and strongly opposes the proud.

(4:7-10) James ends this section by providing us with practical advice on how to put the principle of humility into practice by the power of the Holy Spirit. Verses 7-10 contain several imperatives that indicate just how serious James is about cultivating genuine humility.

1. "**submit**" in humility- This means making what is of importance to Him important to us, ordering our priorities in harmony with God's priorities. Submission involves the surrender of the will, which allows for obedience.
2. "**resist**" Satan strongly - When we do, he will flee from us. Satan wants us to make us doubt, deny, disregard, and disobey God's Word (cf. Gen. 3; Matt. 4). We "resist the devil" by refusing to do these things.
3. "**draw near**" to God - He will in return draw near to us. This is the idea of clinging to God through constant study of His word, consistent worship, heartfelt prayer, and genuine communion with God.
4. We must "**cleanse**" our hands," this is symbolic of changing our outward actions
5. "**Purify**" our divided hearts," this is symbolic of our inner attitudes and motives
6. "**be miserable**" & "**weep**"- this is the idea of feeling remorse for your wrongdoings
7. Let your **laughter be turned into mourning & joy to gloom**- don't ever make light of your sin

8. **"Humble yourself"** under the hand of God- Submitting yourself to God's Word and will through obedience and unwavering trust in God.
9. He will **"exalt"** you- God's temporal and eternal rewards for those who submit to Him.

III. Warning Against Pride (4:11-17)

11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. **12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." **14** Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. **15** Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." **16** But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. **17** Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

(4:11-12) Having dealt with the source of interpersonal and inner personal conflicts that believers in particular, and all people generally, experience, James dealt next with a different aspect of the same problem. He did so to motivate his readers further to forsake the philosophy of the world that puts self-first. The "law" in view probably refers to God's law generally, in view of the context. We sin "against [God's] law" when we criticize a brother, because God has revealed that we should not speak against, or pass judgment on, our Christian brethren (cf. Lev. 19:15-18; Matt. 7:1). We should submit to one another (e.g., Gal. 5:13; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3). Rather than taking a position of humility, such a person exalts himself to the role of "judge" (cf. v. 10). James' point in this passage was that we should be extremely careful about judging other people, because God will judge us with the same severity with which we have judged one another (cf. Matt. 7:2). His point was not that we should never criticize anybody, but we should never "pass judgment" in the sense of condemning someone, passing ultimate judgment, since only the final Judge has the authority to do that.

(4:13-16) In this section James addresses the arrogance of attempting to play God in our own lives. At the core of this arrogant philosophy is the belief that we have the power to control our own destiny and future. There is nothing wrong with planning ahead, setting a schedule, or preparing to make a profit. The problem occurs when we make plans and leave God out of it. James advises us to hold our plans loosely because God is ultimately in control and has the power to rearrange our plans to fit His sovereign plan and divine agenda for our lives. We should never boast in our plans or future programs as if they are guaranteed. All such boasting is arrogant and evil! Instead we should always acknowledge God's sovereignty as we move forward.

(4:17) Lastly, James gives us the final marker of humility by exposing another indicator light of arrogance in our lives. This is comprised of two critical components. First, **"Knowing the right thing to do"**. This is the idea of having and understanding of what God's word has to say about the circumstances that we are faced with. The second component is **"not doing it"**. This is the idea of willfully disobeying the word of God. James says that when we know the right thing to do the

marker of Authentic Faith, is doing what is right according to the perfect standard of the Word of God.

IV. Warning to the Wealthy (5:1-6)

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

(5:1) James begins this section by grabbing the attention of the wealthy that among them. This is the first time that James addresses wealthy people directly even though he mentions them twice before in this letter (1:10-11, & 2:5-6). The Bible nowhere condemns the rich for being rich. Money is not evil (cf. 1 Tim. 6:10). Nevertheless, God's Word consistently warns the rich of the temptations that financial abundance brings with it. These temptations include: a false sense of security, a desire to control others, and personal pride.

(5:2-6) After giving a general warning to the wealthy, he then moves forward to provide four specific rebukes against those who place their faith in their wealth alone.

First, James rebukes the rich because they were guilty of **hoarding their riches (5:2-3)**. James rebukes an elaborate and flamboyant lifestyle that takes no consideration of the less fortunate and does not seek to use their wealth to invest in the kingdom of God nor help those in need.

Second, James rebukes the rich because they are guilty of **cheating others (5:4)**. Instead of giving a fair wage to those who worked for them, the wealthy cheated them out of their wages. James points us to the reality that God's blessings should move us to be Generous Christians.

Third, James rebukes the rich because they are guilty of a **selfish lifestyle (5:5)**. The wealthy in this day were living in the lap of luxury and spending all of their riches on their selves.

Fourth, James rebukes the rich because they were guilty of taking an **unfair advantage of the righteous (5:6)**. The wealthy of that day were guilty of unfairly judging and putting to death those who are righteous.

Application

1. A clear indication of our Spiritual Wisdom is our ability to demonstrate genuine humility toward our kindness toward others.
2. Envy and Jealousy are evil emotions, that can overcome by the blessed gifts of generosity and contentment.
3. To know and not apply is to not know at all!
4. Hold your plans loosely and always surrender them to the sovereignty of God

James 5:7-20 (Week 4)
“Produces Steadfast Humility”

Theme: Authentic Faith Produces Steadfast Patience

After the first five chapters of his epistle, James finally reaches the climax of this letter in the final section of Chapter five. Here, James affirms that Authentic Faith produces Steadfast Patience. The Jewish Christians that James is addressing in this letter were growing weary in their well doing as a result of the intense persecution that they were experiencing at the hands of the Roman government. Since they were distressed by their faith-challenging circumstances, James repeatedly exhorts them to be patient as they await the Lord's deliverance. James reminds his readers that God produces steadfast patience in three primary areas. First, Authentic faith produces patience through suffering (5:7-12). Next, Authentic faith produces patience through prayer (5:13-18). Lastly, Authentic faith produces patience in correction (5:19-20)

Key Terms

Makrothymeo (μακροθυμέω) - "to be patient", "to wait long". This word is a compound Greek word that consists of "macro", meaning "large" and "thymeo" meaning "intense anger". This word implies the ability to keep calm and cool for a long period of time without exhibiting frustration with the circumstance.

Epistrepho (ἐπιστρέφω) - "to turn back" "return". This word is used in the book of James to refer to a wandering believer that is turned back from the wrong path and is restored to the path of fruitful Christian fellowship.

Patience through Suffering (5:7-12)

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

(5:7-8) Because of the dangers James just expounded, believers should adopt a "patient" attitude. James uses the farmer to illustrate what real patience looks like. The farmer does everything that is within his control and then he awaits patiently to allow God to handle the rest of the process that is completely out of his control. James urges Christians to demonstrate the same patient as the farmer when it comes to waiting on the coming of the Lord. When the Lord returns, we will receive our reward at the judgment seat of Christ. In the meantime, we should be "patient" and encouraged ("strengthen [our] hearts"), knowing that our reward lies ahead, as God has promised.

(5:9-11) The second aspect of preserving through suffering is not complaining as you wait on God to deliver you from your present suffering. It is often our natural response to blame others or even God for the negative circumstances that we find ourselves in. James tells us not to complain because complaining is a major deterrent to spiritual growth. Instead of complaining, we are to look to the incredible examples of endurance that God has left on record for us in His word. There is no greater example of patient endurance in the Scriptures than Job. Job demonstrates to us that a Commitment to God's word, consistent communion with God through prayer, and refraining from negative talk will aid us as we seek to persevere in the midst of suffering.

(5:12) Lastly James issues a final command on how we are to respond to others when we feel that we have been wronged. Swearing is an evidence of impatience. When we become impatient and lose self-control, we tend to say things better left unspoken.

II. Patience in Prayer (5:13-18)

13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14* *Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15* *and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16* *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17* *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18* *Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.*

(5:13-15) Prayer to God is the proper outlet for feelings of sadness caused by "suffering" as we patiently endure. The right way to express joy is by praising God. James urges us to pray in seasons of suffering, seasons of success, and if there is someone who is experiencing physical sickness. James provides a three-step process on corporate prayer for those who are experiencing sickness. First, we are to call the spiritual leaders of the church. Second, James instructs the elders (Spiritual leaders) to anoint the sick person with oil... in the name of the Lord. Third, we are to offer prayer in faith to the Lord. Once this is done we are to leave the healing up to God, because God is ultimately the one who heals,

(5:16) In view of the possibility of spiritual and physical sickness following sin, believers should "confess [their] sins (against one another) to one another" (normally privately). Furthermore, they should "pray for one another" so God may heal them (both spiritually and physically).

(5:17-18) To illustrate the power of prayer, James referred to Elijah's experience (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-45). In view of the remarkable answers Elijah received, James reminds us that Elijah was an ordinary person like us, but God answered His prayer. Elijah is a clear Old Testament example of someone who persevered in prayer. We are to submit our prayers to God in faith knowing that He has the power to change our circumstances even when they look dark, dim, and impossible.

III. Patience in Correction (5:19-20)

19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

(5:19-20) James concluded this major section and his entire epistle, by explaining how a brother or sister who had erred could return to fellowship with God, and could resume living by faith. God's grace is sufficient to bring anyone who has strayed away from the faith back into fellowship with God and God's people.

Application

1. Patience is only produced by that Spirit's work in our lives as we consistently demonstrate faith in God
2. Suffering is a tool that God uses to draw us closer to Him, so don't allow the enemy to convince you otherwise.
3. Our sincere prayers move the heart of a sovereign God.