

James 1:1-18

Day 1

Greetings and Encouragement. Read James 1:1-4

1. How did James identify himself? 1:1 (*The author the epistle of James is generally recognized by scholars today and by the earliest Christian writers as Jesus' brother. Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19*)
2. What was James' attitude toward Jesus during his ministry on earth? John 7:5
 - How did that change after the resurrection? Acts 1:14
 - What may have helped James come to an understanding? 1 Corinthians 15:7
3. What do you learn about James from:
 - Galatians 1:18; 2:9
 - Acts 21:17-19

Digging Deeper:

How did the people from Jesus' hometown react to His teachings?

Mark 3:20-21

Matthew 13:53-58

FYI: "[James] and his brothers did not believe in Jesus during His earthly ministry (John 7:5), and they were not with Mary at the cross (John 19:26). Later, however, possibly as a result of James' encounter with the Lord after His resurrection, they were converted (1 Corinthians 15:7), and were with their mother in the upper room as all the disciples were awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). James, then, quickly became a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17). One of the other brothers, Jude, also became a leader (Jude 1), writing the New Testament epistle that bears his name."
- Henry Morris

4. Considering the way James *could have* identified himself, what does the word "*servant*" say about him?
5. To whom was the letter addressed? 1:1b Why had many Jews dispersed? Acts 8:1

FYI: twelve tribes: "Though most of the historical twelve tribes of Israel had lost their distinct identities centuries earlier in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the term 'twelve tribes of Israel' continued to be used as a figure of speech, [see Matt. 19:28, Acts 26:7] referring to all children of Israel through the world. The phrase 'who are dispersed abroad' reinforces the fact that James addressed primarily Jewish Christians...who had scattered as a result of persecution of the church by the unbelieving Jewish authorities."
- Charles Swindoll (20)

"James probably wrote his letter before Gentiles were brought into the church, or at least before Gentile Christians appeared in any significant number... In Galatians 2:8-9 Paul described some of the first-century apostles as *the apostleship to the circumcised*; that is to say they had their ministry mainly to the *lost sheep of Israel*, even as Jesus mentioned in Matthew 10:6 and 15:24"
- David Guzik

FYI: James "was probably the very earliest epistle, obviously written before the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, and probably before any of Paul's epistles. It was certainly important, James realized, that these young Christians should have some written guidelines."
- Henry Morris

"If it is correctly assumed that James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, wrote this epistle to believers who had been dispersed from Jerusalem in the persecution following Stephen's death, the occasion for writing is fairly clear. These Jewish Christians, scattered throughout the area east of the Mediterranean Sea, no longer had contact with the apostles; nor was James among them to instruct and exhort them.

Difficulties--perhaps persecutions--were confronting them (1:2-4); the ungodly rich were oppressing them (5:1-6); the religion of some was becoming a superficial formality (1:22-27; 2:14-26); discriminatory practices revealed a lack of love (2:1-13); and bitterness in speech (3:1-12) and attitude (3:13-4:3) marred their fellowship. Apparently reports of such problems among the scattered brothers had reached James in Jerusalem. In response, he wrote as pastor *in absentia* to urge his people to make the needed changes in their lives and in their corporate relationships."
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary

6. Even in this midst of trials, what attitude did James encourage? 1:2 (What does "various/many kinds/diverse" suggest about the nature of these trials?)

FYI: Trials/temptations NT:3986 *peirasmos* "A putting to the test...When God is the agent, *peirasmos* is for the purpose of proving someone, never for the purpose of causing him to fall."

- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"James is not ordering *all-encompassing joyful emotion* during severe trials; nor is he demanding that his readers must *enjoy* their trials, or that trials are *joy*...Rather, James is commending the conscious embrace of a Christian understanding of life which brings joy into the trials that come."
- R. Kent Hughes (18)

"When James says to 'consider it a great joy,' this is...a verb that addresses how we think...This is not about feeling...When life comes crashing down on someone, James doesn't intend for us to say flippantly, 'Consider it joy, brother.' I think about John 11, when Mary and Martha approached Jesus after their brother Lazarus had died. He didn't immediately start telling them that God had a purpose in this, although He knew God did. Instead, He comforted them and He wept with them (John 11:35)."
- David Platt

7. What do trials/temptations test? What good outcome does this produce? 1:3

FYI: Testing Strong's NT:1383 *dokimion*; a testing; by implication, trustworthiness

"The term 'tested'...was used for coins that there were genuine and not deluded. The aim of testing is not to destroy or afflict, but to purge and refine. (see Gen. 22:1-8)"
- The Nelson Study Bible (2104)

Dokimion 'refers to a means of authenticating something. Like a prospector biting into a gold nugget to test its quality...The goal is not to snap our faith muscles, but to stretch and strengthen them, producing *endurance* - a term derived from two Greek words that together literally mean 'to abide under.' We would say, 'to hang in there.'"
- Charles Swindoll (28,29)

Patience/endurance Strong's NT:5281 *hupomone*; cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy

"the meaning of patience transcends the idea of bearing affliction; it includes the idea of standing fast under pressure, with a staying power that turns adversities into opportunities."
- The Nelson Study Bible (2104)

8. What do we need to know about God's hand in trials?

- Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. NIV

Digging Deeper

See amazing responses to trials in:

2 Corinthians 7:4

Acts 5:40,41

Acts 16:24,25

9. How can being patient help us grow? 1:4 (See Romans 5:3-5)

FYI: Mature/perfect Strong's NT:5046; *teleios*, "Finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing."
- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

10. By saying "*let patience/endurance have or finish*," what was James indicating about the process and a believer's part in it?

- What command is given in 1 Peter 5:6? Write out the benefit given to trials in 1 Peter 1:7.

11. Concerning trials, of what can we be certain? John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12

- However, what else do we know? Romans 8:37

Applying the Word: Describe one of the best things you have learned through the process of going through a trial? What mind set/attitude/practices help you to exhibit patience?

Day 2

Wisdom. Read James 1:5-8

12. When we lack understanding, what should we do? 1:5
(See Proverbs 2:6)

- How do you think a Godly wisdom (divine perspective) often differs from the type of wisdom we seek in this world?

Digging Deeper

What points are made about wisdom in Job 28:12-28?

v. 12-14

vs. 15-19

v. 20-24

v. 28

FYI: "**Wisdom** in distinction to knowledge, is understanding for living. And Biblical wisdom is understanding for living which surpasses earthly wisdom."
- R. Kent Hughes (27)

"When we walk through trials, we realize we don't know all that is going on (knowledge); we don't see our situation from every angle (perspective)...But God says, 'Draw near to Me, and ask Me to help you understand why this is happening and to give you perspective on what you are going through and to walk alongside you as the One who possesses all knowledge, eternal perspective.'"
- David Platt

13. How does God respond to our requests for wisdom? 1:5b How does that make you feel? (See Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9.)

14. According to Proverbs 3:5,6, in what do we need to trust and not trust? What will we receive?

- Where is the source of wisdom? Colossians 2:2,3; Job 12:13

Digging Deeper

For other verses on seeking wisdom see Proverbs 4:5-9.

For human wisdom versus God's wisdom, see 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

15. What attitude/expectation do we need to have about asking? 1:6a

- What are some things we need to understand and trust about God and about His relationship with us in order to believe He will answer our prayers? (*Does that mean our prayers will be answered exactly the way we want them to be answered?*)

FYI: Faith/believe Strong's NT:4102 *pistis*; persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction

"James isn't referring to saving **faith** in verse 6. He has in mind sustaining faith – the kind of faith that allows us to endure trials, to align our will and our attitude with a divine perspective, abandoning ourselves to God and His mighty hand."
- Charles Swindoll (30)

16. How does James describe the character or consequences of "wavering/doubting?"

- 1:6b
- 1:7
- 1:8

FYI: Doubting/wavering NT:1252 *diakrino*; "**Doubting** means 'to be divided in one's mind' or 'to debate.' The term does not describe a momentary doubt but a divided allegiance." - The Nelson Study Bible (2105)

"The verb 'doubt' in verse 6 is in the present tense in the Greek and , therefore, means...something that is ongoing. It is not a single instance but rather a continuous action on the subject's part." - Kay Arthur (24)

"The **double-minded** person should not expect to receive wisdom from God because he's unstable, mixing divine answers with conflicting human answers."
- The Tony Evans Study Bible (1471)

"**Double-minded**...part of me wants to live in God's will; but the other part wants it on my terms. And when a trial comes, I refuse to release my grip and trust that the purpose and plan of God will bring true freedom...But single-minded focused faith means making a conscious decision, with God's help, to choose our attitude. It means surrendering fully to God because we trust Him, resisting the natural tendency to abandon hope."
- Charles Swindoll (31,33)

"Is the Lord demanding perfect faith? Is he insisting that we never waver? I do not think so. If our faith had to be perfect, few would ever receive anything, for we are all doubters. Abraham and Moses were great men of God, but they were not perfect in their faith. Jesus honored the stumbling faith of the distraught father in the midst of testing—"I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)"
- R. Kent Hughes (31)

Applying the Word: Can you identify something in your life which you are double-minded about? (What emotions caused by doubts feed that double-mindedness? What are you holding onto? Why are you afraid to trust God?) Try praying or writing out a prayer for wisdom about this situation.

Day 3

Read James 1:9-15

Wealth

17. Surprisingly, what attitude should a poor person have? 1:9 In what sense do they have a high/exalted position? (See James 2:5)

18. What should a rich person glory in? 1:10a What perspective about life and riches will humble and liberate him? 1:10b,11

- What other thought was added to this in Isaiah 40:8? *How is a godly perspective the great equalizer of the rich and poor?*

Digging Deeper

See Jesus' teachings about riches.
Luke 12:15-21

Matthew 6:19-21, 24

Food for Thought: "If a man is only rich in this world, when he dies, he leaves his riches. But if a man is rich before God, when he dies, he goes to his riches."
- David Guzik

"The rich believer can...glory when a trial brings him low because it teaches him that life is short, and that his pursuits...his business will fade away."
- The Nelson Study Bible (2105)

19. As we go through trials, what perspective helps? 1:12

- What two terms describe what this person does?

FYI: "At this time the Roman emperor Claudius had persecuted and driven Jews from Rome. Jewish businesses were boycotted. Jewish children were mocked and thrown out of schools. Times were harsh and life was grim...Not only were they subject to Roman ire because of their Jewishness; many had been driven out of the Jewish communities themselves because of their faith in the Messiah...Many of these Jewish believers had begun to grow weary... In this context of suffering, confusion, and defection, it is not surprising that James writes a letter of strong exhortation. Remember, this letter is not...a defense of the gospel regarding the person and work of Christ...This letter assumes his readers already know all those things. Instead, James pens a letter about authentic faith lived out in a hostile world."
- Charles Swindoll (21)

"To those who love Him...The passions of sinful temptation can only really be overcome by a greater passion, and that is a passion for the honor and glory and relationship with God."
- David Guzik

"Crown of life..."The Bible describes the believer's reward...under various vivid images such as precious metals (see 1 Cor. 3:8-14), garments...and crowns (see 1 Cor. 9:25, Rev. 2:10; 3:11)."
- The Nelson Study Bible (2105)

Temptation

20. When tempted, what wrong belief can we have? 1:13a Why isn't this true? 1:13b (Note the repeated use of the terms "no one/not anyone.")

- What does God promise about temptations? 1 Corinthians 10:13

FYI: "In verses 13-15, James used the same basic Greek word for 'tempted' that he used for 'trials' in verses 2 and 12. But this time he moves from the noun, *peirasmos*, to the verb, *peirazo*. When he does this, it seems that he changes...from external trials or testing in James 1:2-3, 12 to inward temptations or solicitations to do evil in James 1:13-17."
- Kay Arthur (35)

21. What is the real source of temptation? 1:14 (Compare Matthew 15:18-19; 1 John 2:16)

- List the steps in the process given in 1:14,15. (What does this say about the intensity and attraction of sin?)

FYI: enticed Strong's NT:1185 *deleazo*; to entrap, i.e. (figuratively) delude
"Enticed is a fishing term, meaning 'to bait.' So, a lure gets dropped into our lives...That, in itself, is not sin. Our problem is that deep within us a hunger stirs, a desire to take the bait: lust."
- Charles Swindoll (35)

"Much of the power of temptation comes from its persistence. Temptation does not usually come like a single crashing wave but like the steady pull of an undertow."
- Ben Stuart (52)

"**dragged away and enticed**... 'suggestive of a fish swimming in a straight course and then drawn off towards something that seems attractive, only to discover that the bait has a deadly hook in it.' (Tasker)" - Coleman (22)

conceived Strong's NT:4815; *sullambano*; to clasp, i.e. seize (arrest, capture); specifically, to conceive

"Temptation is not a sin. But when we allow ourselves to be seduced by our desires... there is a consummation that happens...it conceives sin. But it does not end there. Because once sin is born – once we've brought it forth and set it loose – it keeps expanding. It grows and develops until it becomes fully mature...and it produces death. This is shocking imagery, and that's exactly what James intended.

"Temptation is a lure floating right there in front of our eyes, and we get so tempted by the opportunity to experience pleasure or avoid pain that we completely ignore the hook. We do not see the consequences – or we do not allow ourselves to think of the consequences -and we pay a price in the end."
- Ben Stuart (58,59)

22. Although some sin can lead to actual physical death, to what other kinds of *death* could James be referring?

FYI: "In Jewish thinking...to be 'dead' was often a description of the poor quality of life rather than the cessation of being...Jewish Christians saw people as either traveling the path of life (walking with Christ by the Spirit) or the path of death (walking apart from Christ in the flesh). This 'death-like existence' is the opposite of the 'abundant life' Christ promised (John 10:10)"
- Charles Swindoll (37)

"Verses 13-15 seem to be saying that we can fail. It is possible to cave in, to become bitter, to resist the new insights, to hang on to the old despite its proved unreliability...It is our temptation. But it is **only that** – temptation. Is it not more true that by definition, to be a Christian is to be filled with Life!...Pain is not good, but it can bring good. May the wisdom of God be our portion and guide us so that our trials yield the rich fruit we desire."
- Lyman Coleman (23)

23. Underline other things we need to recognize about sin.

- Galatians 6:7,8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh...NAS
- 1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned— NIV
- Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (See Genesis 2:17)

24. Underline instructions for avoiding temptation.

- Proverbs 4:25-27 Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil. NIV
 - Psalms 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. NASB
 - Proverbs 1:10,15 My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them... my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths;
 - 1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. NIV
- Which, if any, of the above can help you with something you are facing?

Digging Deeper

See Joseph's reasons for refusing Potiphar's wife. Genesis 39:9

See David's confession in Psalm 51:4.

FYI: "Trials and temptations are both inevitable, and God intends both to deepen our faith.....James addresses many practical issues: trials, poverty, riches, materialism, favoritism, social justice, the tongue, worldliness, boasting, making plans, praying, and what to do when we're sick, among other things. As we'll see, James sometimes moves from one issue to the next, which can make it difficult to find the book's structure, but he returns repeatedly to how faith impacts not only the details of our lives but also the lives of people around us."

- David Platt

Applying the Word: What kind of "lures" do you need avoid? What would you give as one of your most common excuses/rationales for sin? (Who did you blame? What did you believe about God and His ability or desire to meet your needs compared to what you believed about your own way meeting your needs?)

Day 4

God's Goodness. Read James 1:16-18

25. What understanding can keep us from being deceived? 1:16,17a

- How do you think knowing God's nature combats sin? (i.e. How does 1:16,17 fit with 1:13-15?)

FYI: 1:17 "The sense is even stronger in the literal reading – '*All good giving and every perfect gift is from above*' – because it emphasized that the *action* of giving is good, and that all His *gifts* are *telion* (perfect, complete). Thus, God's giving is intrinsically and comprehensively good - totally good! The logical, implied sense is that nothing evil can possibly come from above."
- R. Kent Hughes (54)

"James implores us not to be deceived. Yet he does not simply mean fooled into believing destructive desires will bring life. James takes us a level deeper, talking about God's nature as a Father who cares for His children. ...Because at the root of our temptation stands a failure to see God rightly. Our fundamental problem is not lust not greed nor anger. Our fundamental problem is our theology. *We've failed to believe that God cares and that He will take care of us.*"
- Ben Stuart (62)

26. What descriptions of God did James give in 1:17b? (See Hebrews 13:8)

FYI: "We earthlings, with our feet planted here on earth, are subjected to constantly changing light...Day and night light perpetually changes...But it is not so with with goodness of God. God *does not change like shifting shadows!* God's goodness is always at high noon."
- R. Kent Hughes (55)

27. From Genesis 3:1-6, how did the Serpent distort Eve's view of God? To what did her focus shift?

- Whom did they blame? Genesis 3:12,13

FYI: "Before the serpent could make the fruit look appealing, he first had to make God look unappealing. Only when I am convinced that God will not take care of me does temptation to look other places find its strength... We must look at the Word of God to see who God truly is. We must fight to believe right things about Him. Here James reminds us that God is the Source of true joy. He's the One who gives us good things, and He's the One we can always count on because He never changes."
- Ben Stuart (63)

28. From Ephesians 2:1-12, what are some of the amazing gifts God has given us and why.

29. Underline what is or what gives light in the following.

- John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men
- John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." NIV
- 1 John 1:5 ...God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. NIV
- Psalm 115:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
- Psalms 119:130 Your instructions are a doorway through which light shines. They give insight to the untrained. NET
- Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light
- 2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. NASU

30. What did God choose to give believers? 1:18a (See 1 Peter 1:23)
(Contrast James 1:15)

- Amazingly, what goal did He have in mind? 1:18b (Compare different translations.)
- How does this understanding help you deal with temptations?

Digging Deeper

See the hope we have in Ephesians 1:12; 2:6,7.

FYI: "Christ is Himself the 'firstfruits' from among the dead, but among 'His creatures,' we are His firstfruits."
- Henry Morris

"James may refer to his own generation of believers when he calls them **firstfruits**, especially as being mainly written to Christians from a Jewish background."
- David Guzik

31. When you look back over James 1:1-18, what picture do you get of the believers James was writing to and issues they faced?

Applying the Word: Recall a temptation that you submitted to. If you could go back, what would you say to yourself? How would it have helped if you had thought about the Lord's love for you and what could happen "down the road"?

Suggested memory verse:

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. James 1:5 NASB

FYI: "It is a fascinating testimony to God's grace that James, who had been an unbelieving brother of Jesus, was chosen to write the first inspired book to believing Jews, and Paul, the chief persecutor of the early church, was chosen to write the first epistle to believing Gentiles.

James stresses the necessity of good works as evidence of saving faith (James 2:14-26), but he also is very clear that works in themselves do not suffice for salvation (James 1:15; 2:10; 4:17), for no one is without sin. He also recognizes the deity of Christ (James 2:1), the new birth (James 1:18,21) through God's Word, and the promised second coming of Christ (James 5:8)."

- Henry Morris