



JAMES

FAITH THAT WORKS

James 1:12 "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

1:1-15

Trials that test our faith.

02

1:16-27

Be doers of the word and not hearers.

03

2:1-13

Loving your neighbour and partiality.

04

2:14-26

Faith in action.

05

3: 1-12

Taming the tongue

06

3:13 - 4:6

Be slow to speak and quick to listen.

07

4:7-12

Draw near to God.

08

4:13 - 5:6

Making plans

09

5:7-12

Patience in suffering

SUMMARY:

FAITH THAT WORKS

Faith is grounded in who Jesus is and results in a life that is outworked through obedience, humility, and love for others.

This theme unfolds as James addresses both external conflicts (such as partiality toward the rich and tensions within the community) and the internal source behind them—misdirected desires, worldliness, and divided loyalty. These issues reveal a deeper spiritual problem: a faith that is unstable and compromised.

Therefore, James urges his readers to seek divine wisdom, resist double-mindedness, and realign their lives with God, so that their faith becomes active, integrated, and evident in how they live and relate to others.



SUMMARY: JAMES

Big Idea of James

“Authentic faith in Jesus is wholehearted and active—it transforms how you live.”

How James Is Shaped

- More like wisdom literature (Proverbs / Jesus' teaching) than Paul's structured arguments
- Built from linked themes rather than linear logic
- Grounded in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (2:1)
- Concerned with people drifting, becoming inconsistent, or self-deceived

What James Speaks Into

Not just behaviours—but the root of faith itself:

- What is your faith actually grounded in?
- Is your life aligned with what you say you believe?
- What direction (trajectory) is your life heading?

James constantly moves between:

- External actions
- Internal source (faith, desire, allegiance)



RESOURCES

TGC – commentary.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/james/>

Bible project – overview + video



1 - JAMES 1:1-15

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ 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. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. ⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. ¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. ¹³ When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

1 - JAMES 1:1-15

God uses every trial in a Christian's life as an instrument for our growth in godliness. He also rewards everyone who remains faithful through trial with the "crown of life" (1:12).

1 - JAMES 1:1-15

According to verses 2–4, what is God producing through trials in the believer's life?

How does James distinguish between trials (testing) and temptation (vv. 13–15)?

What do these verses reveal about God's character in the midst of trials and temptation?

How is faith in God meant to shape the way we respond to trials?

Why does James connect trials with joy—what makes that possible?

Where do you see the tension between trusting God and being “double-minded”?

How might trusting God's purpose in trials reshape the way we respond to hardship?

2 - JAMES 1:16-27

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. Listening and Doing ¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. ²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. ²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

2 - JAMES 1:16-27

God is the giver of all good; receive His word with humility and allow your genuine faith to be lived out through obedience, controlled speech, and compassionate care for others.

2 - JAMES 1:16-27

How does James describe the “word of truth,” and what role does it play in the believer’s life?

What instructions does James give about listening, speaking, and anger (vv. 19–20)?

How does James contrast hearing the word with doing the word (vv. 22–25)?

According to verses 26–27, what marks genuine religion before God?

Where do you see the tension between knowing God’s word and living it out?

What does it look like to receive God’s word with humility in everyday life (v21)?

How might a life shaped by God’s word transform the way we engage with others?

3 - JAMES 2:1-13

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," ^(a) you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," ^(b) also said, "You shall not murder." ^(c) If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

3 - JAMES 2:1-13

James warns believers against showing partiality or favoritism based on wealth or status, urging them instead to fulfill the "royal law" of loving one's neighbor with mercy, which ultimately triumphs over judgment.

3 - JAMES 2:1-13

What does favoritism reveal about the root of our faith—what we truly value or trust in?

Why is partiality incompatible with faith in Jesus? What does it say about our understanding of the gospel?

How does the “royal law” expose whether our lives are aligned with what we say we believe?

Why does James connect seemingly small acts (like favoritism) with the breaking of the whole law?

What does it mean that “mercy triumphs over judgment,” and what does this reveal about God’s character?

Where do you see subtle forms of favoritism or bias in your own life or community?

In what ways might your actions toward others reveal a mismatch between belief and practice?

4 - JAMES 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” ²⁴ and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

4 - JAMES 2:14-26

James 2:14-26 teaches that genuine faith is demonstrated through action, showing that faith without works is dead and cannot save.

4 - JAMES 2:14-26

What issue does James raise in verses 14–17? What kind of “faith” is he challenging?

How does James use the example of someone in need to show the problem with faith that has no action?

What does James mean when he says “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (v17)?

In verses 18–19, how does James respond to the idea that faith and works can be separated?

How do the examples of Abraham (v21–24) and Rahab (v25) help us understand what real faith looks like?

What does James mean when he says a person is “justified by works and not by faith alone” (v24)?

How does the picture of the body and spirit (v26) bring together James’ main point—and how should that shape the way we live out our faith?

5 - JAMES 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ²We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. ³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

5 - JAMES 3:1-12

James 3:1-12 warns that the tongue is a small but powerful and dangerous force, capable of causing great destruction and revealing a person's true character through inconsistent speech.

5 - JAMES 3:1-12

What images does James use to describe the power of the tongue (bits, rudder, fire)? What do these reveal about its influence and danger (vv. 3–6)?

According to verses 7–8, what tension does James highlight about human ability and the tongue?

What does this reveal about the need for deeper transformation, not just behavior management?

How does James expose the contradiction in verses 9–10 (blessing God while cursing people)? What does this say about whether our lives are truly aligned with what we believe?

Where do you see this tension between speech and faith in your own life? What kinds of situations tend to reveal it?

6 - JAMES 3:13 – 4:6

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Submit Yourselves to God

⁴ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people,^[a] don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us^[b]? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud

but shows favor to the humble.”^[c]

6 - JAMES 3:13 – 4:6

James 3:13–4:6 teaches that true wisdom is revealed through humble, peace-filled living, while selfish ambition and pride lead to conflict, exposing hearts that need God's transforming grace.

6 - JAMES 3:13 – 4:6

According to verses 16–18, what are the outcomes of false wisdom compared to true wisdom?

What kinds of fruit does each produce in relationships and community?

How does James connect inner desires to external conflict in 4:1–2?

What does James reveal about the nature of our desires when he says, “you desire and do not have, so you murder... you covet and cannot obtain” (4:2)?

How do disordered desires shape our actions?

In verses 2–3, what does James say about prayer? How can wrong motives affect the way we ask God for things?

at hope is offered even in the midst of this strong rebuke?

Where do you see the pull between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom in your own life? What situations tend to expose which one is shaping you?

7 - JAMES 4:7-12

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister^a or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

7 - JAMES 4:7-12

James calls for humble submission to God and sincere repentance, warning believers to stop judging one another and instead focus on their own accountability before the one true Lawgiver.

7 - JAMES 4:7-12

According to verse 7, what two commands does James give, and how are they connected?

What does it mean to “resist the devil,” and what promise is attached to it?

In verse 8, how does James describe drawing near to God? What actions or attitudes are involved?

What do the phrases “cleanse your hands” and “purify your hearts” suggest about repentance?

Why does James call his readers to grieve, mourn, and weep in verses 9–10? What kind of sorrow is he talking about?

What is the relationship between humility and God’s response in verse 10?

In verses 11–12, why does James warn against speaking evil or judging others? What does this reveal about God’s role as Lawgiver and Judge?

8 - JAMES 5:7-12

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹² Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

8 - JAMES 4:13-5:6

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8 - JAMES 4:13-5:6

James exhorts believers to practice patient endurance in the face of suffering, following the examples of the prophets and Job while avoiding impulsive oaths as they await the Lord's certain return

8 - JAMES 4:13-5:6

What warning does James give to those who make confident plans about the future (4:13-14), and what does this reveal about human limitations?

In verses 16-17, why does James link boasting about the future with evil, and how does this connect to the sin of knowing the good but failing to do it?

Who are the “rich” addressed in 5:1-6, and what strong language does James use to describe their coming judgment?

What specific injustices does James accuse the rich of (vv. 2-4), and how do these actions reveal misplaced trust and priorities?

How does the image of wealth rotting and corroding (vv. 2-3) challenge the way we think about security and material success?

How does James describe the lifestyle of the rich in verses 5-6, and why is this way of living so spiritually dangerous?

How might this passage shape the way we think about our future, our resources, and what we invest in ?

9 - JAMES 5:7-12

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9 - JAMES 5:7-12

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9 - JAMES 5:7-12

What command does James repeat in verses 7–8, and what situation are believers facing?

How does the illustration of the farmer help us understand what patient endurance looks like?

What does James mean when he says “the Lord’s coming is near”? How should that shape our perspective?

In verse 9, why does James warn against grumbling against one another in seasons of pressure?

How do the examples of the prophets and Job (v10–11) help us understand perseverance and God’s character?

What does this passage reveal about the Lord’s compassion and mercy, even in suffering?

Why does James address honesty in speech (v12), and how does integrity connect to a life of patient faith?

