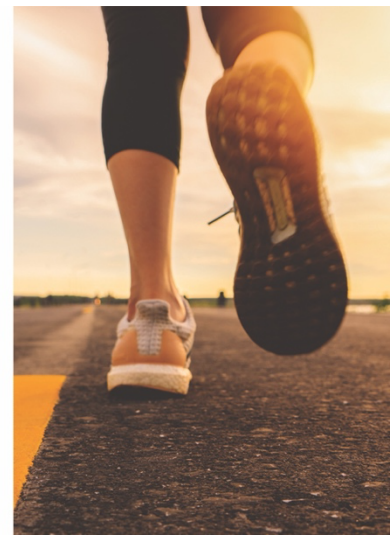




Reasons to Rejoice
BIBLE STUDY

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

THE BOOK OF JAMES



Where the Rubber Meets the Road: James Chapter 1

Please read the whole Book of James at least once as we study chapter 1. Answer the questions below at whatever speed or depth you are comfortable with. Don't forget to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open your understanding and "guide you into all truth"! (John 16:13)

1. Who is the author of this letter and how does he describe himself? (1:1)
After reading about him from the outline given in the *Intro on James*, what else do we know about this man? What does his description tell us about him? Why is it important to know who the author is?
2. List the key words on your "Key Word" sheet. (Key words are words that are repeated or would change the meaning of the text if you took them out. They also can be significant words that are used to exemplify the meaning or value of a word.)
3. What would you say is the main subject, point, or emphasized theme of the chapter? Give the chapter a title that would reflect that.

4. Do you see any comparisons or contrasts in the chapter? (These help you determine the main points the author is making.) Any opposites?

5. Do you see any commands or warnings to follow?

Any promises to cling to?

Does the text reveal anything about the character or the nature of God?

James writes to the “twelve tribes that are scattered abroad” (1:1), the Jews living outside the land of Palestine. Swindoll wrote, “Though most of the 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, referring to all children of Israel throughout the world. The phrase ‘who are dispersed abroad’ reinforces the fact that James was addressing primarily Jewish Christians, those he had likely known in Jerusalem, who had scattered as a result of persecution of the church by the unbelieving Jewish authorities.” Notice James uses the term “brethren” many times.

6. Read and summarize verses 2-4. What’s the purpose of trials? How do people usually view trials and tribulations? How do YOU usually view them?

The Greek word James uses for “trials” is *peirasmos*. The word can refer to tests that challenge the strength of our faith (1:2-12), or to “temptations that challenge our moral strength and integrity (1:13-18). Trials are inevitable and occur in all shapes and sizes. But trials can cause us to be “perfect, or “mature.” The word “consider” means “to make a deliberate and careful decision to experience joy even in times of trouble.” The word “testing” in verse 3 refers to a “means of authenticating something.” The goal of the testing is to mature us or authenticate our faith and reveal its true colors. Sort of like a coach that is training us to strengthen our muscles and develop us to achieve the best results. He’s not trying to hurt us, but to “grow” us. Someone once said, “Trials are not a sign of God’s displeasure, but are opportunities to persevere in the Lord.”

Verse 4 tells us to let “endurance have it’s perfect work”, or “perfect result”, depending on your translation. From what I’ve read, this phrase communicates the idea of “being in cooperation with God’s work.”

7. How can we “cooperate with God” during the trial to help make us mature? What, then, does it mean to be “uncooperative”?

8. Read verses 5-8. When we are in a trial, what does James exhort us to ask for, and how?

9. How can we waste opportunities when we refuse to do this?

A.T. Robertson said, “Wisdom is the practical use of knowledge.” Another defined it as “the ability to view the testings from God’s perspective.”

The word James uses for “double-minded” means “two-souled.” He uses it here in verse 8 and then again in 4:8. He seems to mean being double-minded means to have two competing thoughts or perspectives. Sometimes you want God’s will, and other times you want your own. Or, maybe you want them both at the same time! We often want God’s will, but on our own terms. We refuse to trust God and His will completely.

10. Do you ever find yourself “double-minded”? What’s the remedy for that?

11. James continues his discussion on trials in verses 9-12. Who do trials effect? What contrast or comparison is James using, and for what purpose? What’s his point?

12. Rich or poor, what will the man who endures temptation receive?

In verses 2-4, James reminds us that we are all promised trials, in verses 5-8 he reminds us about what to do about those trials, then in verses 9-11, he reminds us what our attitude should be during trials. And then, in verse 12, he wraps it up by reminding us about the reward of enduring trials. The word “blessed” means “genuinely happy” and James describes the reward as “crown of life.” Commentators have different views about what crown James is referring to. Some think it’s a future crown of eternal life that all believers get, some believe it’s a specific crown for enduring trials, some think it’s a temporal crown as well, rewarding us with maturity and faith. I like the picture and description William Barclay gives: “In the ancient world, the crown (stefanos) had at least 4 great associations:

- a. The crown of flowers was worn at times of joy – it was a sign of festive and happy joy.
- b. The crown was the mark of royalty. It was worn by kings and those in authority.
- c. The crown of laurel leaves was the victor’s crown in the games, the prize that all athletes coveted.
- d. The crown was a mark of honor and quality.

I personally think’s a temporal crown, God’s blessings of wisdom and maturity today for enduring temptations, as well as a literal future crown. But that’s just my take. It is, however, important to remember that James is not saying we are “saved” by enduring trials, but we are rewarding for it. Why? Because He promised it for those who love Him!

13. Are you patiently enduring trials by keeping God’s perspective, seeking His will, asking Him for wisdom, and trusting Him through it? Take some time reflecting on this and evaluating your current mindset on a trial you are facing.

The Jewish believers were being “banged up” and bruised by adversity. James wanted to encourage them to “cooperate with God” by reminding them that trials are inevitable, they are for a purpose, will produce growth, that they should ask for wisdom to know how to deal with them, to respond in humility, and that they will be rewarded! I pray that this will be an encouragement for you, too, in whatever you’re facing! I know it encourages me. I like the part about “cooperating with God.” That’s always a good thing!

In verses 1-12, James was dealing with tests and trials that challenge our ability to stay strong in the faith. Now James will use the other meaning of the word “*peirasmos*” to explain tests of moral and ethical endurance. Some tests come from the outside, some originate from within!

14. Read verses 13-18. What are some things we learn about temptation from this section? Also, describe the progression of sin.

15. Can you think of any stories from Scripture that clearly show this progression?

People often think that God has “tempted” them, but James clearly says the opposite. Allow me to share a paragraph from Charles Swindoll that I think is a very important principle. He wrote, “Temptation is never prompted by God. A small but important detail appears in the Greek text. The word translated “by” in this verse is *‘apo’*. James had a couple options for expressing the way in which temptation might come from God. The preposition *‘hypo’* would have meant direct agency, used of Satan, who directly tempted Jesus to sin (Matthew 4:1). Clearly God doesn’t whisper evil thoughts into our mind or create an alluring mental image. But James’ use of *‘apo’* goes even further at exonerating God. The preposition refers to the origin of something -- temptation to sin doesn’t have its ultimate origin in God. God isn’t even indirectly involved in temptation. While God uses trials and troubles in life to bring about His work of maturing us, God is never the author of temptation. Never!” He also says, “God is holy, and holiness has 2 sides -- the inability to be affected by evil and the inability to cause evil.” Amen, Amen, Amen!!

16. The word “enticed” means “to bait.” Is there some sin that is “enticing” you or being used as bait to cause you to fall into sin? What **should** you do? (Our lustful desire is the cause of our sin. Let’s be careful not to place the blame for our sin on something or someone else.)

I read once that the bad news is that EVERYONE can be tempted by sin. However, the good news is that EVERYONE can resist the temptation to sin, by the power of the Holy Spirit! Woohoo!

17. James, in his direct way, challenges them in verse 16. What does he say?

18. In verses 17-18, James reminds them of the real source of victory over trials and the goodness of God. What does he say? Why? How does meditating on the goodness of God help us to overcome temptations?

19. Read verses 19-27. First of all, give this section a title summarizing the main point. It's an important one!

James uses the word "therefore" to bring his readers back to the point he was making about the "word of truth" in verse 18. In this chapter, James refers to the God's Word as ... the word of truth, the word implanted, the word, a mirror, the perfect law, and the law of liberty. Warren Weirsbe outlines this nicely in his commentary. He reminds us that "We have 3 responsibilities towards God's Word. Receive the Word (19-21), practice the Word (22-25), and share the Word (26-27)."

20. According to verses 19-21, how do we receive the Word? (We often use these verses a bit out of context, even if they are good principles.) How do the things listed relate to receiving His Word?

21. How do verses 22-25 relate to practicing the Word? (Here lies James's overarching theme of the book.) Please summarize his main point.

I almost can't get past these verses. They make me stop in my tracks every time I read them. They are some of the most convicting verses in Scripture. James reminds us Hey guys, this is where the rubber meets the road. You listen to His Word, but are you DOING it? I don't care what you're SAYING ... what are you DOING about what you know? It doesn't matter if you can quote verses, read the Bible every day, or you're serving in your Church. It's not about how much information you know or how many studies you've attended. Are you listening and applying? When you look in a mirror, if something is out of place, do you fix it? Of course you do. James is simply pointing out that the same should apply when you "look" into the Word of God. The word "observing" in verse 23 means an "attentive scrutiny of an object." And the word "looks" in verse 25 means to "keep on looking." Wow. That's all I got.

22. How does this section speak to your heart? Are you challenged? Convicted? Encouraged? Can you share about it with your group?

23. James talks about deceiving ourselves three times in this chapter. In verses 26-27, he uses a negative example of what he's talking about first, then moves on to some positives. First, give the negative example of being a "doer not a hearer." Then, list the positive examples.

24. We can't help but think of the words in 1 John 3:17-18 after we read this section. How does it relate?

I love what Hughes wrote, “James is telling us that we are to be involved in their distress; the pressures which squeeze them in their circumstances, pressures due to illness or fractured relationships or unemployment or family tensions. James insists that acceptable religion reaches out to people in their needs.”

I can't help to quote good ol' Max Lucado as well; “Who are the needy? There are several billion reasons to help them ... some of them live in your neighborhood, others live in jungles you can't find and have names you can't pronounce ... Some of them play in cardboard slums or sell sex on the street. Some of them walk three hours for water or wait all day for a shot of penicillin. Some of them brought their woes on themselves and others inherited the mess from their parents. None of us can help everyone. But all of us can help someone.”

25. Alright, lets wrap this up. What can we learn from all this? How does this chapter specifically speak to your heart? What are a few of the biggest lessons or take aways you received from the Lord? How do you plan to apply it?

Memory Verse of the Week: “But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourself.” James 1: 22

Key Words from the Book of James

R	I	G	H	T	E	O	U	S	N	E	S	S	L
G	H	S	N	E	R	U	D	N	E	E	I	E	U
B	R	F	O	P	A	T	I	E	N	C	E	I	A
R	E	A	T	I	T	E	M	P	T	E	D	R	O
E	L	I	S	S	E	T	Y	C	R	E	M	M	O
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E	E	E	W	O	O	Y	N	E	R	E	E	T	N
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R	R	R	E	U	G	N	O	T	N	E	I	M	T

DOER
 MERCY
 JOY
 WORKS
 PERFECT
 RELIGION
 ENDURE
 TRIALS
 RIGHTEOUSNESS
 WISDOM
 RICH
 BRETHREN
 TEMPTED
 TONGUE
 PRAYER
 SIN
 PATIENCE
 FAITH
 LOVE
 WORD

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