

### Valid Faith: Impartiality and Works James 1

#### Introduction

Two key words in the Book of James are FAITH and WISDOM. Faith needs to be used wisely and wisdom needs to be used with faith.

Some people call the book of James a collection of **proverbs**, but it is much more than that. The teachings are all about the activity of faith. It is the action of faith, not just belief that will be looked at closely. The theme of the book is faith in everyday life – faith to overcome, faith to win, and the faith of Jesus Christ. Take a moment to think about how your faith is shown throughout your day.

The second theme of James' writing is Christian **character**. James will show that Christians live disciplined lives, not lazy, thoughtless lives. James was an **orthodox Jew** who led a mostly Jewish church. He was in a unique position to help the Jews shift from living under the Law of Moses to living by the Law.

The book of James teaches guidelines about living from both the Old and New Testaments. These guidelines apply to all times and places. James will give us examples of how men and women in the Old Testament proved their faith by their actions. Do you think you're actions show your faith to others? Will you humbly study the word of God in the book of James? Will you agree to change any of your habits that do not agree with God's word?

#### Outline of James 1

- I. Overcoming Trials and Temptations by Faith - James 1:1-17
- II. Obeying God's Word by Faith - James 1:18-27.

#### I. Overcoming Trials and Temptations by Faith - James 1:1-17

James begins his letter by introducing himself as a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1). He chose not to mention that he was Jesus' half-brother, and he did not mention his position as the head of the Jerusalem church. James was humble and probably learned his humility from the One who humbled Himself *to the point of death, even the death of the cross* (Philippians 2:8). Are you impressed with position? Have you ever been to a concert and seen the many, adoring fans? Perhaps you were one of those fans. Do you follow a particular sports team and idolize a particular athlete? These are examples of being impressed by position. Perhaps you are impressed with your own position. Small children will often say, "... but I was the fastest!" or, "I did the best!" But as you grow older, your self satisfaction shows itself in quieter ways. You may not say that you are the best, but maybe you like to show off your A+ on a test. Maybe you continue to score points against an opponent when you already have a big lead. Are you willing to take a supportive role, or are you only happy when you have a lead part? It's not wrong to get good grades, win a game, or be the star of the show. It is wrong to lack humility when doing so.

James teaches us to *count it all joy when you fall into various trials* because trials are opportunities to test and prove your faith in God. Christians are to face difficulty with joy. Paul writes in Philippians 4:4, "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice.*" Both James and Paul agree that the Christian life is not carefree. But, you can come up to trials as a track runner approaches hurdles, with a burst of strength and confidence.

Attitude matters. A joyful spirit provides a second wind to spur you on. A negative and complaining attitude can drain your strength and make you feel defeated. Attitude can be the difference between being a victim or a victor. A joyous attitude is a choice and when you choose joy, you choose to obey God.

When James says, “*knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*,” it is no small matter. Purpose is a driving force. Christians can take their eyes off of the difficulty and look at the purpose. After all, if God had no purpose for our trials, it would be foolish to have joy. James explains that the purpose of trials is to learn patience: to learn to wait for God’s timing and God’s solution. Patience is not taught at a special school. It is only learned through trials. Are you full of patience or full of self pity?

When faced with a trial the first response is to figure out how we will handle it. This requires wisdom. Here is a promise: God, the source of all wisdom, will give us wisdom if we ask (1:5). That is marvelous! When is the last time you asked God for wisdom? We need it daily. Jesus said we must come as little children. “Father, show me what to do,” is a powerful prayer because it is simple and honest. God does not mock His children. When His children ask for bread, He does not give them a stone (Luke 11:11-13).

James says to start the trial with joy and, at the end of the trial, patience will be the prize. How do we get from joy to patience? The answer is prayer. Without prayer, disaster is possible. God, who **ordains** the trial, knows the way through and will show it to those who humbly ask. No one but God has all the answers. Prayer provides the wisdom we do not have. Our lack of wisdom does not surprise God. He doesn’t blame us for needing Him. It is self, pride, and Satan who keep us from God’s supply. Don’t wait. Ask for wisdom today.

What does ‘ask in faith’ mean? It is to ask without doubts. Doubt and faith cannot both be true at the same time. You either have faith or doubt...not both together.

Lastly, when we deal with a trial, we must not look back at the past, nor should we look ahead to figure a way out. Closing our eyes and wishing things were different will not help either. The only place to look is up toward Heaven. With this perspective we will make it through the trial, NOT SOMEHOW, BUT TRIUMPHANTLY.

The trials we have been talking about are things which happen to believers. James names another type of trial: temptation. Temptations are unseen trials that take place inside of us. Jesus met temptation at the beginning of His ministry when he went into the desert alone for forty days (Matthew 4). There, we see God’s loving provision and care for Him. It is very important to know that temptations do not come from God. He ordains temptations, but He Himself cannot be tempted, nor can He tempt anyone. Do not blame God for your temptations. If you want to blame someone, look to the very first temptation in history. Who tempted Eve in the garden (Genesis 3)? The father of lies (John 8:44) is also the father of temptation.

When tempted by jealousy, Cain murdered his own younger brother. Tempted by greed, Jacob stole his older brother’s blessing from his father. When tempted by anger, Moses hit a rock with his staff to bring forth water. Like these men, we are all tempted to lie, steal, and murder. But, we make the choice to either act on those temptations or to overcome them. Beware of your “own desires.” The sinful nature of man is attracted to the forbidden. Even a baby will scream when you take something away from him which he should not have. Want is dangerous. *Don’t be deceived* and give in to your wants. God’s desires for us are far better than what we think we must have in the moment of temptation.

Know this also, every gift God gives is good and perfect. That means that even the natural desires we have are meant to glorify Him. Cain's jealousy of his brother's favor with God was meant to motivate him to strengthen his relationship with God. Jacob should not have been greedy for his father's blessing. Instead, he should have been greedy for his own blessing from his Heavenly Father. Moses' anger tempted him to use his own strength. His anger ought to have encouraged him to obey God even more. Every desire has a godly means of fulfillment. Will you trust God to satisfy your desires?

## II. Obeying God's Word by Faith - James 1:18-27

So, how do we overcome temptation? The word of God holds the answer. As Jesus used it against Satan (Matthew 4:4-10), so believers may also bring *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5). God's word is *living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit...and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12). God created the world by His word. Christians are born by hearing His word. God's word is totally true. It has no errors or false teachings. It will never deceive. Do you set apart time to read and study your Bible? Do you believe and obey it?

*Let every man be swift to hear.* Does anything get in the way of you listening for God's word? The world has no place for the word of God. But studying God's word will help you to be *slow to speak and slow to wrath*. How are you doing controlling your speech and temper?

Most people do not know their true appearance. You can see your likeness in a mirror or photograph, but does that mirror have the power to change you? Of course not! It can only reflect an image and many people only see what they want to see. You've probably never thought of the Bible as a mirror, but, it is! It reflects our heart just as a mirror reflects our faces. To ignore the truth of God's word is to trick yourself.

James is very clear about what *pure religion before God is*: 1) to visit orphans and widows, and 2) keep yourself unspotted from the world. Caring for those in need is kindness that reflects God's love. It is also the example set for us by Jesus.

We are surrounded every day with ungodly influences such as billboard advertisements, commercials, clothing styles, and politics, just to name a few. We live in a world and among people that are self-glorifying, instead of Christ-worshipping. Many people are saying that sin is not sin. Do you hate being polluted and spotted by the world's influence? Do you fight against your flesh as it fights with you to get what it wants? If not, ask God to make you sensitive to the things in your life that separate you from Him. †

### Prayer

Father, please give me wisdom to know your will.

### Memory Verse

James 1:5 & 6 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

### Vocabulary

**proverbs** - brief popular sayings which express wise thoughts

**character** - moral excellence; group of qualities that make a person, group, or thing different from others

**Orthodox Jew** - a Jew who faithfully follows the practices of traditional Judaism

**ordain** - decree, destine; God's predetermined, unalterable ways

**wrath** - violent anger; punishment for sin or a crime

**QUESTIONS FOR JAMES LESSON 2**

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

**DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.**

1. ♥(Heart Question) a. What difficult task or person in your life will you face with joy this week?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Did you overcome some temptation this week with God's help? Will you share this?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. From memory, list the two actions which James says represent pure religion.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO: Read James 2:1-9.**

3. a. James tells people with faith not to practice \_\_\_\_\_.  
Choose the correct answer and fill in the blank above.

listening      football      partiality      their faith      the guitar

- b. What example does James give of a person practicing this?

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Can you think of some ways that you or your friends are like the person practicing this in verses 2-4?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. a. What does James say about those who practice partiality in:

Verse 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 6. \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 9. \_\_\_\_\_

- b. What does Job 13:10 say about showing partiality?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Does God show partiality? What do the following Scripture passages say about this?  
Deuteronomy 10:17

\_\_\_\_\_

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Acts 10:34

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Ephesians 6:9

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1 Peter 1:17

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6. a. What part of the “royal law” does James quote in verse 8?

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b. If you follow this law, James says you will do\_\_\_\_\_.

**DAY THREE: Read James 2:10-13.**

7. Write out James 2:10 in your own words.

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8. a. Mark the statement below that best describes the law of liberty:

- ☐ God’s commandments that we no longer need to obey  
☐ God’s commandments joined with forgiveness through Jesus’ resurrection

- b. What does James say about this law in verse 12?

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9. Why should you be merciful and forgiving rather than harsh and judgmental toward those who sin?
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**DAY FOUR: Read James 2:14-20 and Ephesians 2:8-9.**

10. a. Circle T (true) or F (false) for each of the following statements.  
Give the Scripture reference for those statements which are true.

T or F vs.\_\_\_\_\_ James asks if it does any good to have faith without works.

T or F vs.\_\_\_\_\_ Paul says we are saved by faith and not by works.

T or F vs.\_\_\_\_\_ James says that faith without works is dead.

T or F vs.\_\_\_\_\_ James says your works show that you are saved.

T or F vs.\_\_\_\_\_ Paul says that if we were saved by works, we would boast.

T or F vs.\_\_\_\_\_ Paul says that James doesn’t know what he is talking about.

- b. After reading what both James and Paul have to say:  
Why is it necessary for a Christian to have faith?
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Why is it necessary for a Christian to do works?

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11. How did the following people show their faith by their works?

a. The centurion in Matthew 8:5-13

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b. Martha in John 11:39-41

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12.a. What do demons believe that causes them to tremble?

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b. Does this mean that demons have faith? Explain your answer.

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c. Do you also believe what the demons believe? How does this belief affect your life?

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**DAY FIVE: Read James 2:21-26.**

13 a. Was Abraham saved by faith or works? See Hebrews 11:17-19 also.

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b. What did Abraham's offering of Issac do for his faith? Give verse. \_\_\_\_\_

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14.a. What did Rahab do that proved her faith? See Hebrews 11:31 also.

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b. ? (Thought Question) What do you think would have happened to Rahab if she had not put her faith to work as she did?

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b. How was Rahab blessed because of her works? See also Matthew 1:1-6.

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**VOCABULARY FOR JAMES LESSON 2**

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...  
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

**DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.**

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**DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.**

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2.

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3.

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**DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s).** (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

- |      |                  |       |         |       |            |       |         |
|------|------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------|-------|---------|
| 1. . | <b>character</b> | ..... | empty   | ..... | reputation | ..... | morals  |
| 2. . | <b>ordain</b>    | ..... | destine | ..... | wish       | ..... | command |
| 3. . | <b>wrath</b>     | ..... | anger   | ..... | punishment | ..... | gift    |

**DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.****Word****Definition****Orthodox**

brief popular sayings which express wise thoughts

**Jew**

moral excellence; group of qualities that make a person, group, or thing different from others

**proverbs****ordain**

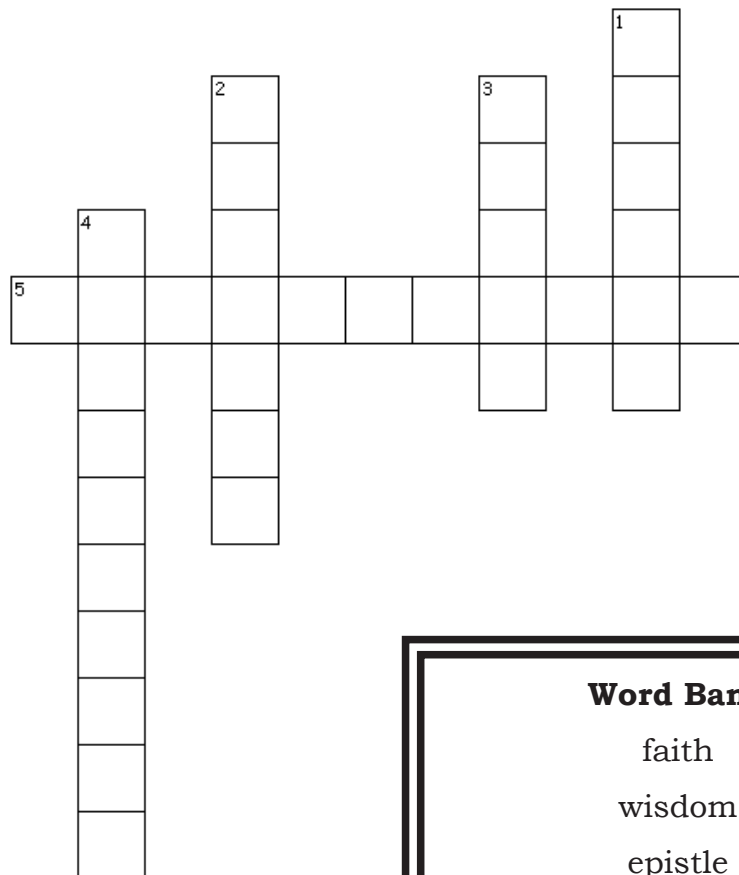
a Jew who faithfully follows the practices of traditional Judaism

**wrath**

decree, destine; God's predetermined, unalterable ways

**character**

violent anger; punishment for sin or a crime

**DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.**Crossword: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Fill in the boxes with the correct words.**Across**

5. treating in a way meant to be cruel or harmful; suffering caused because of a belief

**Down**

1. learning received over a period of time; knowledge and good sense  
 2. a formal letter  
 3. belief, trust, and loyalty in God  
 4. a group of individuals born and living at the same time

**Word Bank**

faith  
 wisdom  
 epistle  
 generation  
 persecution



ANSWER KEY

