

# GROW

## **THIS DEVOTIONAL BELONGS TO:**

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Created by the Student Ministries of:  
First Christian Church - King, NC  
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# LET'S MAKE IT A HABIT!

Have you ever tried to make a habit out of doing something? If you have, you know it takes time. Getting in the habit of doing something won't happen overnight. There isn't an exact science that says you have to do the same thing a certain amount of times to make a habit out of it. We do know that habits take time, patience, and commitment.

In your hands, you are holding a devotional that will take you on a 40-day journey through the book of James. You may be thinking to yourself, reading a book for 40 straight days seems impossible. With everything we have going on in our lives, how is it possible to spend time reading a book for 40 days in a row?

That's the point of these 40-day Grow devotions! Spending time in God's Word is worth making time for; it's worth making it a habit in our lives! It is our hope that by committing to this 40-day journey, you will begin the process of forming a habit that will be of great benefit to you!

The words of James will help you to grow in your walk with Christ! Make it a habit to engage with this book for the next 40 days. We promise that it will be worth it!

# WEEK 1

*This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the ‘twelve tribes’—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!*

*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.*

*Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements.*

*God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

*James 1:1-12*

# JAMES 1:1A

***“This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”.***

***James 1:1a***

Have you ever found yourself trying to figure out a person in a story that someone else is telling you about? Maybe a friend tells a story that involves a person named Mike, but they can't recall Mike's last name. You may know several Mikes because that is a generic name.

We are spending 40 days in the New Testament book of James. But before we get into what this book has to say, we need to spend some time getting to know just who this James is and the purpose for writing this book.

We know pretty quickly who the author is. His name is the title of the book, and he plainly states his name while calling himself a servant of God and Jesus in the first part of the first verse. James is the author, but just who exactly is this James?

In the New Testament time period, the name James is a common name. Biblical scholars have narrowed down two possibilities as to the identity of this James. The least likely is the Apostle James, the brother of the Apostle John. These two are known as the “Sons of Thunder.” Biblical scholars have ruled out this James due to the

time frame the book was written. According to Biblical scholars, the author is James, the half-brother of Jesus. Let that sink in real quick!

You read that right! Jesus had siblings (Matthew 12:46, Mark 6:1-3), and the James who wrote this book is the half-brother of Jesus! Could you imagine Jesus being your older sibling? He could do no wrong while you might have always been in trouble!

There are two interesting facts about James that we need to discuss here.

James and his siblings didn't believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be. In Mark 3:20-22, Jesus is accused of being possessed by the prince of demons for the work He was doing. Word of this gets to his family, and they come to get him because they believe He is crazy. They doubted He was the Son of God!

After Jesus' death and resurrection, it starts to click for James. Maybe his half-brother was the Son of God after all. James has quite the conversion from being a non-believer to fully believing and becoming the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

It's good to know that a guy with doubts about Jesus wasn't disqualified from fully giving his life to God and serving Him in amazing ways. James will have some amazing things to tell us through his book. We hope that over these 40 days, you will grow closer to Jesus just like James did!

## DAY 2

# JAMES 1:1

***“This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the ‘twelve tribes’—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!”***

***James 1 :1***

Yesterday, we found out that the author of James is, in fact, the half-brother of Jesus. Why is it important to know the author of this book? Knowing the true author helps us figure out why they wrote the book and whom it was written for.

The book of James begins like a letter, but the contents are not like most letters written at the time. The book of James is a collection of short sayings and slightly longer discussions of practical living topics. The book of James is often called the Proverbs of the New Testament. The Old Testament book of Proverbs is full of wisdom and wise sayings; the same can be said of the book of James. James writes his letter in a way that its readers would see the need to live their best godly life.

So just who was James writing this letter to? The answer to that question is found in the first verse of the book. James states that his audience is the 12 tribes scattered among the nations. You might be asking yourself, who are the 12 tribes, where are they scattered, and why are they scattered?

The language that James uses throughout the book suggests that he is writing to Jewish Christians. Remember from yesterday, James was the head of the first church in Jerusalem. This first church was made up of Jews who, like James, converted to Christianity after Jesus' death and resurrection.

James is writing to these Jewish Christians who have fled Jerusalem sometime after the stoning of Stephen. It had become very unsafe for Jewish Christians to stay in Jerusalem after this event. These Jewish Christians fled north and northwest to different countries and areas to escape the persecution.

So why was there persecution in Jerusalem? If you recall Stephen's stoning, Stephen challenged the Pharisees' understanding of Jesus and His mission. The Pharisees were angry that Stephen told them they were wrong for what they believed. They had him killed, and as a result, Saul, who became Paul made it his mission to kill all those who followed Jesus.

James is the head of the church in Jerusalem. His mission is to make sure that all of these new Christians who are experiencing trials and oppression stay strong in their faith in Jesus. Many of them have left the comforts of home to find peace in foreign countries.

The godly wisdom found in this book is just as valuable to us today as it was to the original audience James wrote to several centuries ago.

## DAY 3

# JAMES 1:2-4

***“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”***

***James 1:2-4***

Let’s have an honest talk about trials. I hate trials, and I bet you do too. I can’t think of a single person who welcomes trials in their life. Trials are something that we try to avoid at all costs. Sometimes we can avoid trials, but most of the time, they are unavoidable.

Early Christians faced persecution and death. Those that left Jerusalem had to leave friends and family to travel to foreign lands to escape what was happening in their homeland. Those that fled likely faced hardships as they were treated like outsiders and unwelcome guests in these new lands. Those that stayed in Jerusalem feared death every single day.

Right away, James talks about trials. He knows that these early Christians needed a boost of reassurance that everything would be fine. They needed to know that these trials would be better for them in the long run. If the early Christians could make it through the trials they faced, James knew that Christianity would spread like wildfire in these new lands.

Let's talk about trials in our life. All of us will experience trials in life, big and little. Regardless of what you have experienced in life so far, these moments in life can weigh you down. No matter how difficult the trial/trials we face, we are called to be joyful in the midsts of the difficulties. Write down a difficulty you have faced in your life.

James tells his readers to be joyful and to persevere so that maturity would be made complete in faith. But I believe James also writes these words so that our actions in trials would serve to show others that Jesus can help us through anything we face in this life. How do you have joy in trials? Joy isn't a natural response to difficulties; it is only given through Jesus. How do you overcome trials in life? It isn't by your own will and strength, but rather by the power Jesus gives us.

James tells us that we become mature in faith each time we endure trials. Every trial that comes our way is a chance for us to strengthen our faith. This is how the early Christians were able to get through their difficulties. Christianity is here today thanks to the early church having joy and not giving up in difficulties.

Don't become hopeless and give up when trials come. Be joyful that trials come so that your faith may become more mature.

# JAMES 1:5-8

***“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.”***

***James 1:5-8***

What’s the one thing that all of us think we have enough of, but in reality, we greatly lack? The answer to that question is wisdom, and it is what we will be talking about in today’s devotion. I love reflecting back on my life, mostly my middle school years. When I look back at the choices I made, I often have many regrets. As I look back on my middle and high school years, it’s obvious I lacked the wisdom I have today. I’m sure I’ll look back on my life in 15 years and say the same thing about my current self.

While we may think we are wise, we often aren’t. How is that so? James reminds us that if we lack wisdom, we should ask God for it. How do you know if you lack wisdom? Well, if you aren’t asking God daily for wisdom, you probably suffer from a lack of wisdom. James tells us to ask for wisdom, and God will generously give us the wisdom we need!

This wisdom is more than book smarts; the wisdom God gives us is the ability to understand His ways and to live in light of His purposes and values. James knows that genuine Christian maturity will be possible only if we ask for and use the wisdom God gives us.

The last part of this Scripture tells us to ask in faith and not doubt. The problem within all of us is that our minds and hearts are not fully synced with God all the time. James uses the word “doubt” to reveal the conflict of wanting to do things our way over God’s. We often have a conflict of loyalty in our lives when we chose what we want over what God wants for us. The wisdom God gives is only good for making choices that line up with His will, not ours. We have to set aside our will when we ask in faith for wisdom.

Do you struggle with trying to follow God and His will for your life? I know I have daily struggles where I want to follow God, but I am unsure that His will and ways are what I truly want. I know that I am the “double-minded” person James is talking about in verse 8. I think this is a problem all of us deal with. If you are willing to take a brave step in truly following God, ask for wisdom and put your will aside. This is a huge step! James challenged the early Christians to ask for wisdom knowing God would give it to them.

The early church survived and thrived because they had wisdom. Imagine what we could do as a modern-day church if we asked for wisdom. Be brave and ask, knowing that God will provide! Not only will He provide, but our desires will transform from what we want to what He wants! This wisdom that God graciously provides is so much better than doing things our way and feeling unfulfilled.

# JAMES 1:9-12

***“Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements. God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”***

***James 1:9-12***

In our world today, it's easy to find extreme poverty and extreme wealth. If we were to drive around our towns and communities, we would see the contrast of wealth and poverty. At the time that James wrote this book, there were extremes of great wealth and great need, and Christians at the time were not immune.

James writes to all Christians here to remind them that they have different trials they will face no matter if they are wealthy or in need. Let's break this down:

- Believers in humble circumstances - I went on a trip to Haiti a few years ago that opened my eyes to what true poverty looks like. The Haitian Christians I met had so much joy in spite of their poverty. They knew that their hope was found in their relationship with God, which brought them true joy in life!

- Believers who are rich - We may not have millions of dollars, but we are very rich compared to the rest of the world. We can become so attached to our stuff that we forget it's just temporary. The message of Christ isn't about acquiring and having the most on earth; it is about the riches of His grace that allow us to sacrifice and be generous to others.

No matter your economic status, rich or poor, you will face trials. Like he did to start the book, James reminds us to remain faithful and persevere under trials. James encourages us to adopt the right attitude towards the problems that life will bring our way. God will give everyone that loves Him, rich or poor, the crown of life when we remain faithful in our trials.

It's hard to apply the Scripture here to your life now. Here is the thing with Scripture, just because it doesn't speak to your current life doesn't mean it won't later on. The lesson that James is trying to teach us is one that we all need to hear and begin to practice no matter our life stage.

Whatever possessions you acquire in life, always remember that it is God who truly owns it all. Because of this, live a life that helps those in need. If you find yourself in humble circumstances, don't become angry at what you don't have. Remember that if you are in Christ, your relationship with Him is greater than material things.

## DAY 6

# GROWTH

**We've got questions, and you've got answers! Take some time to answer these three questions to grow with Jesus!**

As you think about the devotions this week, what is something that challenged you, convicted you, or influenced you in some way?

What is one thing you learned about God this week that you didn't know before?

Based on what you read this week, what is one thing you want to work on to grow with Jesus?

# WEEK 2

*And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, 'God is tempting me.' God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

*So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.*

*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.*

*But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*

*If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.*

*James 1:13-27*

# JAMES 1:13-15

***“And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, ‘God is tempting me.’ God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drags us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.”***

***James 1:13-15***

Temptations, by definition, are the desires to do something, especially something wrong. It’s these secret desires or wants that pull you away from God. In the box below, write down one of your biggest temptations that you are currently struggling with.

It probably wasn’t very difficult to think of a temptation that you are struggling with. If we’re honest, probably a lot of temptations came to mind. Temptations are struggles that rage a war inside of you. You have the choice whether to succumb to them or resist them. This type of internal struggle can lead to questions:

Why do I struggle with this temptation?

Why doesn’t everyone else have this temptation?

Why am I going through this?

If you are really struggling with temptation, you may find yourself wondering if God is tempting you as a form of testing.

Short answer: no. God never tempts us to do wrong. Even in His humanity, Jesus was tempted. He endured even worse temptations and struggles than you and I could ever imagine. In the Gospels, we read of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. While there are so many lessons to take away from how Jesus handled the situation, the biggest revelation comes from the first verse of the story. Matthew 4:1 says, *“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”* Did you notice who it said Jesus was tempted by?

That’s right; it wasn’t God tempting Jesus. Satan was the tempter. Now, don’t get confused into thinking that the devil has power over God. God is always in control, but God is always good in all things. God is not the orchestrator of temptation. It comes from someone who loves evil. Satan is the one who tempts you and uses evil desires to distract you. Do not underestimate how desperately he is trying to pull you away from God.

Every time you choose your way over God’s way, your relationship with God experiences strain. James makes it even more serious by saying that to even think about your temptations and let them remain as a desire will lead you to sin sooner or later. Just know that even in the deepest of your struggles, though we may distance ourselves from God, God does not distance Himself from us. God’s not asking you to handle these temptations alone. Turn your eyes to Him, admit what evil desires you have, and ask God to help you choose Him over any temptations.

# JAMES 1:16-18

***“So don’t be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.”***

***James 1:16-18***

Sometimes it is very easy to be deceived, and you may not even realize it. That’s why James starts off very straight forward, warning us, as believers, not to be deceived or tricked. What are some ways that we can be deceived, or what are some things that we are deceived by? Think about some and list them below.

We can be deceived by false friendships, false teachers, and we even deceive ourselves into believing Satan’s lies that he whispers to us. One of the most dangerous lies that Satan wants us to believe is that God isn’t a good God. James is pleading with us not to be fooled into thinking this. Instead, we can realize that God is not only good, but He is the giver of all good and perfect gifts.

Have you ever looked into your wallet and accidentally found a \$20 bill? That's one of the best feelings when something good happens. Yet even with something so simple, do you stop and take the time to thank God for this gift? Often times we take things like health, housing, family, friends, and so much more for granted without thanking the one who gives us all of these good gifts. We may not even recognize these things as gifts from God. He wants us to delight in His gifts because He loves and cares for us.

James goes on to explain that we can trust in God's perfect gifts because He is nothing like shifting shadows. God, the giver, will not, cannot, and does not change! NEVER! He is always good and always constant. His goodness does not shift, even when the world is trying to deceive us.

Scripture often uses the term "firstfruits," which refers to the first and best offering brought before the Lord. These firstfruits were the best of their crops, livestock, or possessions that were offered to God as a sacrifice. How does this apply to us? We are His firstfruits. We are chosen by God as His best and most pleasing possessions. James is telling us here that because He has chosen us, we are valuable.

God has chosen us to be His firstfruits. You might ask yourself, "What has God chosen me for?" He chose you and me to have a new birth or a new life through His Word, the Word of truth. This gives us eternal hope. We can place our faith in Him. God calls you and me to be brought into His family through Jesus Christ. We have been created in the image of Him, and we are His prized creation. This is one of the best gifts we can receive from God.

# JAMES 1:19-21

***“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.”***

***James 1:19-21***

Have you ever said or done something quickly before you fully thought it out? I don't think there's a person in the world who hasn't done that at least once. Maybe you said or did something really dumb or embarrassing; maybe you said something hateful, maybe you shared a secret you weren't supposed to. James gives guidance controlling these types of reactions. His instructions are a manual that we can apply to our personal relationships. These verses really can apply to how we should respond to God's Word.

Take a moment of being still and take in all the noises going on around you. God has crafted all of us so intricately to be able to hear and perceive many sounds. Hearing is an automatic reaction for most, but listening is paying attention to what is heard, and it requires action. Be quick to listen. Quick here doesn't mean listening to the words as fast as possible. Quick means being eager or excited to hear what is being said to you, especially that which is God's Word.

Be slow to speak. A philosopher named Epictetus once said, “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” That says something right there. Our words have more power than we can ever realize, and taking a moment before we actually say anything creates space for the Spirit to be in control of what we actually say.

Be slow to anger. Anger is not a bad thing. There were moments where Jesus was angry. The book of Ephesians tells us to “*be angry and do not sin.*” However, our anger should never lead us to emotional decisions that serve ourselves or hurt other people. When we are angry, we must have the self-control to slow down our minds and search for the heart of God. Does this situation also anger God? Do you trust Him enough to let your anger go, knowing that He will one day make all things right? A slowness to anger means we are operating with grace, and when we yield our anger to God, it demonstrates our faith in Him.

These sound simple, but these are some of the most difficult instructions to put into action. Living your life like this aligns yourself with God’s Word that is rooted within you. What is rooted inside of you is what will grow. Grow in Him by humbly living out your faith and welcome God’s salvation in your life.

On a scale from 1 - 10, how well do you live out these instructions? 1 being not at all, 10 being to the best of your capability.										
Be eager to listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Have control over what you say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Have control over your temper.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Read your bible and obey it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

# JAMES 1:22-25

***“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”***

***James 1:22-25***

Imagine you are leaving your house for a formal event, and you look at yourself in the mirror to make sure that your hair isn’t messed up, nothing is in your teeth, and everything looks okay. When you look in the mirror, you happen to notice that you have this huge stain all down the front of your shirt. You see the stain, but you decide not to do anything about it. When you get to the formal event, someone asks you a little sarcastically, “Didn’t you look at yourself in the mirror?”. You took the time to look in the mirror, and it even showed you what a mess you were, but you didn’t react and do anything about it. So what was the point of looking in the mirror in the first place?

This sounds like a ridiculous story, but this is exactly how some of us act with God’s Word. We read the Bible and don’t actually do what any of Scripture tells us to do. We read our Bibles, listen to sermons and podcasts, and hear Scripture in songs as we worship, but once it’s all done with, we walk away completely unchanged by God’s Word.

Here are a few reasons why we can sometimes remain unchanged by God's Word:

- We have become numb to what we read and hear. It's routine.
- We think we know better than God and can fix our problems on our own.
- We don't prioritize living our lives the way God wants us to.
- We doubt or don't try to understand what we are reading.
- We want to go along with what the rest of the world is doing.
- We value the act of reading more than we value applying

That list could go on and on for excuses that all Christians make up, but James urges you not to be like someone who looks in the mirror and forgets what they see. Intentionally read God's Word, but more than that, take the next step and implement what His Word is telling you to do. God's Word has the power to transform.

God's Word is the perfect law. Obeying God's Word comes with freedom unlike anything else in the world - it is freedom from sin and the price we would have to pay. When we take what we hear and really do God's will, God will bless us in it. That is an eternal promise.

# JAMES 1:26-27

***“If you claim to be religious but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.”***  
**James 1:26-27**


“At least, I don’t mess up as badly as \_\_\_\_\_”

“Well, what I’m doing isn’t that bad.”

“If \_\_\_\_\_ makes me happy, then it can’t be wrong.”

“If God always forgives me, why does it matter what I do?”

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Can you think of your own statement that people use as an excuse? 

Many people in this world think that they are living in the correct or right way. You’ve probably heard someone you know use one of those statements above, or maybe you’ve even said one of them yourself. As Christians, we use these excuses to deceive others and ourselves into believing we are truly religious and living a life aligned with God.

God doesn’t want you to live your life as just good enough. He wants and calls you to live your life in a way that mimics the way that Jesus lived. You have to control your actions, your words, and your thoughts.

As a follower of Christ, you need to be mindful of what you are watching on TV, what you are searching on the internet, who you are following on social media, what you are posting, and what you are listening to. Everything that you fill yourself with is what will come out. Focus on Christ. Fill your body and mind with holy things. Strive to live your life as pure and faultless.

James gives us some examples of how we can strive to live a pure life. Keep yourself from being polluted by the world. Do not look to the world for honor, success, and love. It will never satisfy you. Practice love and take care of widows and orphans. Throughout the Bible, the people of God are told to care for the people who are on the margins - those who the rest of the world looks past and forgets about. These are individuals who are in need of love and care. We are to be mindful of our neighbors, especially the ones who need our help. So let's brainstorm how we can live out what God has called us to do.

Write down the name of one or two people who you could love well, even if others don't.

Write down a way that you can take care of and love on one of those names you wrote down.

# GROWTH

**We've got questions, and you've got answers! Take some time to answer these three questions to grow with Jesus!**

As you think about the devotions this week, what is something that challenged you, convicted you, or influenced you in some way?

What is one thing you learned about God this week that you didn't know before?

Based on what you read this week, what is one thing you want to work on to grow with Jesus?

# WEEK 3

DAY 14

*My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?*

*For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives? Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?*

*Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.*

*For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.*

*So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.*

*What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?*

*So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*

*Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."*

*You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?*

*Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.*

*Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.*

James 2:1-26

# JAMES 2:1-7

***“My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?***

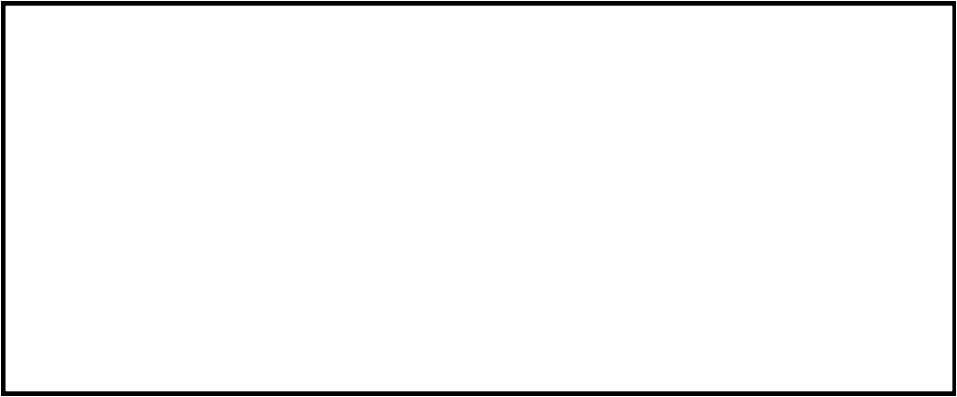
***For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, ‘You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor’—well, doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?***

***Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn’t God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren’t they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? But you dishonor the poor! Isn’t it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Aren’t they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?”***

***James 2:1-7***

The word “discrimination” is a hot word in our world today. Discrimination is defined as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex. If we unpack that a little more, it becomes clear that we can see and treat people differently based on who they are because we have favorable or unfavorable opinions of them. In our world right now, discrimination comes mostly in the forms of race, gender, and wealth. Wealth discrimination was, like today, a problem in the ancient world. James writes these words so that the early church wouldn’t fall into discriminating who could join the church and who couldn’t.

We want you to be very honest and vulnerable right now. Take a moment to write down a few ways you have discriminated against or shown favoritism to someone over another person.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to write their reflections on discrimination or favoritism.

In the four gospels, we read time and time again how Jesus didn't show favoritism or didn't discriminate. Jesus healed those who were considered outcasts. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He helped Romans and Samaritans, not just Jews. In Jesus' eyes, everyone was on equal ground; everyone was made in the image.

It is so easy for us to discriminate and show favoritism based on appearances. We decide who deserves our time based on looks, skin color, gender, and economic status. What if we took the time to get to know people who are different than us? I doubt we would see the barriers we put up. I think we would begin to treat people better. I bet we would see others as God's creation. I know we would love our neighbor just like Jesus commands us to do.

# JAMES 2:8-11

***“Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God’s laws. For the same God who said, ‘You must not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘You must not murder.’ So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.”***

***James 2:8-11***

Are you a rule follower? Do you bend the rules every once and while to justify your wrongs? Do you completely disregard the rules put in place?

**Circle which best describes your view of rules:**

I follow the rules.

I bend the rules from time to time.

I completely disregard rules.

*“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Yesterday we talked about how showing favoritism and discriminating against others is the exact opposite of loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is hard to discriminate if you love someone like yourself.

James is very straightforward in today's Scripture. He reminds us that to break one of God's commands means we break all the commands.

James tells us that regardless of what our sin may be, the penalty for breaking God's law is separation from Him. Of course, different sins have more/less severe consequences, but to be guilty of a sin is to be guilty of the Law.

I like to follow the rules, but I don't follow them to the best of my ability. Maybe you feel the same way. God has given us commands that are meant to be followed. I'll be the first to admit that following His commands isn't the easiest thing to do, and I think that is on purpose. The Law actually was intended to show us our need for a savior (Romans 3:20)!

The Ten Commandments can be split into two categories. The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. The remaining six deal with our relationship with others. Jesus in Matthew 22:37-40 reminds us that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second is to love our neighbor.

If we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we will keep His commands faithfully. If we keep His commands faithfully, we will love others like ourselves. Following the rules God has in place is for our benefit. His commands draw us closer to Him and help us love others better.

# JAMES 2:12-13

***“So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.”***

***James 2:12-13***

Words and actions can tell you a lot about a person. If you constantly gossiped about others and were judgmental, people would conclude that you were a hateful person. If you spoke kindly of others and helped those in need, people would think you were a compassionate person.

In this section of Scripture, James makes it clear that our words and actions will be judged. The things we say to others and how we treat them will speak and show one of two things. Our words and actions can show others that we are unforgiving or that we are merciful. Unforgiving people live under the law and find it hard to live in freedom. Merciful people live in freedom and find it easy to forgive others when they deserve punishment.

All of us want mercy! We would rather someone show us compassion and forgiveness when we deserve to be punished. The ultimate form of mercy was shown on the cross when Jesus took our punishment for sin (death) and died on our behalf. We have been given mercy in the greatest form, yet we often don't give mercy to others when they have wronged us.

James tells us that mercy should be our response because we have been given mercy. He makes it clear that we shouldn't expect mercy if we cannot give mercy.

Everything in us screams out judgment. We want to make sure that those who wrong us pay the price. We have heard it numerous times in our life, "An eye for an eye." Mercy is the exact opposite. Mercy seems like a weak response, and we can't be labeled as weak.

Giving mercy is almost unheard of in our world today; it goes against the idea of paying others back for how they have wronged us. James says that mercy triumphs over judgment. Mercy is better than judgment. We become more like Jesus when we give mercy, even when it isn't justifiable in our eyes.

We have been given mercy on account of our sin. Because of that, we are called to give mercy as well. Let your speech and actions always be merciful.

Write down some ways you can be more merciful towards others.

# JAMES 2:14-19

***“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, ‘Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well’—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, ‘Some people have faith; others have good deeds.’ But I say, ‘How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.’ You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.”***

***James 2:14-19***

I want you to picture a tree. Maybe even a bunch of trees. Think of going to an apple orchard in the middle of October and seeing row and row to apple tree with tons of apples on them. How do you know that each tree is alive? Well, it’s pretty obvious right? The ones with apples are alive, and the ones with no leaves or apples are dead.

Picture faith as the tree. It is tall. It is rooted in the ground and can withstand wind and storms and seasons. Now, think of the apples as works - tree has no value if it never produces any apples.

James makes it clear that someone who truly places their faith in Jesus will produce good works. Faith and action go hand in hand. What good is it to be a tree that never produces leaves or fruit? What good is it to have faith but never put that faith into action?

When we think of following Christ, the first thing that comes to our mind is the idea of having faith. You cannot follow Christ if you don't have faith that Jesus is who He says He is. Having faith in Jesus justifies us. In other words, faith in what Jesus did for us makes us right with God. It roots us into Him and helps us stand through storms.

Some people claim to have a lot of faith, but their lack of action indicates that their faith is actually dead, like an apple tree with no apples. They claim to believe in Jesus, but their actions never indicate true reliance on God. True faith leads us to situations where self-sacrifice and reliance on God are necessary. We know this because Jesus' faith led Him to the cross. Works sanctify us. In other words, they make us look more like Jesus. Works are the fruit that others may enjoy, providing evidence of the life of the tree.

Take a look at your faith.

- Has your belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus led you to take action?
- Have you changed the way you live because you have faith in the way the Lord has called you?
- Because of what you believe, do you act more like Jesus?

Pick one of the three questions above and give a specific example of how you have seen faith *and* works go hand in hand.

# JAMES 2:20-26

***“How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless? Don’t you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: ‘Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.’ He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.***

***Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.”***

***James 2:20-26***

It was the summer of 1999; I was riding in the bus on my way to church camp for a week of preteen camp. I remember talking to the other kids on the bus about how I wanted to be a good person and do nice things for other people so I could get to heaven. Unbeknownst to me, the kid’s minister at our church was listening to my conversation while he was driving the bus.

I had decided in my mind that I had to earn my salvation by doing good and being good. Faith was the farthest thing in my mind when it came to salvation. I knew about Jesus and His death on the cross, but I had concluded that I had to please Jesus by being good and doing good things.

On Thursday night of that same week of camp, my kid's minister took me aside and told me that he had overheard my conversation on the bus. He told me that I couldn't be a good person and get to heaven. He also told me that doing good things for other people wouldn't work either. He and I had a conversation about giving Jesus my life and asking for forgiveness for my sins. That night I confessed Jesus as my Lord and was baptized!

I completely understand the point that James has been making yesterday and today. Our faith leads us to action that benefits the Kingdom of God. **Faith and actions work together.**

James gives us two great examples of individuals that backed up their faith by their actions. In a testing of faith, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son because God told him to do so. Rahab was willing to risk her life to hide the spies sent by Joshua to check out the promised land.

How can faith and action work together in your life? Take some time to write down how your faith can lead you into action.

# GROWTH

**We've got questions, and you've got answers! Take some time to answer these three questions to grow with Jesus!**

As you think about the devotions this week, what is something that challenged you, convicted you, or influenced you in some way?

What is one thing you learned about God this week that you didn't know before?

Based on what you read this week, what is one thing you want to work on to grow with Jesus?

# WEEK 4

*Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.*

*We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches.*

*But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.*

*People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring*

*If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.*

*But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.*

James 3:1-18

# JAMES 3:1-2

***“Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.”***

***James 3:1-2***

In college, I had to learn a language to graduate with my degree. I had the choice between three languages: Greek, Hebrew, or Spanish. I could choose from two biblical languages that would be pretty difficult to learn or choose the easier path in Spanish. I chose Spanish.

My professor was a sweet woman who had been a missionary in Mexico for a few years of her life. She was a very easy-going woman, which made it very easy for me to pass her class, but there was also one problem. I didn't learn anything. I passed the class without trying, which was great, but I also left feeling less confident in my ability to speak Spanish. She was a very sweet woman that I enjoyed seeing around campus, but not the greatest instructor.

Teachers of every kind have a very important job, especially when it comes to teaching God's Word. Teachers have the responsibility to speak the truth, not personal opinions. This is very important because what a teacher says affects the lives of those who listen.

The responsibility of handling God's Word is something that cannot be taken lightly. Allowing people to believe they are saved when they have no understanding of who Jesus is, does not work in the grand scheme of things.

That is why James is trying to warn those who want to teach in the church. He is not condemning anyone who does teach; James is simply trying to protect teaching in the church. James states that those who teach fall under stricter judgment because teachers are expected to live the truth, not just teach it.

Understand that no one is perfect other than God. We will stumble along the way, but we need to be diligent to speak the truth in every circumstance. As you will read in the next devotion, our tongue is the most pivotal tool we have. How you use it can either lead someone to God or lead them astray. That is why James urges us to pursue self-control. Self-control begins in the heart. What flows from the heart will eventually make its way to our words.

Again, James is not condemning anyone from teaching, but he is warning against hurrying into teaching without realizing what a serious responsibility it is.

# JAMES 3:3-8

***“We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.***

***People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.”***

***James 3:3-8***

In November of 2016, the Gatlinburg wildfires began to spread rapidly across the Smoky Mountains. The fires burned more than 10,000 acres inside the Smoky Mountain National Park and 6,000 acres in other areas. At least 14,000 residents and tourists were forced to evacuate the surrounding area, while over 2,000 buildings were either damaged or destroyed. 14 people lost their lives, and 190 people were injured due to the fires. What do you think caused such a great fire? Was it an airplane that crashed among the trees or a Semi-truck carrying fuel through the mountains that overturned and exploded? No, in fact, what caused these large fires might surprise you. These fires were started by two teenagers who dropped lit matches onto the ground along a hiking trail.

Something as simple as a match, that is no bigger than your index finger, was able to create colossal destruction. This is the analogy that James uses in verse 5. James says that the tongue is a tiny spark, but it can set hundreds of people's lives ablaze when used in the wrong way. When we use our words to gossip, to slander, to bicker, to fight with one another, we have the power to destroy any witness we may possess of Christ.

Our words can either build unity or destroy it. In the words of Charles Swindoll, a well-known Christian author, "Our mouths can form a community or fracture it. The tongue is a small but powerful member. Yes, it has the ability to do tremendous good. But it also has the potential to do incalculable harm."

Ephesians 4:29 says,

***"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."***

Are you using your tongue to build others up, or do the words you use create destruction in the hearts of those around you? If you remember anything from this devotion, remember that you are a direct representation of Jesus from the very minute you wake up each morning to the minute you go to sleep. Do your words reflect that?

# **JAMES 3:9-12**

***“Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can’t draw fresh water from a salty spring.”***

***James 3:9-12***

I heard a story once of a family sitting around the lunch table after coming home from a Sunday morning service. The father bowed his head and led his family in the blessing. After he said “amen,” almost immediately, the father began to complain about the preacher. He picked apart every detail of the sermon, explained how the nursery could have been better organized and continued complaining about anything that came to mind during the sermon. His little daughter tapped him on the shoulder and asked the father, “Daddy? Did Jesus hear your blessing a moment ago?” The father replied, “Well, yes, of course, He did.” She tapped him on the shoulder again and asked, “Did God hear your fussing a moment ago, too?” “Well... I suppose He did...” Then the daughter asked yet another question, “Then daddy, which one did God believe?”

James makes the statement that with our tongue, we both praise our Lord and curse others. We see this happen so often today, don’t we?

One minute you can be traveling down the road singing the latest worship album when someone cuts you off. In the blink of an eye, our demeanor changes from praising God to yelling words you wouldn't dare repeat to your mother.

Do you ever wonder where this inconsistent speech comes from? Far too often, we can blame God for making us "the way we are," but in all honesty, the tongue displays who you really are. Sometimes the inner person that hides behind the nice mask we wear to church, behind the "everything is alright" front that you put on social media always seems to find an opportunity to reveal itself through the tongue.

At times a new follower of Jesus can be crushed because of the demeaning words of an impatient, older Christian. Reputations are ruined, marriages are broken, friendships are cut short far too often because of a failed attempt at self-control. The answer to taming your tongue is this: surrender to God's control. God is the only one who can calm your temper. He can tame the beast that wants to come out in irritating situations. He can offer patience in moments of stress. God wants to prevent us from allowing this double-minded behavior to go on in our future.

Now is a good time to pause and pray.

Ask God to change your heart and your tongue today.

# JAMES 3:13-16

***“If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.”***

***James 3:13-16***

We live in a time where everyone thinks they have to be the one that is right. It has become nearly impossible to be on social media without coming across a post where two people are arguing that their viewpoint on a certain matter is correct and that the other person is a fool. We get a sense of pride when we share our “right” opinion. James is saying that this kind of “wisdom” is not of God. Smarts, wits, and education do not make a person wise. What makes a person wise is how well his or her lifestyle reflects God’s truth.

James also points out that being wise involves humility. Wisdom is not found in arrogance; rather, it is found in gentleness. People today often view “meekness” or “gentleness” as a mark of being weak, as spineless people who let others walk all over them. Being “meek” is not a highly looked upon attribute in our society that is competitively arrogant. But in Scripture, “gentleness” is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23, and it is closely tied to “self- control.”

Imagine you have two small group leaders in your church that are in charge of teaching you the Gospel. Both have a degree in biblical teaching, both have been to a four-year Christian university. One teacher is very open about his or her flaws. They understand that they have fallen short of the glory of God, and through that, they can help other students understand how God works in those times. The other leader is very proud of his or her knowledge of God. They know they are not perfect, but the way they carry themselves does not reflect that. They use language that makes it seem as if they are talking down to you because you did something God would not be proud of. They are very hard to approach with questions because you are fearful of their judgment they may cast.

Which leader would you gravitate to?

As you grow towards being a Christian leader, remember that arrogance and jealousy do not promote Godly wisdom. Wisdom from above involves humility, meekness, and self-control. Wisdom is not pursuing riches, success, fame; instead, it is about what you value.

# JAMES 3:17-18

***“But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.”***

***James 3:17-18***

In the verses prior, James describes wisdom from below (earthly wisdom) as one that is arrogant, marked by bitter jealousy, and selfish ambition. James explained that this is not wisdom from above; instead, it is driven by earthly motives. So, what exactly is wisdom from above, then?

First of all, wisdom from God is *pure*. Being pure is listed first because I think it is the most important aspect of true wisdom. God-given wisdom produces purity of inward motives, which pours out to our external actions. The whole book of James revolves around the idea of putting the Gospel message to action. This means that the way we act should reflect holiness in us. Again, wisdom is not about education; it's about action. Through purity, God gives us this promise in Matthew 5:8, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”* Purity in thought and deed help us see God working in all of our circumstances.

Wisdom from God is *peaceable*. This means that our wisdom does not produce jealousy or self-ambition; rather, it produces peaceful relationships. This means that you are not quick to start arguments, but you want the peace that God so badly wants for His people. Living a Godly life guards us against alienating others.

Wisdom from God is *gentle* and *reasonable*. Are you labeled as unreasonable? Or are you someone who listens to anything and evaluates the situation? Godly wisdom describes someone who is teachable, who is not stubborn, but is willing to learn and hear someone out.

Wisdom from God is full of *mercy*. Mercy implies looking upon someone with compassion when they probably deserve punishment. Worldly wisdom would more than likely heap judgment and ridicule on those they think deserve it. Instead, mercy shows kindness and benevolence in those situations.

Wisdom from above looks a lot different than how the world would define it today. The truth of the matter is that our wisdom should not be shown in the degree we get or how smart you claim to be; it should be shown in how we live our lives.

James makes his point crystal clear:

**If you claim to have wisdom as you should, then why do you live like you shouldn't?**

# GROWTH

**We've got questions, and you've got answers! Take some time to answer these three questions to grow with Jesus!**

As you think about the devotions this week, what is something that challenged you, convicted you, or influenced you in some way?

What is one thing you learned about God this week that you didn't know before?

Based on what you read this week, what is one thing you want to work on to grow with Jesus?

# WEEK 5

DAY 28

*What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.*

*You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say,*

*“God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble.”*

*So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.*

*Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?*

*Look here, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.” Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.*

James 4:1-17

# JAMES 4:1-3

***“What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don’t they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don’t have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can’t get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.”***

***James 4:1-3***

Write down the name of someone you don’t get along with well.



Write down something you desire but do not have.



The source of all conflict starts with you. This isn’t meant to sound like you cause fights or that you are the problem. It is saying that the root of fights and quarrels starts from within. Selfishness is a sin that has plagued humanity all the way back to the beginning with Adam and Eve when they focused on themselves. They selfishly wanted to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil so that they would know all that God knew. Today all of us struggle with desires that are focused on ourselves, and these desires lead to conflicts or worse. So the first step to resolving conflict is to acknowledge your own selfishness.

So first, let’s go ahead and admit it. Write your name in the blank.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, AM SELFISH.

Now that we've all acknowledged our inadequacy let's look into what James says on selfishness affecting your prayer life. Your prayer life (or lack of) reveals the focus of your heart. Do you focus your prayer on you or God? James reveals the different ways a believer's prayer life can be. Some people have no prayer life, and it shows that their focus is not on God. Not talking with God will keep you focusing on yourself and your desires. It's not always easy to focus on God and pray. Especially when fighting, we avoid prayer because it's hard to pray for someone and be angry at them at the same time. Even the smallest of effort to start communicating with God is a step in the right direction.

Some people pray and only ask for what they want. If your prayers are only focused on you, then it shows you are trying to use God for what you want, not what He wants. Sometimes when we pray, we treat God like a magical genie in a lamp. We take Him off the shelf only when we need Him and ask Him to grant our deepest wish, and then we put Him back until the next time we need Him.

Be honest with yourself, circle where you are at with your prayer life.

*I do not pray at all.*

*I pray but mostly pray for what I want.*

*I try my best to always pray with my focus on God.*

Our prayers should be done with the right motives, especially when it comes to conflicts. Jesus taught us that as believers, we can be bold in our prayers and ask for what we want. But our responsibility is to ask with the right motives.

# JAMES 4:4-6

***“You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”***

***James 4:4-6***

Can you imagine a couple that gets married, and a couple of weeks later, the bride tells the groom, “I’m going to go on a date with my old boyfriend...I still love you, but I want to love him too”? That marriage sounds like it is in big trouble! When you get married, you vow to leave all others and be devoted exclusively to your spouse. Did you know the church is called the bride of Christ? The symbolism of marriage is applied to Christ and anyone who chooses to be a follower of Christ. Christ has lovingly chosen the church to be His bride. When you decide to become a believer, you choose to vow yourself to only God, and you say goodbye to the rest of the world.

James shocks readers as he calls us “adulterous people.” He has to use this bold language to show us just how deeply we have broken our vows as Christ’s bride. We entered into a covenant with God promising to love and obey Him. But when we turn our back on him and choose the world, it is like the wife who chose to love her old boyfriend rather than remaining faithful to her husband.

Being friends with the world happens when you choose money, love, popularity, relationships, success, comfort, and so many other things over God.

James is trying to bring to light the fact that people try to reason and balance their worldly desires with the Gospel. God doesn't want to share us with the world; in fact, He hates that. To follow the ways of the world is a direct rejection of God. God longs for us to love Him and Him only. He jealously chases after us in hopes of us turning to love Him. Even though we make mistake after mistake, God never stops His pursuit of us.

Think about the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32. A son who was loved and cared for became so distracted by the world and chasing after it. The son wanted independence, money, success, love. He chose to leave his father to chase after these things. Even though the son left him, the father never stopped loving him, not even for a second. When the son returned home, the father didn't reject him or scold him. No, the father ran to his son and embraced him with tears of joy. God treats you and me the same way.

So who do you choose? Are you married to God, or are you married to the world? Do you run after the things of the world, or do you run towards God? Even when we run away towards the world, God never stops chasing us down. He leaves the 99 for the one. When we decide to love him back, He is there with open arms. That is grace - to love us even though we run.

# JAMES 4:7-10

***“So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.”***

**James 4:7-10**

By this point in our study of James, you must realize that throughout the entire book, God gives clear instructions on how Christians are supposed to live their lives. In these verses, James lists out so many commands: submit, resist, come near, wash your hands, purify your hearts, grieve, mourn, wail, humble yourself. Sometimes scripture doesn't need a deep explanation. Instead, you are supposed to take it as is and obey the commands that have been written.

Every single day of your life, the devil is going to try to attack you. He might try to tempt you to sin, tell you you're not enough, or trick you into focusing on the wrong things. This isn't said to scare you or make you lose hope. Instead, it is a warning! It is a reminder of how to react when you're being attacked. Every day you must take a stand for God, and against the Devil. You do not listen to the devil and his lies, you only listen to God and you are promised that He will never lead you wrong. Come near to God. Spend intimate time with Him reading your Bible and talking with God.

Admit your sins and wash your hands of them. Choose to no longer live in sin so that your hearts may be purified.

It might seem a little confusing for you to read that the Bible tells you to grieve, mourn, and wail. None of that sounds very fun. These verses are not telling you to be sad and never be happy again. James is introducing an important practice called lamenting.

Lamenting means to express regret or disappointment over something. We all know that sin is bad and evil, but lamenting isn't just recognizing that. God wants us to lament or weep over how destructive and evil sin is in our lives. Admitting your sin and grieving over how it has separated you from God is an important practice of being a Christian. But there is hope. As a child of God, you can rejoice that God has ultimate power over sin! Praise God that He loves us enough to save us from it!

Re-read those verses one more time. Obey these commands and grow in knowing God. Spend a few minutes in prayer. Talk to God about which commands you struggle with and ask God for His strength when the devil attacks you.

# JAMES 4:11-12

***“Don’t speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God’s law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?”***

***James 4:11-12***

What is the Law?

Who is the one Lawgiver and Judge?

Who is your neighbor?

In chapter 3 of James, you learned that even though the tongue is such a small part of your body, it can be one of the easiest ways that you sin. Think about the different ways that you could “*speak against your brother or sister.*” Gossiping, insulting someone, judging, laughing at jokes about other people, making jokes about others, spreading rumors about someone, and the list could go on. Every single one of us is guilty of having done one of those things at one point or another. These are just a few examples to give you a glimpse at how incredibly easy it can be to criticize.

As a follower of Christ, James gives a clear warning that God doesn't want you to do any of those things. We are called to love one another, and that certainly includes the way we speak to one another. When you speak against someone, you are judging them and disobeying the law of God. To do this is the same as you judging the law. The law refers to God's Word and any of the commandments within. So whenever you judge someone, it is as if you are better than God's law or even God himself. The moment you begin to judge another believer or God's law, you begin to think of others and God as less and think of yourself as more.

Even if you don't speak your thoughts, God wants your heart to be free of judgment. Only God knows the thoughts of what people are actually thinking. Only God knows why people are actually acting a certain way, whether that person's actions are good or bad. Since God is the only one who knows all things, that makes Him the only one who is worthy and powerful enough to judge people. God is the only Lawgiver and Judge. He determines what is sinful and what is good. He will judge fairly and justly.

Let's leave the judgment and control to God. Personally, I don't want to be in charge of any of that. Let God do His part, and we can do ours. We should show mercy to others and not pass judgment. We should point others to His good and perfect law, not create our own.

# JAMES 4:13-17

***“Look here, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.’ How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it’s here a little while, then it’s gone. What you ought to say is, ‘If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.’ Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”***

***James 4:13-17***

Do you have a bucket list? A bucket list is a list of experiences or adventures that you wish to complete in the future. Some bucket lists are full of adventures like skydiving, snorkeling with sharks, or traveling to Antarctica. Some consist more of achievements like graduating from college, having three kids, or buying a fancy car. Sometimes it’s fun to make plans for the future. Take a moment and fill out your bucket list below.

## **BEFORE I DIE, I WANT TO ....**

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

**4.** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**5.** \_\_\_\_\_

**3.** \_\_\_\_\_

**6.** \_\_\_\_\_

There is nothing wrong with making plans, having dreams, or even making a bucket list. There is harm in these things whenever you put your plans and desires before the true purpose of your life. God has given a mission to each and every believer. Remind yourself of what God wants you to do every day in Matthew 28:19-20.

***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”***

You are called to share the good news of Jesus! You are meant to live your life in a way that brings God glory in everything you do. When you make this your number one focus in life, then all of your future plans will reflect that. James says life is like a mist meaning your life will pass by more quickly than you think, so don't say, “I will do it later.” Never put off living your life for Christ. Start living your life for Him today!

When you make decisions or plans ask yourself,

*“Does \_\_\_\_\_ please the Lord?”*

Pray over your decisions and always keep your eyes on Christ as you grow in Him. Talk to God about your future plans or desires that you put on your bucket list. God wants you to hand over all of your desires to Him. Ask God to give you the strength to let go and give control of your life to Him. Pray that you can continue to trust Him even when the future is unclear.

# GROWTH

**We've got questions, and you've got answers! Take some time to answer these three questions to grow with Jesus!**

As you think about the devotions this week, what is something that challenged you, convicted you, or influenced you in some way?

What is one thing you learned about God this week that you didn't know before?

Based on what you read this week, what is one thing you want to work on to grow with Jesus?

# WEEK 6

DAY 35

*Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.*

*You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.*

*Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

*Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!*

*For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.*

*But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.*

*Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.*

*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.*

*My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.*

James 5:1-20

# JAMES 5:1-6

***“Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.***

***You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.”***

***James 5:1-6***

Growing up, I had a couple of friends who came from a wealthy family. They had a big house that was only a block away from Florida’s intercoastal. They had several video game systems; they had a go-kart that they never used. They had a big front yard (which is hard to come by in Florida). I always looked at them as “rich,” or “wealthy.” I would go home to all of my stuff and compare what I had to what they had and consider myself well-off but not rich. I look at myself today, and I still do not consider myself rich. Comparing my salary to the average across America, comparing my house size to those in the same city I live in. I wouldn’t say I am rich in American standards.

But when I look around me right now, I realize that I am surrounded by luxuries. I realize that 98% of the things I own are simple luxuries. These things do nothing to help me stay alive. They are just hobbies, things that I have blindly thrown money into.

Right now, I want you to take an inventory of the room you are currently in. If you are not at home, wait until you get home. I want you to count the things that are luxuries in your room. Things that you DO NOT NEED that are simply there for entertainment or decoration. Amount of luxury items: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you understand what James is warning against in this passage? He says that those who live a selfish lifestyle, those who are *“fattening themselves up like cattle,”* are heaping judgment upon themselves. He is calling those people out because there is a world that is suffering and in need, yet here we are basking in luxury. People worldwide are starving, are without homes, yet here we are with the newest iPhone, new clothes, new shoes, yet we are setting up a “GoFundMe” so that we can go on a vacation.

Examine yourself today. At the end of James 4, we get a very straightforward message. It says: *“Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”* Suppose we know as followers of Christ that we are supposed to help the poor, look after those who are less fortunate, yet we continue to store up luxuries for ourselves. Are we really fulfilling our fullest potential as followers of Christ? If not, then what does it look like for you to change that path today?

# JAMES 5:7-11

***“Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.***

***Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!***

***For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.”***

***James 5:7-11***

Have you ever been through a really tough situation? I don’t mean a math test you didn’t study for or being the only one left alive on your squad in Fortnite. What I mean is: have you ever had someone close to you pass away? Has someone you know received the news that they have cancer? Have you been alienated from friend groups, or maybe even your family, for your belief in God? Think back to those situations for a moment. In those times, did you have a lot of patience, or did you want answers, wanting immediate relief, wanting out of that situation?

The book of James is written to followers of Christ, who were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria because of great persecution.

James is urging these people who are worried, who fear for their lives, who are scattered, to be patient because the Lord is coming. We have that same comfort today. God IS coming back. When? We don't know, but we hold on to the understanding and the hope that He will return.

In these times, James also tells us not to grumble amongst each other. In these times, while we wait for God to return, we can get frustrated and annoyed with one another, but remember that God seeks unity among His people. Don't give in to discomfort and annoyance; seek peace with one another as we await Christ's return.

In verses 10 and 11, James encourages us to look at the lives of the prophets and to consider their example of patience in suffering. We consider them blessed. Why? Because they were patient in their persecution. They did not abandon God in their times of suffering.

Take Abraham when he was asked to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22), or Job when everything was taken away, or Stephen when he was killed for preaching the gospel (Acts 7). Time after time the people of God suffered, and time after time God made Himself known.

In life, we are not promised that all of our problems will go away once we choose to follow Jesus. Be patient in tough times. God will reward you when the time is right.

# JAMES 5:12

***“But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.”***

***James 5:12***

Have you ever been so stressed, so under pressure, so irritated, that you said something you knew you would regret? Maybe you were under so much pressure or so irritated that you made a promise or swore in God’s name that you would do something.

Remember that James is writing to a group of believers who have been scattered across Judea and Samaria because of brutal persecution. They were probably upset, under immense pressure, irritated with their circumstances, and scared. And above all, they were out of their comfort zone. As James writes to them, he encourages them to remain patient because Christ IS coming back (look at yesterday’s devotion). Because He is coming back, it is so important that those around us trust the gospel that we claim to live by. In order to produce trust in what we believe, we must be trustworthy in other areas of our relationships as well.

Our word matters. Our commitments and promises are a big deal in the eyes of God. In a culture where people were making oaths left and right only to go back on their word, James instructs Christians to keep their promises. When you say yes, mean it. When you say no, mean it.

Have you ever thought about that? What we promise to do and not do is an example of our integrity. If our word doesn't matter to others, why would they believe what we have to say about God? Our words testify to what we believe, and if we are untrustworthy in our commitments, how can we expect others to trust in the Lord we follow?

Our words have more power than we know. Not only can we build people up, but we can also lead people astray. We can bring blessing upon ourselves, or we can bring judgment upon ourselves. God listens to what you have to say. Be mindful of how you speak in any situation you are apart of. Have words of integrity, and you will see more and more people who believe that your faith in the Lord is something worth desiring.

# JAMES 5:13-18

*“Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.”*

*James 5:13-18*

If you take time to really read James’s book, it looks a lot less like a Christian check-list and more of how to have a deep relationship with the creator of the universe. It’s about knowing God. It’s about understanding that our very lives revolve around Him and His design.

Re-read verse 13-15 again. What is James saying that we need to do in every situation in life? He says to go to God first! When you are experiencing: depression, anxiety, stress, worry, doubt, persecution, loneliness, etc. **GO TO GOD FIRST!** When you are experiencing: joy, happiness, success, blessings, etc. **GO TO GOD FIRST!**

James says that when we know God, when we look to God as almighty, and we love Him in that way, He will be the first one we go to in all circumstances. Verse 17 gives us such an amazing picture. It starts by saying that Elijah was a man just like us! The same Elijah in the Old Testament that calls down fire from heaven, the same one who prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for 3.5 years! Why does James say this?

James says this to prove that there was nothing special about Elijah. Elijah talked to God the same way we talk to God. Yet so often we look at people in the Bible like Moses, Elijah, King David, and we put them on a pedestal, we make them out to be these superheroes that we cannot amount to; yet at the same time, they were just like us.

Don't think that just because you are not Elijah, Moses, or King David, you can't pray as they did. Don't think that you can't do what they did. They believed that Jesus could use their prayers. They believed that Jesus could use them to do amazing works.

Do you believe that about yourself? Do you believe that He can use you like He did with Elijah? Go to Him in every situation. He has the power to right every wrong. He is worthy of our praise! Do you believe that about God today?

# JAMES 5:19-20

***“My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.”***

***James 5:19-20***

I grew up in Florida, about one mile from the Gulf of Mexico. Every now and then, my family would pack up and head to the beach to watch the sunset. I loved going to the beach because it was a limitless playground for me. I could dig in the sand, build sandcastles, throw a football with my dad, and then when I was done with that; I would head straight for the ocean! For some people, the ocean is a scary place. There are sea creatures underneath you at all times, most of which you cannot see, there can be big waves that pull you underwater, and there are rip currents.

Rip currents are narrow currents of water that move directly away from shore. One night, when I was around ten years old, while we were at the beach, I went out on a floating raft to relax as the sun went down. I laid on my back and let myself float for about 10 minutes. When I was ready to head back in, I sat up and realized that I had been taken out quite a bit by a rip current. Knowing that I would not make it in with my swimming ability, I began to panic. My mom noticed how far I had drifted. She was yelling for me to come in, but no matter my effort, I made no progress.

Out of nowhere, a man trying to enjoy the sunset realized what was happening and jumped in the water. He swam all the way out to where I was, grabbed my raft, and pulled me in. I was a lost cause, but someone who was able refused to let me go.

This is the picture James is painting in these last verses of this book. James doesn't want us to let go of anybody. What he has been trying to communicate through this last chapter is that real faith produces genuine patience as well as action.

When someone has walked away from their relationship with Christ, you and I have the opportunity and invitation to bring them back to Christ. How do we do this? Galatians 6:1 says that we approach this situation with gentleness, wisdom, and humility. Those who are harsh, arrogant, and worldly have no business doing this task.

Why is this so important? James makes sure to place this at the end of this book because God can be willing to use you to change the outcome of someone's eternal destiny. Did you catch that? We aren't just talking about something that happens a week from now; we are talking about what will happen for ages and ages to come. God can use you to shape someone's eternity.

Don't let anyone go. Swim towards the rip current and put this faith into action.

# CONGRATULATIONS!

We want to congratulate you on completing this 40-day journey into the book of James! We hope that through this devotional and your study of Scripture, you understand how important it is to live out your relationship with Jesus! James reminds us that faith and action go hand in hand. Grow in your faith and in your actions every single day!

Don't let this be the end. You have made it a habit of being in God's Word for 40 days! Continue to read the Word by picking a new book in the Bible to read! Write down thoughts or questions you have while you read. It is vitally important to live out your faith by reading what God says in the Bible!

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