

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 26TH - 27TH, 2022 // BOOK OF JAMES

THE AUTHOR: JAMES

James wanted only to be known as a follower of Jesus, but he was much more. James was the younger half-brother of Jesus.

- James was not a believer during Jesus' earthly ministry, but later became one after seeing the resurrected Christ.
- Became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Church historian Eusebius wrote that James' knees were like camel knees because he prayed so often.

- Was stoned to death in 62 A.D. because of his faith, according to the Jewish historian Josephus.

THE DATE AND SETTING

Because James died in 62 A.D., this book was probably written in the mid-50s.

- This letter was written to "the twelve tribes dispersed abroad."
- More than likely, this was written to Jewish-Christians who had left Israel due to persecution.

SIMILAR TO PROVERBS

James quickly moves from topic to topic without any filler. Because of this style, many think of it as the Proverbs of the NT.

- This book will cover many topics, but trials, adhering to Scripture, taming the tongue, and how we use our resources stand out.
- James is essentially a **moral warning**.

SOLID (JAMES 1:1-8)

"JAMES, A SERVANT OF GOD"

James was identified by Paul as a "pillar" in the early church (Gal. 2:9). James had no desire to ride on his Brother's coattails, but to serve Jesus however he could.

- This first impression should be a model for us: **We should strive to make our lives about serving God's Kingdom.**

A GREAT JOY?

James begins by encouraging Christians to stand strong and even count trials and hardships as joy because they produce endurance.

- This doesn't suggest we should seek out or embellish trials. It means **we must choose to look at what we can learn and how we can grow through hard times.**

THERE IS NO MATURITY WITHOUT TENSION

V4 really clears up why God allows difficulties in our lives and why we are to let the endurance from those trials have "its full effect."

- **Without hard times, we cannot properly mature or develop character. It is through trials that we become wise and learn to depend on God and "lack nothing."**

INTENTIONALLY ASKING FOR WISDOM

We gain wisdom from life experiences, but we are also to ask God to gift us with wisdom.

If we're certain to face trials (Jn. 16:33), we must seek God's wisdom in order to navigate and learn from those trials.

- **Wisdom is a promised gift if we seek it intentionally and with confidence.**

DOUBTING GOD LEADS TO TURBULENCE

When we fail to approach God for guidance or do it half-heartedly (doubt), we become "double-minded and unstable in all [our] ways."

- Jesus said, "whoever doesn't gather with me scatters" (Mt. 12:30). Simply put, **God is truth and power, and when we are not connected with Him, we live in instability.**

THIS PROCESS SHOULD BE A JOY!

It sounds bizarre to think of tough times as a good thing, but if we desire to grow into strong and wise people, **we should look back on hard times and appreciate the life lessons and deeper connection with God.**

- **God wants to develop strong moral character in us. We must also desire this.**

TENSION (JAMES 1:9-12)

THE HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

This section challenges both people who have little by the world's standards and people who are wealthy by the world's standards.

- People of "humble circumstances" are **not to lament their poverty but rejoice in what God has provided.** The "rich" are not to let **their wealth become their source of joy.**

MOST OF US FALL PREY TO BOTH

Globally speaking, we're all wealthy, but when we start to compare ourselves to each other, **materialism, envy, greed, and not appreciating God's provision easily become snares.**

- **We must strive to be humble, open-handed, and appreciative because it all belongs to God, and we're owed nothing.**

REMEMBER, THIS IS ALL TEMPORARY

Both the pleasures and sufferings of this world are temporary, but the lessons learned have eternal ramifications. The imagery of the sun drying out a flower emphasizes this.

- **If we love Jesus in this temporary life, we receive the eternal "crown of life" (Heaven).**

LOOK AT THE PROGRESSION

First, God uses trials to produce maturity and endurance. **Second**, for those who seek, God gives wisdom to understand and navigate trials. **Third**, because of gained wisdom and maturity, we're able to appreciate our lives regardless of how difficult they are. **Lastly**, God eternally rewards the faithful.

FIRSTFRUITS (JAMES 1:13-18)

"GOD IS NOT TEMPTED BY EVIL"

It is biblically incorrect to claim, "God is tempting me." God may place situations in front of us to test us in order to build us up, but He never uses evil to tempt people to sin.

- **We're to blame for sinning because we allow ourselves to be "drawn away and enticed by [our] own evil desire."**

ANOTHER KIND OF PROGRESSION

When we lean on God in times of trouble, we grow in a positive manner. The exact opposite happens when we lean on selfish desires.

- V15 is profound. **Unchecked temptation "gives birth to sin." If sin goes unrepentant, it grows and "gives birth to death." Sin has an insatiable appetite.**

TEMPTATION VS. SIN

Temptation itself is not a sin. Sin occurs when a person's mind approves of a sinful action. When this happens chronically, it leads to spiritual, mental, and even physical degradation.

- Though Satan is active in temptation, **we must choose to distance ourselves from it and gravitate towards obedience.**

"EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT"

We must not "be deceived" to think that anything evil comes from God. **God is the giver of anything good that is in our lives.**

- God is the "Father of lights" because He is the truth that illuminates what is right and wrong and the Creator of all things. **He is unchanging and stable.**

BECAUSE HE WANTS US TO BE "FIRSTFRUITS"

God made us in His image, sent His Son, and gave us the truth of the Bible because He created us to be the "firstfruits" of His creation.

- In a vineyard, the firstfruits would be **the first and most important part of the harvest.** These were also the portion of the crop **committed as a sacrifice to God.**

DEVELOPING CHARACTER

- Though not always fun, **we are to take the trials of life as opportunities to learn endurance and gain wisdom.**
- Before hard times come, we should be living in relationship with Jesus and praying for wisdom. If we are not doing this, we will be unstable and volatile. **Proactive vs. reactive.**

CONTENT WHERE GOD HAS US NOW

- We must be careful not to lament over what we don't have or let what we do have become our source of joy.
- Praying for humility and **remembering that everything we have is ultimately God's, helps us to live open-handed and appreciative of the most important things in life.**

A DESTRUCTIVE PROGRESSION

- We're called to stay away from temptation because when it goes unchecked, it eventually gives "birth" to sin. If we are unrepentant of that sin, it will lead to the degradation of our minds, bodies, and souls. **We must be aware of how easy it is to slide backward.**

THE PINNACLE OF CREATION

- **We are meant to grow through trials, appreciate where God has us, and avoid sin because we are the masterpieces of God.**
- If we know "every good and perfect gift comes from God," we must also know that this includes our lives and that **we're to live with intentionality and purpose.**