6. What ought not to be so (3:1-12)? Why (First John 4:20-21)?

7. How does James describe the wisdom from above (3:13-18)?

8. How does the sinner show by his works that he is humble (4:7-10, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 1:16-20, Second Corinthians 7:10-11)?

9. To what does James compare life? What did the psalmist say about this life (90:10)? What did Paul recommend (Ephesians 5:15-16)?

10. James reveals the problem with investing too much in the things of this world (5:1-6). What is it (Colossians 2:22)?

11. Rather than hating the hateful, how should the Christian respond to the persecutor (5:7-12, Matthew 5:38-49)?

12. What makes a prayer fervent (5:16-20)?

Introduction

The ministry of Jesus Christ shows clearly that Christianity is an intensely practical religion. The philosophies of men tend toward abstractions and subjectivity, but the teachings of our Lord make distinctions between right and wrong objectively and direct human beings into a life more abundant.

The short epistle of James renews this commitment to practical and godly living, inserting the power of true faith into everyday events so that discipleship is a lifestyle.

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Lesson 13: Review

1. Historians suggest that James was martyred about A.D. 63 and that this epistle was probably written between A.D. 45-50. How does James describe himself in the first verse? Consider Philippians 2:5-11. In what ways does Christ exemplify bond service?

2. Consider James 1:2-3. What is the “silver lining” inside every dark cloud of trial? In your own words, how do trials bring joy?

3. James contrasts hearers of the word with doers. To what does Jesus like a man who hears his word and does it? To what does he like a man who hears but disobeys (Luke 6:46-49)?

4. James speaks out against showing partiality to the rich and ignoring the poor. Who is my neighbor, according to Jesus (cf. Luke 10:27-37)? How do you really fulfill the royal law then?

5. How does James illustrate the futility of faith without works?
6. If those seeking help through prayer for their illnesses are also involved in sin, they should be even more concerned about their spiritual malady. What is necessary for the Christian to obtain God’s mercy when he sins again (Acts 8:22, First John 1:9)?

7. What is the necessity or benefit in confessing our sins to others (Matthew 18:15-17, Acts 8:24)?

8. What makes a prayer fervent?

9. How do we go about turning a sinner back to the truth (Galatians 6:1, First Thessalonians 5:14, Second Timothy 4:2)?

10. Whose multitude of sins is covered by restoration? Is it possible to sin so as to lose one’s salvation (Second Peter 2:20-22, Hebrews 10:24-39)?

Lesson 1: Introduction (1:1)

1. James was a common name in the first century as it is today. Although two apostles were named John, the early death of one and relative obscurity of the other make them unlikely candidates for authoring this great epistle. How did the apostle James die (Acts 12:1-4)? Who was the other John (Matthew 10:3)?

2. The writer of this epistle is generally identified as one of the bishops of the Jerusalem church. How does Paul identify him in Galatians 1:19?

3. Jesus said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house” (Matthew 13:57). Did his brother James instantly believe Jesus was the Messiah (John 7:1-6, Acts 1:14)?

4. Historians suggest that James was martyred about A.D. 63 and that this epistle was probably written between A.D. 45-50. How does James describe himself in the first verse? Define this.

5. This introduction prefaces the theme of the epistle very well, for service to God is the main message. Consider Philippians 2:5-11. In what ways does Christ exemplify bond service?
Lesson 12: Effective, Fervent Prayer (5:13-20)

1. Paul taught that Christians should pray everywhere and without ceasing. Of course, he did not mean that literally. In your own words, what did he mean?

2. What should happen in the following situations?
   - Suffering:
   - Cheerfulness:
   - Sickness:

3. What is the important benefit of gratefulness (Philippians 4:6-7)?

4. Does this passage imply that elders today can work miracles with sick people? What does it teach?

5. Did all sick first century Christians get better simply through prayer (First Timothy 5:23)? What is the qualification to this passage (Matthew 26:39)?

6. When bondservants are noted figuratively in scripture, the service of Christians to God is under consideration. What do the following passages indicate about our role as bondservants?
   - Second Corinthians 4:5:
   - First Peter 2:16:
   - Romans 6:15-23:

7. The book is addressed to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” This has reference to Hebrew Christians who had been scattered out of Jerusalem by the initial persecutions exemplified in the martyrdom of Stephen. Whom does James identify as the persecutors in 2:5-7 and 5:1-6? Beyond them, whom does James seem to identify as the worst at injuring brethren (cf. Galatians 5:15)?

8. Martin Luther wrote, “In sum: the gospel and the first epistle of St. John, St. Paul's epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians; and St. Peter's first epistles are the books which show Christ to you. They teach you everything you need to know for your salvation, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or hear any other teaching. In comparison with these, the epistle of James is an epistle full of straw, because it contains nothing evangelical.” Find something evangelical in the epistle.

9. Luther also wrote, “In sum: the author of James wished to guard against those who depended on faith without going on to works, but he had neither the spirit nor the thought nor the eloquence equal to the task. He does violence to Scripture, and so contradicts Paul and all Scripture … I therefore refuse him a place among the writers of the true canon of my Bible.” With whom is Luther’s real problem?
5. Rather than hating the hateful, how should the Christian respond to the persecutor (Matthew 5:38-49)?

6. What does Paul mean when instructs us to “give place to wrath” (Romans 12:17-21)? What is an added danger in rejoicing over a persecutor’s downfall (Proverbs 24:17-18)?

7. James warns that under the stress of persecution, there is the potential for Christians turning on one another. Why is that? How is it preventable (Hebrews 13:3)?

8. What did Job suffer? Who caused his suffering? What was the objective of God throughout the ordeal?

9. What benefits are derived when we endure suffering, tribulation, hardship and persecution (Second Corinthians 12:7-10, First Peter 1:6-10)?

10. How does God express mercy in temptation (First Corinthians 10:13)?

Lesson 2: The Testing of Your Faith (1:2-18)

1. Consider James 1:2-3. What is the “silver lining” inside every dark cloud of trial? In your own words, how do trials bring joy?

2. What trial did Paul face according to Second Corinthians 12:7-10? What joy did it bring him?

3. Peter also addressed the issue of Christian suffering. In what can the saints rejoice during their suffering (First Peter 1:1-10)?

4. James adds that wisdom is important in times of trials. How can wisdom help the sufferer to persevere (1:5)?

5. Why can’t we afford to be skeptical about God’s character and intentions during times of trial (1:5-8)?

11. What is the danger of swearing casual oaths in conversation?
Lesson 11: Therefore Be Patient (5:7-12)

1. What’s the “therefore” there for?

2. List the three models of patience revealed in this passage.
   - Verse 7:
   - Verse 10:
   - Verse 11:

3. The “coming of the Lord” is not necessarily Christ’s second coming, for that event was not all the near when James wrote nearly 2,000 years ago. What else could the “coming of the Lord” mean?

4. One who is impatient under persecution can become like the farmer whose field is not yielding, so he reaches into the soil to yank up the crops. What do the following passages instruct about suffering persecution?
   - First Peter 1:20-23:
   - First Peter 4:16:
   - First Peter 5:9-10:
   - Second Timothy 2:12:
   - Second Timothy 3:12:
6. Consider First Peter 1:1-9. What is more precious than gold? What is the true wealth of the righteous?

7. James touches on the relationship of employers and employees. According to Paul, what does each owe the other (Colossians 3:22-4:1)?
   - Employees owe employers …
   - Employers owe employees …

8. Study Proverbs 30:7-9. Why did the writer fear both riches and poverty? What condition did he request instead of these?

9. What comfort has the person who is oppressed by the ungodly rich or is struggling with envy and covetousness (Luke 16:19-25)?

10. What does Paul command the wealthy Christian (First Timothy 6:17-19)?

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Lesson 3: *Doers of the Word (1:19-27)*

1. Why should Christians be slow to wrath? How will swiftness to hear and slowness to speak help (Proverbs 10:19, 17:27)?

2. Is anger always wrong? What prevents anger from turning into sin (Ephesians 4:26-37, 31-32)?

3. If the word of God is like an implanted seed, what are anger, filthiness and wickedness like? Colossians 3:8-10 describes this process. List six habits that must be replaced by meekness.

4. Have you ever planted a seed and watched for months as nothing came up out of the ground? That is what happens when the gospel is heard, but not obeyed. Explain how this contributes to self-deception (verse 22). What is the result of self-deception in matters of the faith (Second Thessalonians 2:9-12)?
5. To what does Jesus like a man who hears his word and does it? To what does he like a man who hears but disobeys (Luke 6:46-49)?

6. Why didn’t doing the word satisfy Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 (cf. Titus 1:16)?

7. Which one “will be blessed in what he does” (verse 25)?

8. This notion of replacing self-centeredness and wrath with meekness and selflessness is illustrated well by Jesus in John 13:12-17. What was the Lord trying to teach there? Compare that event to what he taught in John 8:31-32. How does one abide in his word?

9. How much is the faith of the wrathful Christian worth?

10. What makes for pure religion (Galatians 6:10, First John 1:9)?

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**Lesson 10: Come Now You Rich (5:1-6)**

1. Is it wrong just to be rich? What does James have in mind here?

2. What “great gain” is the ungodly rich lacking (First Timothy 6:6)? How did Paul obtain that (Philippians 4:10-13)?

3. Riches themselves are not the problem. What is the problem, according to these verses?
   - First Timothy 6:9:
   - First Timothy 6:10:
   - Second Timothy 3:2:
   - First John 2:15:
   - Mark 10:24-25:

4. James reveals the problem with investing too much in the things of this world. What is it (Colossians 2:22)?

5. A lust for this life makes other pursuits futile. What did Jesus advise instead of materialism (Matthew 6:19-21, 31-33)?
6. The great poet William Wordsworth wrote,

“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!”


7. Which things are eternal and which things are temporal (Second Corinthians 4:16-18)? What’s the point (cf. Matthew 7:24-27)?

8. To what does James compare life? What did the psalmist say about this life (90:10)? What did Paul recommend (Ephesians 5:15-16)?

9. What is implied by prefacing plans with “If the Lord wills …”? 

10. What kind of sin is described in verse 17?

**Lesson 4: Mercy Over Judgment (2:1-13)**

1. Besides wealth, what other considerations might tempt us to exercise sinful partiality within the faith?

2. Is there such partiality with God? How does he make his distinctions among people (Romans 2:1-11, Galatians 3:26-29)?

3. Getting beyond vague generalizations, how can we practically make certain that we are not showing partiality to certain preferred people?

4. What kind of richness should we be commending instead of material wealth? How did the church at Smyrna have this less tangible wealth (Revelation 2:8-11)? How did the church at Laodicea lack it (Revelation 3:14-22)?

5. What are we revealing about ourselves when we show partiality based upon such temporal, fleshly considerations (Romans 8:5-8)?

6. The hypocrisy and folly of preferring certain people in the faith is emphasized again in First Corinthians 1:26-31. From what three groups are not many chosen? Why is that so?
7. Not all rich people are bound for Hell, but Jesus clearly recognizes great wealth as an impediment to faith. What do the following passages warn about richness?

- Mark 10:21-25:
  It is hard for those who trust in their riches to transfer that trust to God.

- First Timothy 6:9-10:
  Those who yearn to be rich confuse their priorities and fall into temptations as they compromise convictions and spiritual growth for material gain.

- First Timothy 6:17-19:
  Stinginess prevents the rich man from storing up a good heavenly foundation.

- First John 3:16-18:
  The love of God does not really dwell in someone who can watch idly as a brother starves.

8. Who is my neighbor (cf. Luke 10:27-37)? How do you really fulfill the royal law then, considering this context?

  My neighbor is everyone with whom I have contact. I really fulfill the royal law by treating everyone equally within the faith, without partiality rooted in carnal considerations.

9. What is the definition of sin (First John 3:4)? How heinous must a transgression be for it to be a sin that can lead to Hell?

  Sin is the transgression of the law, missing the mark of God's will. Sin is not graded on a sliding scale; all are that serious.

10. By what law are we judged? How should that acknowledgment affect the way that we assess others (Matthew 18:21-35)?

  Those judged by a merciful law of liberty should gladly extend mercy to fellow-men who need it.

Lesson 9: Your Life Is a Vapor (4:11-17)

1. How does James say that we sometimes set ourselves up as judge, jury and executioner?

2. Some might interpret this passage to condemn all judgments about the behavior of others. What kind of judging did Jesus condemn (Matthew 7:1-5)? What kind did he validate (John 7:24)?

3. Consider First Thessalonians 5:14. How would obey without making a judgment (cf. Jude 22-23)? Consider 1 Corinthians 5. Was Paul speaking evil of this brother and this church, or requiring the church to speak evil of him? What is the difference?

4. Consider Romans 14:1-13. In what category of choices are we forbidden to judge one another at all? What is the closing resolution of the passage?

5. James is not condemning all planning in verse thirteen anymore than Jesus was teaching a lesson on combustible fuels in the parable of the ten virgins. What is the attitude that James is criticizing here?
7. With what agents of the devil could we commit spiritual adultery today? How far will God go to share our hearts with our idols (Matthew 6:24, Mark 12:29-31)?

8. Every harlotry fits into one of three categories (First John 2:15-17). What are they?

9. How can God be jealous if jealousy is a sin?

10. The proud will either reject the concept of needing God and his mercy or they will attempt to approach God on their own terms. How will God respond to the proud and the humble?

11. How does the sinner show by his works that he is humble (verses 7-10, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 1:16-20, Second Corinthians 7:10-11)?

Lesson 5: Faith Without Works (2:14-26)

1. A practical area in which we show mercy involves benevolent acts toward brethren in need. James uses that situation to illustrate a much broader doctrine, however—the relationship of faith to works. Why is it impossible to be justified by works alone (Romans 3:19-23)?

2. How does James illustrate the futility of faith without works?

3. The apostle John was on the same page with James. Consider First John 3:17-18. What fault involving law does John recognize in idle faith?


5. Do demons have faith?
6. A rhetorical question was issued back in verse 14. What was it? What would the answer be?

7. Two Old Testament characters are reintroduced here to prove the answer to that rhetorical question. Who are they? In what book and chapter would you find the record of these particular events?

8. Was Abraham justified by faith only? Was he justified by works only? Was he justified by sinless living? How was he justified?

9. When was Abraham justified by faith?

10. Was Rahab saved by faith only when Jericho fell? How was she saved by faith?

11. Overall, how does James characterize faith only?

Lesson 8: *Humble Yourselves (4:1-12)*

1. James begins this section of his book with two questions that will solve the riddle of why the world at large and lives individually are often burdened with conflict. Where do wars and fights come from?

2. Paul studied the same issue in his Roman letter (7:5-23). What are the two sides in this epic struggle?

3. How did Paul find victory (Romans 7:24-8:5)?

4. What are the five sinful actions listed in verse 3 that result from conceding defeat in this struggle?

5. Two reasons are given why such people do not have or receive the objects of their desire. What are the two reasons?

6. Why did God divorce Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 3:6-9)?
6. In your own words of experience and study, define “bitter envy.”

7. Consider Philippians 2:1-4. How on Earth can one possibly overcome self-seeking and selfish ambition and esteem others better than himself?

8. In what seven ways does James describe the wisdom from above?
   •
   •
   •
   •
   •
   •
   •

9. The teaching here closely predicts that of Paul in Romans 8:5-8. What two minds did Paul acknowledge there? What distinguishes between the two?

10. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). What pursuit did the Hebrew writer couple with peace (12:14)? Why is it sometimes impossible to have both with certain people simultaneously (Matthew 10:34-39, Romans 12:17, Galatians 4:16)?

Lesson 6: The Tongue Is A Fire (3:1-12)

1. Why does it seem that James discourages Christians from becoming teachers of their faith? Would it be better if no one became a teacher? What is he trying to communicate?

2. Why should teachers receive a stricter judgment than others (Luke 12:47-49, Matthew 15:14, 18:6-7)?

3. False doctrine is just one improper use of the tongue. How does Paul suggest handling that kind of fire (Titus 1:9-14)?

4. James illustrates the dangers involving the tongue three ways. We learn that big, bad things can result from small causes. List them.
   • Verse 3:
   • Verse 4:
   • Verse 5:

5. James engages in a bit of hyperbole in verse 2 to show how susceptible we are to speech sins. What is his point here?
6. What kind of speech is condemned in the following passages?
   • Proverbs 11:13:
   • Matthew 12:36-37:
   • Ephesians 4:25:
   • Ephesians 4:29:
   • Ephesians 4:31:

7. James’s gifts for hyperbole and illustration take off again in verses 6-8. Who can tame the tongue? Is it hopeless, then? How can Christians take control of their language (Ephesians 4:29-32, First Corinthians 9:24-27)? Consider Isaiah 6:5-7. With what “live coal” shall we cleanse our lips?

8. What arrangement ought not to be so? Why (First John 4:20-21)?

9. James’s final tongue illustration is found in verses 11-12. As he earlier found speech sins rooted in hell, he again references their source from which they spring. What “spring” did Jesus acknowledge for such defilements (Matthew 15:17-20)?

10. How do we identify different trees? What has that to do with distinguishing saints from sinners (Matthew 7:16-20)?

Lesson 7: *Meekness of Wisdom (3:13-18)*

1. In this section, James returns to the theme of chapter in which faith is proven and completed by works. Actually, chapter one touched on the same theme at its end. Let’s summarize:
   • 1:22-25:
   • 2:17, 26:
   • 3:13:

2. Although this passage is not exclusively addressed to teachers, the beginning of the chapter places them in its scope. If any Christian would teach others by doctrine or example, it become vital that his character be consistent with his teaching. In what ways did Paul counsel Timothy to be an example (First Timothy 4:12)?

3. Define “meekness.”

4. How did Jesus set the example for meekness (Philippians 2:5-11, First Peter 2:19-23)?

5. Which Old Testament book is specifically written to supply information about wisdom and understanding? Since it is in the Old Testament, is that book still valid today or should it be ignored?