
INTRODUCTION

The book of James is one of the more unusual parts of the New Testament. Although the book itself does not say so, authorship is traditionally ascribed to James, the brother of the Lord, and its style and preoccupations lend great credence to that theory. Perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, James teaches in the hard-hitting, practical manner of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Its themes are both familiar and important. We may never have occasion to cite Paul to Judaizing teachers in defense of justification by faith, but every one of us has to deal with putting the word into practice, controlling our tongues, and tapping into the power of prayer. James is here to help. His relentlessly down-to-earth approach has led many to describe James as "the New Testament book of Proverbs." This book is a study of some of the most important topics in this collection of Christian proverbs. Solomon described his proverbs as well-driven nails; James' are tools, tools for godly living.

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Tools for Godly Living

Lesson One James 1:19-27 Listening to the Word

QUESTIONS

1. In James 1:19, what does James encourage us to be quick to do? What two things does he encourage us to be slow to do? In James 1:20, what reason does he give for this? Why would this be true? How do we apply this verse on an everyday level?
2. According to James 1:21, what two things must we reject? What are these things? What are we supposed to do instead? With what attitude should we do this? Why? How can we work at putting this into practice?
3. In James 1:22, what does James tell us he wants us to prove to be? What should we not be? What characteristic does James say applies to the hearer only? Why is this description valid?

4. In James 1:23-24, to what does James compare the hearer only? Why is this comparison valid? What does James mean for it to show? How can we avoid being this kind of people?

5. What contrasting type of person does James present in James 1:25? What does this person do? What result will he see? How can we work on doing this?

6. James 1:26 presents a particular type of person. How does this person see himself? What does he fail to do? What is James' assessment of this kind of man? How does this relate to the previous discussion?

7. By contrast, in James 1:27, what two traits does James associate with genuine religion? Why does James pick these traits as opposed to, for instance, always assembling with the saints? What should this teach us about our own religion? How do we need to apply this understanding?



Lesson Two
James 2:1-13
Mercy

QUESTIONS

1. What attitude does James describe in James 2:1? What makes this attitude inappropriate for Christians? Is it still a problem today? Where?
2. James 2:2-3 describes two people. Who are they? How is each one treated in the assembly? How does James 2:4 portray this conduct? How can we avoid falling into this trap?
3. How does James depict the poor in James 2:5? How does he depict the rich in James 2:6-7? Do these things mean that the rich are enemies of God and cannot be saved (consult 1 Timothy 6:17-19 before you answer)? If not, what point is James trying to get across? What should we learn from this?

4. What two commands are given in James 5:16? What will happen if we do? Why? What keeps us from following this pattern as often as we should? How do we overcome these obstacles?
5. What Old Testament character is introduced in James 5:17? How does the text describe him with respect to us? Is this an association that we would normally make? Why or why not? What should it teach us?
6. Also in James 5:17, what did Elijah do? What result did this have? According to James 5:18, what did he do next? What result did this have? How does this support what James says in James 5:16? How can we take advantage of this opportunity?
7. What problem is brought up in James 5:19? With what response does this problem meet? According to James 5:20, what result does this have? What does this teach us about the importance of pursuing our straying brethren? What specifically should we do about it?



Lesson Six James 5:13-20 Prayer and Sal- vation

QUESTIONS

1. What two states of mind are introduced in James 5:13? How are we to respond to each? Do we often struggle with remembering to do this? How can we make it more automatic? What will happen if we succeed at this?
2. What third situation is presented in James 5:14? Is this physical or spiritual illness? Why? How should we respond? What are the elders to do? Why don't elders anoint with oil today? What Scriptural basis does this have?
3. What is the subject of James 5:15? What is this prayer capable of doing? Why? What other result can it accomplish? What is all of this talking about?
4. What command does James 2:8 repeat from the Old Testament? How does James describe it? What does he say of those who keep it? What opposite action does James present in James 2:9? How does he describe this action? What does he say about its result? What should we take from all of this?
5. What statement does James make in James 2:10? How does he prove this in James 2:11? How does this support his contention in James 2:9? What spiritual implications does this have for us?
6. What conduct does James urge upon us in James 2:12? What makes the phrase "law of liberty" a seemingly contradictory wording? What does James' use of the phrase tell us about Christianity? How does this relate to the previous discussion?
7. According to James 2:13, what happens to the merciless man? What happens to the merciful man? How does this fit with James' argument so far? What does it mean for us? How should we act on this understanding?

Tools for Godly Living

Lesson Three James 2:14-26 Faith and Works

QUESTIONS

1. What type of person is brought up in James 2:14? What is significant about James' description of him as one who "says he has faith"? What does James imply will happen to such a person?
2. What illustration of this concept does James provide in James 2:15-16? According to James 2:17, what does this prove about faith without works? How do we reconcile this Scripturally with passages like Ephesians 2:8-9?
3. In James 2:18, two hypothetical people are presented. What does each one claim to have? Which one can prove it? How? How does James 2:19 further show the inadequacy of belief by itself? What conclusion does James draw from all this in James 2:20? Does this make logical sense? Why?

TOOLS FOR GODLY LIVING: LESSON FIVE

4. What opposing attribute of God does James present in James 4:6? What Old Testament passage does James cite in support of this idea? What do we need to do, then, to make sure we encounter the grace, not the jealousy, of God? How?
5. What two beings are presented in James 4:7? How should we deal with each? What result will this have? How do we keep from getting our responses backwards?
6. What command does James give in James 4:8? What will happen if we do? How do we carry this command out? How closely does James 4:8 track the thought pattern of Psalm 24:3-4? What does this tell us about the author of James?
7. What further actions does James command in James 4:9? Does this mean that Christians have to be unhappy people? If not, what does it mean? How does James summarize this behavior in James 4:10? What result will this have? How do we need to apply this?



Lesson Five James 4:1-10 Drawing Near to God

QUESTIONS

1. What question does James ask in the beginning of James 4:1? What are some ways the world would answer this question? How does James answer it? What two scenarios does he present to support this answer in James 4:2? How do they relate back to James 1:14-15? What should all of this teach us?
2. What problem does James cite at the end of James 4:2? Why does this problem exist? What related problem appears in James 4:3? Why does this problem exist? Can these be problems for us too? How should we address them?
3. To whom does James address James 4:4? Why? (Hosea 1:2 may prove useful here) What don't these people understand? What result does their friendship have? What problem with this does James 4:5 point out?

TOOLS FOR GODLY LIVING: LESSON THREE

4. What Bible character is introduced in James 2:21? How does James say he was justified? By what? How does James describe this event in James 2:22?
5. What Scriptural quotation do we see in James 2:23? What does James say about the way that this Scripture relates to the story of Abraham and Isaac? In James 2:24, what lesson does James draw from this? How does this differ from Paul's use of the same Scripture in Romans 4:1-3? Can these two passages be reconciled? How?
6. What other Old Testament character appears in James 2:25? What does James say about her? How does this differ from her description in Hebrews 11:31? Do these two passages contradict each other, or is something else at work?
7. In James 2:26, to what does James compare faith without works? What is true of both? What does this mean to us?

Tools for Godly Living

Lesson Four James 3:1-12 Taming the Tongue

TOOLS FOR GODLY LIVING: LESSON FOUR

QUESTIONS

1. What command does James give in James 3:1? Why? How does this relate to passages like Hebrews 5:12? How should we put this into practice?
2. What general statement does James make in the first part of James 3:2? Where is this stumbling most likely? How do we know? How does this relate back to James' statement in James 3:1?
3. In James 3:3-4, James offers two illustrations. What are they? What are they offered to prove? According to the first part of James 3:5, how is the tongue like these? What should this teach us?
4. According to the end of James 3:5, what effect can the tongue have? In James 3:6, where does James say this fire comes from? What is it able to do? In practice, how does this happen? Why does James give us this warning? How can we heed it?
5. In James 3:7-8, James makes another comparison. What are the things being compared here? In what way are they unlike? What makes the tongue so untamable? How would our speech change if we remembered this Scriptural truth at all times?
6. In James 3:9, James describes two things that the tongue does. What are they? What makes the combination of these two things ironic? How should this change our behavior?
7. How does James describe the above state in James 3:10? What comment does he offer about it? What examples does he cite to prove his point in James 3:11-12? Is our tongue actually able to be unlike these things and produce both blessing and cursing? If not, what's James' point?