

OUTLINE FOR TEACHING JAMES.

James 1:1-2 Greeting and introduction:

- The book of James is written by James, a servant of Christ, to the 12 tribes scattered abroad. The 12 tribes is a reference to the 12 tribes of Israel, but simply means to the Christians that are scattered all over the area. Some letters are written to specific churches about specific problems. This letter is more of a general message to all the Christians.
- This letter is full of good advice and guidance of how to be a good Christian. After we learn about Christ and salvation, James is the best next step because it tells us how to live after deciding to follow Christ. This book is very simple and very practical.

1:2-4 Various trials (Difficulties) make us better Christians:

- Why should we be happy?
- What does the testing of our faith produce? Patience/ endurance
- Why does a Christian need patience and endurance?
- What is the end result of patience and endurance? Perfection
- Compare being a Christian to being a weight lifter.
Weight lifters need to challenge themselves. Once they're able to bench press 200 pounds easily, what will they do next? What is the purpose of adding more weight? Adding more weight makes the job more difficult, but what is the end result? Are the difficulties we face as Christians similar to the weight lifter adding weight to his bar? What will be the end result if we "muscle through" the difficult times. Do we see now why we should rejoice when we face difficulties?
- What does James 1:12 say we will receive if we endure trials?
- What do you think that represents?

1:5-8 Praying with faith:

- If we lack wisdom, what should we do?
- Will God give me wisdom if I ask for it?
- How must I ask/ pray?
- Describe the one who asks without faith? Tossed back and forth. No foundation.
If someone doesn't have faith that God will answer their prayer, they will try really hard to do it themselves. This is what makes them go back and forth. It's like Abraham that tried to have a child through his maid to fulfill God's promise. That just caused problems. We need to have resolve that God will answer our prayers and use prayer as the best solution.
- Will the doubtful person receive from God?
- Why (do you think) is God reluctant to answer the doubter's prayers?

1:9-11 Riches fade away:

- Who is supposed to rejoice? The lowly brother (poor/ humble)
- Would the world expect the poor man to be happy?
- Who needs to be humble? The rich man
- What will happen to the rich man? He will pass away like grass
- Why will someone pursuing riches fade away?
Everything that person strives for is empty and meaningless. Once the physical passes, it's nothing. Think of people who are striving for riches. What happens to them in this life? What will happen to them in the future?

1:13-18: Temptation comes from our own lust. All good things come from God:

- Does God tempt us?
- Where does our temptation come from? Our own lust
Lust means a very strong desire for something. God doesn't tempt us. Our own desires do. We all have different temptations because we desire for different things. If I am tempted to do a certain sin, it is because I desire to do it. Not because God is tempting me to do it.
- What is the result of lust?
- What is the result of sin?
- Where do all good things come from?
Death comes from my sin brought forth by my lust. All bad things come from me. All good things come from God. God is what gives me guidance to not sin. He gives me motivation to fight temptation. He gives forgives me and tells me to keep trying. What is the end result? I have good habits. I am a kind person. I have god friends. I have a loving family. I am a good worker. I have talents. Ultimately I have a place in heaven. Every good thing that I have only came to me by God's wisdom, guidance, and love.
- Verse 18 explains that God created us for the purpose of doing His will.

1:19-21 Quick to listen. Slow to anger:

- What should we be quick to do?
- What should we be slow to do?
- Why? Man's anger doesn't accomplish God's will.
- Has anger every accomplished anything positive?
A parent needs to spank a child, but what if it's done out of anger? A Christian needs to correct his sinning brother, but what if it's done out of anger? Our anger is weakness and can't do anything positive.
- What should we do? Put away all these negative feelings, and meekly accept the word of God.

1:22-27 Be a doer of the word. Not a hearer only:

- What is the difference between someone who hears the word, and someone who does the word?
- What do those who only hear do to themselves? They delude (impose a misleading concept) themselves
They think they are justified because they read the Bible sometimes, go to church a couple times, and pray once a while, but they don't really live their whole life for God. Following God is more of a hobby than a commitment.
- What does James compare a "hearer only" to? A mirror
- What is the function of a mirror? Seeing if your appearance is good
- Does the mirror benefit us if we ignore the mustard stain on our shirt?
- Can God's word benefit us if we ignore all the sin we commit?
- What will happen to he who does the word? He will be blessed in all that he does
- Can someone be religious if they can't control their tongue?
- If we consider ourselves to be religious, what are some things that we could do?

2:1-4 Don't show favoritism:

- What is favoritism (respector of persons)?
- Whom might we be tempted to be extra friendly to? The rich
- Whom might we ignore? The poor
- What are some potential negative consequences to show favoritism for any reason? Remember Jacob and Esau and Joseph.
- If we do this, what have we become? Judges with evil motives

2:5-7 Why it is foolish to show favoritism to the rich:

- Who did God choose to be rich in faith? The poor
Consider the gospels. Was it the rich and powerful that accepted the gospel? Or was it the poor and humble. The Pharisees were rich and powerful, but they abused Jesus and the Christians. The rich young ruler turned away from Jesus because he wasn't willing to give up his possessions. Many of the Apostles were poor fishermen that left everything to follow Jesus.
- In the past, typically who has persecuted the common man?
This just shows mankind's inability to be a good judge. We put superficial things like wealth and popularity over the more important things like goodness and love. Think about whom the world idolizes? How many people are idolized for superficial reasons? How many people are respected for their many good deeds?

2:8-13 Showing favoritism is equally bad as murder, because all sins are equal:

- What is the royal law that we should fulfill?
- If we show favoritism, what are we doing?
- If I stumble in one area, does that mean I'm still okay? If I stumble in one part of the Law, I'm guilty to all the Law.
- If I commit murder, I'm guilty of the Law just the same as if I committed adultery.
- If we don't judge with mercy, will we receive any mercy?
We need to make sure that every person coming into our church feels welcome and wanted regardless of his or her appearance or personality. We can't pick favorites. What if God picked favorites based on money? Where would you be?

2:14-20 Faith without works is dead:

- Is faith useful without works?
- Can faith without works save?
- If my brother needs food, do I do him any good with kind words alone?
- What do I need to do?
- How does that compare to our relationship with God?
- How can we show our faith to God?
- To show the meaninglessness of "faith only", whom else does James mention has belief in God? The demons
- Are demons acceptable to God just because they believe God exists?
- Are we acceptable to God just because we believe God exists?
Whom do we know today might fit this description? Are there others that believe in God, but don't give their life to obeying His commands? Do we do this very thing? Read John 14:15, 21, 24, 15:10, 14 to see how Jesus feels about obedience.
- Faith without works is useless. We need to pair our faith with obedience.

2:21-26 Examples of people with faith and obedience:

- What did Abraham do that showed his faith?
- How does Abraham's obedience show God his faith?
- Read about this account in Gen 22.
- Rahab also shows her faith with her obedience (Joshua 2).
Does this chapter say that all we need is obedience to please God? No. There are other passages (Rom 4) that show the emphasis on faith saving us. This chapter is teaching us that we need BOTH faith and works.

3:1-2 The tongue is a cause for stumbling:

- Why does James discourage some from being teachers? They will receive a stricter judgment.
It could be that people were eager to begin telling others how to live having not yet mastered themselves yet. I think James is just warning us that we need to consider ourselves before we begin telling others what to do. Read Mat 7:1-5 to get a better understanding.
- We all stumble in many ways, but does James suggest is especially difficult to control in verse 2? What we say. If we have control over that, we should be able to control the rest of ourselves.

3:3-6 The tongue is a great fire:

- What is used to control a horse? A bit is a small metal bar attached to the reins, put in the mouth of the horse. It sits there uncomfortably. When the rider desires to turn left, he tugs the reins, which pulls at the bit forcing the horse to turn its head to the left. A small little piece of metal can control a 500 lb animal. A small thing can be very powerful.
- What is used to control a boat? The rudder. The rudder is a small piece that goes underneath the boat. By turning the small rudder, the enormous boat changes direction. Again, a small thing can have great influence.
- What is the rudder and bit compared to?
- What does the tongue have the potential of doing? Defile our entire body
- How can our seemingly small tongue have such a great negative influence?
If we speak badly, we will lose our Christian influence. We can make others feel terrible about themselves with mean words. We can ruin trust with lies. We can ruin friendships with gossip. The potential destruction our tongue can cause is endless.

3:7-12 The challenge of taming our tongue:

- What is the only beast left untamed by mankind?
- What does that suggest?
- What are two things we can do with our tongue according to verse 9?
- Is this acceptable?
- A source of water can either give salt water from its ocean source, or fresh water from a river or lake. It can't give both. What is James trying to tell us with this example?
- Though the tongue is hard to tame, does God expect us to tame it?
The tongue's immense influence and unruly nature make it a very dangerous thing, but it can also be used for great things as well. Think of how our words can have positive effects. If we want to be able to do these positive things with our words and speech, we must first tame our tongue and stop using it for evil. Otherwise our good words will be meaningless.

3:13-18 Behave with wisdom:

- Go back and read James 1:26. Can we be religious if we don't control our tongue?
- Go back and read James 2:14. Can our faith save us without obedience?
It is clear that we need to control our tongue to be truly religious. That is just an example. There are many things that we need to do to be truly religious. This part of chapter 3 encourages us to show our faith, religion, and spirituality by behaving wisely.
- How do we show our wisdom?
- What are the opposite behaviors mentioned in verse 14?
"Lying against the truth" suggests the idea of people believing they are true Christians even though they are bitter, jealous, and selfish. James is trying to tell us that we can't be those things and Christian.
- According to verse 15, where do those behaviors (that wisdom) come from?
- What is the result of those behaviors? Chaos
- What are the behaviors (wisdom) from above?

4:1-3 Selfishness causes problems:

- What is the source of their fighting?
- Verse 2 explains. When they lust after something that they can't have, what do they do to get it?
- When they are envious over something they can't obtain, what do they do?
All their problems are caused by their own greed and selfish motives. This is the perfect way to explain the world. Think of any problem in our society. Is greed and selfishness the source? Teenage pregnancy, divorce, drug addictions, rape, financial debt, etc...
- According to verse 2, what is the only thing they don't do to get what they want?
- When they do ask God, what is the problem?
God is not going to answer selfish prayers with selfish motives. We can pray that our football team plays hard with good sportsmanship, but we can't expect God to give us the Super Bowl championship.

4:4-6 Friend of the world, or friend of God?

- Friendship with the world is also what? Enmity (the state of being actively opposed/hostile to someone or something) with God
- If I declare myself to be a friend of the world, what else have I decided to be? Enemy of God
- Verse 5 explains that there is a scripture showing us that God desires us to be His friend.
- Who is God opposed to? Who does God give grace to?
We can't be arrogant and expect God to help us. We need to put away our selfish needs, quit trying to get what we want from the world, and become a friend to God seeking Him to fulfill our needs.

4:7-10 Submit to God:

- What two things are we commanded to do in verse 7?
- What is the result of resisting the devil?
- What are all the things we are commanded to do in verse 8?
- What is the result?

Can we expect to be close to God if we keep pushing Him away by our own desires and sin? We need to go to God by making a decision to eliminate all the worldliness within us. We go to God to aid us in our journey back to Him. He will draw near to us as we draw near to Him.
- 9-10 suggests that we need to mourn over our sins. If we admit that we've strayed from God, we will feel sad and guilty. But that's okay, because as we humble ourselves in front of God, He will forgive us and lift us back up. We will feel better again.

4:11-12 Don't speak against your brother:

- The person who speaks against his brother is doing what also? Judging him
- If we judge our brother, what else are we judging? The Law
- How many judges are there that can save and destroy? One

Is it our place to put ourselves above others by speaking and judging against them. This gives the idea that people are claiming to be better than others by harshly judging others. Whose job is it to judge? God's. We need to talk to our brother if he is sinning, but can we just speak negatively about him as if we are perfect? No.

4:13-17 Life is like a vapor:

- What are people expecting to do in verse 13? Buy and sell in the future. This is suggesting that they put their confidence and trust in their physical means. This is foolish.
- Why is this attitude foolish according to verse 14? Because life is but a vapor that disappears quickly
- What are we commanded to do instead?
- What does that suggest? Where does it put our trust and confidence?
- Verse 17 suggests that if we have any of these faults, we know we need to change them.

5:1-6 Weep you rich:

- Why should the rich weep?
- What is going to happen to their riches?
- How does this compare to James 1:9-11?
- How does this compare to James 4:13-14?
- What wickedness does James accuse the rich of in verses 4-6?

Do people do that today? Sometimes sin can get us ahead in this world. We need to be shrewd, selfish, ruthless, and greedy to get riches. These people got rich by not paying their workers. That got them ahead so far, but will it work forever? Can their riches forever protect them? Should we put faith in riches? Where should our faith be?

5:7-11 Have patience:

- Did the righteous seek vengeance in verse 6?
- What does James command his brethren to do about these evil rich men?
- Who else is patient in verse 7?

The farmer has to wait for Mother Nature to get his crops. Is there anything he can do to speed the process? What can the farmer do to make the seed grow? All he can do is plant, water, and wait. If people are being mean to us, we just need to be patient and wait on the Lord. It is not our place to change the situation by taking our own vengeance.
- How does verse 9 compare to James 4:11-12?
- We shouldn't busy ourselves with judging because there already is a judge: Jesus.
- Verses 10-11 remind us of the servant Job that patiently suffered until God rewarded him.

5:12 Don't swear (make oaths):

- Why are we commanded to not make oaths? We should have a reputation of being so honest that our word is so trustworthy it doesn't need an oath for credibility.

5:13-18 Advice and uses for prayer:

- What should we do when someone is sick?
- What does that prayer require to be effective? Reread James 1:5-8.
- What else should we pray for according to verse 16?
- What amazing deed did the great prophet Elijah accomplish with a faithful prayer?

5:19-20 Turn a brother from sin:

What is the result of someone turning a sinner from his error?

Which is nicer? Not offending your brother, or telling him (nicely) about his sin?