



RESTORING

WISDOM FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES

DEVOTION

Restoring Devotion: Wisdom from the Book of James

by Jason Ehmann

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Author . . . . .	4
About This Study . . . . .	5
<b>Lesson 1—Introduction . . . . .</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Lesson 2—Faith and Testing. . . . .</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Lesson 3—Faith Fights . . . . .</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Lesson 4—Faith Listens. . . . .</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Lesson 5—Faith Loves: Part 1. . . . .</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Lesson 6—Faith Loves: Part 2. . . . .</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Lesson 7—Faith Speaks . . . . .</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Lesson 8—Faith Revealed: Part 1 . . . . .</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Lesson 9—Faith Revealed: Part 2 . . . . .</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Lesson 10—Faith Restores . . . . .</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Lesson 11—Faith Submits. . . . .</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>Lesson 12—Faith Waits. . . . .</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Lesson 13—Faith Prays . . . . .</b>	<b>178</b>
Appendix . . . . .	190

## FROM THE AUTHOR

If you're like me, then you're a bit of an idealist. When I plan a creative or DIY project, I anticipate that the process will go smoothly, just like the instructional videos and tutorials promise. I envision that the end result will match those inspiring "after" photos.

However, as reality sets in, I find myself dealing with unexpected problems, missing parts, or just not enough resources—and often, I find that I overestimated my skills, as well. As a result, my project ends up looking nothing like what I envisioned at the beginning.

Our journey of faith can follow the same pattern. Maybe you read about the incredible faith of missionaries as they face threats and setbacks in their work or about the inspiring testimonies from seasoned Christians in which everything always turns out right. Or maybe you know someone who makes it look really easy to follow Jesus. But in your own experience, when the rubber meets the road, your life looks nothing like theirs. We see where we are now and where we want to be, but life keeps getting in the way of actually reaching our goal. We end up discouraged, thinking that the process is just too hard—that realistically, everyday devotion to Christ is impossible.

So how can we pursue wholehearted devotion to Christ, acknowledging that the journey is both difficult and strenuous? *Can* we actually live in devotion to Christ? It is possible to navigate our everyday ups and downs by faith? And if so, what does that look like?

Through the Book of James, God offers us the wisdom we need to live our faith both genuinely and realistically. As we grow in our understanding of God's character, we can reflect His love and truth in tangible ways. We bear fruit as Christ commanded—thereby glorifying God (John 15:8). Just as God expects us to live devotedly by faith, so He provides all that we need to reach that goal.

God's good news to us is that, in the end, we *will* reach the perfection He desires for us, by His grace. Until then, keep looking to Jesus.

Your friend in devotion,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Ehmann". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason Ehmann  
February, 2018

# ABOUT THIS STUDY

We often view faith as an abstract concept—a crucial part of salvation but a doctrine that has little bearing on everyday life. However, James argues that a Christian’s faith is alive and vibrant, an attitude that shines through our daily interactions and bears the fruit of good works. James offers us concrete pictures and gentle commands to shape our faith, all while encouraging us to demonstrate our belief in tangible ways.

*Restoring Devotion* aims to help believers grow in God’s wisdom and knowledge as presented in the Book of James and to live out their faith in devotion to Christ.

## Components of This Study

### Teacher’s Manual

This book contains the core content of the study, delving into the Book of James over 13 lessons. Each chapter begins with stated objectives and the lesson text followed by the lesson itself. Discussion questions, side notes, and application enrich the lesson content.

### Student Manual

Each lesson in the student workbook features a memory passage, as well as self-directed devotional readings for the student to complete over five days. You’ll also find a fill-in-the-blank outline of the teacher’s lecture and the main lesson text from James.

### Memorization & Meditation

- Directs students to memorize the first chapter of James section-by-section
- Encourages meditation on the memory passage

### Reading

- Leads students to meditate on verses from James and answer related questions, which appear in the teacher’s lesson as discussion material
- Introduces related passages and questions

### Restoring Devotion

- Applies principles of the lesson text
- Encourages students to discuss points from the lesson with other believers
- Focuses the students’ prayer and praise

### Lesson Outline

- Previews the main points of the teacher’s lecture and invites students to follow along by filling in blanks
- Provides the lesson text

Each lesson in the student manual should be completed prior to the teacher's lecture. This gives the students a chance to familiarize themselves with the Scripture text and the discussion questions ahead of time.

## Memory Verse List

Lesson 1	Introduction
Lesson 2	James 1:1-3
Lesson 3	James 1:4-6
Lesson 4	James 1:7-8
Lesson 5	James 1:9-11
Lesson 6	James 1:12-13
Lesson 7	James 1:14-15
Lesson 8	James 1:16-18
Lesson 9	James 1:19-21
Lesson 10	James 1:22-23
Lesson 11	James 1:24-25
Lesson 12	James 1:26-27
Lesson 13	James 1:1-27

## Slide Presentation

You can download a free slide presentation to accompany this study at [positiveaction.org](http://positiveaction.org). This resource features the lesson outlines and discussion prompts found in the teacher's lesson.

## Suggestions for Using This Study

If you intend to use this study in a lecture format, you can use the teacher's manual to present the lesson during class time once a week while students complete their student manual throughout the week. You can incorporate student manual questions relating to James in the form of discussion questions.

If you're using this study in a small, discussion-oriented group, the teacher's manual can provide background and discussion material as the group works through the student manual together.

We pray that this study will benefit you and, most of all, showcase God's magnificence. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to us by email ([info@positiveaction.org](mailto:info@positiveaction.org)) or phone (800-688-3008). We'd love to hear from you.

# INTRODUCTION

## OBJECTIVES

- Introduce the theme of James
- Give background and context to the theme
- Overview this study

## LESSON

Following Jesus is difficult. No, let's rephrase that—following Jesus in wholehearted devotion is difficult. And it's even more difficult to follow Him with honesty and transparency, because doing so makes us vulnerable to criticism and mistakes.

We can easily put together an appearance—a carefully-crafted persona—of living for Jesus without actually putting much effort into loving and obeying Him. We can mimic other followers of Christ by doing what they do and by saying what they say. But when it comes down to living mindfully for Jesus in spite of our circumstances, personal struggles, and the sinful people around us—that's hard.

So we try to make it easier. We life-hack our Christianity. We have automatic devotional readings sent to our inbox every day; we show up and distribute an exact number of church invitations; we schedule 30 minutes of prayer every night—as if by doing these activities we can make the sanctification process more efficient.

But true Christianity requires effort—there are no shortcuts. Jesus said that following Him means to travel the narrow road, bear our own cross daily, and set aside the weights that slow us down. There's nothing easy about sincerely loving and obeying Jesus each day. Following Jesus is hard.

## Good News

The good news—the gospel—is that we haven't been left to figure out this Christianity thing on our own. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ has saved us from the grip of sin. Christ offers us not only forgiveness for sin, but also a restored relationship with God and eternal life with Him.

And He doesn't stop there. Our faith in Christ secures His help for everyday life—right here and now. This faith—that is, ongoing belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ—changes how we live, transforming our everyday experiences.

We can be tempted to think that faith is passive—at some point in time, we made a conscious decision to believe Christ, and now faith is just something lingering in the background. But our faith is ongoing, something we use every single day, and it affects everything we do.

If we fail to grow in faith, then faith becomes just an abstract, nebulous concept—a theory that Christians occasionally talk about as essential but never really define. Or we'll expect that life will go OK if we just *believe*. Sure, there's a lot about faith that we don't understand—we need divine help to believe at all—but a passive, generic hopefulness that everything is going to be OK is not biblical faith (Mark 9:24). Without a correct understanding of faith, we'll end up feeling confused and lost when life turns hard.

True biblical faith manifests itself in concrete, practical ways. It's bursting with life and energy, and it shapes our everyday experiences. By God's grace, we can live out what we believe. By grace, faith *works*.

Faith changes our life experiences. It radically reforms our relationships. It influences how we speak to one another and how we interact with the world around us. It tempers our suffering, endurance, repentance, service, and prayer.

## God-Given Help

This kind of devotion is hard—at times, it feels *too* hard for us to handle. We need guidance and encouragement to grow into the people that God designed us to be. Thankfully, God provides us this help in the form of several resources.

First, God provides Himself as our greatest help through the presence of the Holy Spirit. When it seems like life as a Christian is more than we can handle, we can rely on the truth brought to mind by the Spirit of God. And the record of Jesus' character and words in Scripture gives us strength.

Even better than these reminders is the actual presence of God dwelling within us. Promised by Jesus, God's presence gives us an anchor to cling to as we wrestle against the desire to give in to our flesh (Matt. 28:20).

Second, the Scriptures provide yet another help to lift us up. God reveals Himself through His Word, giving needed guidance to help us obey Him. The Bible shows us what Jesus desires for us, and its wisdom equips us to carry out His work (2 Tim. 3:16–17). If we lack wisdom, God's Word readily fills that void.

Third, Jesus knew we would struggle to believe the Spirit and the Word, so He gives us additional help through other believers. Our brothers and sisters in Christ have fought the fight before. Their examples of endurance and victory inspire us to persevere in our own faith journeys (Heb. 12:1).

Our brothers and sisters encourage us in our everyday struggles, too. Our fellow Christians understand the struggles we face, because they wrestle and fight right along with us. We can

get tunnel-vision as we battle against sin. These believers can provide a much-needed reality check by assuring us that we have a firm hope in Christ. Their encouraging reminders help build our faith.

## THE THEME OF JAMES

James offers us specific wisdom on how to live by faith. In fact, the Book of James contains almost 60 commands regarding our communication and behavior. For James, faith isn't just a theological abstract—faith acts.

### Sidenote

The following verses contain the commands found in James.

- 1:2 4–7, 9, 13, 16, 19, 21–22
- 2:1, 3, 5, 12, 16, 18
- 3:1, 13–14
- 4:7–11
- 5:1, 7–10, 12–14, 16, 20

Just as Paul emphasizes in his writing that our life in Christ depends on faith, James further reminds us that our life in Christ is still a *life*—it's active, messy, filled with successes and failures. We are not called to live like Christ in a sinless vacuum.

Though we face real-world difficulties, those hardships do not excuse us from living like Jesus where we are right now. With God's help, it is possible to live authentically as Christians—no matter what happens.

Maybe you feel uneasy at the prospect of trying to obey all of the commands found in James. But remember, these commands are rooted in God's character—they aren't simply a list of rules to keep. God gives us key descriptions of Himself—almost 30 of them in James' letter—that help us understand and apply what we read. These are guidelines to help us become more like Christ. So Christ's character and nature provide the reason and motivation to obey these commands. Without knowing God Himself, faithful obedience seems pointless.

## Sidenote

The following verses in James reveal aspects of God's character and work.

Reference	Character Quality
1:5	Generous
1:5	Kind
1:12	Faithful
1:13	Incorruptible
1:17	Good
1:18	Creator
1:20	Righteous
1:27	Our Father
2:1	Lord of Glory
2:5	All-knowing
2:19	Unique
2:23 (also 4:4, 8)	Relatable
4:4	Enemy of sin
4:5	Jealous
4:6	Gracious
4:6	Opponent of pride
4:7	Lord

Reference	Character Quality
4:10	Forgiving
4:10	Restorative
4:12	Lawgiver
	Judge
	Savior
4:12	Destroyer
	Sovereign
4:15	Sovereign
5:4	Lord of Hosts
5:7, 8	Coming Back
5:9	Judge
5:11	Purposeful
	Compassionate
	Merciful
5:14–15	Powerful
	Restorative
	Forgiving
	Healing

So, what is the main theme of James? If we boiled down the teaching of the Book of James to one statement, it might look something like this.

God offers us wisdom for a life of devotion as we grow in our understanding of His character.

## KEY CONCEPTS

In his letter, James identifies and develops some key components of practical faith. We find the following words often in the Book of James.

- **Perfect** (1:4, 17, 25; 3:2) This concept involves wholeness or completion. God sovereignly orchestrates events in our lives for the sake of forming us into followers who reflect His glory. These events, both difficult and joyous, push us toward a life of active faith.

- **Double-minded** (1:8; 4:8) The New Testament uses this word only twice, and both usages appear in the Book of James. As He makes us more like Jesus, God purges our double-mindedness—that is, the way we vacillate between choosing Jesus and choosing the world. A divided mind is the opposite of wholehearted devotion to Christ.
- **Steadfast** (1:3–4, 12; 5:11) This word means *enduring* or *persevering*. The wisdom we find in James anchors our thinking and living, so that we not only *say* we follow Jesus, but we *actually* do follow Him. As we rely on His grace and guidance, we can stick to it even when challenges arise.
- **Suffering, Trials, Temptation, Weakness** (1:2, 3, 12, 13; 5:10, 13–15) These words describe those experiences where we are presented with a choice to sin or to obey God. James wrote realistically, not idealistically. Believers live in a sin-cursed world. We face all kinds of difficulties, problems, and temptations. And the world is not content to simply carry on apart from us—it actively sabotages our devotion to Christ. We live in a cesspool of suffering, and that suffering contaminates us.
- **Wisdom** (1:5; 3:13–17) Wisdom is God’s knowledge and perspective that He provides to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit. In many ways, the Book of James centers on this theme. We first find this truth in 1:5, where we learn that we need wisdom and that God is the source of wisdom. And 3:13–18 later builds on what God’s wisdom looks like.

## Context

As we struggle to live out our faith, the strong, concise instructions from James can seem almost offensive—like a well-meaning but thoughtless friend who gives advice without sympathy. We might be tempted to reply in frustration, “But you don’t know how this person has treated me,” or, “You don’t understand how difficult it is to say no to that temptation,” or, “You don’t really understand what is going on in my life right now.”

James offered these practical instructions in a time when the church experienced suffering of its own—suffering that was probably greater than we’ve ever experienced. James, the brother of Jesus, ministered to the believers gathered in Jerusalem, as well as to those who were scattered over Asia Minor. These Christians faced intense persecution for their faith, risking torture, imprisonment, and death. They were tempted to believe that devotion to Jesus in their situation was impossible.

So James wrote to encourage these believers, affirming that it is possible to live devoted to Jesus Christ no matter the context. Whatever the trouble or temptation, followers of Jesus can live out their love for Him.

The same message rings true for us today. In spite of our circumstances, we can live wholly devoted—without double-mindedness—to magnify the power and glory of God to the people around us. Through faith, we won’t waver between trusting God and trusting ourselves or the world. To do so, we have to center our minds upon God’s truth.

James identifies himself as a “brother” around 20 times in the book, indicating that he is not only a fellow believer, but also a fellow sufferer. He assures his audience that he is experiencing the same hardships they face. He knows their struggles. He understands the pressures of

temptation and persecution. What's more, he addresses them as *beloved*—three times, to be specific—expressing his affection for them. He does not speak as a distant authority, but rather as a peer and a participant—someone who understands the battle and fights right alongside them. As a fellow fighter, James shows his love for his brothers and sisters by equipping them to live for the praise of Jesus.

## Chapter Content

The wisdom of James is deeply connected to other scriptural truths. You'll recognize the topic of wisdom from Psalms and the Book of Proverbs; teaching about the dangers of materialism from Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; and commands about holy living and endurance in suffering from 1 Peter. The Book of James reads like a small group discussion on how to apply Jesus' words in everyday life. These believers had just heard the truth from Jesus, and now they needed the encouragement to put that truth into action.

James seeks to help believers answer the question, "What does it look like to love God and my neighbor?" The answer has to do with trust. We can expand on this answer by drawing out the following themes in James's letter.

- Chapter 1—Trusting God's goodness
- Chapter 2–3—Trusting God's wisdom
- Chapter 4—Trusting God's presence and sovereignty
- Chapter 5—Trusting God's justice and power

This study aims to help us understand what it looks like to trust God.

## APPLICATION

We should not ignore the difficulty of devotion. We wrestle with temptation, trials, and the everyday struggles to trust God—everything that makes it hard to show the love and truth of Christ in our lives. True devotion, however, does not stop at acknowledging the difficulty of living for Christ—doing so presents the temptation to excuse our sinful choices. It is true that we are sinners, but that admission doesn't mean we can continue to live sinfully. God saved us by His grace. He has created us anew. It's important for us to acknowledge our failures, yes, but we must not celebrate them. We must ask sincerely for God's grace to live the active, holy lives that He desires for us.

Hard-hitting, yet relatable, James's words help us put our faith in action. Christ's holiness should pervade every word, action, and interaction of our lives. And although believers face difficulties, temptations, and everyday realities, we can depend on God's grace to live practically and honestly in spite of them, as Jesus did.

## LESSON 1

# INTRODUCTION

## LESSON 1 NOTES

### ◎ The Theme of James

- God offers us wisdom for a life of devotion as we grow in our understanding of His character.

### ◎ Key Concepts

- **Perfect** (1:4, 17, 25; 3:2) This concept involves wholeness or completion.
- **Double-minded** (1:8; 4:8) This describes way we vacillate between choosing Jesus and choosing the world. A divided mind is the opposite of wholehearted devotion to Christ.
- **Steadfast** (1:3–4, 12; 5:11) This word means *endurance* or *perseverance*.
- **Suffering, Trials, Temptation, Weakness** (1:2, 3, 12, 13; 5:10, 13–15) These words describe those experiences where we are presented with a choice to sin or to obey God.
- **Wisdom** (1:5; 3:13–17) Wisdom is God's knowledge and perspective that He provides to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

### ◎ Context

- James, the brother of Jesus, ministered to the believers gathered in Jerusalem, as well as to those scattered over Asia Minor. These Christians faced intense persecution for their faith.

- James identifies himself as a “brother” around 20 times in the book, indicating that he is both a fellow believer and a fellow sufferer.

◎ **Chapter Content**

- Chapter 1—Trusting God’s goodness
- Chapter 2–3—Trusting God’s wisdom
- Chapter 4—Trusting God’s presence and sovereignty
- Chapter 5—Trusting God’s justice and power

## RESTORING DEVOTION

Hard-hitting, yet relatable, James’s words help us put our faith in action. Christ’s holiness should pervade every word, action, and interaction of our lives. And although believers face difficulties, temptations, and everyday realities, we can depend on God’s grace to live practically and honestly in spite of those things, the way Jesus did.

- Talk with a trusted Christian friend about trials you are experiencing.
- Pray together for God to grow your faith through trials and to bless your study of the Book of James.

# FAITH AND TESTING

## OBJECTIVES

- Explore reasons why we can view trials with joy
- Appreciate God’s goodness as expressed to us through His wisdom and promises
- Recognize our need for God’s wisdom
- Encourage with the hope of glory to come

**Text:** James 1:2–12

## LESSON

In 1940, the world’s third-longest suspension bridge opened across the Puget Sound. Over a mile long, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge was considered not only a feat of engineering, but also a much-needed connection between the mainland and peninsula of Washington State.

Shortly after the city of Tacoma opened the bridge on July 1, 1940, people discovered a design flaw—the wind caused the bridge to move significantly more than anticipated. As a result, locals referred to the bridge as “Galloping Gertie.”

In November of 1940, Tacoma experienced a windstorm with 42 miles-per-hour gusts, and “Galloping Gertie” was off to the races. The forceful wind bucked and twisted the bridge so violently that at one point, one side of the bridge was 28 feet higher than the other end. The wind stress proved too much for the bridge to handle, and a 600-foot stretch of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge collapsed into the Puget Sound. Although officials and police closed the bridge at the first sign of trouble, several people on it required rescue when the section gave way. (“The Bridges as Community Connections,” *Washington State Department of Transportation*, [www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov))

A lack of stability hinders progress—as seen in the devastating collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. What was intended to help people ultimately proved more than useless—it became downright dangerous.

## FAITH AND TRIALS (VV. 2–12)

Like the wind flinging the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, trials can upset our faith. Consequences of living in a sinful world—such as illness or selfish conflict—tear apart otherwise peaceful lives. Significant loss and emotional pain can leave our faith wavering, making us unsure of God’s goodness or love. The ups and downs we experience can discourage us, cause us to question our faith, and can even make us doubt our salvation.

But trials like these can become a watershed point for our faith. If we discipline ourselves to remember God’s goodness, we can actively live out our faith during these times. We can endure these hardships for the praise of Jesus.

### Discussion

According to James, how should we view the trials we experience (v. 2)? We should view them with joy.

## THINKING AND FEELING (V. 2)

In order to endure difficulties, we must first understand the connection between thinking and feeling. While we have control over our actions and beliefs, we can feel emotions involuntarily. While there’s nothing wrong with feeling, we do wrong if we allow that emotion to determine our response to the situation. If we don’t discipline our thoughts for our responses, we will hinge our happiness, satisfaction, or contentment on our circumstances.

Most often in the middle of our trial, we ask ourselves how we feel about our experience rather than ask what we should think about it. This can lead to some wrong conclusions and send us into a spiral of despair. So James instructs us to change how we think about our circumstances, rather than responding solely on how we feel. As we do, we can depend on God to temper our emotional response with peace and joy (1:2).

Does this really work, though? Remember James’s context. He wrote to a group of people who had been forcefully expelled from their homes through religious persecution. Their lives were characterized by pain and uncertainty; yet James teaches them to think about their current situation with joy—hopeful, trusting peace.

The idea of a joyful response to suffering seems absurd. However, James did not write these words theoretically—he himself had really suffered. He was a brother with the dispersed church. And he was intentionally, specifically encouraging those who read his letter to base their joy not on the emotions produced by their finite understanding, but rather on the solid truth of God. James echoed Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus challenged His disciples to rejoice in persecution (Matt. 5:10–12).

So often, we respond to difficulties with despair, anger, or hopelessness because we believe something other than the truth of God. We believe that we don’t have what we need, instead of focusing on what God offers us. We believe that we deserve an easy, pain-free sail through life

and wonder why God has allowed trouble to steal from us. But as we focus on the goodness given by God in the midst of difficulty, we can respond with joy as we understand the purpose of our trial.

Jesus provides an example of counting trials as joy. Hebrews 12:2 states that Jesus endured pain and humiliation of the cross yet focused on the future, joyful completion of God's plan. He didn't simply focus on His present surroundings—He looked at those trials and temptations and saw the long-term, future benefits.

## Discussion

**What is the “big picture” that gives us this joyful response? What is God's ultimate purpose for allowing us to endure trials?** God works to complete us spiritually.

### Reason for Joy—Completion (vv. 3–4)

Thankfully, God doesn't just command us to grin and bear the difficulties of life for their own sake. The difficulties we face have a purpose—that is, growth into full maturity, or perfection. Our trials are not pointless; rather, they act as a refinement process, producing endurance and spiritual maturity. We know that God is carefully and lovingly directing our lives toward the goal of holiness. So, in contrast to the unsettled sense of loss and fear we feel in these times, we can have confident joy.

We see a similar refinement process in the way that athletes train. Those who want to be at the top continually push their limits. How long can I run? How much can I lift? How fast can I go? How many shots can I make? With each successive attempt, their endurance grows, and their skill increases. They aim to reach their full potential through training.

God shapes our experiences for the purpose of making us whole—the best that we can be by His grace. He uses difficulties to sharpen our skills, our devotion to Him. In doing so, He receives glory as we reflect His full image in us. That God desires our completion should give us reason for great joy.

### Roots of Joy—God's Wisdom (vv. 5–12)

The thought of enduring pain and suffering for the goal of holiness can still be off-putting to us. That's because we doubt the one who is carrying us toward that goal—God. We need to remind ourselves about God's character and wisdom—the root for our joy response.

God's character—especially His sovereignty, power, and love—means that He knows exactly what He is doing. In His wisdom, God determines exactly what kind of experiences—including the event, timing, and duration—to produce endurance in us by His grace.

And He uses these trials to reveal to us how much we need His infinite wisdom. When we face a situation in which the next right step is unclear, we face the limits of our own wisdom. We don't know what to think, what we should do, or even how we should respond. Thankfully, God offers His wisdom to us.

## Wisdom Given with Grace (v. 5)

God offers this wisdom generously, out of His own volition. He does not limit or hide certain aspects of His wisdom that we need. Instead, He makes His wisdom freely available to us. And when we rely on His wisdom, we ultimately glorify Him.

### Discussion

**How does God answer our request for wisdom (v. 5)?** He provides wisdom freely, without blame.

God offers His wisdom without any criticism or shame. The word that is used in verse five—*reproach, fault-finding, or upbraideth*—comes from the same root word that describes how Jesus’ enemies taunted Him while He was on the cross (Matt. 27:44; Rom. 15:3). It is also used in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus encourages us to love and pray for those who speak evil of us (Matt. 5:11). This kind of reproach doesn’t rebuke for the sake of teaching or helping a person. It’s straight-up mocking, intending to hurt.

God does not mock us. God does not condemn us for messing up—when we try to rely on our own wisdom before approaching Him. He does not despise or shame us. Rather, He freely offers His infinite wisdom with kindness. God makes it very easy for us to return to Him. No matter how badly we mess up trying to do things our own way, God generously gives us His wisdom without saying, “I told you so!” There is no blame.

## Wisdom Received by Faith (vv. 6–8)

Just as we have to receive God’s salvation by grace through faith, we have to receive God’s gracious wisdom through faith. This means we must believe that God’s wisdom is effective and that it’s rooted in His goodness. We must believe that God desires to give us wisdom that actually works for everyday life. And that, because He desires this, He offers us all the tools we need to live out His desire, and to help other believers do the same.

But because we still have a bent toward sin, we experience a conflict of faith—a battle to choose God’s wisdom above all others. It’s a struggle to embrace and apply God’s truth to everyday life, and it’s hard to trust that God will keep His promise.

So we doubt, shifting between God and our own finite wisdom. We might say we believe that God is in control of a trial, but we act like it’s all up to us to get through it.

James compares this type of person to a ship caught in a storm, tossed around by the trials of life. Like that ship, this person faces turmoil, fear, and ultimately, destruction. But the person who embraces God’s wisdom with joy will be able to successfully pilot the waves of life. They will have stability, instead of becoming broken and scattered like the foam of the ocean.

### Discussion

**What are some truths about God that we could meditate on during trials? How can we help believers to think biblically about suffering but still show empathy to their pain?** Answers will vary. God is unchanging. He is powerful and good. He loves us.

## The Faithful Restored by Wisdom (v. 9)

In every way that trials bring us low, God's gracious wisdom restores and exalts us. God's way really works, but only if we receive it and act on it by faith.

Jesus teaches in Matthew 5:3 that those who recognize their impoverished spiritual need will inherit the kingdom of God. He also promises the same to those who endure persecution for His sake (Matt. 5:10). In each instance, God promises exaltation that far outweighs the crushing effects of the trial. He is the good shepherd who leads His sheep to places of restoration (Ps. 23).

### Discussion

**What are some promises that can encourage believers during trials?** Answers will vary. God won't leave us. He gives us grace to bear them. He has a plan for our lives.

## The Proud Humbled by Wisdom (vv. 10–11)

By contrast, those who depend solely on their own abilities and resources in trials will be brought low. Like the grass that withers in the summer heat, a self-sufficient person will crumple under the trials of life.

James points out that this humiliating effect of trials has at least one benefit. A trial is a litmus test that reveals the true source on which we depend for strength. If we live in devotion to Christ, we'll take note of our wrong dependence and make a course correction.

Those who lack resources may become discouraged, while those with abundant resources may become prideful. Both responses reveal self-reliance. We become discouraged because of what we don't have, or we're tempted to depend on what we do have. These reactions to trials show that we treasure our own resources more than the promises of God.

Those who have little and those who have much should both rejoice in the promise of God's help during trials. He will help the poor to remember His limitless, loving provision, and He will help the rich remember their need for humility and dependence. God's wisdom works no matter the context.

### Discussion

**How does material wealth affect our response to trials?** We can be tempted to base our security and faith on our resources rather than on God.

## The Faithful Rewarded by Wisdom (v. 12)

So if we faithfully choose God's wisdom, will we never experience suffering? No. We live in a broken world, and we will feel the consequences of sin until we leave it. However, choosing God's wisdom does mean that we will be able to endure suffering in ways that clearly showcase God's goodness and love—our reliance on God in suffering reveals His glory.

We have a future reward, as well.

## Discussion

**What is the reward promised by God for those who endure trials and love Him (v. 12)?**  
He promises life.

Those who endure difficulty in this life, and faithfully navigate it with joy and God's wisdom, will be rewarded in heaven with life like they have never imagined. Not only does God grant us everlasting existence, but He also gives us the best quality of life in His presence. So, like Paul, we can understand that whatever we face in this life simply can't be compared to future glory (Rom. 8:18).

## CONCLUSION

Trials are crucibles of our faith, tools used by God to reveal the source of our dependence. These experiences refine our devotion, distilling it down to reveal our true motivations. They purge our wrong beliefs and create the opportunity for us to turn towards an all-wise God. He can provide what we need to live for Him.

If we understand trials are tools and focus on the future glory that God has promised, we can have deep-rooted peace and joy that remains undisturbed by our circumstances.

LESSON 2

# FAITH AND TESTING

## DAY 1

### Memorization & Meditation

One goal of this study is to help you memorize the first chapter of James. Each day, write out and review the memory verses for the upcoming lesson.

Today, begin by reading James 1:1–3 five times.

### Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- According to James, how should we view the trials we experience (v. 2)? With joy

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Read 1 Peter 1:3–21.

- List five truths from this passage that can help you view trials scripturally. Answers will vary.

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## Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- What does our faith produce when tested (v. 3)? Patience, or steadfastness  
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- What is God’s ultimate purpose for allowing us to go through trials (v. 4)? He works to complete us.  
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Read 2 Thessalonians 1.

- For what is Paul thankful (vv. 3–4)? The church’s faith was growing, the believers loved each other, and they endured trials.  
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\_\_\_\_\_
- Even though these believers were facing difficulties at the time, what hope did they have for the future (v. 5)? They were suffering for God’s kingdom.  
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## Restoring Devotion

God allows us to face difficulties in order to refine our faith.

- Engage a fellow believer in a conversation about lessons you have learned through previous trials. If you are presently experiencing a trial and struggle to see its purpose, take some time to reflect on God’s character. What might God be showing you about Himself through this trial?
- Pray together, thanking God for His Person and character. Ask for grace to know God better through difficulties and to trust His wisdom.

# DAY 3

## Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:1-3 in the space below. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

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## Reading

Read James 1:2-12.

- If we need wisdom, from whom should we find it (v. 5)? God  
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- How does God offer His wisdom to us (v. 5)? He offers it freely. He doesn't blame us for our failures or criticize us for our weakness.  
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Read Psalm 111.

- How does verse 5 describe God? He provides, and He remembers His promise.  
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## Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- How does God answer our request for wisdom (v. 5)? He gives generously, without criticizing or shaming.

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Read Proverbs 2.

- Which of these promises help your faith in God’s wisdom (vv. 6–12)? Answers will vary.

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## Restoring Devotion

In every way that trials bring us low, God’s gracious wisdom restores and exalts us. God’s way really works, but only if we receive it and act on it by faith.

- Engage a fellow believer in conversation about God’s promises to those who are struggling to believe. What do you struggle to believe? How can you use God’s promises to encourage one another?
- Pray together, confessing that you believe God, and ask Him to help your unbelief (Mark 9:24).

## DAY 5

### Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:1–3 in the following space. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

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## Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- What is the reward promised by God for those who endure trials and love Him (v. 12)? Life

Read Romans 8:12–39.

- How would you describe your current hardships compared with the glory that is going to be revealed to us (v. 18)? Answers will vary. Our future glory far outweighs the pain we endure for a short time in this life.

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- What are two truths from this passage that can anchor you through difficulties? Answers will vary.

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## Restoring Devotion

Left to ourselves, we can despair and rage in times of suffering. But by using God's wisdom, we can get a bird's-eye view of our trials. We realize that the glories of eternity illuminate the darkest moments of our lives.

- Talk about the glory of our future reunion with Christ. What do you think that will be like? How does this affect the way you view your current struggles?
- Pray together, rejoicing in what God has promised for our future. Ask God for faith in the glory that He will reveal one day.

## LESSON 2 OUTLINE

Text: James 1:2–12

◎ **Faith and Trials (vv. 2–12)**

◎ **Thinking and Feeling \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 2)**

- Reason for Joy—Completion \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 3–4)
- Roots of Joy—God's Wisdom \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 5–12)
  - Wisdom Given with Grace \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 5)
  - Wisdom Received by Faith \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 6–8)
  - The Faithful Restored \_\_\_\_\_ by Wisdom (v. 9)
  - The Proud Humbled \_\_\_\_\_ by Wisdom (vv. 10–11)
  - The Faithful Rewarded \_\_\_\_\_ by Wisdom (v. 12)

# FAITH FIGHTS

## OBJECTIVES

- Warn believers that temptation is deceptive
- Encourage believers to fight temptation by remembering God's goodness

**Text:** James 1:13–18

## LESSON

“The best defense is a good offense” is an old, tried-and-true principle of warfare. And the way to a good offense is to study the enemy and hit his blind spots or predict his moves based on patterns and then beat him to the punch.

Smart players in any competition will use this knowledge to their own advantage. When a chess player wants to improve their skills and train for matches, they will study potential moves. They will anticipate their opponents' moves so they can avoid traps—and set their own. And in any team sport, a good coach will study past games to learn the opposing team's plays, scouring reports for anything that may give his own team a strategic advantage in the next game.

The same strategy can help us deal with sinful temptation in our Christian life. As we deal with temptations, we need to be aware of the tactics used by our enemy—that is, our flesh, the world, and the devil. And to recognize these tactics for what they are means that we must first know the character of God. By knowing God, we can more easily spot what is not of Him—what is sin.

As we face trials and temptations, our faith wavers and we get confused about who is fighting for us and who is fighting against us. Often, we end up fighting against the One who is on our team, and we end up hurting ourselves in the long run.

The Greek word translated in verse two as *temptation* appears in verse 13, as well. But the meaning here seems to shift slightly. The first usage means *trial* or *temptation* in a specific sense, referring to trials of faith in verses 2–12. But as this word is used verses 13–18, James seems to have in mind trials of both circumstance and faith. Temptation can originate from both the internal and external. Our sin nature causes us to wrestle with unbelief and right attitudes, while people, events, and circumstances cause suffering that we must endure.

We often experience a double whammy of both kinds of trials at once. Not only do we need endurance to get through the bad situation, but we also need grace to avoid a sinful response to that situation. So in order to prepare and overcome both trials and temptation, internal and external, we need the stability and steadfastness that comes from God.

### **Discussion**

**Can you think of an example of a difficult trial that could also present a temptation to sin?** Answers will vary, but may include: not delivering payment if you're short on money; treating people badly when you're not feeling well; neglecting to spend time with God because you are stressed out by work.

## **IDENTIFY THE ENEMY—UNDERSTANDING TEMPTATION (V. 13–15)**

So where does temptation come from—where does it begin?

First of all, James makes it clear that the temptation to sin never originates with God.

### **Discussion**

**What about God's character indicates that He will not tempt us with sin (v. 13)?** He is holy and will not sin. He does not tempt us to sin.

When we're being tested, we must never believe that God is teasing us with sin to see if we'll give into it. He never tempts us with evil or tries to make us sin.

We know that God is never the source of our temptation because His character reflects complete and utter holiness. God is wholly pure without any spot of evil, deception, or manipulation. No part of God desires sin. God does not tolerate or even look at wickedness (Hab. 1:13). So when we face the temptation to sin, we can be sure that such a temptation did not originate with God.

However, God's holiness doesn't mean that He turns His back on the temptation and suffering we experience. Because He is sovereign, He orchestrates and controls everything that happens to us. This seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? The truth is, while He does not test us with evil, He does permit evil to exist, and He allows us to endure it in order to grow our faith in Him. So He is not the source of evil, but He does sometimes allow it to continue for a time.

As we see in the account of Job, God permitted Job to face trials and spiritual temptation for a limited duration of time (Job 1:6–12). Not only did He sovereignly allow each trial, but He also controlled how much Job could be affected by them and how long Job had to endure them.

## Discussion

**Does it seem weird that God controls trials and temptations and exercises His authority over them? Why?**

**Who else would you like to be in control of your trials or temptations?**

**Why is it a struggle to trust that God is sovereign—especially over evil in our life?**  
Answers will vary. Our knowledge is limited, and it's difficult to reconcile the unpleasant parts of our life with the good that God intends for us.

The idea of God's sovereignty actually encourages our faith. This all-powerful Father stands over everything that happens to us. He loves us, understands us, and molds us through suffering to become more like Jesus.

## Sidenote

We see that God is holy, good, and all-powerful, and that He can turn suffering into a tool for our benefit. However, we don't know the big reason why God allows *evil itself*—the cause of suffering—to exist.

It's sort of like a table standing upright on three legs.

- One leg represents the existence of evil.
- Another leg is the truth of God's power and goodness.
- But we don't know what the third leg is—only that the table stands upright.

We don't understand how the table can stand upright because we see only two legs. God may reveal that hidden truth to us—that third table leg—one day, but He hasn't yet. Our responsibility now is to believe and trust what God has revealed so far.

## Reading Resource List

If you'd like to read more about God's sovereignty and suffering, see the appendix at the back of this book for a list of resources regarding this topic.

And although trials and temptations hurt, we must believe by faith that the value of our transformation into holiness far outweighs the value we place on our comfort. Like it or not, God uses suffering and temptation to shape us into Christ's image. And we demonstrate our devotion to Christ by humbly accepting whatever God allows in our life.

As we face trials and temptations, we often want to lash out with blame for what happens to us. We think we know what is good. And because we think we deserve only our version of good, we view anything that doesn't meet our criteria as a threat to our happiness. So when something bad or undesirable happens, our initial reaction is one of fear, anger, and mistrust—not a peaceful understanding that God is shaping us into holiness.

We blame others—and even God—for trying to hurt us. But God is not the One to blame.

## Discussion

**Do you ever ask God why He has put you in a difficult situation?**

**Why do you keep giving into sin, no matter how much you don't want to?**

**Why doesn't God just take away all your desire for sin?**

**Why does it seem easy to blame God for our sin struggles?** Answers will vary. We struggle to believe either that God is good or God is sovereign.

Our accusations against God reveal how little we know and trust Him. Consider Job's situation. Job asked God the question why, but God never answered that question. Rather, through a series of awe-inspiring questions of His own, God demonstrated His wisdom and power (Job 38–41). He didn't match Job's finite understanding with easy answers. He simply revealed Himself to Job.

By the time God finished speaking, Job's perspective had completely changed. Job's trial showed him that he lacked a practical understanding of God's character.

Our sinful response to suffering also reveals that we don't know the truth about ourselves—or at least, that we don't want to face the truth. We assume that we have the right to know what God knows—that we have the capacity to judge what is best. In essence, we overestimate ourselves and underestimate God.

So how does faith act in response to temptation? We demonstrate devotion by believing the truth about God and ourselves.

Now that we know that the temptation to sin never originates with God, we can look at its true source.

## Discussion

**Where does temptation really originate?** It comes from our desires.

## Temptation Comes from Our Own Desires (v. 14)

The temptation to sin comes from our own hearts. Although we want to blame people or circumstances for why we sin, the truth is that we don't need to—*we* are really the ones to blame. We're tempted enough by our own sin natures—temptation from the world is just extra.

When it comes to temptation, we cannot blame our choice to sin on anything or anyone but ourselves. Yes, many outside factors influence us—the world's way of thinking, our friends, our enemies, and the devil—but temptation starts with the evil in our own hearts. Contaminated by sin, we have unlimited potential for disobeying God (Rom. 3:9–18).

## Temptation Is Specific (v. 14)

Further, because all people are different and we all have different desires, the form of temptation we each face is different as well. Temptation speaks specifically to our desires. Think about what the serpent offered Adam and Eve—knowledge and wisdom. Adam and Eve knew God

personally, and they no doubt spotted their own finite differences compared with His power and wisdom. They desired to become just like Him—but not in the way He intended. Instead, they violated His commands in order to gain what they desired.

When we understand this truth, we can begin to look for a solution. But where to find it? If the source of temptation is our own hearts, and the temptations that we face are specific to our own desires, then how can we find a solution in ourselves? If we are so weak to the influence of sin and we are completely riddled with sin, how can we also possess enough strength to resist it? The answer is, we can't. We need help from Someone who knows us and loves us and has more power than we do. We need Jesus.

Our faith grows when we recognize the problem with our human hearts, humbly acknowledge it, and then run to Christ for help.

## Discussion

**The world believes that people are innately good—especially because people can do so much good in the world. How does this idea contrast with what the Bible says about our natural inclinations?** Answers will vary. We all have a sin nature.

**Why is it dangerous to believe that we are innately good?** We have to first recognize our need before we can get help from Christ.

**What is the cure for a sinful heart?** Jesus Christ alone can cure our sinful heart.

So temptation to sin comes from our own evil desires. How exactly does this process work?

## DESIRE DRAWS US OUT AND TRAPS US (V. 14)

Temptation occurs when our desires meet opportunity. Our desire invites us to take what we want no matter how we do it—thereby luring us into danger. The words used in verse 14 to describe temptation convey the idea of hunting, fishing, or trapping. First, some attractive bait lures us out of our hiding spot. Then after swallowing the bait, we find ourselves caught, unable to withdraw. Our own desire draws us from the way of safety—following the Lord—to the way of danger, which ultimately leads to destruction.

## Discussion

**What are some ways that temptation can be deceitful? Give an example, perhaps from your own experience.** Answers will vary. We think the benefits from sinning outweigh any consequences. We think there won't be consequences. We blame our weakness for giving in.

These desires aren't always bad in themselves. We can want legitimate, even necessary things like safety, comfort, pleasure, fulfillment, and peace. But when we reach out and grasp for these things with a death-grip, doing whatever is necessary to get them, we turn our backs on God and sin.

We become masters of rationalization when desire gets involved. Sin is sneaky and deceitful enough, but when we really want something, we won't let anything get in the way of getting it. Consider Saul in 1 Samuel 15. God instructed Saul, via Samuel the prophet, to wipe out the evil Amalekites and all that they owned—down to the livestock. But Saul greedily decided to save the best animals, as well as the king, in direct violation of God's command. What's more, when Samuel asked about why Saul hadn't destroyed them, Saul blamed the people—and he tried to pretend that he disobeyed because he intended to worship God (vv. 15, 21).

This is the essence of idolatry. We commit this sin when we are willing to do whatever it takes to fulfill our desires. We value our satisfaction and happiness more than we value God. And our desire comes from the fundamental belief that we're missing out on something good, but we can't trust God to give it to us.

## Discussion

**What are some good things that can be twisted into temptations? Why do you think it is so hard to recognize when these things become a temptation to sin?** Answers will vary. Desires for good things, like fulfillment, comfort, and safety, can turn into sin if we try to get them the wrong way.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF TEMPTATION (V. 15)

The tricky part is that the temptation to sin can actually look pretty good. Such an opportunity can seem to be beneficial at first. We might even rationalize that it's OK to sin—just a little—in order to do something ultimately good. The goal is the most important thing, no matter if the means to get there are a little shady—right?

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Giving in to sin is always destructive.

In verse 15, James illustrates the process of sin in terms of reproduction—conception, birth, and maturity. When we desire something and then sin to fulfill that desire, our sinful choice begins to develop into something ugly. Instead of sparking the beginning of life with our choice, we create something that results in death.

This illustration reveals another aspect about the consequences of temptation—they are not always immediate. We may not see the effect of our sinful choices for quite some time; but be assured, the consequences will catch up with us. Sin causes a rift in our relationship with God (Ps. 66:18).

Contrast the product of sin with the product of perseverance in verse 12. Faith that endures trials and temptation matures into life—light, vigor, success, and joy—while sin matures into death—darkness, isolation, despair, and ruin (Rom. 6:23).

## **RESISTING TEMPTATION (vv. 16–18)**

Although sin can seem innocently disguised as good, it's just a dirty trick with a hidden, nasty end.

Temptation is often difficult to see for what it is, and even harder to resist. Don't be fooled by it. Don't be fooled by what others say about you. Don't be fooled by the world's distortion of God's truth. Don't be tricked by Satan—resist and find true goodness and life in Christ.

Sin is a choice. We can't always prevent the temptation to sin from appearing right in front of us—not as long as we live in a sinful world. An unbidden thought may enter our mind, or we might overhear someone gossiping. We can choose to accept and participate in those things, or we can choose to say no, with God's grace. God judges us for our choices, not for things we can't control.

So let's look at what we can do to resist temptation and genuinely live like Jesus.

### **Identify Our Own Worst Enemy—Self (v. 14)**

Although it's difficult to hear, we have to recognize that self is the biggest obstacle to living fully devoted to Jesus. Our greatest enemy is our sinful heart, a traitor ready to help the enemy sabotage our new life in Christ (Jer. 17:9).

We are so easily deceived by our heart, so we must continually focus on God's goodness. The more we do, the more we will mistrust our heart and grow to trust His. And something begins happening to that traitor. Bit by bit, God reveals it as an enemy, and begins to transform it by His grace. God wants to remove our treacherous heart and replace it with a submissive one that loves Him supremely.

God promises to clean out all the trickery and deception, giving us a heart that genuinely desires to follow Him. We must trust what God says about us rather than relying on how we feel about ourselves. After all, He knows us better than we know ourselves.

### **Believe that God Is the Only True Source of Good (vv. 16–17)**

We spend so much time looking for what is good that we ignore or forget the true Source of all that is good. God, the Creator and Source of all good, has given us many good things. It is His nature, and He delights in interacting with us this way. He never changes from being good or doing good. We can enjoy every blessing from His hand—but never more than we enjoy Him.

#### **Discussion**

**What two things do we learn about God's character, according to verse 17? He is good. He doesn't change.**

Every gift from God reflects part of His character—His greatness, beauty, or majesty. As we see the glory of the gifts He gives, we should use them to remember that the Giver is even greater, turning our hearts and minds to Him. We sin not because of the gifts that God has given, but

rather because we place more value on them than on the Giver. We must carefully watch our heart attitude by what we value.

Remembering and accepting God's goodness proves difficult during trials and temptations. But believing and living in God's goodness lies at that heart of what it means for a believer to live devotedly to Christ—we must believe that God is good. Even when temptations and trials come, He is still good because that is who He is. My circumstances do not determine what God is like; He remains unchanged and absolute. A perceived lack of God's goodness does not change the truth that He is good.

So when we hurt and cry out in pain, we know that God is listening and that He's with us in every moment. Sometimes pain is a necessary part of the path to wholeness. The process may be excruciating, like the way that childbirth or surgery and recovery pains us. But in the end, we know that we will rise up stronger and better. And who better to trust with this process than our good, loving Father?

## Pursue the Life-Giving Truth of God (v. 18)

### Discussion

**How does the process of temptation contrast with the process of sanctification (vv. 12, 14, 18)?** Temptation begins with evil desires, develops into sin, and ends in death. Regeneration begins through God's truth and ends with life.

In direct opposition to the development process sin that produces death (1:15), we see here a different, life-giving process (1:12, 18). The Father of lights, by His own will, births us through truth, matures us in faith, and delivers us to life in Him. Faith in God's truth—Jesus Christ—enables us to live in loving, life-giving obedience. It takes practice to keep learning about God and to obey Him. We can't consistently resist temptation and live in devotion and obedience if we don't pay attention to what God says. We must get to know Christ in His Word.

## CONCLUSION

In order to live out our faith, we must be wary. We will face temptation that is strong and tricky and downright destructive. We must resist by the grace of God and battle idolatry in our hearts. Devotion to Christ requires more than simply acknowledging that we struggle with temptation. It requires us to be vigilant, protect ourselves, resist, and repent when we fail.

Do you believe Jesus, love Him, and want to be like Him? Do you long for the life He offers? Then, with God's help, you must pursue a life of holiness, resisting temptation by depending on God's grace.

LESSON 3

# FAITH FIGHTS

## DAY 1

### Memorization & Meditation

Ready to review your memory verses from last week? Without looking, see if you can write James 1:1–3 on the lines below.

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Now let's focus on this week's memory passage. Read James 1:4–6 five times.

### Reading

Read James 1:13–18.

- What about God's character indicates that He will not tempt us with sin (v. 13)? He can't be tempted with sin, and He does not tempt anyone with sin.

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Read Job 7:1–21.

- Describe how Job felt in his suffering. Have you ever felt like this?  
Answers will vary.

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Read Job 42:1–6.

- Describe Job’s response at the end of God’s conversation with him. What did Job say changed his perspective of suffering (v. 5)?  
He saw God and learned about His character.

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### **Restoring Devotion**

Our accusations against God reveal how little we know and trust Him. Consider Job’s situation. Job asked God the question *why*, but God didn’t answer that question. Rather, through a series of awe-inspiring questions of His own, God demonstrated His wisdom and power (Job 38–41).

- Discuss with a fellow believer this week about our typical response to struggles. Do you ever blame others for your difficulties? In what ways are you tempted to accuse God but excuse your own wrong responses?
- Pray together, thanking God for His wisdom and power.

# DAY 2

## Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:4–6 in the space below. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

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## Reading

Read James 1:13–18.

- Where does temptation originate (v. 14)? In our desires  
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Read Romans 3:9–20.

- What does the Bible say about our basic moral nature? Is it good or evil (vv. 10–12)? It's evil; there is no righteousness in us.  
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- How does the world's view about our basic moral nature differ from Scripture? Answers will vary. The world portrays humanity as basically good, which is the opposite of Scripture.  
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## Reading

Read James 1:13–18.

- What are some ways that temptation can be deceitful? Answers will vary. We think the benefits from sinning outweigh any consequences. We think there won't be consequences. We blame our weakness for giving in.
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Read Matthew 4:1–11.

- What tactics did Satan use to try to trap Jesus (vv. 3; 5–6; 8–9)? He misused Scripture and appealed to Jesus' human aspects, like hunger.
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Read Romans 6:23.

- Satan was tempting Jesus to try to destroy Him. What is the end result of our sin? Death
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## Restoring Devotion

Although sin can seem innocently disguised as good, it's just a dirty trick with a hidden, nasty end. Temptation is often difficult to see for what it is, and even harder to resist. Don't be fooled by it.

- Talk or write about the deceptive nature of temptation. In what ways has temptation fooled you in the past?
- Pray with a believer, asking for grace to recognize temptation for what it is and to resist it.

# DAY 4

## Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:4–6 in the space below. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

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## Reading

Read James 1:13–18.

- What two things do we learn about God’s character, according to verse 17? God is good, and He does not change.

Read Psalm 107.

- List several ways that God showed His goodness to His people. Answers may vary. God gathered them, saved them from evil, led them, satisfies their soul, and healed them.

- Think through your experiences and list several ways God has shown you His goodness. Answers will vary.

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### Restoring Devotion

Even when temptations and trials come, God is still good because that is who He is. Our circumstances do not determine truth; God declares truth. Our experience of God’s goodness—or perceived lack of it—does not change the fact that He is good.

- Think about God’s goodness. How has God been good to you? Share your answers with someone.
- Praise God together, thanking Him for demonstrating His goodness to you.

## DAY 5

### Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:4–6 in the space below. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

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## Reading

Read James 1:12–18.

- Contrast the process of temptation (v. 14) in this chapter with the process of sanctification (vv. 12, 18). How do they begin and end? Temptation begins with evil desires, sin, and ends in death. Regeneration begins through God's truth and ends with life.
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Read John 1:1–18.

- Who is the one in whom there is life (v. 4)? Jesus
  - Who is the truth that gives us life (vv. 12–13)? Jesus
  - Grace and truth come through whom (v. 17)? Jesus
  - What are two truths from this passage that can help anchor you through difficulties? Answers will vary.
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## Restoring Devotion

Remembering and accepting God's goodness prove difficult during trials and temptations. But believing and living in God's goodness lie at that heart of what it means for a believer to live devotedly to Christ—we must believe that God is good.

- Hold a conversation about Jesus as the embodiment of truth. How does that truth help you resist temptation?
- Pray together, rejoicing that God sent Christ into the world to show us truth and to give us grace. Ask for grace to live in ways that please God.

# LESSON 3 OUTLINE

Text: James 1:13–18

◎ Identify \_\_\_\_\_ **the Enemy—Understanding Temptation**  
(vv. 13–15)

- Temptation Comes from Our Own Desires \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 14)
- Temptation Is Specific \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 14)
- Desire Draws Us Out and Traps \_\_\_\_\_ Us (v. 14)
- The Consequences \_\_\_\_\_ of Temptation (v. 15)
- Resisting \_\_\_\_\_ Temptation (vv. 16–18)

Identify Our Own Worst Enemy—Self \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 14)

Believe that God Is the Only True Source \_\_\_\_\_ of Good  
(vv. 16–17)

Pursue the Life-Giving Truth \_\_\_\_\_ of God (v. 18)

**Note:** If you'd like to read more about God's sovereignty and suffering, see the appendix at the back of this book for a list of resources dealing with this topic.