

## The Book of James “Proverbs” of the New Testament

### Background

- Written: ~45-50 AD (earliest NT letter)
- Author: James, the half-brother of Jesus
- Audience: believing Jews of 1st century and all believers to come

**Big Idea:** Following Jesus is not only about agreeing with theological information. Jesus followers become truly wise by living according to Jesus’ summary of the Law—love God whole-heartedly and love your neighbor as yourself.

### Salvation vs Sanctification

- Salvation = to be saved from sin and its consequences (death and separation from God) by Christ's death and resurrection. Salvation is a gift of God's grace to those who believe.
- Sanctification (spiritual growth) = the process of becoming holy (more like Christ)

### Organization (or lack thereof)

- James does not write in an ordered or linear way, but all the teachings are connected by repeated key words and themes.
- Chapter 1 is designed to sum up the main ideas of the entire book. It presents a flowing stream of wise teachings introducing us to all of the themes and key words that James further develops in chapters 2-5.

### James 1 (introduction): sums up the book’s main ideas and key words

- **James 1:2-4** Life’s **trials** produce endurance and can make us “perfect” (holy) testing→perseverance→mature→perfect (complete/integrated)
- **James 1:5-8** God gives **wisdom** to those who ask in faith w/o doubting God’s character Doubt→anxiety vs. Belief (trust)→stability/peace
- **James 1:9-11** Poverty can force us to trust God and **wealth** will pass away God wants our humility and dependence on Him.
- **James 1:12, 16-18** **God’s Character:** generous and trustworthy God is generous and gives us new birth and eternal life through Jesus
- **James 1:13-15** **Temptation** is not from God; He always provides a way out desires→enticement→sin (acting on it) →death (separation from God)
- **James 1:19-21** **Holiness** (listen more, talk less, slow to anger, humbly accept the Word)
- **James 1: 22-27** Don’t just listen to God’s Word, but **DO IT!**  
Practical examples of living out the Law of love (love God, love others)
  - James 1:26 **speak** in kind and loving ways
  - James 1:27 **serve** others & be **whole-heartedly devoted to God** (not the world)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is God challenging you to grow in regards to your speech?
2. Share something in your life that you need God's wisdom to navigate. Do you trust that His purposes for you are good and that He wants to reveal Himself to you?
3. James encourages God's people to pursue a life of holiness and *act* like God's people. Knowing the Scriptures is the first step. Doing what God says is the next step.  
\*In what area of your life are you feeling most challenged to let your actions mirror the faith you proclaim?
4. In Matthew 5:3 Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be "poor in spirit" means being humble and dependent on God. It is the opposite of arrogance, pride, and self-sufficiency. James applies this idea literally to those experiencing poverty, but he also includes those who find themselves in difficult circumstances.  
\*What, in your life, keeps you dependent on God, recognizing that you are "poor in spirit"?  
\*Share about a trial you've experienced and the way in which God has kept His promise to bless you through it.
5. Jot down in the space below anything that you notice the Lord highlighting as you listen to the teaching on the book of James.  
\*Share as you feel led.

**James 1:1** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

**James 1:2-4** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**James 1:5-8** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

**James 1:9-11** Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wildflower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

**James 1:12, 16-18** Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him . . . Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

**James 1:13-15** When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

\*\*1 Corinthians 10:13 God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

**James 1:19-21** My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

**James 1:22-25** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

**James 1:26** Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

**James 1:27** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.