

faith, hope, love

James 1:1-27
Inductive Discovery Lesson 1

Testing Your Faith The early Christians needed this letter, and so do we. They were a scattered people, compelled to flee all that was familiar and comfortable because of circumstances beyond their control. What can cause you to feel scattered? Life takes an unexpected turn. Daily pressures squeeze. Responsibilities pull. Nerves begin to fray. Patience evaporates. Feelings hurt. We need staying power and a focused outlook to navigate the trials and temptations that come our way. So James gets right to the heart of the matter: God allows trials to test our faith. He wants to see *genuine* faith being lived out in our lives. We know that real life is not always easy, but sometimes we forget that real faith is not always comfortable. As you begin this series on *Faith, Hope and Love*, there may be days when you're tempted to quit. You see, the enemy of your soul doesn't want you to grow—but take heart! God will increase your capacity to endure the testing of your faith to become a wise woman of God, fully able to meet every challenge that comes your way.

Background James is one of the oldest books in the New Testament, probably written around A.D. 46-48. The church was still in the early stages of development and needed practical instruction. This letter deals with how to practice Christian faith and develop spiritual maturity. Keep in mind that the original readers were Christian Jews who were living outside of Palestine. Time and distance separated them from the events and experiences taking place in and around Jerusalem. As yet, there was no New Testament to read; no letters from the apostles Paul, Peter or John had been written. The gospels were not yet recorded. Christians needed to know how to put their faith into action in everyday life. In answer to the needs and problems of these scattered believers, James wrote this letter.

Who was James? He simply identifies himself as “a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” With such a common first name and a humble phrase that could describe any true believer, it's difficult to say with absolute certainty who wrote this letter. But we can make a reasonable guess based on *internal evidence*. (Internal evidence simply means clues gathered from other sources within the Bible.) The solid evidence points to James, the half-brother of Jesus.

James and his brothers didn't believe in Jesus during His earthly ministry (John 7:5). James became a Christian when he saw Jesus after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). He was present in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:14). James went on to become a leader in the early church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 15:13, and 21:18). Paul called him a “pillar” of the church (Galatians 2:9). It was the strength and influence of James' leadership that brought a peaceful conclusion to the debate over whether Gentiles needed to observe Jewish law in order to be saved (Acts 15).

Josephus, a first-century historian, records that James was martyred in A.D. 62. According to church tradition, it happened during Passover when Jerusalem was filled with visiting Jews from throughout the world. The Pharisees, knowing of James' godly reputation among the people, led him to the top of the temple to “persuade those who came to Passover to think correctly about Christ.”¹ When James testified *for* Christ rather than against Him, the Pharisees threw him down from the temple. Broken in body but not killed, the story relates how James prayed for the angry men even as they struck a fatal blow to his head.

Working Text for James 1:1-27
New International Version (NIV)

¹ John Foxe, *Foxe's Christian Martyrs of the World* (Barbour and Company, Inc., 1989) pp. 7-8.

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

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **4** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. **6** But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7** That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; **8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. **10** But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. **11** 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 man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. **13** When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **16** Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. **17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. **21** 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. **22** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. **23** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. **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.

OBSERVE

Start by reading the entire chapter at least once. Now read each section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Briefly describe, *in your own words*, what it says.

Use the second column to keep track of information you get from other sources such as scripture references, a dictionary, concordance, maps, etc. You can also use this section to jot down **your thoughts, impressions or questions**. *Do your best to follow James' train of thought.* Does he use a word or phrase repeatedly, or emphasize a particular topic? Are his words urgent? Encouraging? Commanding? What issues or problems does he address? What questions does he ask?

James 1:1-11

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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James 1:12-18

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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James 1:12-18 (cont.)

Facts from the passage:

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James 1:19-27

Facts from the passage:

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Key Words and Phrases

Write the definition of the following words and phrases. Use a regular dictionary or a Bible concordance with Greek Dictionary if you have one.

“consider it all joy” (vs. 2) _____

“endurance” (vs. 3-4) _____

“perfect and complete” (vs.4) _____

“doer” (vs.22,23,25) _____

INTERPRET

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as: Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid? **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

APPLY

We don't study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new insight for me, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

James 1:1-11

Lesson: _____

Application: _____
_____?

James 1:12-18

Lesson: _____

Application: _____
_____?

James 1:19-27

Lesson: _____

Application: _____
_____?

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter to help you remember what it says.

Up close and personal

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be
perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

James 1:2-4 NAS

Memorize God's Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize the verse in and re-write it here.

Meditate on God's Word

While you memorize this verse, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea—the longer it steeps, the richer the flavor. So give yourself permission to slowly savor God's Word! Use the questions below (like a tea bag) to keep dipping into this verse.

Challenge alert: You won't always see an obvious answer directly from the verse. Just *think and pray* about it and share what the Lord brings to your heart and mind.

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“No matter what the trials may be on the outside,
or the temptations on the inside,
through faith in Christ we can experience victory.
The result of victory is spiritual maturity.”
- Warren Wiersbe -

Message Notes: _____

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