

## James - Faith for Living “Proverbs of the New Testament”

*(this is the intro from the web site where we found many of the questions for our study)*

### A Sure Sign of Life

The book of James, controversial because of its emphasis on “good works,” is perhaps best understood through the analogy of motion. In both the physical realm as well as the spiritual realm, where there is life there will be motion.

When a person becomes a Christian, new life begins, and inevitably that life must express itself through “spiritual motion,” or good deeds. In James’ words, “What good is it ... if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?” (2:14)

Movement does not cause life, but it does inevitably follow life. It is a sure sign that life is present. Similarly, genuine faith in Christ should always result in actions that demonstrate faith.

### Does James Contradict Paul?

James is not writing about how to become a Christian, but rather how to act like one. Having all the correct beliefs about God will hardly suffice: even demons believe in God. Real, life-giving faith should produce motion, and James minces no words in describing the specific spiritual actions expected of Christians.

Christian thinkers, notably Martin Luther, have struggled to reconcile the message of James with that of Paul, who so firmly warned against slavish legalism. But Paul never belittled holy living. When he wrote to carousers, such as his letter to the Corinthians, he railed against immorality as strongly as James.

Evidently, James’ readers were not even flirting with legalism. They lived at the other extreme, ignoring the laws that God had clearly revealed. James had a simple remedy: “Do not merely listen to the word .... Do what it says.” (1:22)

### Straight to the Point

Unlike the apostle Paul, James was no urbane man of letters. He was a simple, homespun preacher, perturbed at people who were not living right. His letter covers a wide range of topics, applying the Christian faith to specific problems, and commanding readers to live out their beliefs.

Be humble! James orders. Submit to God! Stop sinning! James is as forthright as an Old Testament prophet; it is hard to miss his point.

Modern readers of James face the same dilemma as the first recipients of this unsettling letter. His words are easy enough to understand, but are we doing as he says? What kind of motion characterizes our spiritual lives? As Luther himself said, “You are saved by faith alone, but if faith is alone, it is not faith.”

As leader of the headquarters church in Jerusalem, James knew how to speak with authority. You don’t have to look for hidden meanings in this book. James tells you clearly how you should act in 54 direct commands. Note that many of these have parallels to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. As you study these verses, keep in mind the diverse audience he was addressing which included the rich and the poor. Note, too, his “asides” to specific groups.

## THE WEEKLY – James 1:1-18 Trials & Temptations

**Memory verses:** James 1:2-3 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

### VOLUNTEER TO OPEN IN PRAYER

### BREAKING THE ICE: (5 Minutes)

*Do you have a favorite book of the Bible? Which one and in one sentence why? A few to share.*

### PART 1— GETTING FAMILIAR WITH THE AUTHOR (5 Minutes)

- 1) *Who was the author of this letter? (Read Matthew 13:55----Galatians 1:19----Mark 6:3)*
- 2) *Who did James write this letter to? Why?*

### PART 2—DEALING WITH TRIALS ( 25 Minutes)

1) *There are two main themes we are looking at here. Persevering through trials and persevering through temptation. Depending on the version of bible we are using, the word “persevere” may be translated as “enduring” or being “patient” in the midst of trials and temptation. Let’s have a few people give their ideas on what the difference is between a trial and temptation in the context James is using. (5min)*

2) *According to James and other scriptures, what is God’s purpose for allowing His children to face trials? Again, keep in mind as we read through the bible we will be looking at scriptures that use the words “suffering, persecutions and tribulations” as these in themselves are forms of trials and should be treated with the same attitude of perseverance. ( Read: James 1:2-3----Romans 5:3-5----2 Cor 1:4----) (5min)*

3) *What would our biblical response be toward hardships? In what ways are we rewarded? (5min)*

4) *What would be an improper response be toward trials? How would this affect us and displease the Lord? (5min)*

### PART 3---DEALING WITH TEMPTATIONS ( 55 Minutes)

1) *Where does temptation come from? (Matt 4:1---- Matt 18:7-9--- Mark 9:42-50--- 1 Cor 7:5) (5min)*

2) *Where does temptation not come from? (James 1:13) (5min)*

3) *James describes a sequence of events that take one from the temptation through to committing the act of sin itself. What is this sequence, as described in James 1:14-15? Take a look at (Gen 3:6). (10 min)*

4) *How should we deal with temptation? Before looking through these verses, let’s go around the room and get some ideas of things we can do personally to deal with temptation when it arises and how to avoid it. (Matt 4:1-11 , 26:41 Luke 22:40, 46 1Cor 10;13 2Cor 10:5 Heb 4:15 2Tim 2:22 Prov 22:3 1Peter 5:8; Heb 2:18) (15 min)*

5) *If anyone is comfortable with it, would anyone like to share some of types of temptations that they personally face? (10min)*

6) *What does the bible tell us about perseverance? (Read Rom 2:7---8:24-25---2 Cor 6:3-7---2 Peter 1:3-9) (10 min)*

## THE WEEKLY – James 1:1-18 Trials & Temptations

*Memory verses: James 1:2-3 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*

### VOLUNTEER TO OPEN IN PRAYER

#### BREAKING THE ICE: (5 Minutes)

*Do you have a favorite book of the Bible? Which one and in one sentence why?  
A few to share.*

#### PART 1— GETTING FAMILIAR WITH THE AUTHOR (5 Minutes)

- 1) *Who was the author of this letter? (Read Matthew 13:55-----Galatians 1:19---Mark 6:3)*
- 2) *Who did James write this letter to? Why?*

#### PART 2—DEALING WITH TRIALS ( 25 Minutes)

1) *There are two main themes we are looking at here. Persevering through trials and persevering through temptation. Depending on the version of bible we are using, the word “persevere” may be translated as “enduring” or being “patient” in the midst of trials and temptation. Let’s have a few people give their ideas on what the difference is between a trial and temptation in the context James is using. (5min)*

2) *According to James and other scriptures, what is God’s purpose for allowing His children to face trials? Again, keep in mind as we read through the bible we will be looking at scriptures that use the words “suffering, persecutions and tribulations” as these in themselves are forms of trials and should be treated with the same attitude of perseverance. ( Read: James 1:2-3---Romans 5:3-5----2 Cor 1;4----) (5min)*

3) *What would our biblical response be toward hardships? In what ways are we rewarded? (5min)*

4) *What would be an improper response be toward trials? How would this affect us and displease the Lord? (5min)*

#### PART 3---DEALING WITH TEMPTATIONS ( 55 Minutes)

1) *Where does temptation come from? (Matt 4:1---- Matt 18:7-9--- Mark 9:42-50--- 1 Cor 7:5) (5min)*

2) *Where does temptation not come from? (James 1:13) (5min)*

3) *James describes a sequence of events that take one from the temptation through to committing the act of sin itself. What is this sequence, as described in James 1:14-15? Take a look at (Gen 3:6). (10 min)*

4) *How should we deal with temptation? Before looking through these verses, let’s go around the room and get some ideas of things we can do personally to deal with temptation when it arises and how to avoid it. (Matt 4:1-11 , 26:41 Luke 22:40, 46 1Cor 10;13 2Cor 10:5 Heb 4:15 2Tim 2:22 Prov 22:3 1Peter 5:8; Heb 2:18) (15 min)*

5) *If anyone is comfortable with it, would anyone like to share some of types of temptations that they personally face? (10min)*

6) *What does the bible tell us about perseverance?  
(Read Rom 2:7---8:24-25---2 Cor 6:3-7---2 Peter 1:3-9) (10 min)*