

ENCORE | Introduction to the Book of James ENCORE

- 01) What comes to mind when you think of the Book of James?

- 02) Most scholars and church historians agree that the epistle of James was written by James the brother of Jesus. What do you think it was like growing up with Jesus as your older brother?

- 03) Read John 7:1-5. What was James' attitude about Jesus at this time?

- 04) Why might it have been difficult for Jesus' brothers to believe He was the Christ, the Son of God?

- 05) In Acts 1:13-14 we find James gathered with the other disciples in the upper room, and his attitude toward Jesus had changed. What happened?

- 06) Do you think James' childhood memories of Jesus might have changed?

- 07) Who was this letter addressed to (v. 1)?

- 08) Who was James' ministry primarily to (Gal. 2:9)?

- 09) How does this affect the way we approach or interpret this epistle?

- 10) Read Acts 15:13-21. How might this passage help you understand James' teaching on the "Law" and "works" in the epistle of James?

- 11) What are you looking forward to the most in our study of James?

Looking Ahead | James 1:1-8

Monday (James 1:1-3) – Don't ever doubt that trials will accomplish something positive. They are designed to produce "patience" or better translated "endurance" or "perseverance." With every trial, we build the tenacity of spirit that holds on under pressure while waiting patiently on God to remove the trial at the appointed time and then reward us. It strengthens us as we gain more endurance. God builds us up in the same way a runner gradually develops the ability to run long distance. He starts small and works up to his maximum capacity. God allows increasingly greater trials in our lives to increase our endurance for greater ministry and joy, for the more difficult the battle, the sweeter the victory. When you come out of a difficult trial, you can rejoice over God's delivering you. That proves Him to be trustworthy, and that strengthens your faith. From John MacArthur's "Truth for Today"

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 13-15; Acts 2:1-21

Tuesday (James 1:4) – Many of us are all right in the main, but there are some domains in which we are slovenly. It is not a question of sin, but of the remnants of the carnal life which are apt to make us slovenly. Slovenliness is an insult to the Holy Ghost. There should be nothing slovenly, whether it be in the way we eat and drink, or in the way we worship God. Not only must our relationship to God be right, but the external expression of that relationship must be right. Ultimately God will let nothing escape, every detail is under His scrutiny. In numberless ways God will bring us back to the same point over and over again. He never tires of bringing us to the one point until we learn the lesson, because He is producing the finished product. It may be a question of impulse, and again and again, with the most persistent patience, God has brought us back to the one particular point; or it may be mental wool-gathering, or independent individuality. God is trying to impress upon us the one thing that is not entirely right. We have been having a wonderful time this Session over the revelation of God's Redemption, our hearts are perfect towards Him; His wonderful work in us makes us know that in the main we are right with Him. "Now," says the Spirit, through St. James, "let your endurance be a finished product." Watch the slipshod bits - "Oh, that will have to do for now." Whatever it is, God will point it out with persistence until we are entirely His. From Oswald Chambers "My Utmost for His Highest"

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 16-18; Acts. 2:22-47

Wednesday (James 1:5) – If any of you lack wisdom. There is no "if" in the matter, for I am sure I lack it. What do I know? How can I guide my own way? How can I direct others? LORD, I am a mass of folly, and wisdom I have none. Thou sayest, "Let him ask of God." LORD, I now ask. Here at Thy footstool I ask to be furnished with heavenly wisdom for this day's perplexities, ay, and for this day's simplicities; for I know I may do very stupid things, even in plain matters, unless Thou dost keep me out of mischief. I thank Thee that all I have to do is to ask. What grace is this on Thy part, that I have only to pray in faith and Thou wilt give me wisdom'. Thou dost here promise me a liberal education, and that, too, without an angry tutor or a scolding usher. This, too, Thou wilt bestow without a fee -- bestow it on a fool who lacks wisdom. O LORD, I thank Thee for that positive and expressive word "It shall be given him." I believe it. Thou wilt this day make Thy babe to know the hidden wisdom which the carnally prudent never learn. Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory. From Charles Spurgeon "Faith's Checkbook"

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 19-21; Acts 3

Thursday (James 1:5) – When you are being tested, you need to recognize your need for strength, and you must look for a greater resource to hold onto in the midst of the trial-God Himself. The search for wisdom is man's supreme search. For those who know and love the Lord, He provides that wisdom. This kind of wisdom is not philosophical speculation, but the absolutes of God's will-the divine wisdom that is pure and peaceable (James 3:17). Divine wisdom results in right conduct in all of life's matters. When some Christians go through troubles, their first response is to run to some other human resource, Although God may work through other believers, your initial response to trials should be to ask God directly for wisdom that will allow you to be joyous and submissive in finding and carrying out God's will. Today's verse is a command to pray. It is as mandatory as Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Trials are intended to drive us to dependency on God by making us realize we have no sufficient human resources. From John MacArthur's "Truth for Today"

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 22-24; Acts 4:1-22

Friday (James 1:6) – A believer should request wisdom in confident trust in God. If you lack wisdom, it's not God's fault. If you don't understand your trial-why your spouse died, your health is deteriorating, your finances are a mess, or why you are having problems with your car, your job, or your children-then you probably haven't asked God with unwavering faith to give you wisdom. Perhaps you have prayed somewhat insincerely with wrong motives like those whom James condemned as praying for wisdom only to help with their lusts (4:3). Maybe you're not praying in accord with 1 Timothy 2:8 which says "without wrath or doubting," and you doubt whether God is able or willing to help. Unwavering faith simply believes that God is a sovereign, loving God who will supply everything needed for understanding the trial and being able to endure it. Whatever the trial is, you can believe that God allowed it for His purpose and your spiritual maturity. From John MacArthur's "Truth for Today"

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 25-26; Acts 4:23-37

Saturday (James 1:6-7) – The doubting person who doesn't believe that God can provide wisdom is like the billowing, restless sea, moving back and forth with its endless tides, never able to settle. There's no sense in such a person supposing he will receive anything from the Lord. When faced with a trial an unbeliever who professes to know Christ will doubt God and get angry with Him and eventually sever his association with a church. A true Christian who is spiritually immature may respond in a similar manner because he reacts emotionally to his difficult circumstances and doesn't fully trust God. In the midst of a trial he will not experience a joyous attitude, an understanding mind, a submissive will, or a believing heart. He will seem unable to ask for wisdom from God and unwilling to take advantage of the resources He has provided, never knowing the resolution available to him through faithful, persistent prayer to God. From John MacArthur's "Truth for Today"

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 27-29; Acts 5:1-21

Sunday –

- Daily Bible Reading: Prov. 30-31; Acts 5:22-42