

Video: [James Chapter 1](#) - [Bible Project Book of James](#)

- Author: **James, a leader of the Jerusalem church**; Church tradition and evidence attribute the book to James, half-brother of Jesus and a primary leader of the church in Jerusalem. James was martyred around AD 62.
- James Audience: Written for **Jewish/Christian – (The Twelve Tribes)** but it is also reverent to all Christians, even as gentle.

Theme: **James emphasizes that God enables a life of faith that works itself out in action, especially with mercy for those most vulnerable.**

- Early Date (AD 44–49): **Most traditional scholars date** the letter before the Jerusalem Council of AD 49 (described in Acts 15). [1, 2]
- Lack of Gentile Conflict: **The book addresses Jewish Christians** ("the twelve tribes scattered among the nations"). It does not mention any conflict or rules regarding Gentile believers. This absence suggests it was written before the major debates about **Gentiles entering the church**.
- James simply identifies himself as **“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”** (James 1:1). Because James the disciple was an early martyr (Acts 12:2), the likely candidate for the authorship of this epistle is **James, the brother of Jesus** (Galatians 1:19). **A skeptic at the time of Jesus’ ministry** (Mark 3:21; John 7:5), **James converted after witnessing the resurrected Jesus** (1 Corinthians 15:7). **James later became a prominent figure in the church** (Galatians 2:9).

James participated in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, delivering a speech in support of Paul (Acts 15:13–21). This is significant due to alleged contradictions between James and Paul, **particularly regarding justification by faith** (James 2:14–26; cf. Ephesians 2:8–9). **It seems the truth is that the teachings of Paul and James are complementary.** While we are **declared righteous through faith alone** (Paul’s emphasis), **our faith is intended to yield good deeds** (James’ emphasis). **Paul also emphasized the importance of good conduct resulting from faith in the gospel, aligning with the letter of James** (see Ephesians 4:1).

The letter of James deals with the **“practical”** side of faith, which means trusting God even in times difficulties and crises.

Something to Think About: **Think about the way you have responded to a recent problem or struggle in your life. How would you describe your general attitude during this time? What does your response to this situation reveal about your view of God?**

James introductory chapter is designed to sum up the main ideas to the entire book. Chapter 1 is a flowing stream of wise teachings and one-liners that introduce us to all of the keywords and themes that we'll see in chapters 2-5.

KEY THEMES • God gives us true wisdom. • Satan tempts to break us; God tests to strengthen us. • The words we use are powerful and influential. • Faith and good deeds go hand in hand.

✚ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead (James 2:26).

Notes: NIV Application Bible

1:1 James describes himself as a “**servant**,” as one who speaks with authority, but as one with the mind of Christ. James issues a strong call for the basic character of the Christian life to be that of servant. That Jesus was the **Servant-Messiah**.

James 1:2

1:2–8 James speaks of “**pure joy**” a complete, overflowing joy. Although it seems strange, trials are to be occasions of such joy.

Trials are the process through which **something** good develops.

Through trials we need to trust in the **reliability** and the goodness of God.

Joy vs. Happiness: Joy is **not** the same as happiness. Happiness depends on comfortable, pleasant circumstances, whereas biblical joy is a deep, steady confidence in God regardless of outward pain. Crossway.org

A Shift in Perspective: Seeing trials as occasions for joy does not mean pretending pain doesn't hurt or enjoying the suffering itself. Instead, it means looking past the immediate pain to trust that God is working out a greater, positive purpose.

Is your life marked by the joy of the Lord? What are you preaching to your heart as you endure your present pain? Do you believe the Lord is working all things together for your good?

Testing Produces Endurance: Hardships test and stretch a person's faith, much like physical exercise breaks down muscle or fire refines gold. This process builds **perseverance** and **spiritual maturity**.

[1:3](#) Trials can be a means of testing your faith, that can produce **perseverance**.

[1:4](#) The result of the testing of faith is “**perseverance**.” The “**complete**” person is one whose character is fully formed; it is not “**perfection**”.

How do you see popular culture standard of perfection?

⁴ *Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

[1:5](#) **Wisdom understands God's purposes.** James conveys the notion that God's spontaneous generosity is unwavering, regardless of our previous record. (**Grace & Mercy**).

[1:8](#) **With the words “double-minded and unstable,”** James is speaking of someone who constantly changes allegiances. James calls us to be people of character **whose faith displays itself in action** corresponding with what God has called us to be.

[1:9–11](#) **It is possible that the those that are rich (have wealth)** includes the wealthy people whose lives gave little evidence of **Christian commitment**, disqualifying them from true membership. **The humble should rejoice** because their poverty provides an arena for their faith to be tested. **This allows endurance to grow.** Ultimately, they will be exalted, just as Jesus had promised.

Living in poverty, trials persist in the daily fight for survival; a wealthy person may not notice or grasp them, yet they face trials too. Are our trials not simply the human tendency toward sin that we must overcome with God's help, along with the struggle against the evil one (devil) who holds temporary control over many parts of this world, as the evil one exploits human sin?

With wisdom comes an appreciation for the timing of God. As we experience trials in life, we ask for wisdom in prayer. Trials push us to **(think about)** contemplate the Scripture, pray, and **seek God's. In so doing, we become more like Jesus.**

[1:12](#) Calling Christians who **(endure)** suffer or tolerate something painful, difficult, or unpleasant without giving up, **"i.e. blessed,"** James is saying **Christians belong to God.** This includes intimacy with **God** and participation with him in his purposes.

[1:13–15](#) **Temptation originates in a personal desire born of self-interest.** It renders us **susceptible to evil desires (SIN).** We may wrongly seek to blame others, Satan, or even God, but ultimately, we are **morally responsible for our sinful actions.**

The Devil make me do that! - popularized in the 1970s by American comedian [Flip Wilson](#) – character Geraldine Jones.

Blaming a spiritual tempter goes back to the Book of Genesis, where Eve tells God, **"The serpent deceived me, and I ate,"** effectively offering the very first **"the devil made me do it"** defense.

In (Genesis 3:12), [Adam](#) blamed [Eve](#) and indirectly blamed **God** when asked why he ate the forbidden fruit. By saying *"The woman whom you gave to be with me,"* he implied that [God](#) shared the fault for creating her and putting her in his life.

[1:16–18](#) In the phrase **"the Father of the heavenly lights,"** James has combined two important theological ideas (v. [17](#)). The first is that **God is the Father of the universe** and has power over the heavenly luminaries; both concepts recall the creation account. The second is the notion of **God as Father and of God as light.** James further describes God as one **"who does not change like shifting shadows"** (v. [17](#)). **God is light, and in him there is no shadow. God controls all the things to which we wrongfully attribute power; he controls political forces, economic forces, Satan, fate, and the stars.**

*"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the **Father of the heavenly lights, with whom there is no change or shifting shadow.**" — [James 1:17](#)*

The teaching of vv. [12–18](#) might be summed up as follows: **Since we were created by God with the full potential for truth and life, we should use it and not trade it for falsehood.**

The **sinful nature of man** is an internal, inherited bias toward **rebellion and disobedience against God.**

- **The Fall of Man:** Rooted in Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, sin entered the human experience and altered human nature.

Born into Sin: People do not become sinners just by committing bad acts; rather, humans commit bad acts because they possess a foundational, inherited sin nature from birth (Psalm 51:5).

The Flesh: The New Testament often calls this internal opposing force "the flesh" (*sarx*), **which actively resists God's will and spiritual guidance.** [What is the sin nature?](#) | [412teens.org](#) (Checkout Video)

[1:12–18](#) James **calls us to see trials as opportunities for growth**, not evidence of God's indifference. To follow Jesus is to learn an attitude of mind and heart that is sensitive to the will and presence of God. God seeks and waits for our attention and for our hearts to be turned to him. **The first step is opening the door to God in prayer, asking God to be at work in our minds and hearts and to change us into his image and likeness.**

[1:19–21](#) The opening verb, **"take note of this"** (v. [19](#)), is most likely a command. It introduces the thoughts that follow: **"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"** (v. [19](#)). James provides two examples that illustrate his point: human anger and the righteous life that God desires. **Anger, in any form it takes, undermines the righteousness God intends for us.**

[Jas 1:19–21](#) If we struggle to control our anger, how can we grow in self-control?

[1:21](#) James opens with behaviors that should not characterize the life of a Christian. **Christians should “get rid of” or strip off certain behaviors** (v. [21a](#)). James instructs us to remove “moral filth” and “evil.” **These terms imply not only moral evil but also premeditated, evil intent.** James places before us an alternative path: “Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (v. [21b](#)). **Humility is the essential attribute of the poor**—those without resources who are dear to the heart of God. **God’s word has the power to save us.** We are to nurture it, for it is a force in the process of saving us. The result of this process is that we will receive **ultimate salvation**.

[1:22](#) **Living a life of holiness requires a life of action.** God’s people must continue to grow in carrying out the **commands of God’s word**. But **hearing alone is insufficient**. To hear and not to take action is to **lie to oneself**.

[1:23–24](#) The image in the mirror, whether the product of a quick glance or an adoring gaze, quickly dissipates; **whatever impression forms in the mind and heart while looking in a mirror is temporary**. Ignoring faith’s call to justice and action in the world is like this glance. When we “forget” what we look like as faithful followers of Christ, **we essentially forget who and whose we are**.

[1:25](#) For James “**perfect law**” and “**word**” (v. [23](#)) are related. For the Christian, this law is still the **will of God**. The perfect law, the word implanted and allowed to take root, **is ultimately the very teaching of Jesus**.

[1:26–27](#) **James highlights the sin of reckless speech**, the theme that opened the passage (v. [19](#)). Worship is described as worthless without actions motivated by a **godly character**. The practice of “**pure religion**” is described here as the control of **speech, acts of charity, and resisting temptation**.

[1:19–27](#) Words have great power to both wound and heal. Our speech has the power to encourage and nourish life or to snuff it out. **Which shall we choose?**