

## The Testing of a Believer's Faith

James 1:1-12

### Background

### Doctrinal Points

1. The testing of our faith results in maturity.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. The testing of our faith results in reward.

### Practical Application

1. We can be wise if we wish.

### Questions

1. Who is the author of the book of James? What else do we know about him?
  
2. Did James always believe in Jesus as the Christ?
  
3. How does James refer to himself?
  
4. How is the deity of Christ implied in James 1:1?
  
5. To whom was the epistle of James written?
  
6. Is the content of this epistle limited to its specific audience?

## Answers

1. James, the half-brother of Jesus. He was a leader in the church of Jerusalem, and who presided over the first church council held in Jerusalem
2. No. See John 7:5. But there came a change of heart and James became a believer.
3. He humbly refers to himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The Lord Jesus is put on the same level as God Himself, because Jesus is God.
5. *“To the twelve tribes scattered abroad.”* These would be Jewish believers who were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire.
6. No. The content of this epistle can be applied to all believers throughout time.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Refer to James 1:3-4. *“The testing of your faith results in maturity.”* The idea in the phrase, *“perfect and complete,”* is maturity. If you want to be a mature Christian, then thank the Lord for trials and tribulations which test your faith. It is impossible to be a mature believer apart from trials. You can be joyful in trials because you know that God is in control, and that whatever trial you face, it is not by chance. God uses each trial to test your faith so that your faith will become stronger, and you will mature as a believer. Sometimes it may seem to stretch you beyond what you can take, but God will never allow you to be tested beyond what you are able to bear. See 1 Corinthians 10:13. How are you responding to your trials?

2. Refer to James 1:12. The crown of life, the blessing is pronounced upon the one who endures in his faith, not the one who runs away from the trial. So, when the trials of faith come your way, don't play games and pretend that they don't exist. Rather, endure, persevere, and learn the lessons that God has for you. As you persevere in the testing of your faith, your relationship and appreciation of the Lord's love and grace is deepened and enlarged in a way that is impossible apart from trial. It is now that you have the privilege of enlarging your cup and thus receiving the crown of life. How much do you love the Lord? Enough to endure the testing of your faith?

## Challenge

1. Refer to James 1:5. Do you ask God to help you to understand the trials that test your faith? God guarantees an answer if you ask. He will give your insight, wisdom, and understanding as to why He is allowing a certain trial in your life, but you need to ask. You also need to come with the right attitude, not doubting His love, care, and goodness. How wise are you?

**Unholy Temptations and the Word of God that Overcomes Sin**  
**James 1:13-27**

**Background**

**Doctrinal Points**

**1. God does not tempt anyone to sin.**

**2. God uses His word to overcome sin.**

**Practical Application**

**1. Will you pass the OWS religion test this coming week?**

**Questions**

1. Why is it confusing to look at the word for holy “trials” and unholy “temptations”?

2. How can you sort out the confusion?

3. What is the context of James 1:2 and of James 1:13?

4. In which case is 1 Corinthians applicable? Explain.

5. Is the way of escape necessarily a relief from that situation?

## Answers

1. Because the same Greek word is used for both (holy) trials and (unholy) temptations.
2. By looking at the context.
3. James 1:2 has to do with holy trials of our faith; 1:13 has to do with unholy temptations to sin.
4. 1 Corinthians 10:13 is applicable to both James 1:2 and James 1:13. God will not allow you to face a test of your faith that you can't endure, or a temptation to sin that you can't resist.
5. No, but the power and strength in Christ is sufficient to endure the test or resist the temptation.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Refer to James 1:13. God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. We cannot blame God, nor can we blame even the devil when we sin. The problem is not the object of the temptation, but it is because of our sinful natures, and when we yield to the temptation, either in thought or action, it is sin. Death means separation, and unconfessed sin results in separation in fellowship with the Lord for the believer and eternal separation from God for the unbeliever. How are you doing with temptations?

2. Re-read James 1:18-25. God's primary method for helping us to overcome temptations to sin is His Word. We are the fruitfruits of God and are to be dedicated to God, just as the firstfruits of the harvest were always dedicated to God in the Old Testament. When we are dedicated to the Lord we will produce the righteousness of God in our lives. Hear and receive the word by reading, meditating and acting on the truths of Scripture. This is the means of overcoming sin and finding victory and blessing in your life. How are you doing in receiving and living out the word of God?

## Challenge

1. Will you pass the OWS religion test this coming week? Try it!

**Not Showing Personal Favoritism**  
**James 2:1-13**

**Background**

**Doctrinal Points**

**1. Showing favoritism reverses God's normal way.**

**2. Showing favoritism breaks God's moral law.**

**Practical Application**

**1. Let mercy triumph over judgment.**

**Questions**

1. Is favoritism an easy sin to commit?
2. What is the theme of the epistle of James?
3. What was the subject of Chapter 1?
4. How big or how small are our tests of faith?
5. What is the teaching of James 2?

## Answers

1. Yes.
2. "Practical Christian Living."
3. The proper Christian response when we face tests of our faith and when we face temptations to sin.
4. Tests range from small to large. Recall both from your own life and how you dealt with them.
5. It is in another area of Christian living – not showing favoritism because of someone's wealth or position.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Showing favoritism because of a person's wealth or status or position is wrong in God's eyes. Review the examples in James 2:2-4 of two people coming into a church setting. How would you respond to two such people coming into your church? To which one would you gravitate during fellowship time? Which one would you invite home for dinner? Actually, which one would you invite to church? Remember, God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith.

2. If you show favoritism, you are not fulfilling God's royal law. God's law is a unity, and when you show favoritism you are breaking a part (and therefore all) of this law. Believers will lose out on reward if they practice partiality and show favoritism. Who is your neighbor? With whom are you cultivating friendships? With those who can give gifts to you, or with those who cannot give you anything in return?

## Challenge

1. Refer to James 2:12-13. See also Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. All of these verses have to do with the Judgment Seat of Christ, the place reserved for believers where lives will be reviewed as to their faithfulness and service to the Lord. When you show mercy to the poor and needy and handicapped and hurting people around you, it will go a long way in your favor when the Lord reviews your life before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Will you receive rewards from him for refusing to show favoritism now?

**Faith without Works is Dead**  
**James 2:14-26**

**Background**

**Doctrinal Points**

**1. Faith without works is dead**

**2. Abraham and Rahab did works of faith.**

**Practical Application**

**1. Do you believe more than the demons?**

**Questions**

1. Down through the centuries of church history, Christians have discussed and debated the meaning of this passage of Scripture. Why?
2. Which of the reformers referred to James as the epistle of straw? Why did he refer to James this way?
3. Refer to Romans 4:5; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9; and Titus 3:5. What are these passages setting forth?
4. Can James' statement that "faith without works is dead" be harmonized with the other clear statements that we are saved by faith alone?

## Answers

1. These verses seem to be saying that salvation is not by faith alone, but there must also be good works, for faith without works is dead.
2. Martin Luther. To Luther, it seemed that James was contradicting the apostle Paul, who clearly wrote that salvation is by faith alone.
3. That salvation is by faith alone.
4. Yes, they must be harmonized because the Bible does not contradict itself. The Bible is God's Word, and God does not contradict Himself.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Refer to James 2:17, 26. In these verses, James is clearly teaching that faith without works is dead, but he has in mind the good works of helping people who are in need. James is speaking not about salvation, but he is describing a faith that works, showing evidence of faith. Good works are not the root of salvation, but the fruit of salvation. How does your life show evidence of your salvation?

2. Review James 2:21-26 and Genesis 15:6. *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness."* Paul quotes this verse in Romans 4:3 to show that Abraham was saved by faith and not by works. James is not contradicting Paul in James 2:21. The key is in James 2:23. Review the history, noting that God had declared Abraham righteous based on his faith in Genesis 15, thirty years before the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22), but the offering of Isaac proved that Abraham had saving faith. His works proved that Abraham had the right kind of faith. How would God refer to your faith?

## Challenge

1. *"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble."* James 2:19. James' point here is that saving faith is more than head knowledge. Do you have saving faith, or only head knowledge? Be sure that you have more than mental assent to Biblical truths. Saving faith needs evidence and is proved by good works. Do you believe more than the demons?



## **The Tongue** **James 3:1-12**

### **Background**

### **Doctrinal Points**

- 1. The tongue is a small part, but it has a big effect.**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. The tongue is a restless evil, but it can be controlled.**

### **Practical Application**

- 1. It's easier not to say it than to try and take it back.**

### **Questions**

1. If our tongues are not kept under control, our whole persons are out of control. True or False?
2. What is the theme of the epistle of James?
3. Name the areas of instruction, in Chapter 1, 2 and 3.
4. Refer to James 1:19, James 1:26, James 2:12, James 3, James 4:11, and James 5:12. What is the theme?
5. Why do teachers of the Bible receive a stricter judgment?
6. How can the tongue be controlled?

## Answers

1. True.
2. "Practical Christian living." James provides practical and ethical instruction for many areas of life.
3. Chapter 1 – Instruction regarding the testing of our faith and in reference to our temptations to sin.  
Chapter 2 - Instruction in the sin of showing favoritism to those with social status.  
Chapter 3 – Instruction in the use of our tongues.
4. Controlling the tongue.
5. If teachers do not know the word, they will sin with their tongue and stumble. Teaching the Bible is a serious responsibility, and will be judged by the Lord Himself.
6. By doing what it takes to grow in Christ – Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship. If you are involved in these activities, your life in Christ will thrive and your tongue will be governed by your new nature.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Review James 3:3-6. List the three different illustrations given here that emphasize how something small, like the tongue, can result in great effect. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and out of control it is destructive and devastating and deceptive. Recall how you used your tongue during this past week.

2. Good news! The tongue can be controlled. The very fact that with the tongue we can both bless God and curse men (James 3:9-10), is a hint that the tongue can be controlled. The believer has two natures, the fallen sin nature that we are born with, and the new nature because we've been born again and have new life in Christ. Because of our new nature, our tongues can be controlled and used to praise God and edify one another.

## Challenge

1. Did you ever try to take something back that you said when you were angry or only thinking of yourself? It's not easy to do. It is easier not to say it than to try and take it back. Our Lord said in Matthew 12:36 that for every idle word that men may speak they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. How often do you wish that you had not spoken in anger or haste? Pray as David prayed in Psalm 141:3.

**Two Different Kinds of Wisdom**  
**James 3:13-18**

**Background**

**Doctrinal Points**

1. The wisdom from below is earthly, natural and demonic.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. The wisdom from above is first of all pure.

**Practical Application**

1. Remember, there are two wisdoms when you make decisions.

**Questions**

1. Name the two different wisdoms discussed in this portion of Scripture.
2. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
3. Which book in the OT is called “wisdom literature?” Which book in the New Testament is called “wisdom literature?”
4. Why are these books called “wisdom literature?”
5. How can we know for sure which wisdom we are following?

## Answers

1. The wisdom from below and the wisdom from above.
2. Knowledge is the apprehension of truth in one's mind; wisdom is the application of truth to one's life.
3. Old Testament – Proverbs; New Testament – James.
4. Because they give us guidance for the application of truth to our everyday lives.
5. James 1:5.
6. The answer is to look at the results as seen in James 3:13-14, observed in our conduct.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Refer to James 3:15. The wisdom from below is earthly, natural and demonic, resulting in pride, envy, self-seeking and evil. See 1 Corinthians 1:21. Wisdom from below does not take God into account. Wisdom from below is sensual or natural; it is the wisdom of the flesh, the fallen and sinful nature that we all possess. Ultimately, Satan is the source of wisdom from below, designed to appeal to our fallen natures. When you are faced with decisions, check your source of wisdom. Are you taking God into account, or are you listening to Satan?

2. Refer to James 3:17. Read this verse carefully, pausing after each description of the wisdom from above. Do you want peace in your life? How are you pursuing it in your family and in your fellowship? Are you willing to give up your rights for the sake of others? When someone wrongs you, do you seek revenge? If you are following the wisdom from above, your life and the fruit of your life will be characterized by righteousness and peace (James 3:18). Are you following the wisdom from above? Have you first of all asked for God's wisdom? See James 1:5.

## Challenge

1. Remember the Gibeonites of Joshua 9, whose craftiness seemed so right. Satan, the master of deception, will try to trick you into following his wisdom. Remember, also, Joshua's mistake – he did not ask counsel of the Lord (Joshua 3:14). When you make decisions, as you do daily, make sure you ask counsel from the Lord and pray for God's guidance.



## Answers

1. No, unfortunately, it applies to believers, too.
2. No, unfortunately, it applies to today as well.
3. To the Jewish believers who were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. However, the exhortations are applicable to us today.
4. The term, “brethren.”
5. The term, “adultery” can be taken both in the literal sense and in the spiritual sense. In the latter, friendship with the world means to commit spiritual adultery, taking priority over full commitment to the Lord. Just as God’s people in the Old Testament turned away from the Lord and turned to the foreign gods, so God’s people today commit spiritual adultery.
6. Lust is strong selfish desire.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Re-read James 4:1-2. The ultimate source of strife is lust, a strong selfish desire. It is understandable why unbelievers would lust for the pleasures and possessions and power and prestige of this world, but this should not be so for the Christian. Pray that God will keep you from selfish desires of this world. Where is your treasure? There your heart will be also. See Matthew 6:21.

2. The source of strife is in our ungodly lusts, but praise God that we are not left to overcome these ungodly lusts in our own strength. No matter what the problem or need that is causing strife, remember that God’s grace is sufficient to overcome. See James 4:6 and Hebrews 4:16. Our part is to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, to submit to God. This means a time of real soul searching, a time of confession and consecration. Have you come to that place yet? Have you ever cried before the Lord about your lack of commitment and the strife and problems you cause? Prayerfully re-read James 4:1-10.

## Challenge

1. Remember the way up is the way down. When you humble yourself before the Lord, God says that He will exalt you. Do you believe it? See James 4:10, Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Peter 5:6. Have you humbled yourself before the Lord?

**Finding Fault and Planning Ahead without the Lord**  
**James 4:11-17**

**Background**

**Doctrinal Points**

1. It is a sin to speak evil of a fellow believer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. It is a sin to plan ahead without the Lord.

**Practical Application**

1. Remember, there are also sins of omission.

**Questions**

1. What is the theme of the epistle of James?
  
  
2. James points out the particular area of struggle, the particular problem, and then what does he do?
  
  
3. What is our responsibility in dealing with life's problems?
  
  
4. How many commands are listed in the five chapters of James?
  
  
5. How are we able to follow these commands?
  
  
6. What is meant by "DV?"

## Answers

1. "Practical Christian Living."
2. He doesn't leave us stranded because he gives us the solution to the problem.
3. We are given commands to do something, then we are to follow them.
4. There are fifty-four commands. These commands are the solutions to the problems.
5. By asking God for help
6. DV is short for two Latin words – Deo Volente, which means "God willing."

## Discuss / Consider

1. *Do not speak evil of one another, brethren.* James 4:11 Speaking evil of a fellow believer means to find fault with him/her and publicize it. This is a sin and it leads to contempt. When we find fault with fellow believers, we not only judge them, but we judge God's law of love. Essentially, we are disagreeing with God and thus we are finding fault with God. Are you a faultfinder? How dare we judge one another? How dare we disagree with God?

2. *"You do not know what will happen tomorrow... You ought to say, 'If the Lord wills...'"* James 4:14-15 Planning ahead without consulting the Lord not only lacks common sense, but it is a sin. It is a form of arrogance and boasting and evil (James 4:16). It is not wrong to plan ahead. In fact, goal setting and counting the cost are biblical principles. It becomes a sin when the Lord is not consulted. To make plans apart from the Lord is to presume upon God and assume that we know the future.

## Challenge

1. *"To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."* James 4:17 There are sins of commission, but there are also sins of omission. Sins of omission take place when we don't do what we know we should do. Review your life this past week and consider your sins of omission. For example, did you see someone in need that you could have helped? Determine to be more aware of others' needs this coming week.





## Answers

- Chapter 1 – Practical exhortations concerning the tests of our faith and our temptations to sin.  
Chapter 2 – Practical exhortations on not showing favoritism to those having social status.  
Chapter 3 – Practical exhortations on concerning the proper use of our tongues.  
Chapter 4 – Practical exhortations concerning strife and making plans without taking God into account.  
Chapter 5 – Practical exhortations to the rich and to the oppressed.
- Hoarding.
  - Acquiring wealth by dishonest means.
  - Luxurious living.
  - Condemning the just.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Review James 5:1-6, where the four sins of the rich are denounced. The rich in this section refers to both Christians and non-Christians. Although the epistle was written to the twelve tribes scattered throughout the Roman Empire, the contents would become known to non-believers of the first century as well. It is sad to note that the sins of the rich are practiced by many rich Christians, both then and today. It is not wrong to be rich if God so chooses for you, but beware that rich Christians are vulnerable to committing the sins listed by James. Consider these sins and ask yourself:

“Am I a hoarding Christian or am I a sharing Christian?”

“If you are rich, how did you acquire your wealth – by honest or dishonest means?”

“Am I living a self-indulgent lifestyle when others around me are in need?”

“Have I taken advantage of poor people?”

2. James 5:7-11 is addressed to believers who are being oppressed. Are you feeling oppressed either by people or by circumstances? If so, wait patiently enduring the oppression that you may receive your reward. Remember Job and the Lord’s compassion and mercy (Job 42). Be patient and be encouraged – life is short, the Lord is at hand, the judge is standing at the door. The Lord’s return is imminent, perhaps even today.

## Challenge

1. “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes.’” *James 5:12* There is a tendency to grumble when you are under oppression, either from people or circumstances. Have you been a grumbler? The Bible says that it is wrong and that you will be judged. The Lord warned us of this sin in Matthew 5:37. With the Lord’s help, we should stay cool and calm and collected, and we should always be very honest. How are you doing?

**God Answers Prayer**  
**James 5:13-20**

**Background**

**Doctrinal Points**

**1. Prayers for the sick are answered.**

**2. Prayers of the righteous are effective.**

**Practical Application**

**1. Let's save souls and cover sins.**

**Questions**

1. The theme of this portion of Scripture is both encouraging and controversial. Explain.
2. What does this passage teach in general about sickness and healing?
3. Is sickness the direct result of some specific sin in a believer's life?
4. What is disciplinary sickness?
5. Whenever you see a Christian who is sick, is it disciplinary sickness?
6. Does God heal people today?
7. What should we consider when we think about healers?

## Answers

1. We believe that God is able to heal the sick, but we would ask, “Is this promise for healing good for today, or was it only good for the early church when the sign gifts were still in operation? Is the promise of healing good for every illness or only for sickness associated with God’s discipline of the believer?”
2. Sickness is the result of sin in a general way. If sin had never entered the world there would be no sickness. Sickness and death are the result of sin.
3. Yes, there are some cases where sickness is the direct result of some specific sin in the believer’s life. See 1 Corinthians 11:27-30. This is called disciplinary sickness.
4. Disciplinary sickness is when a Christian sins and the Lord disciplines him in reference to that specific sin.
5. No. There are many biblical examples where individuals are sick and it has nothing to do with a specific sin in their lives. See, for example, John 9:1-3.
6. Yes. Usually, the means that God uses today is natural. Medical doctors can prescribe medicines and remove obstacles to that the human body which God has marvelously designed can do its natural work of healing. But God can heal supernatural as well, both then and today.
7. Consider the source and power of their healing. Is it of Satan or is it of God? Beware of occult and pagan healers.

## Discuss / Consider

1. Re-read James 5:15. Consider, “Does this verse mean that if you pray for healing and the sick person is not healed, then you and the sick person didn’t have enough faith?” There are numerous biblical examples where people prayed with great faith and were not healed. It is not God’s will to heal in every case. Actually, this verse refers to disciplinary sickness. That is, sickness because of a specific sin. In context, note James 5:16. Consider disciplinary sickness as a “Time-out” from God, so that the believer will look up and repent of his sin. Do you believe that you have ever been under God’s hand of discipline in this way?

2. *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16* Elijah’s prayers were based on the revealed word of God and he prayed in faith. Do you want to see your prayers answered? Then base your prayers on the revealed Word of God and pray in faith. Challenge: pray this week for a specific opportunity to share the gospel with a specific individual that you know. Then watch God work! He loves to answer those kinds of prayers!

## Challenge

1. Re-read James 5:19-20. The saving of souls here and the covering of sins does not refer to eternal salvation in this passage, but the context is the disciplining of the wayward believer. Do you pray earnestly for fellow believers who have wandered from the truth? Do you reach out to them and love them back into the fellowship? Pray specifically for a prodigal fellow believer, then reach out to him/her in love.