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Trials and Temptations - James 1:1-18

Topics: Believe, Desires, Doubt, Evil, God, Prayer, Temptation, Wealth

Open It

1. Why would you agree or disagree with the statement, “Life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you respond to what happens to you”?
- * 2. How would you respond to someone who tells you that good can come from the trials which you are experiencing?
3. What doubts about God and prayer does the average person usually experience?

Explore It

4. Who wrote this letter? (1:1)
5. To whom was this letter written? (1:1)
- * 6. What attitude did James tell people to exhibit when they are facing trials? (1:2)
- * 7. What is produced when our faith is tested? (1:3-4)
8. What is God’s response when we ask for wisdom? (1:5)
9. What effect does doubt have on a person when he or she prays? (1:6-8)
10. What will eventually happen to the wealth of a rich person? (1:10-11)
- * 11. What reward awaits the person who perseveres under trial? (1:12)
12. From where does temptation come? (1:13-15)
13. How does sin start and end? (1:13-15)
14. From where do all good and perfect gifts come? (1:16-17)
15. How did James describe God’s relationship with the people He created? (1:17-18)

Get It

16. What trials and difficulties have you experienced during your life?
17. Why does God allow people to go through trials and difficulties?
- * 18. What good has ever come out of a difficult situation in your life?
19. How does a person’s relationship with God change as he or she goes through trials and problems?
20. When do you find it hardest to pray?
21. With what doubts have you struggled concerning God and prayer?
22. How can doubting affect a person’s prayer life?
23. How can a person who pursues wealth and riches be disappointed?
24. In what way have material possessions disappointed you once you possessed them?
- * 25. How would you explain to a ten-year-old why a person does something wrong or evil?
26. Why do we often blame God for tempting us when we sin?
27. What can a person do to stop an evil desire from becoming an actual evil act?

Apply It

- * 28. What do you believe God is trying to teach you this week through the trials and situations you are experiencing?
29. In what specific areas do you need to ask God for His wisdom this week?
30. What temptations do you need God’s help to resist this week?

Listening and Doing - James 1:19-27

Topics: Anger, Caring, Compassion, Evil, Forget, Hypocrisy, Law, Listening, Obedience, Religion, Words

Open It

1. Who do you admire as a religious or spiritual role model?
2. How does it affect you when a person is caught doing what he or she tells others not to do?
- * 3. When are you most likely to lose your temper?

Explore It

- * 4. What instruction did James give about the relationship between speaking, listening, and anger? (1:19)
- * 5. What is the relationship between anger and righteous living? (1:20)
- * 6. What should a Christian clean out of his or her life? (1:21)
7. What is the relationship between listening to God's Word and doing it? (1:22)
8. What analogy did James use to describe a person who does not do what the Bible says? (1:23-24)
9. What promise did James give to the person who studies God's Word and practices it? (1:25)
10. What does the Bible give to people? (1:25)
11. How is a person's speech related to the credibility of his or her faith? (1:26)
12. What did James describe as pure religion? (1:27)
13. What is pure religion? (1:27)

Get It

14. What makes it hard for us to be good listeners?
- * 15. How can being quick to speak and quick to anger get you into trouble?
- * 16. How do displays of anger and temper affect the witness of a Christian?
17. What attitudes and habits can inhibit our growth as disciples of Christ?
18. What makes it hard for us to practice what we know to be good?
19. How does our speech reflect our relationship with God?
20. How have you experienced freedom by doing the Word of God?
21. What can we do to help widows and orphans?
22. In what ways can the world pollute us?
23. How can we keep ourselves from being polluted by the world?

Apply It

- * 24. In what situations this week will you need to curb your anger? How can you?
25. What do you need to change in your actions this week to match your talk?
26. Whom will you help this week in obedience to God's Word?

Favoritism Forbidden - James 2:1-13

Topics: Change, Differences, Equality, Favoritism, Judging Others, Poor, Prejudice, Status

Open It

- * 1. How much money would it take to make you consider yourself rich?
- 2. For what reasons might a person think he or she is more important than another person?
- 3. Where do you see prejudice being practiced?

Explore It

- 4. What practical example did James use to illustrate how favoritism was practiced in the church? (2:1-4)
- * 5. What has God promised to the poor of this world? (2:5)
- * 6. What does the church do to the poor person when it shows favoritism toward the rich? (2:6)
- * 7. What do rich people have a history of doing to people in the church? (2:6-7)
- 8. What is the royal law found in Scripture? (2:8)
- 9. What does practicing favoritism do to a person who is trying to keep the law? (2:9)
- 10. What does a person have to do to be considered a lawbreaker? (2:10-11)
- 11. By what standards should a person speak and act? (2:12)
- 12. What promise is made to people who judge without mercy? (2:13)
- 13. Why should we be merciful? (2:13)

Get It

- 14. In what ways have you been a victim of favoritism or prejudice?
- 15. How have you shown favoritism or prejudice toward other people?
- 16. Why do we often treat rich people as more important than poor people?
- 17. How do we use physical appearance, job status, and athletic ability to show favoritism toward people?
- * 18. How can we welcome poor people in our church?
- 19. Why does God have a special concern for poor people?
- * 20. In what practical ways can we show genuine love to people of different races, cultures, and economic standing?
- 21. Why is favoritism or prejudice often overlooked as a sin?
- 22. Why would God condemn us as lawbreakers if our sins are only “minor” ones, such as prejudice?

Apply It

- 23. From whom can you ask forgiveness this week for showing prejudice toward him or her?
- * 24. How can you change the way you look at wealth this week so that you value it as God does?

Faith and Deeds - James 2:14-26

Topics: Actions, Faith, God, Hypocrisy, Righteousness

Open It

- * 1. If you were 100 miles from home with no money, no credit cards, no friends, no transportation, and no place to stay, what would you do to survive and make it home?
- 2. What is the difference between someone who talks about a problem and someone who does something about the problem?

Explore It

- 3. What is the relationship between faith and deeds? (2:14)
- 4. What illustration did James use to explain how real faith affects a person's deeds? (2:15-17)
- 5. How did James describe faith that has no accompanying deeds? (2:17)
- 6. What is wrong with having faith without deeds? (2:18-26)
- 7. What do the demons believe about God? How does it affect them? (2:19)
- * 8. What did Abraham do to show his faith? (2:21-23)
- * 9. What made Abraham righteous? (2:23)
- * 10. How is a person justified before God? (2:24)
- 11. What did Rahab do? (2:25)
- 12. How did Rahab show faith? (2:25)
- 13. How are faith and deeds like the body and the spirit? (2:26)

Get It

- 14. How is being a Christian supposed to change the way we live?
- 15. What can a Christian do to help the people around him or her?
- 16. What is one way to tell if a person has a real, living faith?
- * 17. What is difficult about applying what we hear in church to our everyday lives?
- 18. What are some of the biblical commands which are hard for you to live out?
- 19. If God has forgiven us and promised us eternal life, what motivation do we have to live in obedience to Him today?
- 20. Which is easier for you—talking about your faith with others, or demonstrating love toward them?
- * 21. In what areas of your life do you want to begin acting more like a Christian?

Apply It

- * 22. In what home, work, or neighborhood situations might you be able to show faith in God this week? How?
- 23. How can you show greater faith in God by what you do this week?

Taming the Tongue - James 3:1-12

Topics: Change, Conversation, Teaching, Words

Open It

- * 1. If you could hear a tape recording of everything you said last week, what would you want to edit out?
- 2. How do you react when you hear someone cursing and using abusive language?
- 3. How can a person be hurt by the words of others?
- 4. What can you learn about a person by listening to him or her speak?

Explore It

- 5. What unique responsibility does a teacher bear? (3:1)
- * 6. If a person were never at fault in what he or she said, what would that show about the person? (3:2)
- * 7. What is significant about the way we talk? (3:2)
- 8. What is the purpose of a bit in the mouth of a horse? (3:3)
- 9. What is the purpose of the rudder of a ship? (3:4)
- 10. What damage can a small spark cause to a great forest? (3:4)
- 11. What similarity does a person's tongue have to a horse's bit, a ship's rudder, and a spark of fire? (3:5)
- 12. How did James describe the tongue? (3:6-8)
- 13. What damage do our tongues do to us? (3:6)
- * 14. What is so difficult about taming the tongue? (3:7-8)
- 15. Of what inconsistencies are we capable? (3:9-10)
- 16. In what ways are we inconsistent? (3:9-10)
- 17. What illustrations from nature did James use to condemn cursing? (3:11-12)
- 18. What can a spring or a fruit tree teach us about speech? (3:11-12)

Get It

- 19. What motivates a person to teach others?
- 20. How is a teacher in the church supposed to be different from the average member?
- 21. Why will God judge teachers more strictly than other people?
- * 22. What are the ways we sin with our speech?
- 23. Why are sins of speech often overlooked as not serious?
- 24. How is our speech influenced by others around us?
- 25. What practical advice would you give someone who wanted to control his or her tongue better?
- 26. What weaknesses in our lives does our speech often expose?
- * 27. In what times or places can your tongue be used for good?
- 28. How can you change your daily speech to reflect its importance in your life?

Apply It

- 29. What do you need to remove from your speech habits this week to make your words more pleasing to God?
- * 30. What positive words do your family and coworkers need to hear from your mouth this week?

Two Kinds of Wisdom - James 3:13-18

Topics: Ambition, Bitterness, Envy, Humility, Rewards, Wisdom

Open It

1. What occupations or jobs require lots of knowledge and training?
2. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
- * 3. What kinds of jobs or occupations require wisdom or discernment?
4. Where do people often go to get wisdom?

Explore It

- * 5. How can a person demonstrate wisdom and understanding? (3:13)
6. How can we tell when a person is wise? (3:13)
7. What common attitudes do we need to avoid boasting about? (3:14)
- * 8. What is wrong with the “wisdom” of a selfish and bitter person? (3:14-15)
9. How is a person’s character related to his or her ability to discern? (3:14-16)
10. From where does the “wisdom” of a selfish and bitter person come? (3:15)
11. To what do envy and selfish ambition lead? (3:16)
12. What are the qualities of the wisdom that comes from heaven? (3:17)
- * 13. How does a wise person act? (3:17-18)
14. What happens when people “plant seeds of peace”? (3:18)

Get It

15. What is the best way to make a lasting positive impression on others?
16. What is the difference between earthly wisdom and God’s wisdom?
- * 17. What life experiences increase our wisdom?
18. What are the marks of humility in a person?
19. What damage can bitter envy or selfish ambition do to a person?
- * 20. How can we get or experience heavenly wisdom?
21. What are practical ways we can sow seeds of peace during our life?
22. What godly characteristics are present in our speech when we are pursuing God’s wisdom?
23. What kind of bitter envy or selfish ambition do you tend to hold in your heart?

Apply It

24. What can you do this week to plant peace in a relationship or situation which has been troubling you?
- * 25. What can you do this week to seek God’s wisdom?

Submit Yourselves to God - James 4:1-12

Topics: Attitude, Commitment, Forgiveness, Grace, Humility, Pride, Quarrels, Repentance, Submission

Open It

1. If you could ask God for anything, what would it be?
- * 2. What do families and friends commonly fight about?

Explore It

3. What are the battles going on inside a person? (4:1-2)
- * 4. What is the root cause of fights and quarrels between people? (4:1-3)
5. Why don't people have what they want? (4:2)
6. Why doesn't God give some people what they ask for? (4:3)
7. What does friendship with the world do to our relationship with God? (4:4)
8. Whom does God oppose and favor? (4:6)
- * 9. When does God give us grace? (4:6)
- * 10. How did James describe the way we should come to God? (4:7-10)
11. How does the devil react when a person resists him? (4:7)
12. What does God do to us when we have an attitude of humility before Him? (4:10)
13. How are we to speak to one another? (4:11)
14. When we speak against a fellow believer, what attitude are we having toward God and His law? (4:11-12)

Get It

15. What do most people think God wants from them?
16. How has your belief about what God wants from you changed over the years?
17. How does pride show up in our work? home? church? community?
18. Why does God oppose people who are proud?
- * 19. What is the difference between pride and a sense of accomplishment?
20. How can a person tell when he or she has become proud?
- * 21. How can we reduce or remove the pride from our lives?
22. What do we want from God most of the time?
23. Why do we hesitate to give our lives to God?

Apply It

24. What sins of action and attitude do you need to confess to God today?
25. What can you do this week to draw near to God?
26. In what situations do you need to resist the devil this week?
- * 27. What can you do this week to help you bring more humility into your life?

Boasting About Tomorrow - James 4:13-17

Topics: Ambition, Decisions, Future, Goals, Greed, Judgment, Materialism, Plans, Sin

Open It

1. To where in the world would you like to travel?
2. If you could start your own business, what would it be?
- * 3. If you knew you had just three months to live, what are some things you would want to do?

Explore It

4. Whose attention did James want to get? (4:13)
- * 5. What warning did James give to those who make plans for the future? (4:13-14)
6. What could happen to destroy even the best laid plans? (4:14)
7. To what did James compare our lives? (4:14)
- * 8. What is the best way to plan ahead? (4:15)
- * 9. What should we say when we are making plans? (4:15)
10. What outlook toward the future does God want us to change? (4:16)
11. What sinful attitudes often accompany the act of making plans? (4:16)
12. How did James define sin? (4:17)
13. How do we sin? (4:17)

Get It

14. What's wrong with planning out our lives?
- * 15. What responsibility does God want us to take in planning our lives?
16. What is the best use we can make of our lives?
- * 17. How can we make plans for business or living which are pleasing to God?
18. Given how long you think you could live, how can you plan for the future with humility and faith?
19. What would you like to accomplish before you die?
20. What accomplishment from your life do you want to present to God?
21. How can you determine in your daily life what is sinful and what is pleasing to God?

Apply It

22. What aspects of your life plans do you need to present to God in prayer this week?
- * 23. What can you do this week to place your plans for the future in God's hands?
24. In what part of your job or occupation do you need to do the good you know you ought to do this week?

Warning to Rich Oppressors - James 5:1-6

Topics: Compassion, Greed, Injustice, Judgment, Justice, Materialism, Money, Oppressed, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. How much does it take to be considered rich in your community?
- 2. If you won \$1 million, what would you do with it?
- 3. How does money change people?

Explore It

- 4. Whom did James address in this passage? Why? (5:1)
- 5. What warning did James give to rich people? (5:1-3)
- 6. What misfortune lies ahead for the wealthy? (5:1-3)
- * 7. Who should “weep and wail”? Why? (5:1-6)
- 8. What will happen to all the possessions of the wealthy? (5:2-3)
- 9. What attitude does God have toward hoarding wealth? (5:3)
- 10. For what reasons will the rich be punished? (5:4-6)
- 11. Who have been the victims of rich people? (5:4-6)
- * 12. How have rich people hurt others? (5:4-6)
- * 13. What do luxury and self-indulgence have to do with the trouble that lies ahead for rich people? (5:5)

Get It

- 14. How do money and riches affect our relationship with God?
- 15. What does God think about people who are rich?
- 16. What problems are solved by being rich?
- 17. What problems are not solved by being rich?
- 18. How does God want us to handle money?
- * 19. What does it mean to live in “luxury and indulgence”?
- 20. What common business and financial practices are different from God’s standards?
- 21. How should a Christian business owner or employer be different from others who do not follow Christ?
- 22. How does a person’s use of money reflect what is important to him or her?
- * 23. How can we use money to reflect what is important to God?
- 24. What material possessions would you find it difficult to give up to help someone else?
- 25. What do you possess that money cannot buy?

Apply It

- 26. What can you do with your money this week to demonstrate your love for God?
- * 27. What changes can you make in your habitual use of money to please God?
- 28. What plans for the future can you make to reflect God’s concern for the poor?

Patience in Suffering - James 5:7-12

Topics: Attitude, Complaining, Discouragement, Endurance, Giving Up, Judgment, Patience, Perseverance, Suffering, Swearing

Open It

- * 1. What kinds of experiences try your patience?
- 2. What good things in life are worth waiting for?
- 3. How can you tell if a person is telling the truth or making a promise that he she will keep?

Explore It

- 4. What do we need to do as we wait for the Lord's return to earth? (5:7)
- 5. What illustration did James use to describe the kind of patience we need? (5:7)
- 6. When will the Lord's coming occur? (5:8)
- 7. Why should we be patient about Christ's return? (5:8)
- * 8. Why should we avoid judging others or grumbling against them? (5:9)
- * 9. What will happen to Christians who grumble against their fellow believers? (5:9)
- * 10. What people serve as good examples to us? How? (5:10-11)
- 11. In what ways does God help us when we must endure suffering? (5:11)
- 12. What warning did James give concerning swearing? (5:12)
- 13. What is the alternative to swearing? (5:12)

Get It

- * 14. How does God use others to build patience in our lives?
- 15. What makes it hard to wait on God's timing?
- 16. What kind of changes does God want to make in us over an extended period of time?
- 17. How have you suffered as a Christian?
- 18. What blessing or reward came to you for suffering as a Christian?
- 19. How will God reward us if we are patient?
- 20. What does it mean to stand firm as a Christian?
- 21. What lessons from Job's experience can we apply to our lives?
- * 22. For what kinds of reasons do Christians judge each other?
- 23. What causes us to grumble against each other?
- 24. What does God think about Christians fighting among themselves?
- 25. What can a Christian do to be trusted with his word and promises?

Apply It

- 26. With what situation or problem can you ask God for help and patience this week?
- * 27. What steps will you take this week to avoid judging others in your home? workplace? church?
- 28. What promise do you need to keep? How?

The Prayer of Faith - James 5:13-20

Topics: Answers, Backslide, Confession, Correction, Faith, Healing, Instructions, Perseverance, Prayer, Sickness

Open It

1. What are some of the most memorable moments of your life?
- * 2. What are some situations in life when most people pray?

Explore It

3. What should a person do when he or she is in trouble? Why? (5:13, 15)
4. What should a person do when he or she is happy? Why? (5:13, 15)
5. What should a person do when he or she is sick? Why? (5:14-15)
- * 6. Why is prayer important? (5:15)
7. What are the elders of the church to do for someone who is sick? Why? (5:14-15)
8. How can prayer affect a person's health? (5:15)
9. How can a person have his or her sins forgiven? (5:15)
10. Why should we confess our sins to one another? (5:16)
- * 11. What is the effect of a righteous person's prayers? (5:16)
- * 12. Who is a good example of how God answers prayer? How? (5:17-18)
13. What is a Christian's responsibility toward a fellow believer who has wandered away from the truth? (5:19)
14. What is the benefit of helping a person get back into following the truth? (5:20)

Get It

15. How can we use prayer to help someone who is sick?
16. When have you had the opportunity to pray specifically for someone or for a special need?
17. How have you seen prayer bring changes in people or circumstances?
- * 18. What hinders Christians from praying with confidence?
19. What hinders Christians from confessing sins and praying for each other?
20. If we confess our sins to God, why should anyone else have to know about it?
- * 21. What circumstances beyond our control can we affect through prayer?
22. What causes Christians to stumble and fall away from their faith?
23. How could you help someone who has drifted away from his or her relationship with Christ?
24. How have others helped you when you were drifting in your relationship with Christ?

Apply It

- * 25. What situation or person will you pray for in faith this week?
26. What personal needs can you ask others to pray for through the coming week? Whom will you ask?
27. Whom do you know who has been drifting away from the Lord and who needs an encouraging word from you this week?