

newark united pentecostal church

Lesson Title: Book of James - Chapter 1



Key Concept: James is action-oriented “wisdom literature” filled with good advice that reflects the teachings of Proverbs and Jesus. Chapter 1 teaches that God blesses those who live according to the truth, but those who do not should not expect to receive anything from him.



Scriptures:

But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

James 1:25 *New Living Translation*

Context Scriptures: James 1; Proverbs; Matthew 5–7, 22:35–40; 2 Corinthians 12:9



Lesson Thoughts:

An overarching theme of chapter 1 is that although we experience hardships and endure suffering in this life, God's mission for us as his “prized possession” (v.18) is to make us whole. James uses the language “perfect and complete” (v.4), which shows up seven times in the book, to describe this wholeness in Christ. The majority of Chapter 1 is also an introduction to other themes in the book that are explored in the subsequent chapters. In brief, the Book of James teaches about and defines the characteristics and values of a true believer (v.1). These same characteristics are found elsewhere in scripture: namely in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and in the biblical principles both that you should love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:35–40) and that in your weakness, God is strong (2 Corinthians 12:9).

A true believer places their faith and trust in God alone (v.3). While suffering does test our faith, through the process of transformation we are made “perfect and complete” through the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Suffering doesn't cause our brokenness; we suffer *because* we are broken. But God takes our brokenness and uses it to make us whole (“perfect and complete”) in him.

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A true believer seeks wisdom from God and asks him for it (v.5). Because God is the source of wisdom, he will grant it to those who ask. A wise person knows that no matter our circumstances — even through hardships and suffering — God is always good.

Finally, a true believer is both a listener and a doer of the word of God (v.22). James reminds us that we have been given “the perfect law that sets us free,” which is the teachings of Jesus (vv.25–27). A true believer will listen to the authority of the truth of scripture and follow the teachings of Jesus (vv.25–27).

James emphatically teaches that those who follow the scriptures in word and deed are true believers, and that God will bless them (v.25). Every good and perfect gift comes from God (vv.9, 12, 17). Conversely, James is equally bold in his statement that those who “are divided” in their loyalty should not expect to receive blessings from God (vv.6–8). Following the teachings of the world will lead to corruption (v.28), but following the teachings of Jesus will “make us perfect and complete.”

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How does chapter 1 change the way you understand the purpose of hardships and suffering?
- 2) What are some characteristics of a true believer according to James? Why are they important to follow?
- 3) What does James mean by being made “perfect and complete” through Christ?

Next Lesson: Book of James – Chapter 2 (Do a slow read before the next lesson)

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Wisdom is a major theme in the Book of James. What are areas of your life that you need more wisdom in?
- 2) James teaches that if you ask for wisdom, then God will give it. Pray and ask God for wisdom.
- 3) What are some areas in your life where you are a listener and not a doer?
- 4) In those areas, what can you do to become a doer instead of just a listener?
- 5) Before the next lesson in this series, do a slow read of James chapter two.