

The Letter of James Lesson 1

Practical Application of Faith

James wrote to Jewish Christians "scattered" probably because of persecution (Acts 8:1). While these early Christians were professing Christ when together, they were encountering trials and were demonstrating a lack of faith. Their faith was not visibly operative. James taught how a life of faith should be manifested. There are 16 references to faith in James, so clearly the emphasis is on what faith should look like.

Read James 1:2-12.

1. What is the imperative word in verse 2? This word is used to mean evaluate. How did Paul "evaluate" himself and his situation in Phil 3:5-7? How did Peter "evaluate" in 1 Peter 2:20-25? How did Paul evaluate the Christians in Ephesus in Eph 2:1-9?
2. How are we to consider or evaluate trials? Which should we have, a material or a spiritual perspective? What did Jesus say about trials in John 16:33? How about Peter in 1 Peter 1:6-7?
3. What do you "know" in James 1:3? Faith is always tested. The test proves our commitment and gives assurance as well. How do Peter and Paul view being tested (1 Peter 1:7, 2 Cor 4:16-18)? "Know" that God has a ministry to you in trials.
4. James 1:4 may be translated "let endurance have its perfect result that you may be mature and complete". The requirement is that you let God work, that you surrender your will. How would this change first your perspective and then your actions based on Col 3:17, Gal 2:20, Eph. 6:6-7?
5. When trouble comes we always wonder why and then what we should do. Who do we ask for wisdom and understanding (James 1:5)? Even if you know the Word of God, you need wisdom to apply it. What is the guarantee in James 1:5?

6. How does James qualify the guaranteed answer to prayer in James 1:6-8? What imagery does he use for the one who prays one thing but does another (verse 6)? What does he call someone divided between God and the world (verse 8)?

7. In James 1:2-6 we are given a formula for a faithful response to trials: Evaluate, verse 2; Know, verse 3; Let, verse 4; and Ask, verse 6. Take a practical example in your past and using this formula, tell how you should have responded.

8. Do passages like James 1:2, Rom 5:3, Math 5:12 and 1 Peter 1:6 make it sound like we should get happy and have a party when we get sick, or we are persecuted? Are we to be joyous based on what our temporary, materialistic circumstances are, or should our joy be based on what God is doing in our lives and what God has promised for the future? How did Paul put it into perspective in Romans 8:18? What about Peter in 1 Peter 5:10?

9. Do you notice consistency in the Bible between the different authors, writing from different places at different times to different audiences? How does the Bible explain the unity of the message (2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21)?

10. You could paraphrase James 1:9-11 like this: Let the poor man be rich in his relationship with Christ and let the rich man be humble because his riches will fade away. What man is blessed in verse 12? What is this blessed man promised (verse 12)? What was Paul promised (2 Tim 4:8)? How about Peter (1 Peter 5:4)? What about John (Rev 2:10)? How important is it to have hope in the midst of a troubled world (Romans 5:3-5)?