

THE NIV ACTION STUDY BIBLE



AUTHOR:
JAMES

James

James wrote down some of his best wisdom. His letter may have been the first of all the New Testament books, written before 50 A.D.

GOD IN ACTION

What does God want from us? What kind of worship makes Him happy? You can find the answers in the letter James wrote.

God wants His people to be wise. But wisdom doesn't just mean knowing a bunch of facts. It means knowing how to live. The good news is that God promised to give wisdom to those who ask for it (1:5).

Sometimes the only way to get wisdom is by going through hard times. People learn some of the most important lessons in life when things are bad, not when they're easy (1:2-4). That's one reason that God doesn't promise an easy life. But He does promise to reward those who trust Him no matter what (1:12).

God also wants people to practice true religion—not just going through the motions of singing and praying and going to church. He wants people to care for those in need (1:27). He wants people to love their neighbors. That's the real way to keep God's law (2:8). He wants people to be humble. In fact, He promises He won't let the proud stay that way for very long (4:6).

Most of all, God wants people to come near to Him. He is kind, loving, and forgiving. He promises to be near everyone who seeks Him (4:8).

If you want to know what kind of life makes God happy, just read James' letter.

PEOPLE IN ACTION

James was one of Jesus' brothers. He was an important leader in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19; 2:9). But James didn't always believe in his own brother (John 7:5). Jesus' family thought he was crazy (Mark 3:21). After Jesus rose from the dead, James became a believer—and he never looked back (1 Corinthians 15:7). He practiced the wisdom he wrote about in this book.

FAITH IN ACTION

KEY WORDS IN THIS BOOK

WISDOM
PATIENCE
INTEGRITY
LOVE
ENDURE

TEMPTATIONS
PRAYER

OBEY

**DID YOU
KNOW**

Some people call this book the "Proverbs of the New Testament." That's because it has so much wisdom to offer.

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

Greetings.

Trials and Temptations

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^a whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

REMEMBER IT

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:5

⁹Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

¹²Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

¹³When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

UNLOCK IT

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN SOMEONE IS MEAN TO ME?

James 1:2-4

Everyone faces trouble. It could be a kid who's mean to you. What should you do? First, be glad. (Yes, really.) Your faith is being tested. If you hang in there, James 1:2-4 promises that you'll be stronger than ever. Second, you should forgive those who are mean to you because God has forgiven you (Colossians 3:13). Third, don't take revenge. Love is the only thing that can defeat evil (Romans 12:14-21). Finally, if you think someone wants to hurt you, ask an adult for help. You don't have to fight back, but you shouldn't let anyone put you in danger.

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

REMEMBER IT

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him . . .

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says.

James 1:12, 22

^a2 The Greek word for *brothers and sisters* (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in verses 16 and 19; and in 2:1, 5, 14; 3:10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19.

Listening and Doing

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Favoritism Forbidden

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine



clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

What About This?



WHY SHOULD WE DO WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS?

James 1:22

God gave us the Bible for a reason. It’s God’s own Word to us, and it guides us on the best way to live our lives. These directions aren’t meant to keep us from having fun—they’re rules that keep us safe, help us serve God, and help us be kind to others.

If we only listen to the Bible but don’t do what it says, then we’re not going to be living the best lives (James 1:22). In a way, we’re telling God that His Word to us isn’t important. Obeying what God tells us in the Bible is one way we can show Him we love Him and want to follow Him.

Besides helping us to live our best lives, the Bible tells us how to do the work God wants us to do while we’re on this earth (John 9:4). He wants us to take care of His creation, care for others, and tell everyone we can about Him so they can get to know Him, too.

Ancient— —Archives

Horse's Bit

James 3:3

A horse's bit is a piece of metal, attached to reins, that is put inside a horse's mouth behind the teeth. When a rider pulls on the reins, the horse can feel the bit and will obey the directions of the rider. Horses are big animals—more than 1,000 pounds—but a small piece of metal can control them. James compares this to how powerful the tongue can be (James 3:3-5).

⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”^a you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,”^b also said, “You shall not murder.”^c If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Faith and Deeds

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?^d ²¹Was not

our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”^e and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Taming the Tongue

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ²We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Two Kinds of Wisdom

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

¹⁵Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where

^a 8 Lev. 19:18

^b 11 Exodus 20:14; Deut. 5:18

^c 11 Exodus 20:13; Deut. 5:17

^d 20 Some early manuscripts *dead*

^e 23 Gen. 15:6

REMEMBER IT

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

James 3:16

you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Submit Yourselves to God

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people,^a don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?^b ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble.”^c

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹¹Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister^d or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping

it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Boasting About Tomorrow

¹³Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

Warning to Rich Oppressors

5 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.^e ⁶You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Patience in Suffering

⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹²Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

^a 4 An allusion to covenant unfaithfulness; see Hosea 3:1.

^b 5 Or that the spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely; or that the Spirit he caused to dwell in us longs jealously

^c 6 Prov. 3:34

^d 11 The Greek word for brother or sister (*adelphos*) refers here to a believer, whether man or woman, as part of God's family.

^e 5 Or yourselves as in a day of feasting

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