



SESSION ONE

SESSION 1 SERMON NOTES

Use the following space to reflect on what you learned from the sermon.
Write down any questions you want to discuss with your small group.

SESSION 1

SMALL GROUP

GETTING STARTED

Welcome to Session One! You and your small group are about to begin an amazing journey into the heart of hope! Let's start by getting to know each other.

- Share a little bit about yourself and what brought you to this small group.
- What do you hope to gain out of the next six weeks?

WATCH THE SESSION

Each week, you will watch a session video together. You'll find space for notes, questions, and thoughts you want to share or remember. After watching the video, have someone read the session's discussion questions. Then you can discuss them as a group. Remember to share the responsibilities of leading and reading each week.

SESSION 1 VIDEO NOTES

1. Extraordinary living starts with an _____ relationship with _____.
- Real faith is about Who you belong to.

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9

2. An extraordinary life is a _____ life.
- You'll find Jesus' presence gives you _____ and _____ in the midst of any trial!
 - While your _____ is tried, your _____ is built on the inside.

Session One Answer Key: 1. authentic, Jesus 2. tested, peace, joy, faith, character

LET'S DISCUSS

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you have learned from this session's video message and small group study. Then discuss practical steps you can take to live out what you've learned.

Read **James 1:1-4** as a group:

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ... My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

1. How can we choose joy? How is happiness, or joy, possible when facing trials?
2. What is the purpose of our trials?
3. In what ways can we persevere through life's challenges?
4. Share a time when you grew as a result of going through a hard season. How did those trials affect the person you are today?
5. What does surrendering your life to Jesus mean? What are the benefits of living a surrendered life to Him?
6. List some areas in your life that you need to surrender to Jesus. What steps can you take to surrender those areas to Him?

GET INTO ACTION

What are three tools or truths you took away from this session?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What is the main thing you believe God wants you to apply?

GO TO GOD

No matter what trials we face, prayer is powerful. God has every answer and He desires prayer to draw us closer to Him, to one another, and to the extraordinary life He designed for us to live. While He gives us hope for eternity, He also offers help for today.

Take time to:

- Share your prayer needs—maybe it's an area in your life where you feel caught in the drift.
- Pray for others and write down how you can continue to pray for them throughout the week.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Give each person a chance to share prayer requests and praise reports. Write your personal prayer requests and take notes on how you can pray for each other.

SESSION ONE
DEVOTIONAL PLAN



**EXTRAORDINARY
LIVING**

Extraordinary Living starts with the Author of Life Himself. All you need to do is open a Bible and start reading. Each time you open Scripture, you hear directly from God. The Bible is a series of books that contains eternal truths for every area of life. Each daily guide begins with a Scripture (don't skip this!), includes a brief teaching, and has space for reflection.

The daily guide will take just a few minutes to read. This is an excellent opportunity to build or strengthen the habit of meeting with God daily. Beyond reading, I also invite you to put the truth you learn into practice—this is where life change happens.

Here's what to expect:

Transformation, not just information

God is in the business of transforming, not just informing. Act on what you learn and count on the Holy Spirit to teach, guide, and help you.

Truth strong enough to build your life

In a world adrift, God's Word is an anchor, a source of truth and triumph. It is strong enough to support your life. You will never regret letting Scripture guide you.

Training to grow in your relationship with God

As you will learn, getting right with God happens in an instant with Jesus. However, Christ's new life inside of you still blossoms and grows over a lifetime. You will be trained and equipped for the wonderful purpose God has for your life.

Whether you're exploring Christianity for the first time or have followed Jesus for decades, God has something new for you each day. Press in and walk into a new season of *Extraordinary Living*!

DAY 1: FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

*James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...
James 1:1a*

The Apostle James was not always extraordinary. He didn't show any special promise. He didn't start ministry as one of the twelve disciples. He originally didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah. Even worse, in Mark 3:21 we learn that he tried to stop Jesus from continuing His work because James thought Jesus was crazy!

So, isn't it interesting how God used someone who didn't have a great start to give us one of the most powerful books ever written? *Something powerful happened to transform James from ordinary to extraordinary.* The same experience still happens to this day.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to more than 500 people—one of those people was his younger brother, James. This encounter changed James' life forever because, immediately, he believed.

James shows us that extraordinary living starts with an authentic relationship with Jesus. In today's guiding verse, he calls himself a "bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." James' faith transformed him from doubter to doer, from skeptic to servant! And authentic faith produces eternal and *extraordinary* fruit.

If we believe in Christ as Lord, what's our natural next step? *Surrender.*

In what life areas can you follow James' example and surrender more fully to Jesus?

REFLECT

Session 1 Memory Verse

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...

James 1:2

What Is God Saying to Me Through Today's Devotional?

What Does It Mean to Me?

How Can I Apply What God Is Teaching Me?

How Can I Be Specific in Prayer Today?

DAY 2: TESTS INTO TESTIMONIES

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...
James: 1:2a*

Today's guiding verse is a challenge, isn't it?

Can you imagine receiving this letter as a new Christian in the first century? From mockery to martyrdom, Christians were starting to face persecution. But here, within the first few lines, James encourages these believers to count every trial as a joy. The same message applies to us, today. How are we supposed to experience joy in the face of pain? Perspective.

A trial is a test, and when we count our trials as joy, these tests become our testimonies. James was reframing the way his Christian brothers and sisters viewed their difficulties. We see this throughout Scripture:

- In Genesis, Joseph was sold into slavery—yet became an extraordinary leader who saved millions of lives.
- David was unjustly hunted by King Saul—yet became a king whose influence would endure for generations.
- Esther wasn't ready to stand against an empire—yet God used her to save the nation of Israel.

We can't choose our trials—but we can choose our attitude amidst them. We can live as *victors* rather than *victims*. That's because we know our God is writing an extraordinary story through the pages of our lives—even when we cannot see it. Jesus willingly endured the cross because He knew “the joy that was set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2).

REFLECT

Session 1 Memory Verse

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DAY 3: GROWING IN PATIENCE

...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

James 1:3b

You can board a plane and land on the other side of the world in a day. That journey used to take a lifetime for a select few, if it ever happened at all. Or you can hop on the Internet and learn just about anything in a matter of minutes. This access to information is unprecedented. You can even order an item from a store online and have it delivered to your doorstep just hours later! However, this speed comes at a price: *impatience*.

This is a problem because patience is almost always a requirement for God's plans for the world, His people, and our individual purposes. You may have heard one of the most well-known Scriptures on God's plans for us, Jeremiah 29:11: *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

David was anointed king yet waited fifteen years and suffered many hardships before he wore the crown.

In today's guiding verse, James helps us understand that God's plans require patience. Things virtually never happen overnight. God's work in and through us is more slow cooker than microwave! However, patience produces an inner strength. Faith doesn't always immediately deliver us—but always carries us through.

Trees produce fruit in seasons, not in seconds. Our lives in Christ work the same way. How can you make the best of where you are right now? Can you enjoy the current season you are in regardless of what you are waiting for?

REFLECT

Session 1 Memory Verse

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James 1:2

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DAY 4: CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James 1:4

Is it best for a baby to reach full term before being born, or to come early?

We all want our children to completely develop before entering the world! We want them to thrive from day one. No matter how uncomfortable, pregnancy isn't something we want to rush.

Becoming who God made us to be works in similar fashion. When James says "perfect" in verse 4, he doesn't mean "flawless," he means mature. Just as with an infant, maturity takes time. It works in stages. Patience, if allowed to grow to its full strength, will leave us more complete than we were before. This leads to a joyful, peaceful life through which God produces extraordinary results.

God's goal for our lives is creating Christlike character in us. The Apostle Paul echoes James' sentiment, writing in Romans 8:29 that we were made "to be conformed to the image of His Son."

While this process isn't easy, *it's worth it*. Think about going to the gym. Every time we lift weights and run, our muscles undergo thousands of tiny tears. However, our body repairs them by *adding* muscle, stamina, and strength. Enduring discomfort with patience makes us healthier!

Where can you grow in maturity by practicing patience today?

REFLECT

Session 1 Memory Verse

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DAY 5: GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5

Children are curious. They have constant questions about the world around them: “Why is the sky blue?” “Where do babies come from?” “Why do I have to go to bed when it’s still light out?!”

Are any of us shocked when they ask these questions? *No*. We know children must progressively learn how the world works to understand their place in it. No one expects them to understand everything.

Did you know God is the same way with us?

James shares that God knows we will lack wisdom! So, like children, Jesus wants us to ask for it because God *loves* to give it. God gives “without reproach,” which means without disapproval or disappointment.

Gaining wisdom means receiving God’s practical outlook in a given situation. It means asking for insight. And Solomon, one of the wisest people to ever live, painted this word picture in Proverbs 1:20: Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares.

God is not in the business of withholding wisdom. Instead, He pours it out extravagantly on those who ask. The question for us is twofold: Will we ask? Will we follow God’s wisdom once we receive it?

Where do you need wisdom today? I invite you to ask for it right now, and then respond in faith when God gives it!

REFLECT

Session 1 Memory Verse

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...

James 1:2

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DAY 6: STEADFAST ON STORMY SEAS

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:6–8

Years ago, I was fishing on a boat in the Gulf of Mexico. I love being on the water. The endless blue horizon and salty breeze are wonderful. However, that day, the wind was howling. Waves were breaking in white caps and our boat was tossed around so hard we had to tie onto an oil rig. Needless to say, I was nearly green with sea sickness and wanted to kiss the ground when we got back to land.

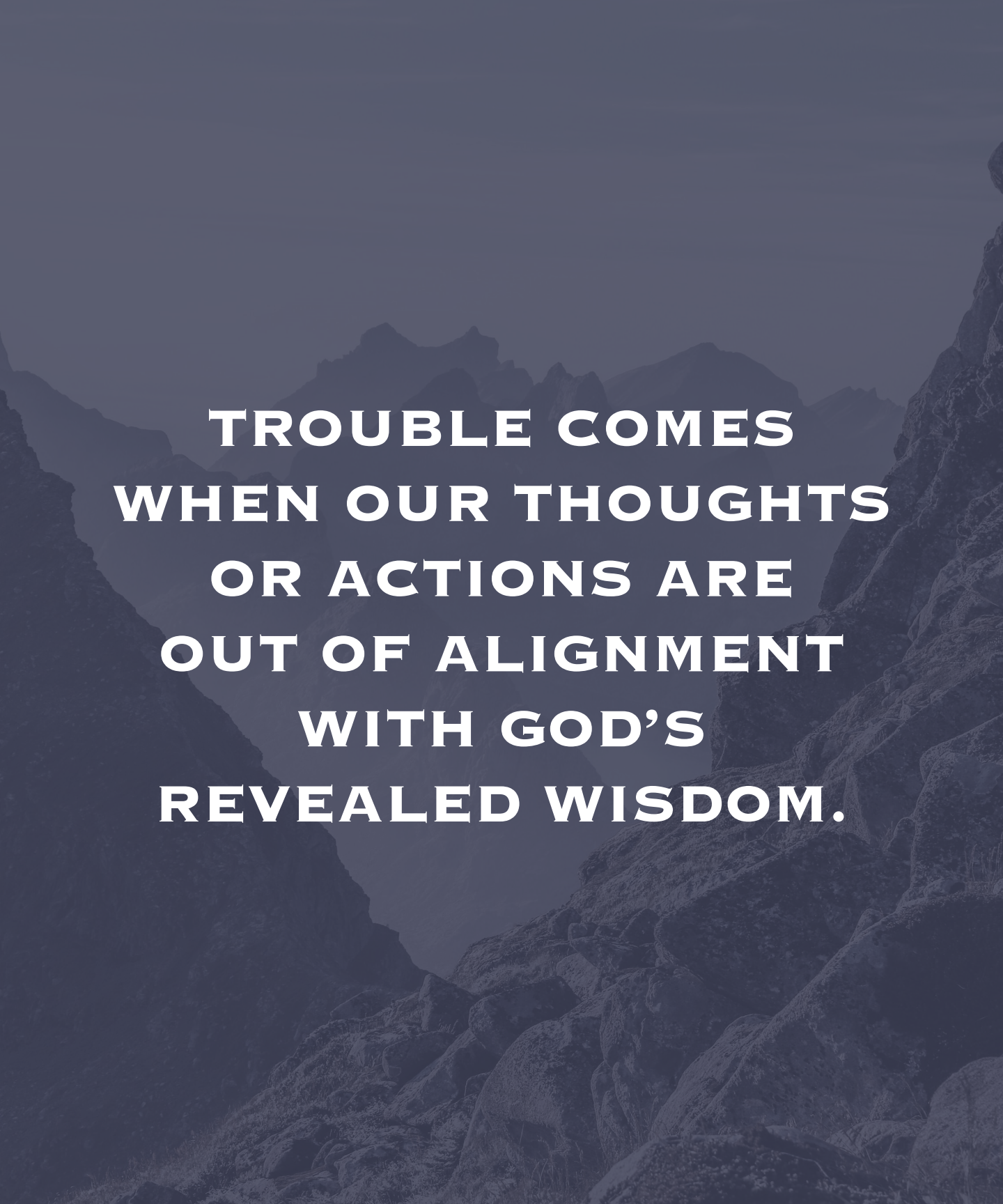
Today's passage casts a similar image. Instead of a ruined fishing trip, being tossed around by the wind and waves of doubt creates chaos in a Christian's life. James explains that the doubter is out of control and is on a wild ride to nowhere.

Does this mean our faith never wavers? Not at all. If our faith had to be perfect to receive wisdom, none of us would receive any at all! James is encouraging us to boldly ask for God's wisdom in faith, believe we will receive it, and then act accordingly.

Thomas, one of Jesus' Twelve Disciples, is an excellent example of this. Remember, he doubted Jesus' resurrection. It wasn't until he saw and touched the resurrected Jesus for himself that he believed (see John 20:24-29). Once Thomas touched the holes in Jesus' hands, it changed everything, catapulting him on a powerful missionary journey that took him all the way to India.

Trouble comes when our thoughts or actions are out of alignment with God's revealed wisdom.

Does your life resemble a boat tossed around on a stormy sea, or the peace of sitting with Jesus who calms the waters? A calm and peaceful life is found when we ask for, believe in, and act upon the wisdom God loves to give.



**TROUBLE COMES
WHEN OUR THOUGHTS
OR ACTIONS ARE
OUT OF ALIGNMENT
WITH GOD'S
REVEALED WISDOM.**

REFLECT

Session 1 Memory Verse

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...

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DAY 7: WEEKLY REFLECTION

What are the top three realizations you had this session?

What is the main thing you believe God wants you to apply?



SESSION TWO

SESSION 2

EXTRAORDINARY LOVE

Thought for the Week:

God lavishes His love on us so we can share it with others

James shows us how to have a visible and productive faith in a fallen and hurting world. This power-packed book gives practical wisdom for:

- enduring hardship with grace,
- living with purpose,
- controlling our tongue,
- overcoming temptation,
- authentically walking out our faith,
- experiencing and sharing God's extraordinary love!

It doesn't take long to realize that our culture could benefit tremendously from followers of Christ embodying those keys to extraordinary living! However, no matter who we are, none of these facets of the Christian life come naturally. After all, while Jesus walked on this earth, even His own brothers—including James—didn't believe in Him! In fact, they thought He was crazy (see John 7:5).

It wasn't until Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection that James finally understood that Jesus was more than a man. He is Lord. That's when everything changed. My greatest desire is for you to meet with Jesus in the same way.

- *This week, Jesus wants to meet you—and fill you—with extraordinary love.*

SESSION 2 SERMON NOTES

Use the following space to reflect on what you learned from the sermon. Write down any questions you want to discuss with your small group.

SESSION 2

SMALL GROUP

GETTING STARTED

Welcome to Session Two! This week, you will learn four principles to walk in extraordinary love. Real love only has one source and definition: God Himself.

Let's start by discussing what love means to you:

- What do you think love means in our culture today?
- How is the love of Jesus unlike any other "love" this world offers?

WATCH THE SESSION

Next is a space for notes, questions, and thoughts you want to share or remember. After watching the video, have someone read the session's discussion questions, then you can discuss them as a group. Remember to share the responsibilities of leading and reading each week.

SESSION 2 VIDEO NOTES

For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

John 7:5

Not only did Jesus' brothers not believe in Jesus, they thought He was crazy.

- When Jesus specifically appeared to James after the _____, everything _____ for him.
- James experienced Jesus' _____ firsthand.

...God is Love

1 John 4:8

Four Principles for Walking in Extraordinary Love:

1. Extraordinary love _____.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

James 1:19-20

- Walking with others in _____ requires us to _____ and listen.
 - Listening is more than simply looking for an _____ to _____.
2. Extraordinary love speaks _____ words.

for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20

- We could avoid much strife if we returned _____ words with a _____ reply.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.

Proverbs 15:1

- Our words can blow away years of _____ and _____ in a matter of minutes.

3. Extraordinary love produces _____.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

James 1:22-24

- Extraordinary love—a healthy relationship with Christ—it produces obedience.
4. Extraordinary love leads to _____.

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

James 1:26

- The _____ is harder to control than a _____.

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James 1:27

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:17

- Good works are not the _____ to your salvation, they are the _____ of your salvation.

Session Two Answer Key: resurrection, changed, extraordinary love 1. listens, community, slow down, opportunity, speak 2. careful, healing, painful, gracious, trust, relationship building 3. Obedience 4. Extraordinary actions, tongue, wild beast, path, proof

LET'S DISCUSS

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you have learned from this session's video message and small group study. Then discuss practical steps you can take to live out what you've learned.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20

1. Why do you think James talked about the importance of the words we speak?
2. Do you say things about yourself, or others, that you quickly regret? How can you be more careful with your words?
3. Share a time when someone spoke words of encouragement to you when you were experiencing difficulty. How did their words affect you?

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James 1:27

4. James describes pure and undefiled religion as not letting the world corrupt you. How can you practically live this out?

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:17

5. Why can't good works or good deeds save us?
6. We know that good works or deeds can't save us. Only Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection can save us. However, if we are true followers of Jesus, we should desire to share the love of Jesus by serving others like He did. Share a time when someone's "good works" benefited you and helped you grow closer to God.
7. How can you serve the suffering, help the hurting, and meet the needs in your community?
8. How has our discussion today impacted how you will relate to God and respond to those He has called you to serve?

GET INTO ACTION

What are the top three tools or truths you learned this session?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What is the main thing you believe God wants you to apply?

GO TO GOD

No matter what trials we face, prayer is powerful. God has every answer and receives prayer to draw us closer to Him, to one another, and to the extraordinary life He has made us for. While He gives us hope for eternity, He also offers help for today.

Take time to:

- Share your prayer needs—maybe it's an area in your life where you feel caught in the drift.
- Pray for others and write down how you can continue to pray for them throughout the week.
- Share the good things God is doing in your life! For what are you grateful? What prayers have been answered?

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Give each person a chance to share prayer requests and praise reports. Write your personal prayer requests and take notes on how you can pray for each other.



**EXTRAORDINARY
LOVE**

DAY 8: LOVE IS A GREAT LISTENER

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear,
slow to speak, slow to wrath...*

James 1:19

Have you ever said something in anger you wish you could take back? I certainly have. However, what we say cannot be unsaid. No matter how hard we try, we can't reel our words back into our mouths. In today's guiding verse, James gives us the cure to foot-in-mouth disease: being swift to hear and slow to speak.

In context, the early Church was scattered geographically and drifting spiritually. They were buried in all kinds of struggles: doubtful attitudes, strife, sensuality, rootless faith, and unbridled speech. And James' job was to help them overcome these struggles first by listening to God, and second, to one another.

God's design for us has always been unity. In fact, that was the first request Jesus ever prayed for us, asking in John 17:21 that we *"...all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."*

James was showing that fractured relationships could be restored as they again became sensitive to one another's needs. The early Church was being persecuted and believers were scattering out from Jerusalem. Through that turmoil, they had quit listening to one another.

Do you know what people are seeking? Genuine, authentic love that listens rather than reacts. Genuine, authentic love seeks to understand before flying

off the handle. But this requires patient and active listening. The old adage is true: No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. Sometimes the best way we can love others is by listening. Remember, God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason!

Who is God calling you to patiently hear and understand?



**GOD'S DESIGN FOR
US HAS ALWAYS
BEEN UNITY.**

REFLECT

Session 2 Memory Verse

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20

What Is God Saying to Me Through Today's Devotional?

What Does It Mean to Me?

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DAY 9: EXTRAORDINARY LOVE

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:8

Jesus' mother, Mary, watched in agony as Jesus, her Son, hung dying on the cross (see John 19:25). Yet do you know who wasn't there? Jesus' brothers.

Neither James nor the rest of Jesus' brothers believed He was the Messiah—instead, they thought He was crazy. It can be safely assumed none of them cared, or believed, enough to be at their own brother's execution. However, somewhere along the way everything changed.

We touched on this briefly in the last session's first daily guide. But I want to dive deeper into 1 Corinthians 15:7: *...He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.* Jesus specifically appeared to James after being raised from the dead, even though he did not bother to be present for the crucifixion. To that point, James only knew Jesus as a brother. But after the crucifixion, he came to know Him as Savior and Lord.

Rather than hold a grudge or tell his younger half-brother, "I told you so," Jesus pursued a relationship with him in love. James experienced the extraordinary love of Christ firsthand.

Today's guiding verse explains where true love originates: God Himself! And when we encounter it, it changes our lives. *Love has a name—Jesus.*

Have you ever felt like you've messed up so badly God couldn't possibly love you? I'll bet James felt that way, too. But, my friend, if Jesus' own brother who doubted Him and skipped His execution wasn't too far gone, neither are any of us! Receive God's love for you. Then, carry that love to those in your life.

Becoming a Christian is not as complicated as some make it out to be. It's not about how much good you do in this life that makes you right with God. The Bible is clear. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 10:9-10, *...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

We are saved by the grace of God, through what Jesus did for us on the cross. To make a decision for Christ, please visit the *Prayer of Salvation* page in the appendices of this guide.



**LOVE HAS A NAME
— JESUS.**

REFLECT

Session 2 Memory Verse

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20

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DAY 10: MIRROR, MIRROR

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
James 1:22*

To hear, study, and read God's Word does little for us if we do not actively live out its truths. James says that if we listen but never take action, we're simply pulling the wool over our own eyes.

He illustrates this by describing someone who looks at themselves in the mirror, only to immediately forget what they look like. In this word picture, James confronts when our actions are misaligned with our beliefs.

He's talking about when we say we believe one thing, but yet do the exact opposite. In short, when our actions betray our beliefs, we've forgotten who we really are. Life transformation happens when our identity is changed—and if you've received Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have a new identity in Christ.

Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Consider the difference between a caterpillar and a butterfly. After emerging from its cocoon, the butterfly can float on the breeze! It is a fundamentally different creature. Does a butterfly keep acting like a caterpillar? Would it look in the mirror and, instead of wings, see a caterpillar with stubby legs?

The same is true when we are saved by faith in Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit. We are made new. When we hear God's Word but act in opposition to it, we're deceiving ourselves, seeing our old nature in the mirror.

How can you fully embrace your new identity in Christ with your actions today?



WE ARE MADE NEW.

REFLECT

Session 2 Memory Verse

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20

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DAY 11: OF BRIDLED TONGUES AND COAL MINES

*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.
James 1:26*

More than 100,000 people came to Christ in 1904 during the Welsh Revival. Some of those coal miners were so radically changed by Jesus it actually affected the production of their mines. Even though the already hard-working miners worked even harder, production ground to a halt. The problem wasn't their work ethic, it was their language! Their mules were so used to their constant profanity that when they stopped cursing, the animals didn't understand their commands and refused to pull the coal wagons!

If our walk with Christ is authentic, it will produce healthy actions. But not because we white-knuckle our way to holiness. Rather, God's love changes us from the inside out. Like a massive boulder tumbling into a lake, we see its impact ripple out into every area of our lives.

One of the key areas is our tongue—which James says is untamable on our own, an “unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8). In today's verse, we learn that our relationship with God can help bridle our tongues. A bridle is a piece of headgear with straps attached to a bit that controls a horse many times larger than its rider.

Like the coal miners, our speech changes when our hearts change. This means:

- We respond in gentleness as people of peace (Proverbs 15:1)
- We encourage others, rather than tearing them down (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

- We praise God with our lips without cursing others (James 3:10)
- We season our speech “with salt,” imparting grace to those around us (Colossians 4:6)
- We abandon coarse joking and filthy speech (Ephesians 5:4)

What we say demonstrates who we are. So, let’s bridle our tongues with the character of Christ this week and share God’s love with every breath.



**WHAT WE SAY
DEMONSTRATES
WHO WE ARE.**

REFLECT

Session 2 Memory Verse

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James 1:19-20

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DAY 12: FRESH AS A MOUNTAIN SPRING

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James: 1:27

Picture a glass of fresh water from a mountain spring. What does the water look like? Hopefully clean and crystal clear. Now, picture one filled from a mud puddle. What does that glass look like? Brown, nasty, and filled with who-knows-what.

One glass is pure, the other is contaminated. The first is a picture of purity, which means free from contamination. James shows us what the pure glass of mountain spring Christianity looks like. Instead of swirling with the pollutants of a fallen world like greed, selfishness, lust, hatred, or envy, it is a crystal-clear reflection of God's heart for humanity: to love and build people while living in holiness.

Notice how true holiness—being “unspotted from the world”—isn't to be better than anyone else. Rather, it's to love everyone else well. James defines moral purity first through Christlike action rather than religious piety.

As the saying goes, actions speak louder than words. This means extraordinary love—true religion—is all about the walk, not just the talk. The plight of widows and orphans was not a pretty picture in the ancient world. Christianity has filled the gap of compassion for centuries. This is why early Christians commonly rescued abandoned children, used their own money to feed the hungry, sold property to provide for the destitute, and dug into their own pockets to provide decent burials for the needy.

True religion is found in God's love expressed through our actions.

REFLECT

Session 2 Memory Verse

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20

What Is God Saying to Me Through Today's Devotional?

What Does It Mean to Me?

How Can I Apply What God Is Teaching Me?

How Can I Be Specific in Prayer Today?

DAY 13: BRANCHES OF FAITH

*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
James 2:17*

Imagine if I invited you to come with me to visit an apple orchard. Yet, when I took you through the orderly rows of fruit trees, you only saw bare branches with withered leaves. Would you believe we were in an apple orchard? Perhaps these were once apple trees, but now, they're simply dead wood waiting to fall.

In the same way, when our faith stays surface level, we produce no real fruit. Our lives resemble those bare branches rather than ones sagging from the weight of the abundant fruit Jesus talked about. In John 15:5, Jesus told the disciples, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."* The principle is—you know a tree by its fruit. If we are filled with the life of Christ, our branches will be rich with fruit. And that fruitfulness is demonstrated in faithful action which we call obedience.

Today's guiding verse does *not* mean "good works" are pathways to salvation. That would be like saying it's the fruit that grows branches. It's only through faith in what Jesus did on the cross that one is saved. However, genuine faith in God is demonstrated with Christ-like actions.

Take a look at the branches of your life and faith this week. Where do you believe God wants you to bear more fruit? Now, what does obedient action look like in those areas?

REFLECT

Session 2 Memory Verse

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

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DAY 14: WEEKLY REFLECTION

What are the top three realizations you had this session?

What is the main thing you believe God wants you to apply?
