



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**JAMES, 2 PETER,
& JUDE**

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

James, Peter and Jude—three Jewish men whose lives were forever changed by Jesus.

It could not have been an easy journey for any of the three. Our study starts with a look into the world of James. Assuming him to be the half brother of Jesus (as did the early church fathers), can you imagine his life growing up in Nazareth under the shadow of his older brother?

James may have been in the synagogue when Jesus was rebuffed by his own townspeople (Lk 4:14-30). He traveled with his mother Mary and at least some of his brothers, Joseph, Simon and Judas (Jude), to visit Jesus during his ministry. Although James may have questioned his brother's role during his ministry (Mk 3:21), after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead we read that James became a passionate leader of the church in Jerusalem. He voiced the final decision at the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, keeping Jewish and gentile Christians from splitting the church. James writes to his fellow Jewish Christians, proclaiming great freedom in the royal law of love, founded in Jesus and expressed through living faith.

Next in our study comes Peter's second epistle. Peter had been a Galilean fisherman until Jesus called him to fish for people. Peter learned that in the storms of life, Jesus is the Captain of our ship and fully in control. On the mountain, at the transfiguration of Jesus, he learned that the glory of Jesus far exceeded that of his heroes Moses and Elijah. Sometimes he learned the hard way. When Peter audaciously disagreed with Jesus that he must be killed, Jesus strongly rebuked him and called him "Satan."

The night before the crucifixion Peter claimed he would never disown Jesus—yet a few hours and three denials later

the rooster crowed his disappointment. But seven weeks later, on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit transformed him into a man of faith and courage. In second Peter we read his reflection about the transfiguration on the mountain with Jesus and the transformation that God miraculously performs in the life of every Christian.

Jude's brother James had been leading the Jerusalem church through times of persecution and inner turmoil. Now Jude added his voice to warn about false teachers who corrupt the gospel. As a servant of Jesus, Jude urged his readers to contend for the faith that Jesus had entrusted to the saints (Jude 3).

Three authors, three books, three perspectives—but one gospel. All three men focus on the gospel given them by their friend, their brother, their teacher, their Lord, their Savior, Jesus the Messiah.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don't be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each "daily" lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

JAMES,
2 PETER,
JUDE

Three Friends
of Jesus

Introduction to James

Authorship: The author identifies himself simply as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1). There are two men mentioned in the New Testament whom this might be. Since the disciple James, brother of John, son of Zebedee, was martyred by Herod Agrippa I in A.D. 44 (Ac 12:2), it is doubtful that he was the author. The James who is generally accepted as author is the son of Mary and Joseph, and half brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55). James had become the leader of the Jerusalem church by A.D. 44 (Ac 12:17), and chaired the council in Jerusalem in A.D. 49 (Ac 15:13). This position would account for the authoritative tone of the epistle (Jas 1:1, 27; 2:5).

Date: James may have written this book any time between A.D. 45 and 62, when tradition says he was martyred.

Setting and purpose: James writes to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (1:1). These were Jewish Christians (2:1; 5:7) who lived outside Judea.

This letter helps Christians understand that faith in Jesus Christ is alive in its response to God’s grace. Christians with dynamic faith live out God’s grace with acts of mercy, peace and love.

James calls these Jewish Christians to respond positively to trials brought by external antagonists. They should rejoice because trials develop perseverance and, in the end, Christian maturity (Jas 1:4). God’s purpose is to give new birth through his grace (vs. 16-27). The perfect law of God gives freedom (v. 25) enabling Christians to respond to the royal law of love (2:8) with dynamic faith (vs. 9-26).

James then focuses on practical applications of his theology, addressing sins of the tongue (ch. 3) and sins of worldliness (ch. 4). He calls for Christians to be self-disciplined, submitting to God and resisting the devil (4:7-10). Spiritual riches should replace physical riches as one’s focus (5:1-6). Patience and prayer are the complements to living faith (vs. 7-20).

Background: Some believe that James and Paul contradict each other. But James does not contradict Paul because Paul also wrote

about a faith that is given to us by God's grace. Paul emphasized that works (which he most often expressed as works required by the law of Moses) cannot earn God's gift of salvation (Ro 6:23). Even a casual reading of Paul will find repeated urgings to respond to God's grace with acts of love (Ro 13:8-11; Gal 5:6, 13-15; Eph 2:8-10). Paul taught all Christians to keep the law of Christ, as led by the Holy Spirit (1Co 9:21; Gal 6:2).

James teaches us that deeds are the evidence of our faith. That is, those who are in Christ and who have been given faith by God's grace, will also display the fruit or evidence of that faith in their lives. The fruit and evidence is produced in their lives by God—and cannot be construed to be something which has been humanly produced.

According to tradition, James was ordered by Jewish authorities in A.D. 62 to renounce Jesus as Lord. His steadfast faith in his Savior led to his martyrdom.

Outline: Each capital letter represents a daily lesson.

I. THE LIFE OF TRIALS, 1

- A. All My Trials, Lord..., 1:1-4
- B. Power of Patient Perseverance, 1:5-11
- C. The Great Gift Giver, 1:12-18
- D. Gimme That Ol' Time Religion! 1:19-27

II. THE LIFE OF FAITH, 2

- A. Pew Time, 2:1-7
- B. The Royal Law, 2:8-13
- C. Faith That Works, 2:14-17
- D. Righteous Rahab, 2:18-26

III. THE LIFE OF WISDOM, 3

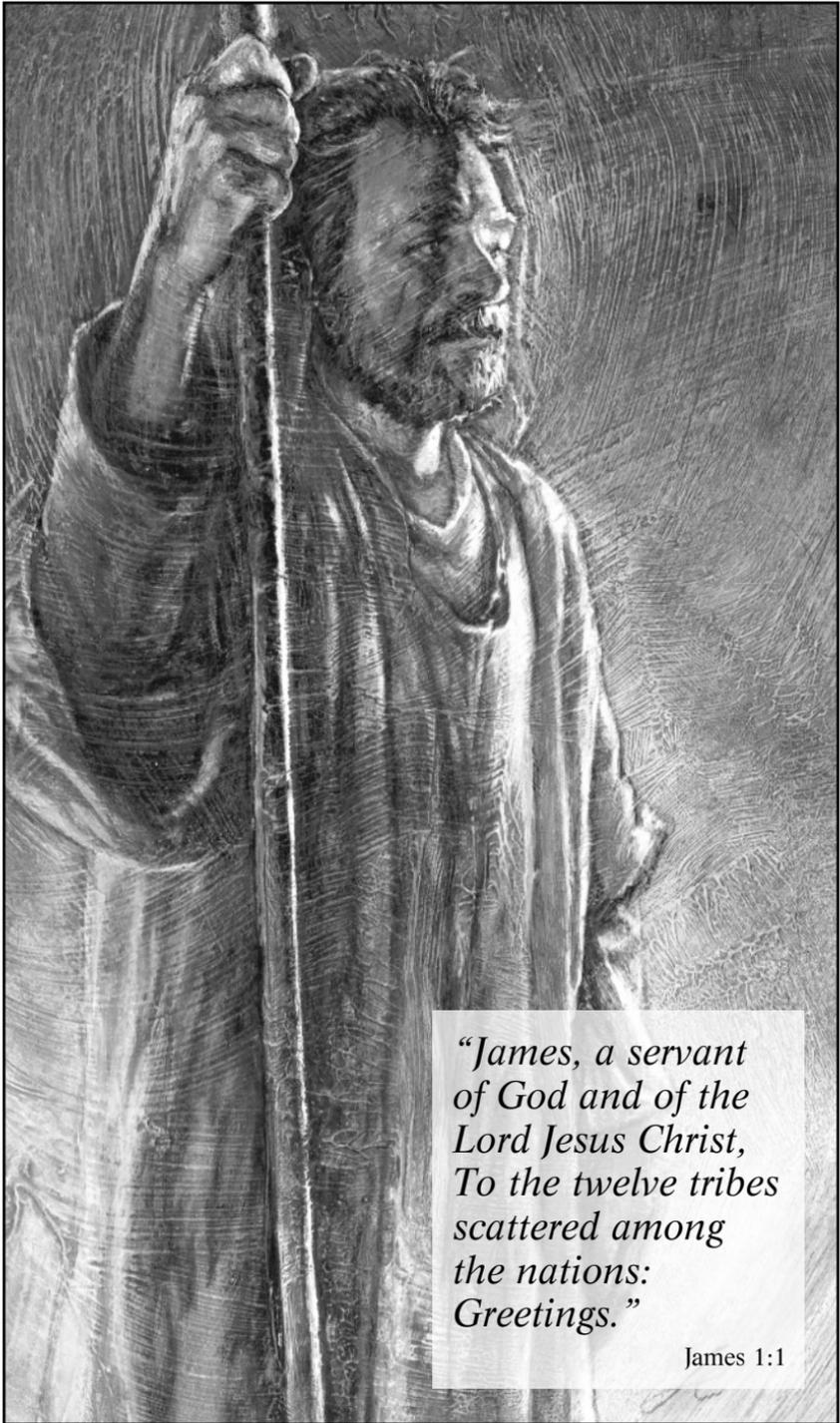
- A. Curb Your Tongue, Knave! 3:1-4
- B. Tongues of Fire, 3:5-12
- C. Kingdom Wisdom, 3:13-18

IV. THE LIFE OF WORLDLINESS, 4

- A. Wanton World, 4:1-6
- B. Lift Me Up, Lord, 4:7-10
- C. Here Comes the Judge! 4:11-17
- D. The Problem of Riches, 5:1-6

V. THE LIFE OF PATIENCE, 5

- A. The Patience of Prophets, 5:7-12
- B. The Power of Prayer, 5:13-20



*“James, a servant
of God and of the
Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes
scattered among
the nations:
Greetings.”*

James 1:1

All My Trials, Lord...

DAY 1

James 1:1-4

Have you ever thought about what your greatest joys might be? Would you describe any trials you might have had as joys?

1. How does James identify himself? What does this tell you about him?
2. Whom does James address in this book (v. 1)? How do you think his letter would reach them?
3. Why should these Christians count persecutions and life's difficulties as joyful (vs. 2-3)? How does our response show where our heart is?
4. How do Christians become complete in God's love (v. 4)? Compare with Galatians 5:6.

1. If you have siblings how much do you respect them? Have you ever taken them for granted? Why? How did the citizens of Jesus' hometown view him (Lk 4:22-24)?

2. Adversity and the threat of death serve to help a person discern the real character and power of faith. How do you respond to the trials in your life? (a) groaning, (b) grumbling, (c) grateful.

*The Greek word James uses for **trial** can mean an enticement to evil. It is often translated "temptation," as in James 1:12-15. It can also mean trials from the hardships of life. The context tells us that James is speaking here of trials that result from external causes. The same word refers to the tests endured by Jesus (Heb 4:15). Jesus experienced the daily tasks of being human, with his earthly life culminating in suffering from beatings and crucifixion. Although he was not tempted to sin (Jas 1:13), Satan assumed he could influence him to sin.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

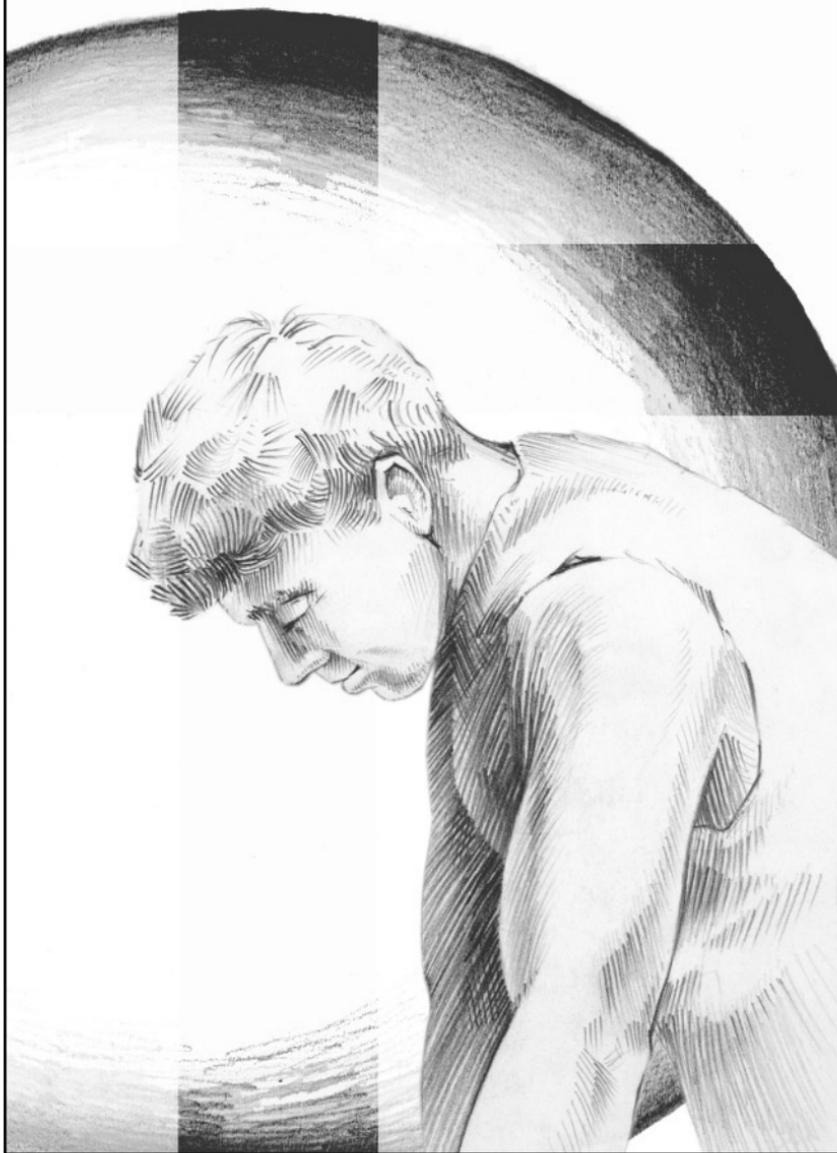
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

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

James 1:5



Power of Patient Perseverance

DAY 2

James 1:5-11

What is the longest time you've had to wait for something you really wanted? Would you have waited even longer?

1. What is the difference between perseverance (v. 4) and wisdom (v. 5)? How can they support each other in your life?
2. Although some readers may understand James to be emphasizing works in a Christian's life, can you see how he first introduces faith as a foundation for his teaching (vs. 3, 6-8)?
3. How does James contrast the poor and the rich when it comes to faith (vs. 9-11)?

1. Have you ever asked God for wisdom? Do you think he answered you?
2. What do you ask God for when you pray? Do you place the most emphasis on the honor that God gives or the honor that the world gives? Do you trust him to give you everything of real value (vs. 9-11)?
3. When you pray, do you speak to God with a transparent heart? Or do you try to keep some things hidden? Is this being "double-minded" (vs. 6-8)?

***Prayer** is a vehicle for humans to build a relationship with God (v. 5). Pray by simply being honest and forthright, whether silently or out loud, expressing your patience, joy, concerns and faith. God grants wisdom to whoever asks, whether rich or poor (vs. 9-11).*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

James 1:12



The Great Gift Giver

DAY 3

James 1:12-18

What crown would you like to wear? (a) Burger King, (b) Miss America, (c) Mr. Universe, (d) The Queen of England. Would you like the responsibility that comes with having a crown?

1. Everyone faces temptation to say or do something wrong. What importance does James place on enduring temptation without sinning (v. 12)?
2. Is God responsible for tempting us (v. 13)? How does temptation get its start?
3. Desire by itself can be either good or bad. How do we give birth to sin (vs. 14-15)? Once evil takes root, what is the outcome of sin?
4. How do God's good gifts contrast with the evil that comes from within (vs. 16-17)? What does he want for us (v. 18)?

1. Have you ever imagined yourself wearing an eternal crown, encrusted with priceless jewels? Do you feel worthy of such a spiritual crown—or does the image seem so far-fetched it can only remind of you of God's matchless grace?
2. Consider Paul's advice in 2 Corinthians 10:5. Does this add to James' comments about sin and temptation? How does Jesus enable you to conquer sin and wear the eternal crown?
3. Why does God, the Father of lights, want to give such undeserved, lavish gifts (Jas 1:17-18)?

*James moves from trials that come from external sources (vs. 1-11) to **moral trials**, those temptations that come from inside us (v. 12).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 4

Gimme That Ol' Time Religion!

James 1:19-27

OPENING
up to the Word

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all? What do you see when you look in the mirror?

DIGGING
into the Word

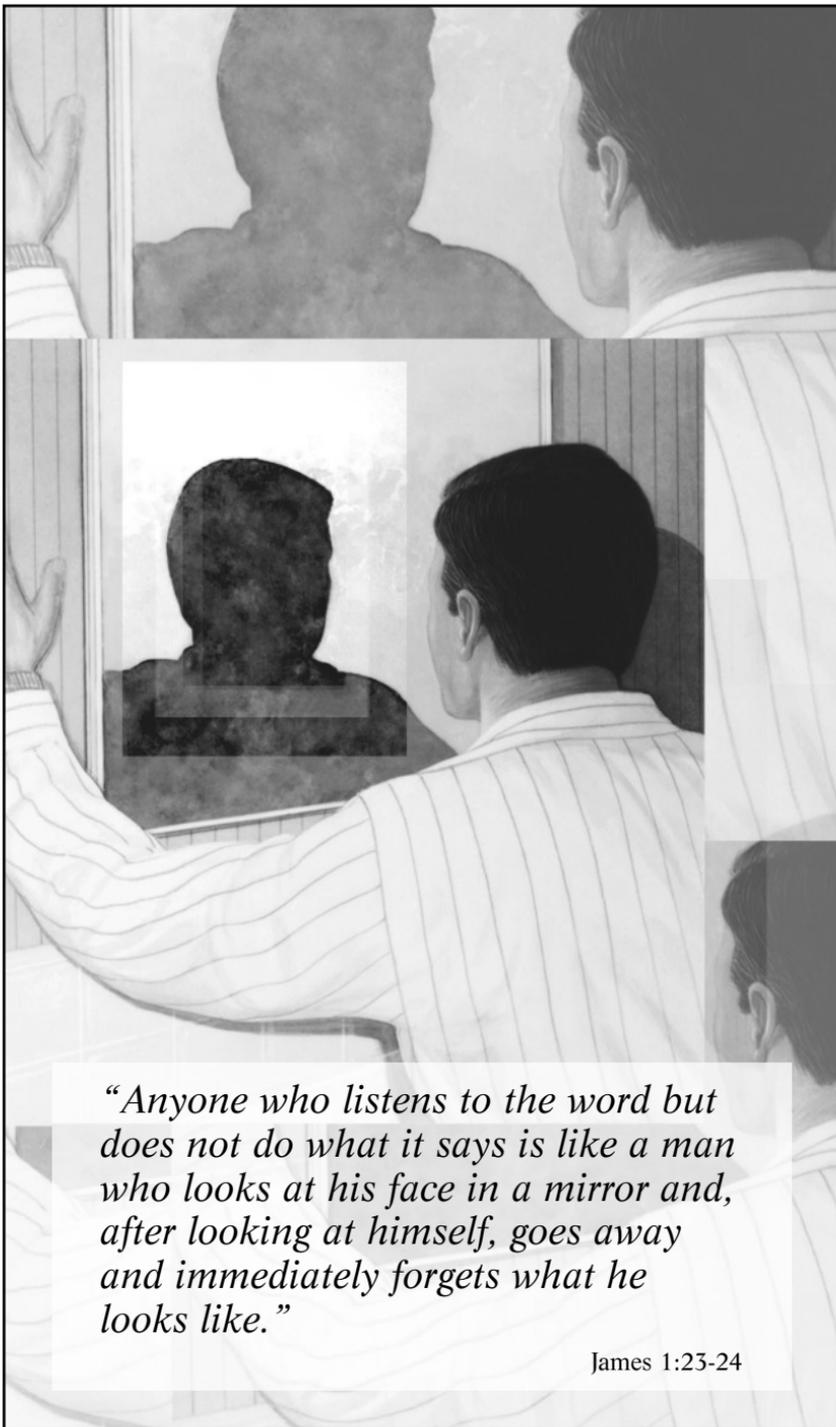
1. What advice does James give for Christians who want to live in God's righteousness (vs. 19-20)?
 2. What must be laid aside for Christian living (v. 21)?
 3. How is hearing empty if it is not followed by action (vs. 23-25)?
 4. What makes a person's religion useless (v. 26)? Since James specifically speaks of "pure" religion, how do we recognize "impure" religion? What religious deeds are praiseworthy (v. 27)? How is this kind of religion undefined?
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. What do James' words: "...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...." (v. 19) mean to you? Do you consider this wisdom before you speak?
 2. How do you respond to stressful situations? (a) quick to justify yourself, (b) quick to become defensive and angry, (c) listening patiently.
-

WINDOW
on the Word

*The relationship between **faith and works** begins to be developed here. James discusses being "slow to become angry," being "quick to listen" and being "slow to speak" in verse 19. Within the life of a Christ-follower, controlling one's speech and anger demonstrates the work of the inner life of Christ.*



“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.”

James 1:23-24

DAY 5

Pew Time

James 2:1-7

OPENING
up to the Word

Are the best seats in many brick-and-mortar church buildings in the front or the back? Who gets them? (a) the rich, (b) the poor, (c) the powerful, (d) early birds, (e) late comers.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How can clothes indicate a person's status (vs. 2-4)? When early Christians gathered together, how did James say they should treat each other?

2. How did the rich tend to treat the poor (v. 6)? Was it powerful and influential people who had despised and rejected Jesus in the courts? See Luke 22:66-23:25.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Is it possible for humans to be perfectly impartial? What hampers your impartiality? Consider that God views all of us as his creation.

2. Are you a rich Christ-follower or a poor one? How—with money or with faith and love for God (v. 5)?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Faith** in our Lord Jesus Christ (2:1) is demonstrated by how we treat others. Preferential treatment of the rich is not the evidence of Christ in us.*

The Royal Law

DAY 6

James 2:8-13

Which laws frustrate you the most? (a) city, (b) state/provincial, (c) federal, (d) religious (e) traffic.

1. What is the “royal law” (v. 8)? See Leviticus 19:18. How does this law identify favoritism as sin (vs. 2-4)?
2. How does the old covenant, and specifically the Ten Commandments, which are part of the old covenant, demonstrate a pre-Christian application of the royal law (vs. 8-11)?
3. How does God’s standard of judgment, the royal law (v. 8) become the law of liberty in the new covenant (vs. 12-13)?
4. Do mercy and justice sometimes conflict (v. 13)? How does mercy, found in the law of liberty itself, demonstrate faith?

1. The “royal law” (v. 8) is expressed in many biblical passages, the commandment to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. It is called “royal” because it is both the summary of all laws governing human relationships as well as being the supreme law of all such laws.

2. Let God’s mercy triumph over his judgment in your life (v. 13). Is there someone who has harmed you, to whom you can show mercy by extending forgiveness?

Greek Orthodox Christians, shortly before Lent, recite the following words: “God has shown mercy to us. Let us in our turn show mercy: let us feed the poor, and with the divine water of fasting let us wash the defilement from our souls.” This recitation, based on James 2:8-13, is intended as a prayer of repentance to plead for God’s mercy.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Faith That Works

James 2:14-17

OPENING
up to the Word

What do you consider *profit*? (a) income after taxes, (b) income after expenses, (c) assets minus liabilities, (d) the gift of the faith of Christ.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Now James turns more specifically to the issue of how works relate to faith. Isn't it impossible to receive faith, by grace, and not have evidence of that displayed in the works God produces in our lives (v. 14)?

2. How does faith show itself to be alive (vs. 15-16)?

3. Is James saying that works can save anyone? Works alone can only bring death, since everyone has sinned (v. 10) and the wages (what we earn by our efforts apart from God) is death (Romans 6:23).

LIVING
out the Word

1. Does it take living faith (that comes only from Jesus Christ who lives within us) to help the needy? Who could use your help today?

2. Can physical assistance open the way for the needy to be receptive to spiritual help?

WINDOW
on the Word

*James is concerned that Christians understand the **meaning of faith**. Dead faith cannot save (v. 14). Saving faith is an active faith. The Greek word used here is *pistis*, which comes from the same Greek root that is generally translated "believe."*