



# JAMES

## APPLYING THE LAW OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

### Authorship of James

Traditionally the author of this book is James, the brother of our Lord. As with all biblical books, scholars question this traditional view. James' Epistle was not listed as one of the canonized New Testament writings in AD 140, or 170, but was included by AD 367. In 1522 Martin Luther referred to it as a "right strawy epistle."<sup>1</sup>

It is written in very good Greek—which does not seem consistent with the education available to a poor family in the small Jewish town of Nazareth, with a population of just a few hundred. However, a knowledgeable scribe may have translated the letter into Greek. The Epistle includes Jewish motifs suggesting a Jewish author (i.e. James 1:1 and James 2:2; etc.).<sup>2</sup>

Several later apocrypha were also given the name "James" (i.e. *Protoevangelium of James*, *Apocryphon of James*, etc.). Later writers may have "borrowed" the name of James as a sign of authority. Regardless of the authorship,

we hold this Epistle as sacred scripture. In the Restoration, we have a special affinity for this great book (Joseph Smith—History 1:11).

## Audience

This is the first “General Epistle” in the New Testament written to “the twelve tribes . . . scattered abroad.”<sup>3</sup> The New Testament includes disciples from at least four tribes of Israel.<sup>4</sup> The primary audience seems to be Israelite converts who struggled with adversity and patience in waiting for the Lord's return. It does not sound like a missionary track, but is written to disciples striving to live the Savior's higher law.

James included several references from the Law of Moses and Writings and Prophets, suggesting that these Christians were familiar with much in our Old Testament scripture.<sup>5</sup> However, one can understand the content without a deep understanding of Old Testament scripture. It was probably a circular letter to be read by Palestinian Christianity and several churches within the Roman Empire where Jewish-Christians lived.

## Who's Who among the Jameses?

The name “James/*Jakobos*” (Greek) comes from the Hebrew name “Jacob.” (The most famous Jacob in the Old Testament was the grandson of Abraham, whose name was changed to Israel.)

There are three James mentioned in the New Testament:

1. The Apostle James, the son of Zebedee and Salome, also known as a “son of thunder.” He was present with Peter and his brother John on the Mount of Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead, etc. He was killed by Herod in the early 40's (Acts 12:2). He returned to earth with Peter and John to give the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph Smith (Joseph Smith—History 1:72).
2. James, son of Alphaeus and Mary, also a member of Jesus' original twelve apostles, sometimes known as “James the less” (Mark 15:40; also see Matthew 10:3; 27:56; Luke 6:15; 24:10; etc.).
3. James, the half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55) who identifies himself as a “servant of God.” During Jesus' life, he did not believe that his half-brother was the Son of God (John 7:2–5). He was probably the “James” referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:7 when the resurrection accounts are listed, “after that, he was seen of *James* then of all the apostles.” He became a leader in the Apostolic church, possibly a Bishop, area authority, or an apostle (Galatians 1:19).<sup>6</sup> Paul refers to him in Galatians as one of the “pillars” of the church (Galatians 2:9). According to the Jewish historian Josephus he was stoned by the Sanhedrin in AD 62. Ananus “assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others . . . he delivered them to be stoned.”<sup>7</sup>

## Structure

The Epistle opens with a modified introduction, not the formal Greek introduction and personal greeting of Paul's Epistles. Its form is a collection of exhortations as we see in Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.<sup>8</sup> The author argues over twenty points by comparing and contrasting many ideas (with some expansions on some earlier points). The Epistle is known as “the most socially conscious writing in the New Testament.”<sup>9</sup> The first chapter briefly touches on ten themes (patience, prayer, faith, wealth, temptation, good gifts, communication, sin, doers of the word, generosity), and then develops these themes in the remainder of the Epistle. Each section stands on its own as self-contained counsel, connected only with catch-words. Jesus' teachings are repeated regularly. The one theme that consistently runs throughout the Epistle is to apply Christ's Gospel.

## Outline

- 1:1 Greetings
- 1:2–4 View Trials and Patience Eternally
- 1:5–8 God Gives Wisdom to All Who Ask in Faith
- 1:9–11 Believers Have Cause to Rejoice
- 1:12–18 Resisting Sin Brings a Crown
- 1:19–27 Pure Religion is Listen, Love, Repent, Do
- 2:1–9 Avoid Partiality toward the Rich
- 2:10–11 Keep the Law of the Gospel
- 2:12–13 Show Mercy
- 2:14–26 Faith Without Works is Dead
- 3:1–12 Talk is Cheap and Dangerous
- 3:13–16 Avoid Contention
- 3:17–18 Be Truly Wise
- 4:1–5 Worldliness is the Enemy of God
- 4:6–10 Submit Your Will to God's Will
- 4:11–12 Judge Not
- 4:13–17 Do Good in God and Boast Not
- 5:1–6 Warning to the Corrupt Rich
- 5:7–13 Patience through Suffering
- 5:14–16 Elders Heal the Sick-Laying on of Hands
- 5:17–20 Confession and [Re]Conversion



## JAMES 1

### Introduction

*James 1:1*

**James 1:1** “James, a servant of God . . . to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting” Jesus called all of His disciples to be servants to God as the Lord Jesus Christ served and submitted to God in and all things.<sup>10</sup> The author refers to himself as a “servant of God,” as did Abraham, Moses and David, to name a few. In Revelation 1:1, all Christian believers receive this title. It stems from Christ’s teachings for all disciples to serve one another (Matthew 23:8–12). In Christianity, “the twelve tribes” may include those adopted into Israel as well as those born from of the dispersion—not one group specifically. As Jesus taught, all who apply this counsel become children of Israel (Matthew 5:45; John 8:33–47). This is to all those spiritually of Israel.

### View Trials and Patience Eternally

*James 1:2–4*

**James 1:2–4** “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance . . .” (NIV) The JST changes the KJV “divers temptations” to “many afflictions.” This is closer to the original Greek, and very doctrinally different. Most other English translations change “temptation” to “trials.” This is a very important principle of the gospel. In order to “mature” as disciples, our faith must be tried. As we endure trials by focusing on God, we can learn patience and faith in the right things. The natural laws of nature testify of the same truth. As discussed previously, we cannot be perfected without tribulations (Hebrews 10:40 JST).

### God Answers Faith-Filled Prayers with Wisdom

*James 1:5–8*

**James 1:5–6** “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” The impact of these verses is phenomenal. Just think of what this verse started across Christianity, let alone in the Restoration. In the Smith home, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith led family devotionals every morning and night where they read from the Bible and prayed.<sup>11</sup> Lucy reported that her son Joseph began “seriously searching the scriptures” between the ages of twelve and fifteen on his own.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, a local Methodist minister used the text from James 1:5–6 that may have been heard by Joseph.<sup>13</sup>

How do we ask in faith? Belief breeds faith. Faith grows with truth and reflection. Faith also grows with finding the Lord’s hand in the world. Faith is also wanting to increase our faith but not knowing how. I love the example in Mark, “Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). One of the greatest gifts God has given us is the ability



to ask our questions in prayer with the promise that He—the Creator of the Universe—will answer them. James adds another qualification in addition to patience from v. 3; we must have “no trace of doubts” (JB) or “wavering” (KJV) in our faith. James likens doubts to the shifting winds and waves. Hearing God’s answers requires a belief, patience, and fervent faith built on trust. There are other qualifications that James does not mention, including “if it is right,” remembering back on past promptings, and having an honest heart (D&C 9:7; 6:22; 8:1).<sup>14</sup>

**James 1:7–8 “That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord . . . double-minded and unstable”** (NIV) We are double minded when we vacillate between wanting to please the Lord and please our appetites. We are double minded when we have not firmly committed to love the Lord more than everything else (i.e. our Sabbath activities, choice of reading material, past times, etc.). Our culture suffers from double-mindedness as we do not keep our word, marriage covenants and promises are broken, and we change our minds often.

## Believers Have Cause to Rejoice

*James 1:9–11*

**James 1:9–11 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower”** (NIV) We see life differently when we look at it from an eternal view, and prioritize different experiences. The humility learned from one’s station is a blessing. And, a preoccupation with wealth will be damning. For three verses James emphasizes the worthlessness of earthy riches. He uses the imagery of grass’ “*beauty of its appearance*” (NAS) which only lasts a few weeks without rain, and then dies.

## Resisting Sin Brings a Crown

*James 1:12–18*

**James 1:12 “Blessed is the man that resisteth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life”** (JST) Only one word was changed, “endureth” to “*resisteth*.” Doctrinally, this is a powerful difference. We should avoid temptations not endure them! This section turns to encouraging the reader to persevere against tribulations. The beginning sounds like a beatitude (i.e. “blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:10). Paul also shares this theme in 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 2:5; Romans 8:28; and 1 Peter in 5:4. It is clear that these ideas are very Christian—our current trials can prepare us for an eternal reward.

**James 1:13–15 “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me’ . . . But each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed”** (BSB) Satan is the tempter, not God. Yet, many biblical verses read, “God tempted . . .” because the Jewish practice was to give God all credit for everything. However, in the Hebrew translation of Genesis 22:1 it reads, “God tested Abraham.” This is doctrinally correct and is repeated in D&C 101:4, “they must be chastened and tried, even as Abraham.”

If we do not bridle our appetites and tendencies of the natural man, Satan can build on them to lead us to sin. In hunting wild game, the animal is “lured” or “drawn away” (KJV) out of the safety of the thicket into an area set with snares. Satan wants us to catch his bait. President M. Russell Ballard described temptation like fishing bait: “The use of artificial lures to fool and catch a fish is an example of the way Lucifer often tempts, deceives, and tries to ensnare us.”<sup>15</sup>

**James 1:16–17 “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above”** (NIV) This is the way to judge wisely, or is a key in making daily choices—if it good it is of God. Mormon elaborated more the same principle, “All things which are good cometh from God . . . everything which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God” (Moroni 7:12–13). This means that all our good thoughts are from God. In our daily life this allows us to distinguish which thoughts are inspired by the Spirit and which ones are not.<sup>16</sup> It also allows us to make righteous judgements as we see all goodness from God.

**James 1:18 “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creation”** (BSB) We are born again through Jesus Christ as we accept Him as our spiritual Father and Master. The “first fruits” is a well-known reference to Deuteronomy 26:1–11, about the sacrifice of the first fruits. The Lord required the best and first so that His people could learn to sacrifice, delay gratification, and prioritize the things of God. This signifies that those who are the first fruits stand above others and present themselves to God as an offering to him to serve him with our whole souls.

## Pure Religion is Listen, Love, Repent and Do

*James 1:19–27*

**James 1:19–20 “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry . . . get rid of all moral filth and the evil . . . and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you”** (NIV) The old Byzantine manuscripts use the linking word, “consequently.” It is because of our commitment to join the Lord and sacrifice for Him that we try to live the higher laws of the gospel. Everyone ought to be ready to listen to God’s word—whenever it is proclaimed. And, eagerly listen to others more than talk. James also emphasizes the need for internal controls—and to put away anger and bad habits (or in the KJV, “all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness”). In its place, we should “implant the word” (v. 21).

**James 1:22 “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”** To be a Christian disciple requires more than a verbal confession. Disciples assume responsibility as servants of God. We must sacrifice whatever is needed to fulfill God’s will in our lives. James explains this by describing the fleeting reflection in a mirror. James asks converts for lasting commitment and action.

**James 1:25** “one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom, and continues to do so—not being a forgetful hearer, but an effective doer—he will be blessed in what he does” (BSB) The “law of liberty” emphasizes the difference between Christ’s higher law and the Mosaic Law. Just like Paul, James teaches that keeping Jesus’ commandments is what truly brings us freedom.

**James 1:26** **If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain**” We cannot pretend to be religious while attacking others or speaking unkindly. The Spirit departs and knows hypocrisy. The gospel is a law of love.

**James 1:27** **Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from vices of the world**” (JST italicized) The children and widows also received Jesus’ attention and blessings during His ministry. The Apostolic Church is following after His example. This is at the root of the latter-day Church’s ministering. Pure religion is defined here as manifesting one’s actions in love.

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## JAMES 2

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### Avoid Partiality toward the Rich

*James 2:1-9*

**James 2:1-5** “My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring . . .” (NIV) There must have been a problem with the rich and well-dressed getting better treatment than the poor. This was especially inappropriate in the “synagogue” setting where Jesus Christ, as our exemplar, went out of His way to meet the needs of the poor, sick, and under-recognized classes. (The word choice of “*sunagógé/synagogue*,” suggests that the author or audience had a Jewish background.) Currying favor with important people in any assembly is not a problem unique to that culture. We, too, live in a culture where one “dresses for success” and opportunities are limited depending on one’s clothing and wealth.

The author specifically mentions a “gold ring.” This would indicate that the man was either a Roman nobleman or of senatorial rank.<sup>17</sup> The next phrase adds that he dressed in “good apparel” (KJV) In Greek this is, “splendid apparel” (BLB), probably signifying the white wool toga of Roman citizenship. It may even suggest that he is seeking support for a political office. In any case, he was representing the aristocracy, in opposition to the poor.<sup>18</sup>

The Christians’ eagerness to please the aristocracy may have come from their need for political protection and a hope for freedom to practice their religion. (Judaism was one of the ten free foreign religions practiced at

the time, and Christianity, initially, piggy-backed along as the followers were fellow Israelites.) Such behavior produces dissension in the congregation. Unity cannot thrive if we do not treat each other with respect and love. But, regardless of the status, James pleads with the early saints to not show favoritism. True disciples of Christ should look within to cleanse any form of prejudice—economic, race, opportunities for learning, exclusive groups, mental health, disabilities, etc. (See also 2 Nephi 26:33; Alma 32:5; 3 Nephi 6:12; etc.).

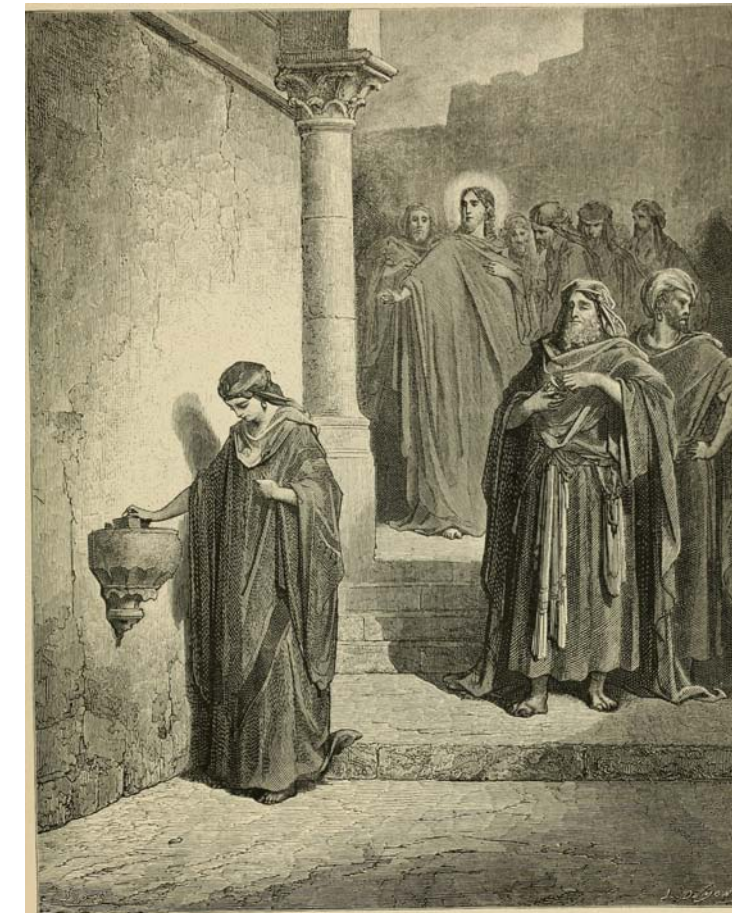
God uses a higher standard of judging His children, which Christians should follow. The humble, meek followers of God are the most valuable. This is why His prophets (and even His Son) are often chosen from the common man. It is often the poor who have the richest faith. It is their great faith that allows them to receive the promises of the Kingdom of God.

**James 2:6** “Ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?”

This is a common New Testament theme mentioned by Paul as well (Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 11:22; 13:3). Jesus also taught an opposition to those who love their riches (Matthew 6:2-3; 19:21; Mark 12:43-44). There may have been some problem with factions because of social rank in the church. Their society was fractured with class distinctions. An Empire wide census from AD 47 showed a third of the population worked as slaves or servants.<sup>19</sup> Class distinctions are the antithesis of a Zion society living the Law of Consecration.

**James 2:7** “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?”

The political and equestrian rank of society denounced the Lord Jesus as a common criminal. This verse can also be understood in another sense—when Christians show favoritism, they blaspheme, too. Those who have taken on Christ’s name at baptism and deliberately sin, are in a sense flaunting the name of God. In the Old Testament, God’s chosen people are referred to as, those “on whom the Lord’s name is called” (Deuteronomy 28:10; Amos 9:12). Another interpretation of the text is that the preferred rich leave the church assembly and then slanderously revile the name of Christ afterwards.<sup>20</sup>



The Poor Widow Casts into the Treasury all the Living She Has. Illustration from *The Bible Panorama, or The Holy Scriptures in picture and story*, 1891. Image via Flickr.

**James 2:8 “If you really keep the royal law stated in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well”** (BSB) Finally, James comes to the underlying principle or doctrine behind all this unfair treatment. This favorite passage is found in the center of the Torah (chiastically, the most important placement—the middle of the middle book). Leviticus was their priesthood manual, but the message applied to all Israelites. Jesus quoted this verse, Leviticus 19:18, when asked what was the most important commandment from the Law of Moses, wherein “hang ALL the laws and the prophets” (Matthew 22:39). It is the biblical commandment of love and Paul cited it, too (Romans 13:10). All the Jewish rites and precepts of purification were subsidiary to this “royal law.”

This unique reference to it as a “royal law,” may refer to God as the true King, superior to the Roman emperor. James had just mentioned political figures, so giving the title, “royal law,” may be in opposition to the Roman propaganda. Jesus built on this law when He gave the “new commandment” at his Last Supper, “That ye love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34)

Elder Marion G. Romney, while in the First Presidency, used the phrase, “the royal law of love” as the title to a general conference talk. He confirmed that: “The caring for the poor and the handicapped and those who need our help is a main purpose and an absolute requirement in fulfilling the royal law of loving our neighbors as ourselves.”<sup>21</sup>

**James 2:9 “if you show favoritism, you sin”** (NIV) If we are partiality moved by wealth or prestige in our respect and church fellowship of others, then we transgress God’s law of love.

## Keep the Law of the Gospel

*James 2:10–11*

**James 2:10–11 “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all”** The last phrase “is guilty of all,” can mean they are “accountable for them all,” or “liable to a penalty.”<sup>22</sup> It does not mean that if one lies they are guilty of murder, but rather they are guilty of breaking the law. Joseph Smith also emphasized the importance of living all of God’s laws: “Any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law, too.”<sup>23</sup> This is why repentance and forgiveness are so vital. President Nelson’s call to repent daily will keep our allegiance aligned with righteousness: “Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance.”<sup>24</sup>

We mortals progress line upon line. We can repent and return our desires and love to God and receive forgiveness with each stumble. With the help of the Spirit, we can progress to the level that Jesus encouraged in the Sermon on the Mount—to control our hearts and desires. Jesus warned his disciples that even if they only think about killing or breaking the law of chastity, they have broken the law (“whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” Matthew 5:28, NKJV).

## Christians Show Mercy

*James 2:12–13*

**James 2:12–13 “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. For judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful”** (BSB) The “law of liberty” (KJV) is Jesus’ higher Law of the Gospel, which is all based on His mercy and love. If we commit to becoming Christians, we need to live that way: offering forgiveness to others. When we forgive others—even those who have hurt or abused us—we learn how the “law of freedom” works. Allowing God to take over the judgement and mercifully offer forgiveness to those who have wronged us, leads to becoming free of hurt and anger which stunts our progress and inhibits the Spirit. When we show mercy to others, we become more Christ like as He, too, offers forgiveness. As James says, “mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Judgment under the higher law will be both sterner and milder than under the Law of Moses. Jesus and James both teach that those who show no mercy will be given no mercy (Matthew 25:34–41). Much of James’ counsel is actual quotations or elaborations on Jesus’ teachings.

## Faith Requires Works

*James 2:14–26*

**James 2:14 “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?”** (CSV) The section begins in the style of a Greco-Roman diatribe with questions and answers. In the New Testament when faith is mentioned it is always faith in Jesus Christ and not just wishful thinking or a positive attitude. This is why our deeds must follow, because belief in Christ requires following Him. If one does not live one’s faith, one does not really have faith. James attacks hypocrisy. The superficial condition that permits faith to be nothing more than a formal confession must have been a problem in James’ day as well as ours. Jesus warned of the same principle. Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21).

**James 2:15–16 “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food . . . Depart in peace . . . notwithstanding ye give them not . . . what *doth it profit?*”** James offers a logical example of showing that we must act on our beliefs to have them help us and others. The phrase, “depart in peace,” or “go in peace,” was a farewell used throughout the Old Testament and New Testament.<sup>25</sup> Here it is used to show the hypocrisy of those who voiced their peace but refused to feed orphans and widows in need.

**James 2:17 “faith, if it *have not works, is dead*”** (JST *italicized*) Four times James repeats this message that true worship is not just words and ceremonies, but active deeds of love (also see verses 20, 24, 26).

**James 2:19** “Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble; *thou hast made thyself like unto them, not being justified*” (JST *italicized*) James’ diatribe offers a slap in the face to those who feel verbal allegiance is sufficient. Satan and his devils also believe. We are on the same level as they are if we do not take this knowledge and apply it in our lives. Converts made up the entire Christian church at this point (possibly there were second generation members, but only a few), so one’s responsibilities upon joining needed to be completely understood. The reason why our faith dies if we do not incorporate it into action is because the Holy Spirit can only dwell with us if we are living the gospel. We cannot grow in faith if we are not receiving the nurture and admonition of the Holy Ghost.

**James 2:21** “Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?” (NIV) At the time of James’ writing, the Jews held Abraham as the progenitor of the covenant, and the genealogical line that insured a place in heaven. In their thinking, Abraham’s seed had royal blood. Because of this, he is referenced often in the New Testament. In Hebrews 11:17–19, Paul used the example of Abraham’s great faith in offering Isaac. Here, James uses the same story as an example of Abraham’s works. Abraham needed both faith and works to carry out that command. The New Testament remembers Abraham for following God’s direction, even in the most difficult request imaginable. I personally believe that God will ask us to also sacrifice or offer up those things that are most tender to us in order to show our commitment to Him. This spirit of sacrifice is required to develop the faith needed to become more Christlike.

**James 2:22** “You see that his faith was working with his actions, and his faith was perfected by what he did” (BSB) Abraham’s faith was perfected through his actions. Likewise, our faith is perfected as we complement our beliefs with deeds. James cites Genesis 15:6. The JST adds that “Abram looked forth and saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad, and his soul found rest” (Genesis 15:12, JST). Abraham’s righteousness made him a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:18). Jesus told his apostles that they would be His friends if they did whatever He commanded them (John 15:14).

**James 2:24** “a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone” (NIV) James’ conclusion on the subject does not contradict Paul’s. Paul only rejects of works of the Law of Moses as a means to salvation. Paul never teaches that we do not need to live the Law of the Gospel, or as James referred to it, “the Law of Liberty” (see 1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Matthew 25:31–46).

**James 2:25** “Rahab the harlot *was justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way?*” (JST *italicized*) James offers a second witness of where works and faith were combined, this time by a woman—the “harlot Rahab” from Joshua 2:1–6. Paul also highlights Rahab as a woman of great faith (Hebrews 11:31). The Old Testament book of Joshua described sending Israelite spies to check out Jericho. Rahab had a home on the city wall, and hid the Israelite spies on her roof until they could secretly escape

unharmd. Because of her kindness, when the Israelites returned to destroy Jericho, Rahab and her household were spared and they joined the Israelites. I assume the family became fully converted because she became the great-grandmother of King David, according to the genealogy of Joseph in Matthew 1:5. Throughout Jewish history, she was held as a shining example of hospitality and conversion.<sup>26</sup>

The unusual aspect of this story is that the Bible always identifies her with the title: “harlot.” As mentioned in Hebrews, there is debate as to the translation of that word. Could it have meant she was an inn keeper? Or was she forced into that profession by the men in her life, but her heart was honorable? Whatever profession she had initially, Rahab became a heroine of faith, works, hospitality, honesty, conversion, and change. As good works need pure desires, we can assume that if Rahab’s actions were counted for righteousness, then God sees more than her title.

**James 2:26** “as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead” For the fourth and most forceful time, James repeats his thesis. Faith is an action word and must motivate positive deeds or it is “useless” (NAS, NIV, JB). This time he adds the image of the death of our mortal bodies. We would die without our spirit residing within, and in the life hereafter, our spirits will be virtually dead without the presence of good deeds. In all periods of history, Christians’ good works are the way they are judged by outsiders and is a common sense standard. This was one of the favorite scriptures of Benjamin Franklin.<sup>27</sup>

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## JAMES 3

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### Taming the Tongue

*James 3:1–12*

**James 3:1** “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (NIV) All other English translations I know of change the KJV word “master” to “teacher/*didaskalos*/an instructor,” giving this whole section a different bend. Both words could mean teacher at the time. James warns that there will be a greater condemnation if teachers speak falsely, or if teachers learn more, they will be held accountable for more.

**James 3:2** “We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to control his whole body” (BSB) By practicing self-control of our tongues, we are better able to control every aspect of our lives. The author humbly includes himself as one who has offended others in word. This first phrase sounds just like Jesus’ admonition, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). If the teacher or master is a good example of what to say and when, then the whole church learns self-control and the other virtues that their leader teaches.

Let's look at another interpretation. As God designed scripture to often communicate more than one meaning, and often to testify of His Son, it is interesting to see Jesus in this verse. The greatest “teacher” and “master” (3:1) is also known as “the Word.” Jesus is the perfect teacher who never said anything amiss, and He was able to control the whole body of the church. By His word, He created the world and controls it.

**James 3:3–5 “ships . . . are so large and . . . steered by a very small rudder . . . the tongue is a small part of the body, but it boasts of great things. Consider how small a spark sets a great forest ablaze.”** Paul illustrates his point with three images: a horse bridle/bit, a ship's helm, and a forest fire. A boat often symbolizes the early church in early Christianity. Hence, a rudder can be the leader or teacher. In the more literal understanding, the tongue's size does not measure its influence. We can control the rest of our actions if our mouth is governed. The fierce winds are often symbolic of temptations. Ephesians 4:14 uses the imagery of winds to symbolize extra distractions or useless interests. Some verbal abuse or persecution spreads repercussions like a fire. The phrase in KJV, “course of nature” is literally, “the wheel of being” referring to our existence.

**James 3:7–9 “All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue”** (NIV) Man is given dominion or stewardship over the animals in Genesis 1:28 and 2:19. Humans can train bulls and lions, but can still struggle with taming their own tongues. Controlling our tongues can be one of the “weaknesses,” that we need Christ's help to overcome as the Book of Mormon teaches: “I give unto men weakness that they may be humble, and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me” (Ether 12:27).

Coastline of the Dead Sea by Eduard Marmet. Image via Wikimedia Commons.



**James 3:9–10 “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing”** Our words can be two sided: we can use them to praise God, and yet curse our fellow beings, God's creation. Combining blessings and cursing is incompatible. Blessings are from God and cursing from the devil. It is wrong to degrade each other.

**James 3:11 “Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives”** (NIV) If the audience were the Hebrews along the Jordan Valley, they were familiar with both mineral and fresh water springs. The fruits of the figs, olives and berries are indigenous foods from that area. Sweet and bitter waters did not mix. A fountain or spring of “sweet water” is another way of saying, “the well of living water.” If the water is sweet it is living or running water. Bitter water is stagnant. The Children of Israel on their exodus through Sinai experienced the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15:23). In contrast, Ezekiel 47:1 describes pure waters flowing from the Temple as a symbol of revelation, God's gifts, and life (also see Psalm 46:4; Isaiah 55:1). Sweet water was the clear flowing inspiration from God. John 7:37 compares preaching to water which ties back to one of the meanings of the first section, about teachers. James teaches that Christians who praise God, should never speak unkindly, abusively or dishonestly. We need to follow the examples of nature.

## True Wisdom Involves Humble Living

*James 3:13–18*

**James 3:13 “Are any of you wise or sensible? Then show it by living right and by being humble and wise in everything you do”** (CEV) If we are wise and knowledgeable, we must guard against pride. Maintaining a meek, humble perspective will foster more learning. We are “wise” only if we stop bragging. The KJV “conversation,” is also translated, “life,” (NIV) “behavior” (NASB), and “conduct” (NKJV).

**James 3:14–16 “If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts . . . such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic”** (NIV) The antithesis of humility and wisdom is pride and selfishness which fosters “unrighteous dominion” (D&C 121:39). The motives behind selfishness and ambition, or “this wisdom,” are Satanic.

Seeking more wisdom was one of the noblest Greek values. The word “philosophy” comes from two roots: “*philo*/love” and “*sophy* /wisdom.” Greek schools of philosophy such as the stoics and cynics taught the art of argument, of “dialectics.” James differentiates between wisdom from God and the counterfeit version from Satan.

**James 3:17–18 “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”** We learn of wisdom from above through revelation. If it brings peace and speaks to our mind and heart, it is from the Spirit of God (D&C 6:15, 23; 8:2). In addition to God's wisdom, it brings mercy, fairness, sincerity, and good fruits, Isaiah 32:17 describes that “the fruit of righteousness will be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness.”



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## JAMES 4

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### Worldliness is an Enemy of God

*James 4:1-6*

**James 4:1-2** “What causes fights and quarrels among you? . . . You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God” (NIV) There may have been a problem among the saints with contention. It may have been Jews fighting Christians, zealots, or even Christians against Christians. These verses suggest that the fighting was for lusts, material advantage, gratification, passions, or pleasures. He is probably is not referring to a military war of killing, but definitely to hostilities that figuratively kill the spirit. Their hearts were set on the wrong thing

**James 4:3** “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (NIV) The Lord will not answer us if we are asking for the wrong things, with the wrong attitude, or at the wrong time. James addressed “ask[ing] amiss” (KJV) earlier in James 1:5, “ask in faith, nothing wavering.” If we are motivated by the wrong source or if we are not asking for what is wisest in the Lord’s sight, we will not receive what we ask. However, God still hears all our prayers, and His delay in answering is to teach us a wiser purpose (D&C 6:14; 9:7; 122:7). God will answer our prayers as we align our will with His, and not the other way around. It is always our hearing problem, not His. This is why we must humbly trust and keep seeking.

James mentions two reasons why our prayers are not answered, but there are many more.<sup>28</sup> We may feel like Joseph Smith, when he charged God with hiding (D&C 121:1-2). But, as God taught Joseph in Liberty Jail, His ways are wiser and we have something to learn from the process. Prayers may not be answered to try our faith, or until repentance occurs, or to learn from the process of drawing closer to God, or perhaps God previously gave the answer. Or, our prayers are answered but we cannot hear Him because of distractions (Mosiah 4:11, 20; Alma 39:16 D&C 4:5; 6:22; 90:24; 122:7). During those times that we desperately want God’s witness, we need to follow the Apostle Thomas’ example—he did not leave his fellow apostles. He continued to hope. While waiting, he did not deny his past witnesses. He remained in the right place, so that at the right time, he heard the Lord’s answer.<sup>29</sup>

**James 4:4** “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?” (NIV) In this context, “adulterers” (KJV) not only refers to all sexual sinners, but also to idolatry. In the Old Testament, the marriage covenant is often used to describe the chosen people’s relationship to God (i.e. Hosea 3:1). Zion is to be God’s bride. In this relationship, when they leave God’s covenant, they are figuratively committing adultery. James may be referring to those who selfishly love money more than feeding the poor or keeping the Sabbath day holy. Jesus also addresses this in Matthew 6:24. According to James, if we love worldli-

ness, we are an enemy to God. Our hearts must be purified to want God’s will more than the things of the world (James is not referring to those who love God’s creation and hope to preserve our planet).

**James 4:5-6** “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” James quotes Proverbs 3:34. The idea is also in the Book of Mormon, where the natural man takes over our hearts. We cannot be arrogant in our relationship to God and His creations. For eternal blessings we must humbly seek His will and His divine path.

### Submit Your Will to God’s Will

*James 4:5-12*

**James 4:7-8** “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts” This is the formula for conquering and abandoning evil. God can transform our lives. We should think of the imagery of walking toward the Lord and then like a magnetic pull, we become embraced in His love. Jesus’ taught the same principle in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:24 and in Jeremiah 31:3).

**James 4:9-10** “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” We must change from our extravagant ways, lament over our sins and fully change through whole-hearted repentance. It sounds as though James is promoting unnecessary mourning or weeping and interpreting laughter as a sin. But, in the context, it appears he is asking for a reverent nature before God, not a stoic nature or forced depression.

### Judge Not

*James 4:11-12*

**James 4:11-12** “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another . . . There is only one Lawgiver and Judge . . . who are you to judge your neighbor?” (NIV) This is an elaboration on the need control our tongues from James 3:1-12. When we speak against others, we are judging them which breaks God law. The Law of the Gospel calls for forgiveness and followers not critics. From our one-sided mortal perspective we need to trust the one who can see the whole eternal picture. Jesus is the one “Lawgiver” and the “Judge.”<sup>30</sup> Are we trying to take over God’s role when we judge another?

### Do Good in God and Boast Not

*James 4:13-17*

**James 4:13-15** “You who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there . . . and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. . . . Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do . . .’” (NIV) James reminds his audience that they should never leave God out of their plans. As disciples, our lives are not in our own control but in God’s. And, the goal of mortality is not gain. We need to be malleable to God’s directions. Rather than anti-capitalism, James is anti-self-assurance.

Throughout the epistle, James condemns those who seek and prioritize material riches and worldly advantage (i.e. James 1:10; 2:1–7; 5:1–6). The scriptures are filled with examples of God blessing His people with the goods of the world, but James condemns the commercial schemer who carries out his or her elaborate plans to get rich without consulting God. Humanity tries to calculate the earth's events, but they are subject to God. The Lord calls on His disciples to plan for their future and to create and bless the world. Yet the sinful self-centeredness of the planning and executing without attention to God filled James' society and ours.

**James 4:16** “**You boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil**” (NIV) Boasting is prideful and comes from a self-centered heart. However, James is not referring to building a child up with encouragement or honoring another. In the Book of Mormon, Ammon's brother cautioned him not to boast about his missionary success, but he defended himself, that he was praising God (Alma 26:10–11).

**James 4:17** “**If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them**” (NIV) God will hold us accountable for knowing what He has revealed. All those that come into the earth are given the light of Christ to distinguish right from wrong. And, those of the age of accountability will be held accountable. Serving and loving more comes at the price of learning more. Or as the Lord taught, “Where much is given, much is required.”

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## JAMES 5

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### Warning to Rich Oppressors

*James 5:1–6*

**James 5:1–3a** “**You who are rich, weep . . . Your riches have rotted and . . . their corrosion will testify against you and consume your flesh like fire**” (BSB) James writes like an oracle of doom. Seeking money to get gain is Satan's first law of false faiths.<sup>31</sup> Those whose hearts are set on materialism will even lose the self-satisfaction that came when they first made money. The forthcoming natural disasters and divinely-guided destructions will change the plans of the materialistic. James wrote this in the perfect tense as if the misfortunes had already occurred. This tense is always used in the prophetic voice.

**James 5:3b–4** “**You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you**” (NIV) God will punish those managers who cheat their laborers. Like the blood of Able that cried from the ground for justice (Genesis 4:10), the poor laborers cry out against their overlords who become rich off the laborers' service. The KJV includes the title, “Lord of the Sabaoth” which does not mean the Lord of the Sabbath, but is a military title. It is the “Lord of Hosts” (ESV) or the “Lord Almighty” (NIV), the one who will deliver judgment.

**James 5:5–6** “**You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous, who did not resist you**” (BSB) James likens the secular selfish people who are insensitive to the needs of those around them, to a fatted calf ready to be slaughtered. They glut themselves for no personal avail, as their lives will end shortly. The problem is the self-indulgence. The fat heart represents the feeding of our selfish desires.

### Patience through Suffering

*James 5:7–12*

**James 5:7–8** “**Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land . . . You too, be patient and stand firm . . .**” (NIV) The early Christians expected Jesus to return to reign in glory within their generation or their grandchildren's. This agricultural reference of patiently waiting was well known from Daniel 11:14. It is an expression of trusting God. Patience shows our trust in God. His implanted word will bear fruit. After two-millennia, Christians continue to trust in the Second Coming, but expect that His Kingdom will come in His time. In modern scripture we learned that the righteous can cut that time short if a Zion people becomes ready.

**James 5:9** “**Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!**” (NIV) For the fifth time, James returns to the theme of judgement (James 1:16–17; 2:12–13; 3:1; 4:11). He warns his audience not to “complain” (BSB) or create contention. Contention was also the first problem that Jesus denounced when visiting the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:29).

**James 5:10–11** “**Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets . . . Job's perseverance . . . The Lord is full of compassion and mercy**” (NIV) The ancient prophets are still our examples of patience, with Job leading the list. The Lord also used the example of Job as the prime example of suffering to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail (D&C 121:10). We use these two examples of Job as evidence that he lived and was a real person rather than just a fictitious story.

**James 5:12** “**Above 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”**” (NIV) James turns to many of Jesus' teachings here (Matthew 5:33–37). Swearing shows impatience. It appears that James' uses the phrase, “above all” as a connecting phrase, and not necessarily to point to the most important commandment in his epistle. Since this directive is only mentioned once, and ten others are repeated and elaborated on multiple times, we can assume that it is not his most valued message.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the importance of making oaths with God is of serious import and should not be taken lightly. In the context, the saints needed patience to endure their suffering. Perhaps he is asking those who have made covenants, with a clear “yes,” to hold and maintain integrity by keeping those covenants.

## Elders Heal the Sick through Laying on of Hands

*James 5:13–18*

**James 5:13 “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms”** James opens the subject of healing with the reminder that all Christians should pray to endure affliction. He includes singing hymns or “praises” (BSB) as an expression of joy (also Ephesians 5:8). I find the Psalms and hymns help to endure trials. As we are merry, the type of music we choose to sing is important. James specifies that it is to praise the Lord. As in our day, at this time in the Greco-Roman world, many rejoicings included “arrogant and salacious songs that were characteristics of banquets and similar celebrations.”<sup>33</sup>

**James 5:14 “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord”** Anointing with oil typifies of Christ. The word “Christ/Messiah” in English means, “Anointed.” God the Father anointed Jesus to become the Holy One. It is significant that the oil used for anointing is olive oil. It symbolizes the atonement. As mentioned earlier, the garden of Gethsemane referred to an olive press where the oil was crushed and squeezed out (Matthew 26:36–46). Jews saw olive oil as a type of special use for life and spirit. The *Apocalypse of Moses* 9, and *Book of Adam and Eve*, describe the “Tree of Life” as flowing with healing olive oil.<sup>34</sup> Also, as instructed in the Law of Moses, the anointing of the sons of Aaron to become priests and the coronation of kings both used olive oil (1 Samuel 10:1, Exodus 28:41; 30:30). It was also used for wounds (Isaiah 1:6; Luke 10:34), and in preparation of death (Matthew 26:6; Mark 16:1).<sup>35</sup> Jews and Jesus anointed the sick with oil (Mark 6:13).<sup>36</sup> There was nothing magical about the oil, yet if done according to God’s laws, the anointing was done on the symbolism of Christ, the Anointed One, as the prayer intercedes with God our Creator.

What role did an elder play in the early church? In the New Testament, “Elders” are not just older citizens, but are the leaders (1 Peter 5:2). By AD 40–50, the elders had a permanent place in the Jerusalem congregation along with the apostles (Acts 11:30; 15:2; 16:4; 22:18). Barnabas and Paul were ordained “elders” (Acts 14:23). They are mentioned as church leaders (Acts 20:4, 28; 1 Peter 5:15), as preachers and teachers (1 Timothy 5:17–19) and in an ordination (1 Timothy 4:14). An Elder was a title of honor and distinction (1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1). Also, Elders appear to be lay members as they are engaged in ordinary occupations as well.<sup>37</sup> The anointing of the sick is one of the ordinances from the primitive church that the Lord restored in our dispensation.

**James 5:15 “the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”** James’ emphasis is on the Lord’s role and the prayer of faith. The gift of healing is available to all with faith (1 Corinthians 12:28). Many ancient peoples, including those in the Old Testament and New Testament, thought that sickness was a consequence of sin (1 Kings 15:4; Matthew 9:2). As discussed earlier, this is a mistaken notion (see John 9:1).<sup>38</sup> The praying saint or elder calls on God’s power for both healing and forgiveness. James links divine healing and forgiveness. In one example of healing, Jesus showed that He had

power to forgive sins as well as heal (Mark 2:5–11). Yet, not everyone that Jesus healed appeared to have had a repentant heart. Forgiveness requires repentance. But, if the power of God is used to physically heal someone, it certainly may have the power to cleanse them spiritually, too.

Both healings and cleansing use the Spirit and power of God. James’ discussion raises a few questions, Can one be healed by the power of God without a spiritual cleansing? Does the Spirit carry out both cleansing and healings? Does the Spirit’s presence always cleanse to some degree? To find answers, we look to the Book of Mormon. There Jesus taught: “Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins” (3 Nephi 12:2). And, again in the final pages, Moroni summarized this key doctrine: “. . . were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 6:4; 8:26; also see D&C 76:52). As the Spirit is the cleansing agent, when the Spirit is present for healing, a cleansing may well occur too.<sup>39</sup> This does not mean that everyone who feels the Spirit will be healed, but perhaps everyone who is healed is cleansed, at that moment.

## Confession and [Re]Conversion

*James 5:16–20*

**James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective”** (NIV) Confession is a very important part of the repentance process. It enables accountability, change acceleration, and reconciliation. Acknowledging our mistakes and apologizing to those we have aggrieved is the beginning of deep, meaningful change. Some serious sins should be confessed to a bishop.<sup>40</sup> Confession to a priesthood leader can be daunting, but when done with a humble spirit, it becomes a giant step towards forgiveness. Confession may seem like a difficult and sometimes embarrassing first step, and yet, it is often the easiest part of truly repenting.

**James 5:17–18 “Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not”** (NIV) In Greek, “Elias” (KJV) is the name for Elijah. This venerable Old Testament prophet was a righteous example of offering prayers to draw God’s power to earth. 1 Kings 17 and 18 tells the story of Elijah asking God to close the heavens from rain for 3 ½ years in order to bring the Children of Israel to repentance. The climax of the account is the day of the return of the rains when all the wicked priests of Baal met on Mt. Carmel to offer sacrifices to Baal with great drama, followed by Elijah offering a sacrifice to Jehovah with great fire from heaven. The following death of the priests of Baal stopped the drought, and the down pour of rains came as Elijah ran down the mountain. (Consistent with many of James’ examples, Jesus also recalled this story in Luke 4:25.)

**James 5:19–20 “My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth . . . Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins”** (NIV) James

closes his epistle with this last charge for preaching the gospel and a promise of forgiveness. If we can help restore a non-committed-believer, or returning-believer it brings great blessings to both parties. The entire epistle of James is filled with guidelines on how to become more Christ like. James' closing promise is that as we come toward "perfection" (KJV), we receive God's forgiveness.

On a related note, bringing someone back to the fold includes the need to bear testimony so that the Spirit can witness of the truth. In this dispensation, God also promised to forgive our sins when we testify: "the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you, and your sins are forgiven you" (D&C 64:3). The two are related as bearing our testimonies can be the means of restoring us to a straighter path.

*Header Image: Image by Valiphotos via Pixabay.*

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## ENDNOTES

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1. Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (NYC, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 725.
2. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Anchor Yale Bible: The Letter of James* (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 1995), 6.
3. The title, "General Epistle," is also written as, "Catholic Epistle," which means general or universal.
4. Elizabeth and Zacharias from Aaron (Luke 1:5); Anna from Asher (Luke 2:36); Joseph husband of Mary, from Judah (Matthew 1:3, 16); Paul from Benjamin (Romans 11:11); Barnabas from Levi (Acts 10:36).
5. The Old Testament was an open cannon at the time of the Apostolic church. It was referred to as the Law of Moses, Writings and Prophets.
6. The word "apostle" may have referred to a missionary, or anyone else "sent" as well. It appears that there are more people referred to as "apostles" than to members of the "Twelve." The word "apostolos" was used as "a messenger, one sent on a mission, an apostle, envoy, delegate, one commissioned by another to represent him in some way, especially a man sent out by Jesus Christ Himself to preach the Gospel." Strongs, # 652, "Apostolos."
7. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1.
8. Harper, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 447. The structure is also similar to the apocryphal literature known as *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.
9. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 725.
10. See Come Follow Me #22: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22; #32: 1 Corinthians 1–7; and #40: Ephesians 1–6.
11. Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2001), 38. The practice of daily devotionals was recorded by both Lucy and her son William. Daily prayer, "both morning and evening," which was also consistent with Lucy Mack's childhood under the tutelage of her mother, Lydia Gates Mack. During the winter of 1830–31 between twelve and twenty neighbors attended the devotionals (ibid. 34–35). The most exhaustive biographer of Lucy Mack Smith, described her "as a model of domestic spirituality, a model drawn directly from her New England culture about proper behavior for pious women." (ibid. 17). Again Lucy Mack, "Whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remember the service of & the welfare of our souls" (ibid., 323). According to first-hand accounts, Joseph Smith continued this same practice of evening family devotionals in his home (Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet*, 147). Jessee, *Personal Writings of Smith*, 10. "[My] goodly parents spared no pains to instructing me in the Christian religion."
12. Richard Bushman, *The Beginnings of Mormonism*, 54. William, the only son to live to an old age, remembered that his mother "made use of every means which her parental love could suggest, to get us engaged in seeking for our soul's salvation" (ibid. 39).
13. James 1:5 was the topic of a sermon: "What Church Shall I join?" by the Methodist minister, George Lane. He preached at camp meetings within near the Smith's home in Palmyra. Years later, Joseph younger brother William recalled that Joseph heard him preach on James 1:5. Unfortunately, William was not very stable and this is our only source of this detail. Joseph Smith was also very familiar with the Bible on his own right. <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/arti->

- cle/museum-treasures-jesse-townsend-sermons?lang=eng (accessed 10-30-19).
14. Wilson, *Learning the Language of the Lord*, 163–193. Chapter 6, “What If I Do Not Feel Revelation?”
  15. M. Russell Ballard, “O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One,” General Conference October 2010.
  16. David A. Bednar. Face to Face with Elder and Sister Bednar (May 18, 2015). <https://www.lds.org/youth/activities/spiritual-strength/scriptures-and-pro-ets/face-to-face-with-elder-and-sister-bednar>.
  17. Johnson, *The Anchor Yale Bible: James*, 221.
  18. Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects and Gospels* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 48. A splinter group of Jewish Christians were known by the Hebrew/Aramaic name “poor/Ebionites.” The group’s records reveals they had a letter of “James the Just,” but we do not know if it were similar to the New Testament Epistle.
  19. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Bartchy, “Servant” 4.420. <sup>Timothy G. Parkin</sup>, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins, 2003), 183.
  20. Johnson, *The Anchor Yale Bible: James*, 226.
  21. President Marion G. Romney, “The Royal Law of Love,” General Conference April 1978, Welfare Session.
  22. Johnson, *The Anchor Yale Bible: James*, 232.
  23. Dean Jessee, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 319. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 331.
  24. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” General Conference April 2019.
  25. In the Old Testament: Judges 6:23; 18; 6; 19:20; 1 Samuel 20:22; 29:7; 2 Samuel 15:27; 2 Kings 5:19. In the New Testament: Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; 8:48; 24:36; John 20:19; Acts 16:36; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 6:23; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Titus 1:4; 3 John 1:15; etc.
  26. Johnson, *The Anchor Yale Bible: James*, 245; lists at least twelve examples of ancient texts highlighting her in a positive manner.
  27. Thomas S. Kidd, *Benjamin Franklin: The Religious Life of a Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 2017). Benjamin Franklin called himself a Deist rather than a Christian, but he still loved good moral council for the nation that as was taught in the Bible.
  28. Wilson, *Learning the Language of the Lord*, chapter 6. I spend thirty pages elaborating on the problem of not hearing answers.
  29. Patrick Q. Mason, *Planted: Belief and Belonging in an Age of Doubt* (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship and Deseret Book, 2015), 131–32.
  30. The Lord has delegated short term judgement to his Bishops as “judge in Israel” (D&C 58:14–17; 107:69–72).
  31. Hugh Nibley, “Leaders and Managers” *BYU Speeches* Commencement Address, August 19, 1983. As referenced in commentary from Luke 12: 15, “Satan has tempted humanity with greed or a love of materialism since Adam’s children. Hugh Nibley helped define the problem: “We have been warned against things of this world . . . but exactly what are the things of the *world*? An easy and infallible test has been given us in the well-known maxim ‘*You can have anything in this world for money.*’ If a thing is of this *world*, *you can have it for money*; if you cannot *have it for money*, it does not belong to this *world*”
  32. The ten mentioned in chapter one as listed in the “Structure” include: patience, prayer, faith, wealth, temptation, good

- gifts, communication, sin, doers of the word, generosity.
33. Johnson, *Anchor Bible: James*, 57.
  34. Gregory Dix, Henry Chadwick, eds., *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome* (London, NY: Routledge, 2013), preface g. “. . . a blessing of olive oil: the Oil from the tree of life was the elixir of immortality according to many ancient texts. e.g. Life of Adam and Eve 36; II Enoch viii.3—5; Apocalypse of Moses ix.3; Acts of Pilate 3 (19); Acts of Thomas 157.” Also see Bo Reicke, *Anchor Bible: James, Peter, and Jude* (NYC, NY: Doubleday, 1964), vol 37, 59.
  35. *Mishnah, Shabbath*, 23:5.
  36. This later reference claiming to be practiced earlier: *Jerusalem Talmud, Berakot* 1, 3a; 9.
  37. Johnson, *Anchor Bible: James*, 59.
  38. Avraham Steinberg, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jewish Medical Ethics* (Jerusalem Israel: Feldheim, 2003), 34, “Any illness may result from sin.” Their society incorrectly presumed that physical imperfections made one a sinner because priests with birth defects were not allowed to serve at the altar of the temple: “No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire” (Leviticus 21:21, 17–23).
  39. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:499–500. On July 9, 1843, on a Sunday Sermon in Nauvoo the Prophet Joseph taught: “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Savior says, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
  40. Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 179, 186.