



# JAMES

## Read James 1:1–11

Pay particular attention to the importance that this letter places on living with ethical norms. This is significant because at the time the letter was written Jews were “dispersed,” living in various locations throughout the Greco-Roman world.

**Reflect:** When facing trials or when asking for God’s help with a particular need, we must be strong in our faith. The by-products of faith—perseverance, confidence, and humility—are essential, especially during times of doubt and uncertainty.

**Pray:** God of faith, hope, and unending love, we open our hearts and minds to trust in your mercy, knowing that when we place our concerns in your hands, your love will carry us through.

## Salutation

**1** James, a servant<sup>a</sup> of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:  
Greetings.

## Faith and Wisdom

**2** My brothers and sisters,<sup>b</sup> whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; <sup>4</sup> and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

**5** If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. <sup>6</sup> But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; <sup>7, 8</sup> for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

## Poverty and Riches

**9** Let the believer<sup>c</sup> who is lowly boast in being raised up, <sup>10</sup> and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way

<sup>a</sup> Gk *slave*

<sup>b</sup> Gk *brothers*

<sup>c</sup> Gk *brother*

**Act:** When you are tested, rely on your faith values through prayer for an increase in confidence and understanding.

### Read James 1:12–27

We are fortified by God's word to resist temptation during our journey. When our determination falters God's grace is there to help us.

**Reflect:** We need to be attentive, lest our listening to scripture and proclaiming "Thanks be to God" become a matter of habit and routine.

**Pray:** Lord, may my life always be open to your light shining within me, and may I be able to share that light with others less fortunate than I.

**Act:** Resolve that how you live your life will clearly reflect your faith values.

### Read James 2:1–13

This prophetic reading can be viewed as prescription for avoiding discriminatory practices. We are instructed to treat individuals fairly, to not play favorites, and to respond to God's call to love one another regardless of wealth or status.

**Reflect:** Be cautious and refrain from becoming a self-appointed judge, classifying individuals according to earthly standards, being quick to label others who do not live your lifestyle, and so forth. Avoid being partial; instead, love your neighbor as yourself.

with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

### Trial and Temptation

12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord<sup>a</sup> has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup> No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; <sup>15</sup> then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. <sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved.<sup>b</sup>

17 Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.<sup>c</sup> <sup>18</sup> In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

### Hearing and Doing the Word

19 You must understand this, my beloved:<sup>b</sup> let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. <sup>21</sup> Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. <sup>23</sup> For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves<sup>d</sup> in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. <sup>25</sup> But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

### Warning against Partiality

**2** My brothers and sisters,<sup>e</sup> do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?<sup>f</sup> <sup>2</sup> For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a

<sup>a</sup> Gk *he*; other ancient authorities read *God*

<sup>b</sup> Gk *my beloved brothers*

<sup>c</sup> Other ancient authorities read *variation due to a shadow of turning*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *at the face of his birth*

<sup>e</sup> Gk *My brothers*

<sup>f</sup> Or *hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ without acts of favoritism*

**Pray:** Lord God, you created each of us in your image. Help us always to see your image in each other.

**Act:** Cultural distinctions, levels of wealth, color of skin, and religious preferences can set the stage for sins of partiality. Avoid being passive. Exercise your Christian values when faced with an opportunity to overcome prejudice and discrimination.

### Read James 2:14–26

Reflecting on this passage gives us reason to ask ourselves: Are our works and deeds fulfilling our faith commitment to God?

**Reflect:** Faith in action is easier to talk about than to do. It is not necessary to be the “volunteer of the year” to demonstrate that you care for the less fortunate. Extending a helping hand to just one person in need could well be a soul-saving gesture.

**Pray:** Almighty God, thank you for the graces and blessings you have so generously given me. Grant that I may always be willing to share with others and to assist those in need.

**Act:** Place yourself in the shoes of the person on the opposite side of the soup kitchen table, or the one who is homeless, huddled in a cardboard box for warmth. Do what you can to work for justice, and remember in your prayers those who have no one to pray for them.

seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,”<sup>a</sup> 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.<sup>b</sup> Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? 7 Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

8 You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 9 But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. 11 For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

### Faith without Works Is Dead

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters,<sup>b</sup> if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? 17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. 20 Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. 23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

<sup>a</sup> Gk *Sit under my footstool*

<sup>b</sup> Gk *brothers*

### Read James 3

James lays out standards for teaching and discusses the harm that can be inflicted when a tongue strays from truthfulness.

**Reflect:** Consider the characteristics of the “wisdom from above” described in the final verses of this chapter. Can these characteristics be found in your life and in your actions?

**Pray:** Lord, I thank you for the power of speech that enables me to speak well of others and to give honor, glory, and praise to you.

**Act:** Consider setting a bar high for yourself in terms of how others are spoken to and about. When called upon to comment as a witness to an event or give your testimony regarding facts, be absolutely certain that you speak the truth.

### Taming the Tongue

**3** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,<sup>a</sup> for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup> For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. <sup>3</sup> If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. <sup>4</sup> Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature,<sup>b</sup> and is itself set on fire by hell.<sup>c</sup> <sup>7</sup> For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,<sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup> From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters,<sup>d</sup> this ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters,<sup>e</sup> yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

### Two Kinds of Wisdom

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. <sup>16</sup> For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

### Friendship with the World

**4** Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet<sup>g</sup> something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you

<sup>a</sup> Gk *brothers*

<sup>b</sup> Or *wheel of birth*

<sup>c</sup> Gk *Gehenna*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *My brothers*

<sup>e</sup> Gk *my brothers*

<sup>f</sup> Or *by*

<sup>g</sup> Or *you murder and you covet*

### Read James 4

Through a series of questions followed by recommendations, the author defines love of the world vs. love of God.

**Reflect:** Verse 8 recommends, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” In contrast to conflicts, envy, boasting, and arrogance, what the Lord desires is humility and resistance to evil.

**Pray:** Look upon me with kindness, O Lord, and strengthen my resolve to resist evil and grow closer to you.

**Act:** Resolve to do something specific today to draw near to God.

### Read James 5

The first verses of this chapter focus on the ungodly who, though wealthy, mistreat others. The author then counsels patience in waiting for the Lord.

**Reflect:** What are the critical stumbling blocks to helping the poor in our own day and age?

**Pray:** Lord, give us the grace to provide assistance to the poor, aid to those who are ill, and guidance to those seeking to change their sinful ways. Grant that our hearts may be firm as we wait patiently for your coming.

**Act:** The Lord consistently encourages us to be compassionate and merciful. He will always answer our prayers.

do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, “God<sup>a</sup> yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup> But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says,

“God opposes the proud,  
but gives grace to the humble.”

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

### Warning against Judging Another

<sup>11</sup> Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters.<sup>b</sup> Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup> There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?

### Boasting about Tomorrow

<sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.” <sup>14</sup> Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that.” <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin.

### Warning to Rich Oppressors

**5** Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. <sup>2</sup> Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure<sup>c</sup> for the last days. <sup>4</sup> Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. <sup>5</sup> You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have

<sup>a</sup> Gk He

<sup>b</sup> Gk brothers

<sup>c</sup> Or will eat your flesh, since you have stored up fire

fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

### Patience in Suffering

<sup>7</sup>Be patient, therefore, beloved,<sup>a</sup> until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. <sup>8</sup>You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.<sup>b</sup> <sup>9</sup>Beloved,<sup>c</sup> do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup>As an example of suffering and patience, beloved,<sup>a</sup> take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

<sup>12</sup>Above all, my beloved,<sup>a</sup> do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

### The Prayer of Faith

<sup>13</sup>Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup>Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup>Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

<sup>19</sup>My brothers and sisters,<sup>d</sup> if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, <sup>20</sup>you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's<sup>e</sup> soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

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<sup>a</sup> Gk *brothers*  
<sup>b</sup> Or *is at hand*  
<sup>c</sup> Gk *Brothers*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *My brothers*  
<sup>e</sup> Gk *his*