

**CHRISTIAN  
STANDARD  
BIBLE®**

**DR. GENE GETZ**



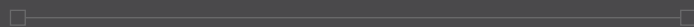
# **MEN OF CHARACTER**

**B I B L E**



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CHARACTER  
BIBLE**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**



About the <i>CSB Men of Character Bible</i>	<b>3</b>
Features	<b>4</b>
How to Use this Bible	<b>6</b>
About Dr. Gene Getz	<b>8</b>
Available Covers	<b>9</b>
Book of James Sampler	<b>10</b>

# ABOUT THE *CSB* *MEN OF CHARACTER BIBLE*

In a world where Christian role models seem increasingly rare, this Bible reminds us that some of the most worthy examples of godly character are the biblical figures who brought leadership, wisdom, and inspiration to God's people. Each of these men faced trials, frustrations, and even failure, yet they were empowered by God to persevere and achieve great things for his glory.

In the *CSB Men of Character Bible*, renowned Bible teacher Dr. Gene Getz guides men through Scripture by exploring the lives of men of character found throughout the Bible. Over 60 in-depth articles on men of character are strategically placed in the Bible alongside the accompanying text, with associated key life principles, application questions, and verses to remember.

## FEATURES

- ◆ 60 in-depth articles on men of character
- ◆ Application questions and key life principles
- ◆ Verses to remember
- ◆ Nearly 50 profiles of men of character focused on specific character principles
- ◆ Introductions and reading plans for each book of the Bible
- ◆ Smyth-sewn binding
- ◆ Presentation page
- ◆ Two-column text
- ◆ Cross-references
- ◆ Footnotes
- ◆ Topical subheadings
- ◆ Black-letter text
- ◆ 9.75-point type
- ◆ Concordance
- ◆ Full-color maps

The *CSB Men of Character Bible* features the highly readable, highly reliable text of the Christian Standard Bible® (CSB). The CSB stays as literal as possible to the Bible's original meaning without sacrificing clarity, making it easier to engage with Scripture's life-transforming message and to share it with others.

Throughout this Bible you'll discover features that include articles, character profiles, and qualities that measure a man's spiritual status. For a list of specific topics and biblical passages within these three features (as well as their corresponding page numbers), consult the table of contents.

## 1 MEN OF CHARACTER ARTICLES

These features include brief expositions of Scripture that look at men in the Bible and focus on their decisions, choices, actions, and relationship to God and others. Each article highlights biblical principles that apply today, calls attention to a relevant Bible verse to remember, and poses probing questions to help us develop godly character.

## 2 BIBLICAL CHARACTER PROFILES

These features examine a number of men in the biblical story line and connect their experiences to our own. Though they lived centuries ago in totally different cultures, both their strengths

and weaknesses provide guidelines for living in God's will today.

## 3 THE MEASURE OF A MAN

These features consider key character traits and qualities that are critical to becoming the men God created us to be. These in turn provide biblical goals for "growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness" (Eph 4:13).

## 4 VERSES TO REMEMBER

These are crucial Scripture passages that will enable all of us to hide God's Word in our hearts so that we may grow in grace as men of God. Each highlighted verse points readers to a related Men of Character article.

## 5 BIBLE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

These sections at the beginning of each book of the Bible present helpful background information. Each also includes a reading plan.



### A CRISIS OF FAITH (GENESIS 12:10-20)

**HAVE YOU EVER** felt great about your relationship with God and suddenly the bottom dropped out? It's not a new experience. Just when you think everything is in order spiritually, you face a crisis—a test of faith. It happened to Abraham shortly after he obeyed God fully and crossed the burning desert into Canaan. The crisis came quickly and abruptly: "There was a famine in the land" (Gen 12:10).

Imagine what much have gone through his mind. I came all the way out here for this! After his huge caravan made it across the desert, Abraham (later Abrahah) faced the danger of being totally wiped out—man and beast—in the midst of the land that God had promised would provide him with blessings.

**A MAN-CENTERED DECISION**  
Most of us tend to act quickly under pressure. Abraham was no different. He "went down to Egypt to stay there for a while because the famine in the land was severe" (12:10). When the bottom fell out, he wanted no time doing something about it.

It's not surprising that Abraham sought refuge in his family. But attempting to save them from starvation was not Abraham's essential problem. Unfortunately he took matters into his own hands without consulting God, the One who brought him into the land in the first place. In other words, Abraham made a man-centered decision.

When he arrived in Egypt, he faced another crisis. Egyptian royalty went on the lookout for beautiful women. Because Sarah (later Serah) was desirable, Abraham was worried for his life and (rightly so). Consequently, he devised a plan to protect himself: telling Sarah to pretend to be his sister, so that the Egyptians would not kill him for his wife (12:11-13).

Abraham's plan was based on a rather intriguing rationalization. Sarah was his half sister (19:20, 20:12). She was the daughter of his father but not of his mother. So Abraham's statement to the Egyptians was a half-truth. As a result, Pharaoh wanted little time taking Sarah into his harem (12:15). Abraham offered no solutions, individual did this. This job and Pharaoh, who renewed one of the greatest lessons we can learn from Abraham is that we also face crises when we are not of God's will. Although this crisis was a particularly perplexing one, it demonstrates God's loving discipline in our lives.

**Principle 1:** When we face a crisis, we will always be tempted to go to someone in asking our problems. God honors a sound thinking and responsible actions. However, we can easily get into trouble because of the ego satisfaction we enjoy when we work out our problems by ourselves. On the other hand, because we often tend to be insecure and afraid of making

#### GOD'S GRACE

If Abraham allowed God to prepare the way for him in Egypt, his strategy would have been God-centered rather than man-centered. However, Abraham was operating under his own stress. But God in his grace stepped in to bail him out of his predicament. In spite of Abraham's failure, God brought judgment upon Pharaoh for his sin (12:17).

Somehow Pharaoh discovered the full truth and waited no time calling Abraham into his court. He asked some probing questions and declared, "Now, here is your wife. Take her and go!" (12:18). We see God's amazing grace when Abraham was allowed to leave the servants and animals that Pharaoh had given him in exchange for Sarah. To top it off, Pharaoh's men escorted Abraham out of Egypt and back to Canaan where he belonged. Ironically God used page people to get his servant back on the right track (12:20).

Abraham seems to have learned his lesson well when he returned to the place where he had first built an altar. At once again "called on the name of the Lord" (12:13). This, of course, is what he should have done in the first place.

Again, let's remember that calling on the name of the Lord and following him is a totally new experience for this man who had for most of his life bowed to idols. In those initial years, both Abraham and Sarah made some serious mistakes. But God patiently helped them learn from these mistakes.

#### PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY

**Principle 1:** We will face periodic crises in our Christian lives, even when we are following God fully. Although it's unpleasant, we are functioning more equally when we face struggles and problems. So let's eagerly accept that some of the best character tests God allows in our lives because he wants to teach us and to prepare us for an even greater work before him.

Other crises come because of the natural circumstances of life. Remember that the principle of faith is hidden in our lives. We are witnesses of the environment in which we live and must expect difficulties to arise as we live our lives.

**Principle 2:** When we face a crisis, we will always be tempted to go to someone in asking our problems. God honors a sound thinking and responsible actions. However, we can easily get into trouble because of the ego satisfaction we enjoy when we work out our problems by ourselves. On the other hand, because we often tend to be insecure and afraid of making

decisions, we may withdraw and fail to fulfill our human responsibility. We must maintain a balance between these two extremes.

There's no question about which extreme Abraham followed: rather he faced the former in Canaan. This is probably the most common error we make as men. We're often open opinion and fail to consult God for help. This can lead us into serious trouble, and we won't experience God's greatest blessings in our lives.

**Principle 3:** Women follow God's divine order in determining to tell for our lives.

Foremost, we must consider the Scriptures carefully for the direction and principles that will guide us in doing his will. When making a decision, we must do so in a way that is in line with anything in God's revealed Word that would touch us that this is his right or wrong decision.

Can we consult God directly? Yes, since James encourages us to ask God for wisdom (1:5). However, we should always combine this prayer with a study of Scripture, because the Bible is filled with divine wisdom. Any thought or idea that contradicts God's Word cannot be from God.

We have the Scriptures, most of us are also surrounded by mature Christians who can assist us in determining God's will. Furthermore, we should ask ourselves the following key questions: Does it make good sense? Is it logical and rational? Is there an overall pattern? What will happen if I make this decision? What are the ultimate advantages for me and my family? What are the ultimate disadvantages?

Most important, how will this decision affect my spiritual life and my maturity?

Finally, be cautious about feelings. Emotions can be helpful in making a decision, but they are not our human tendency to put our own feelings at the top

16

of the line. When we are making an important decision, particularly in a crisis, we'll always experience positive and negative feelings.

Unfortunately many Christians equate these emotional dynamics with the leadership of the Holy Spirit. If when they have negative feelings, they believe that the Holy Spirit is saying no. When they have positive feelings, they feel the Holy Spirit is saying yes. But the same emotional dynamics surround most every decision we make. Consequently we must beware of relying on our emotions, for they can deceive us. In fact, many decisions have to be made in spite of negative emotions, because we know it is the right thing to do.

#### VERSES TO REMEMBER

"How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway of sinners or sit in the company of mockers! He who delights in the Lord's instructions, and he meditates on it day and night" (Ps 1:1-3).

#### DEVELOPING YOUR CHARACTER

1. How do I react when crisis comes into my life even though I'm attempting to do all I can to follow God fully?

2. How do I distinguish between crises that are normal and natural because of the realities of life and those that happen because I'm departing from the will of God?

3. To what extent do I maintain a balance in decision making by not going to extremes—in the one hand, relying only on my own strengths and skills and, on the other hand, simply relying on God and neglecting my God-ordained human responsibility? To what extent am I depending on God's divine order in determining his will for my life?

1

MEN OF CHARACTER



## ROMANS 12-15

12:16 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to what is honorable in everyone's eyes.  
12:17 If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.  
12:18 Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay," says the Lord.<sup>19</sup>

12:19 If your enemy is hungry feed him.<sup>20</sup> If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

12:20 For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.<sup>21</sup>

12:21 Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

## A CHRISTIAN'S DUTIES



the governing is in no authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. "For it is the authorities God." So then, obey those who are in authority, for the Lord's sake, those who oppose you in themselves, to good con-

and they are constant on your lips, with an angry person, and do not be a companion of a bad, ungodly man.

12:12 Do you go to work on the Sabbath? Do you go to work on the Sabbath? Do you go to work on the Sabbath? Do you go to work on the Sabbath?

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### ADAM MASTER OF THE BLAME GAME

ADAM AND EVE were the first man and woman, the parents of all, made directly by God's hand. The Lord created Adam first—"out of the dust of the ground." He gave special knowledge to Adam—the case God "breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being." (Gen. 2:7) Adam was made to be a great blessing to the world, an image who reflected God's personality and character.

David captured the difference when he wrote that God created man upright, "to walk with him and to keep his commandments" (Ps. 8:4). That doesn't mean we are capable in error of the self-compassion and power. However, we are capable in error of God's righteousness, mercy, and love—and we must create.

**ADAM'S PERFECT COMPLEMENT**  
God designed Adam to be a perfect complement to Eve. Adam's "perfect complement" was Eve. And as God made Adam from the dust of the ground, He made Eve from Adam's rib. This was to show that Adam and Eve were to be one flesh, and that Adam was to be the head of the church as Christ is the head of the church.

**SIN AND BLAME**  
Indebtedly what God had created to be heaven on earth became a place of damnation, pain, confusion, tension, and angering. Adam and Eve were to be one flesh, "fleshy of the flesh" (Gen. 2:24). But Adam and Eve sinned "secretly" (Gen. 3:7). At that point, Satan entered the scene. God had created and intended to be a blessing to the world, but Adam and Eve sinned, and the world became a place of pain and suffering.

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### GENESIS

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING**  
Since pre-Christian times, authorship of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential tradition. From the second millennium BC with an astrological Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is traditionally anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments commonly recognize Moses as the author of the book. (Ex. 17:14; Num. 33:2; Deut. 34:6; Jer. 1:1; 15:1; 23:18; 30:6; 35:15; 39:21; 44:4; 45:2; 46:1; 47:26; 48:3; 49:1; 50:6; 51:1; 52:1; 53:1; 54:1; 55:1; 56:1; 57:1; 58:1; 59:1; 60:1; 61:1; 62:1; 63:1; 64:1; 65:1; 66:1; 67:1; 68:1; 69:1; 70:1; 71:1; 72:1; 73:1; 74:1; 75:1; 76:1; 77:1; 78:1; 79:1; 80:1; 81:1; 82:1; 83:1; 84:1; 85:1; 86:1; 87:1; 88:1; 89:1; 90:1; 91:1; 92:1; 93:1; 94:1; 95:1; 96:1; 97:1; 98:1; 99:1; 100:1; 101:1; 102:1; 103:1; 104:1; 105:1; 106:1; 107:1; 108:1; 109:1; 110:1; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 114:1; 115:1; 116:1; 117:1; 118:1; 119:1; 120:1; 121:1; 122:1; 123:1; 124:1; 125:1; 126:1; 127:1; 128:1; 129:1; 130:1; 131:1; 132:1; 133:1; 134:1; 135:1; 136:1; 137:1; 138:1; 139:1; 140:1; 141:1; 142:1; 143:1; 144:1; 145:1; 146:1; 147:1; 148:1; 149:1; 150:1; 151:1; 152:1; 153:1; 154:1; 155:1; 156:1; 157:1; 158:1; 159:1; 160:1; 161:1; 162:1; 163:1; 164:1; 165:1; 166:1; 167:1; 168:1; 169:1; 170:1; 171:1; 172:1; 173:1; 174:1; 175:1; 176:1; 177:1; 178:1; 179:1; 180:1; 181:1; 182:1; 183:1; 184:1; 185:1; 186:1; 187:1; 188:1; 189:1; 190:1; 191:1; 192:1; 193:1; 194:1; 195:1; 196:1; 197:1; 198:1; 199:1; 200:1; 201:1; 202:1; 203:1; 204:1; 205:1; 206:1; 207:1; 208:1; 209:1; 210:1; 211:1; 212:1; 213:1; 214:1; 215:1; 216:1; 217:1; 218:1; 219:1; 220:1; 221:1; 222:1; 223:1; 224:1; 225:1; 226:1; 227:1; 228:1; 229:1; 230:1; 231:1; 232:1; 233:1; 234:1; 235:1; 236:1; 237:1; 238:1; 239:1; 240:1; 241:1; 242:1; 243:1; 244:1; 245:1; 246:1; 247:1; 248:1; 249:1; 250:1; 251:1; 252:1; 253:1; 254:1; 255:1; 256:1; 257:1; 258:1; 259:1; 260:1; 261:1; 262:1; 263:1; 264:1; 265:1; 266:1; 267:1; 268:1; 269:1; 270:1; 271:1; 272:1; 273:1; 274:1; 275:1; 276:1; 277:1; 278:1; 279:1; 280:1; 281:1; 282:1; 283:1; 284:1; 285:1; 286:1; 287:1; 288:1; 289:1; 290:1; 291:1; 292:1; 293:1; 294:1; 295:1; 296:1; 297:1; 298:1; 299:1; 300:1; 301:1; 302:1; 303:1; 304:1; 305:1; 306:1; 307:1; 308:1; 309:1; 310:1; 311:1; 312:1; 313:1; 314:1; 315:1; 316:1; 317:1; 318:1; 319:1; 320:1; 321:1; 322:1; 323:1; 324:1; 325:1; 326:1; 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899:1; 900:1; 901:1; 902:1; 903:1; 904:1; 905:1; 906:1; 907:1; 908:1; 909:1; 910:1; 911:1; 912:1; 913:1; 914:1; 915:1; 916:1; 917:1; 918:1; 919:1; 920:1; 921:1; 922:1; 923:1; 924:1; 925:1; 926:1; 927:1; 928:1; 929:1; 930:1; 931:1; 932:1; 933:1; 934:1; 935:1; 936:1; 937:1; 938:1; 939:1; 940:1; 941:1; 942:1; 943:1; 944:1; 945:1; 946:1; 947:1; 948:1; 949:1; 950:1; 951:1; 952:1; 953:1; 954:1; 955:1; 956:1; 957:1; 958:1; 959:1; 960:1; 961:1; 962:1; 963:1

# HOW TO USE THIS BIBLE

## MUTUAL STUDY

If you've read the introduction to this Bible, you've already noted God's design for "growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness" (Eph 4:13). We need "one another" because we're "members of one another" within the body of Christ (Rm 12:5). Elaborating on this metaphor, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' Or again, the head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Co 12:21). Just so, as members of the body of Christ, we cannot grow spiritually as we should in isolation from one another. We cannot say, "I don't need you!" and, at the same time, be living in God's perfect will.

## BUILDING UP ONE ANOTHER

Biblical authors often used the Greek word *allēlōn*, translated "one another," to emphasize the importance of mutual interaction in order to mature in our Christian lives. In fact, you'll discover this is an exciting study in itself since the New Testament authors used *allēlōn* at least sixty times. Since Paul wrote thirteen letters that are included in the New Testament, he used the term approximately forty times.

To demonstrate how important mutual study is, consider the following specific examples:

- "My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to *instruct one another*" (Rm 15:14; emphasis added).
- "For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but *serve one another* through love" (Gl 5:13; emphasis added).
- "Brothers and sisters . . . *carry one another's burdens*" (Gl 6:1–2; emphasis added).
- "Therefore *encourage one another* and *build each other up* as you are already doing" (1Th 5:11; emphasis added).
- "Therefore, *confess your sins to one another* and *pray for one another*" (Jms 5:16; emphasis added).

## SPECIFIC PLANS

In view of these biblical directives, here are some suggestions for mutual study.

### Plan 1 – Mentoring Others

Jesus modeled this plan with the twelve apostles. His invitation to these men to follow him was not an "open invitation." And even with the twelve, he spent alone time with Peter, James, and John, but also focused particularly on Peter's spiritual growth.

The *Men of Character Bible* will help you mentor other men (without showing favoritism) on a selected basis—whether it's one or several.

Paul also modeled this approach with Timothy—but notice why! We can multiply our ministry through mentoring: "What *you have heard from me* in the presence of many witnesses, *commit to faithful men* who will be able to *teach others also*" (2Tm 2:2; emphasis added).

### Plan 2 – Open Group Study (Advance Preparation)

- Before meeting together, have the participants agree to read the material for each feature.
- Prior to discussing life applications as a group, review the segments and scriptural texts.

### Plan 3 – Open Group Study (No Advanced Preparation)

- Spend time personally and silently reading the features (which will take about ten minutes).
- Have members share what they have learned and how it applies personally.
- End in prayer, asking God for strength to apply what each has learned.

### Plan 4 – Teaching Session with Group Participation

- As a spiritual leader in your church, invite a group of men to use the features of this Bible for mutual study.
- Make sure each man has access to a copy of the *Men of Character Bible*.
- Review the content in each feature with a succinct message.
- Following the message, divide the large group into smaller groups for discussion and application. Note: Some of the segments already have questions for application.
- Have the group leaders share the results of the discussion.
- Before closing in prayer, encourage everyone in the group to review the feature on their own.

### Plan 5 – Husbands and Wives

As a husband, invite your wife to join you in various studies, sharing with her that you want her input into your life so you can become a better husband, a better father, and a better representative of Jesus Christ in all your relationships.

## MY PERSONAL STORY

In the introduction to this men's Bible, I mentioned a book I wrote entitled *The Measure of a Man* (updated ed.; Revell, 2016). This book includes twenty qualities

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outlined by Paul in 1 Timothy and Titus for evaluating our maturity in Christ.

In order to evaluate my own progress in “growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness,” (Eph 4:13) I invited my wife, Elaine, to study these twenty qualities with me. She agreed to be a part of this experience, sharing first of all what she felt were my strengths. I also asked her to share specific characteristics in which I could grow in my relationship with her and our children. To be honest, it was somewhat threatening, but it became a very significant experience in becoming more like Jesus Christ.

However, this personal story continues to unfold. I shared my experience with other men and encouraged them to do the same. Again and again, these men reported back that this was one of the most significant experiences in their marital lives, opening up communication that had led to a much deeper and fulfilling life together.

I share this personal experience since I firmly believe that you’ll get the same results with the *Men of Character Bible*. May God bless you as you continue to become more and more like Jesus Christ in all your relationships.

My prayer for you and for myself is Paul’s prayer to the Ephesians—personally and corporately:

For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love, and to know Christ’s love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14–21)

– Gene A. Getz





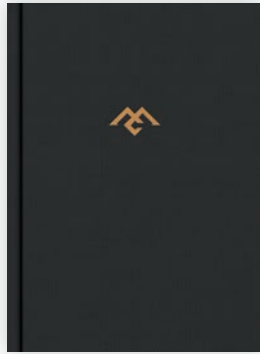
## ABOUT DR. GENE GETZ

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Dr. Gene Getz is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and Rocky Mountain College. He has earned advanced degrees from Wheaton Graduate School and New York University. He served as a professor at Moody and Dallas Theological Seminary and then became a church planting pastor, launching the Fellowship Bible Church movement. He is heard daily on the radio in a 2-minute feature entitled “Bible Principles.” Dr. Getz has also authored over 60 books.



# AVAILABLE COVERS



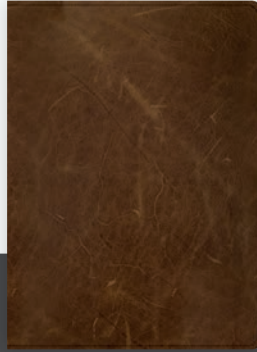
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# JAMES

## CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING

James is named as the author in 1:1. A number of New Testament personalities were named James, but only three are candidates for the authorship of this book. James the son of Zebedee died in AD 44, too early to have been the author. No tradition names James the son of Alphaeus (Mk 3:18) as the author. This leaves James the brother of Jesus, also called James the Just (Mk 6:3; Ac 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1Co 15:7; Gl 2:9,12), as the most likely candidate.

This James is identified as the brother of Jesus in Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; and Galatians 1:19. Though he was not a follower of Christ during his earthly ministry (Jn 7:3–5), a postresurrection appearance convinced James that Jesus is indeed the Christ (Ac 1:14; 1Co 15:7). James later led the Jerusalem church (Gl 2:9,12), exercising great influence there (Ac 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1Co 15:7; Gl 2:9,12).

James was probably written between AD 48 and 52, though nothing in the epistle suggests a more precise date. James's death in AD 62 or 66 means the epistle was written before this time. Similarities to Gospel traditions and Pauline themes are suggestive. If Mark was written around AD 65 and time is allowed for the events of Acts 15 and 21 to have occurred between Paul's first and second missionary journeys, a date between AD 48 and 52 seems most likely.

James led the Jerusalem church. The reference to "the twelve tribes dispersed abroad" (1:1) suggests the letter was written to Jewish Christians living outside of Israel. The reference to a synagogue (Gk; 2:2) also suggests that his audience was Jewish Christians. References to their circumstances (e.g., oppression by wealthy landowners; 5:1–6) could refer to congregations anywhere in the Roman Empire.

However, Semitic word order, quotations from the Septuagint, and the overall dependence of the letter on the Jewish wisdom tradition suggest a specifically Jewish Christian audience.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE

James continually called for obedience to the law of God. He never referred to the ceremonial law, but to the moral law. Although some people think James is at odds with Paul about the Christian's relationship to the law, both authors combine to give us a solid understanding of the Old Testament law. Paul showed believers that Christ met the demands of the law and, thus, brings us to salvation. James showed believers that their obedience to God's moral standards is an indication of a living faith, which is a life lived in step with the one who met the demands of the law. Some choose to oversimplify the distinctions between the Old Testament and the New Testament and say the Old Testament is grounded in works and the New Testament is grounded in faith, but James brings both testaments together to show that faith and works are integrally related in both the old and new covenants.

## STRUCTURE

The book of James is a letter (an epistle), though only the greeting conforms to the ancient Greek form exemplified in Paul's letters, especially Galatians. The greeting identifies the author as James, includes a title demonstrating the source of his authority ("a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"), names the recipients ("the twelve tribes dispersed abroad"), and conveys "greetings" (1:1). Epistles were often used as a means of spurring the recipients to a change in

### 2100–900 BC

- **JOB 2100–1900?**
- **ABRAHAM 2166–1991**
- The Mosaic law at Sinai **1446**

- Rahab supports the conquest of Jericho. **1406**
- Much of Proverbs is written. **970–931**

### 900 BC–AD 33

- Elijah's ministry **862–852 BC**
- The Book of Wisdom **220–50 BC?**
- The deuterocanonical book of Ecclesiasticus **180 BC**

- Jesus's trials, death, and resurrection **NISAN 14–16** or **APRIL 3–5, AD 33**
- Following his resurrection, Jesus appears to James his brother. **AD 33**

behavior or belief based on the authoritative word and guidance of the sender.

The book of James has been compared to Old Testament Wisdom literature. Although there are

wisdom elements in James, such as comparing the wisdom of the world with the wisdom that comes from God, it also contains exhortations and prophetic elements not common to Wisdom literature.

## OUTLINE

I. SALUTATION (1:1)

II. SURVIVING TRIALS AND TEMPTATION (1:2–18)

III. AUTHENTIC RELIGION (1:19–2:26)

IV. THE NEED FOR WISE TEACHERS (3:1–18)

V. PEACE WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER (4:1–17)

VI. DISCIPLINE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (5:1–20)

## READING PLAN

☐ James 1:1–27

☐ James 2:1–26

☐ James 3:1–4:12

☐ James 4:13–5:20

AD 33–44

AD 44–330

- Pentecost **33**
- Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road **OCTOBER, 34**
- Paul meets with Peter and James on his first visit to Jerusalem following his conversion. **37?**

- James becomes leader of the church at Jerusalem. **44**
- Execution of James, son of Zebedee, by Herod Agrippa **44**

- The letter of James **48–52**
- Martyrdom of James half brother of Jesus **62**
- Destruction of Jerusalem **70**

- Origen quotes James in his commentary on the Gospel of John. **230**
- Eusebius refers to the letter of James as Scripture. **330**

VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

JAMES 1:2-3

See *The Final Exam* on page 24

VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.*

JAMES 1:5

See *Dealing with the Consequences of Family Dysfunction* on page 48

VERSE TO REMEMBER

*My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.*

JAMES 1:19-20

See *A Wounded Ego* on page 336

<sup>21</sup>Therefore, ridding yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, <sup>e</sup> humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>22</sup>But <sup>f</sup> be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup>Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face <sup>f</sup> in a mirror. <sup>24</sup>For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. <sup>25</sup>But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does.<sup>u</sup>

<sup>26</sup>If anyone <sup>e</sup> thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, <sup>v</sup> his religion is useless and he deceives himself. <sup>27</sup>Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows <sup>w</sup> in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.<sup>x</sup>

GREETING

**1** James, <sup>a</sup> a servant of God <sup>b</sup> and of the Lord Jesus Christ:  
To the twelve tribes <sup>c</sup> dispersed abroad.<sup>a,d</sup>  
Greetings.<sup>e</sup>

TRIALS AND MATURITY

<sup>2</sup> Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>f</sup> <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 nothing.

<sup>5</sup> Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.<sup>g</sup> <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith without doubting. <sup>6</sup> For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup> being double-minded and unstable in all his ways.<sup>c,h</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Let the brother of humble circumstances boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup> but let the rich boast in his humiliation because he will pass away like a flower of the field. <sup>i</sup> <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises and, together with the scorching wind, dries up the grass; its flower falls off, and its beautiful appearance perishes. In the same way, the rich person will wither away while pursuing his activities.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown <sup>k</sup> of life that God <sup>9</sup> has promised to those who love him.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>13</sup> No one undergoing a trial should say, “I am being tempted by God,” since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn’t tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire.<sup>m</sup> <sup>15</sup> Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>o</sup> <sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.<sup>p</sup> <sup>18</sup> By his own choice, he gave us birth by the word of truth so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.<sup>q</sup>

HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger,<sup>r</sup> <sup>20</sup> for human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness.

<sup>a</sup>1:1 Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Ac 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gl 1:19; 2:9,12; Jd 1  
<sup>b</sup> Ac 16:17; Rm 1:1;  
Eph 6:6; Jms 1:1;  
1Pt 2:16; Rv 1:1  
<sup>c</sup> Gn 49:28; Ex 24:4; Ezk 47:13; Mt 19:28; Ac 26:7; Rv 21:12  
<sup>d</sup> Jn 7:35; 1Pt 1:1  
<sup>e</sup> Ti 1:1  
<sup>f</sup> 1:2 Mt 5:12; 1Pt 1:6  
<sup>g</sup> 1:5 1Kg 3:9;  
Pr 2:3–6; Mt 7:7  
<sup>h</sup> 1:8 Jms 4:8; 2Pt 2:14  
<sup>i</sup> 1:10 1Co 7:31; 1Pt 1:24  
<sup>j</sup> 1:11 Ps 102:4,11; Is 40:7  
<sup>k</sup> 1:12 1Co 9:25; 2Tm 4:8; 1Pt 5:4; Rv 2:10; 3:11  
<sup>l</sup> Mt 10:22; Jms 2:5  
<sup>m</sup> 1:14 Pr 7:6–23  
<sup>n</sup> 1:15 Jb 15:35; Ps 7:14; Is 59:4; Rm 6:23  
<sup>o</sup> 1:16 1Co 6:9; Jms 1:19  
<sup>p</sup> 1:17 Nm 23:19; Mal 3:6; Jn 3:27; 1Jn 1:5  
<sup>q</sup> 1:18 1Jn 1:13; Eph 1:12  
<sup>r</sup> 1:19 Pr 10:19; 17:27; Ec 5:1–2  
  
<sup>s</sup> 1:21 Eph 1:13; 4:22; Col 3:8  
<sup>t</sup> 1:22–25 Mt 7:24–27; Rm 2:13; Jms 2:14–20  
<sup>u</sup> 1:25 1Jn 13:17; Jms 2:12  
<sup>v</sup> 1:26 Ps 34:13; 39:1; 141:3; Jms 3:2–3; 1Pt 3:10  
<sup>w</sup> 1:27 Jb 31:17; Is 1:17,23; Mt 25:36  
<sup>x</sup> Rm 12:2; 1Jn 5:18

<sup>a</sup>1:1 Gk *diaspora*; Jewish people scattered throughout Gentile lands <sup>b</sup>1:6 Or *without divided loyalties* <sup>c</sup>1:8 Or *in all his conduct* <sup>d</sup>1:12 Other mss read *that the Lord* <sup>e</sup>1:21 Or *the abundance of evil* <sup>f</sup>1:23 Or *at his natural face* <sup>g</sup>1:26 Other mss add *among you*

## THE SIN OF FAVORITISM

**2** My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> For if someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and a poor person dressed in filthy clothes also comes in,<sup>3</sup> if you look with favor on the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Sit here in a good place,” and yet you say to the poor person, “Stand over there,” or “Sit here on the floor by my footstool,”<sup>4</sup> haven’t you made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

<sup>5</sup> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Didn’t God choose the poor in this world<sup>b</sup> to be rich in faith<sup>c</sup> and heirs<sup>d</sup> of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> Yet you have dishonored the poor.<sup>e</sup>

Don’t the rich oppress you and drag<sup>f</sup> you into court?<sup>7</sup> Don’t they blaspheme the good name that was invoked over you?<sup>g</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, **Love your neighbor as yourself,**<sup>a,h</sup> you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> If, however, you show favoritism,<sup>i</sup> you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all.<sup>j</sup> <sup>11</sup> For he who said, **Do not commit adultery,**<sup>b</sup> also said, **Do not murder.**<sup>c,k</sup> So if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you are a lawbreaker.

<sup>12</sup> Speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom.<sup>l</sup> <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to the one who has not shown mercy.<sup>m</sup> Mercy triumphs over judgment.

<sup>a</sup> 2:1 Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17; Ac 10:34; Rm 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25  
<sup>b</sup> 2:5 Jb 34:19; 1Co 1:27  
<sup>c</sup> Lk 12:21; Rv 2:9  
<sup>d</sup> Rm 4:13–14; 8:17; Gl 3:29; 4:7; Ti 3:7; Heb 1:2; 11:7  
<sup>e</sup> 2:6 1Co 11:22

◇  
<sup>f</sup> 2:6 Ac 8:3; 17:6; 18:12  
<sup>g</sup> 2:7 Is 63:19; 65:1; Am 9:12; Ac 15:17  
<sup>h</sup> 2:8 Lv 19:18; Mt 22:39  
<sup>i</sup> 2:9 Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17; Ac 10:34; Rm 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25  
<sup>j</sup> 2:10 Mt 5:10; Gl 3:10  
<sup>k</sup> 2:11 Ex 20:13–14; Dt 5:17–18  
<sup>l</sup> 2:12 Mt 7:12,24–29; 19:17–21; 22:36–40; 28:20  
<sup>m</sup> 2:13 Jb 22:6; Pr 21:13; Mt 5:7; 18:32–35

<sup>a</sup> 2:8 Lv 19:18   <sup>b</sup> 2:11 Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18   <sup>c</sup> 2:11 Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17

## SLOW TO ANGER

### THE MEASURE OF A MAN



ANGER IS A God-created emotion. That’s why Paul wrote (quoting Ps 4:4), “Be angry and do not sin” (Eph 4:26). In fact, Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, demonstrated that it’s possible to express righteous anger when he drove the money changers out of the temple (Jn 2:13–17).

Paul’s statement and Jesus’s example pose a very practical question: When does anger become sinful?

### QUICK-TEMPERED BEHAVIOR

In Titus 1:7, Paul warned against church leaders being “hot-tempered” or “quick-tempered.” When this happens, we usually say and do things that hurt and offend others. Though these feelings per se are not sinful, when we express these feelings in hurtful ways, we’re violating the will of God. This is why James wrote, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness” (Jms 1:19–20).

### BITTERNESS

Paul stated, “Be angry and do not sin.” He followed this exhortation with another: “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, and don’t give the devil an opportunity” (Eph 4:26–27).

When we allow angry feelings to linger and fester, they can lead to bitterness and hatred. This kind of emotional reaction is destructive to our own physical bodies—and certainly leads to both passive and aggressive behavior that hurts others. This too is out of the will of God.

### VENGEANCE

When someone has hurt us, our natural tendency is to want to get even. But that, God says, is not our right or our responsibility. According to Paul, we must “not repay anyone evil for evil” (Rm 12:17). He continues, “Do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God’s wrath, because it is written, ‘Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (12:19). Instead, through the help of the Holy Spirit, we must not be “conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good” (12:21).

### VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Unchecked angry feelings can quickly lead to violence and abuse. This kind of behavior can be both verbal and physical. Whether we strike out at people with our words or with our body parts, again we are violating God’s perfect will. And to do so can only be described as sinful.

### CONTROLLING ANGER

How can we keep anger from becoming sinful? This is not an easy question to answer but there are three proverbs that give us great insight. In essence, they state that when we truly understand the causes of anger, it helps us to control this intense emotion:

- “A patient person shows great understanding” (Pr 14:29).
- “The one who has knowledge restrains his words, and one who keeps a cool head is a person of understanding” (17:27).
- “A person’s insight gives him patience, and his virtue is to overlook an offense” (19:11).

FAITH AND WORKS

<sup>a</sup>2:14-16 Mt 25:35-36;  
Lk 3:11; 1Jn 3:16-18  
<sup>b</sup>2:18 Rm 3:28; Heb  
11:33; Jms 3:13  
<sup>c</sup>2:19 Dt 6:4;  
Mt 8:29; Lk 4:34  
<sup>d</sup>2:21-22 Gn 22:9;  
1Th 1:3; Heb 11:17  
<sup>e</sup>2:23 Gn 15:6;  
Rm 4:3; Gl 3:6  
<sup>f</sup>2Ch 20:7; Is 41:8  
<sup>g</sup>2:25 Jos 2:4, 6, 15;  
Heb 11:31  
<sup>h</sup>3:1 Mt 23:8;  
Rm 2:20-21; 1Tm 1:7  
<sup>i</sup>3:2 1Kg 8:46;  
Pr 20:9; Jms 2:10  
<sup>j</sup>Mt 12:37; Jms 1:26;  
1Pt 3:10  
<sup>k</sup>3:3 Ps 32:9; 39:1  
<sup>l</sup>3:5 Ps 12:3-4; 73:8-9  
<sup>m</sup>3:6 Ps 120:2-3;  
Pr 16:27; Mt 15:11, 18  
◇  
<sup>n</sup>3:8 Ps 140:3;  
Ec 10:11; Rm 3:13  
<sup>o</sup>3:9 Gn 1:26; 1Co 11:7  
<sup>p</sup>3:13 Jms 1:21; 2:18  
<sup>q</sup>3:14 Rm 2:8;  
13:13; 2Co 12:20  
<sup>r</sup>3:15 2Th 2:9; 1Tm 4:1;  
Jms 1:17; Rv 2:24  
<sup>s</sup>3:17 Lk 6:36; Rm 12:9;  
1Co 2:6; Heb 12:11;  
Jms 2:4  
<sup>t</sup>3:18 Pr 11:18; Is 32:17;  
Hs 10:12; Am 6:12;  
Gl 6:8; Php 1:11  
<sup>u</sup>4:1 Rm 7:23; Ti 3:9  
<sup>v</sup>4:3 Ps 18:41;  
1Jn 3:22; 5:14  
<sup>w</sup>4:4 Jn 15:19;  
Jms 1:27; 1Jn 2:15  
<sup>x</sup>4:5 1Co 6:19; 2Co 6:16  
<sup>y</sup>4:6 Ps 138:6;  
Pr 3:34; Mt 23:12  
<sup>z</sup>4:7 Eph 4:27;  
6:11; 1Pt 5:8-9

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?

15 If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." <sup>a</sup>Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works.

19 You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe — and they shudder.

20 Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless? 21 Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was made complete, 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, **Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,** <sup>b,e</sup> and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

3 Not many should become teachers, my brothers, <sup>c</sup> because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. <sup>h</sup> 2 For we all stumble in many ways. <sup>i</sup> If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body. <sup>j</sup> 3 Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, <sup>k</sup> we direct their whole bodies. 4 And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. <sup>l</sup> Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed <sup>o</sup> among our members. It stains the whole body, <sup>m</sup> sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly

poison. <sup>n</sup> 9 With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. <sup>o</sup> 10 Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. 11 Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom. <sup>p</sup> 14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. <sup>q</sup> 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>r</sup> 16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense. <sup>s</sup> 18 And the fruit of righteousness <sup>t</sup> is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace.

PROUD OR HUMBLE

4 What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions <sup>u</sup> that wage war within you? <sup>e</sup> 2 You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. <sup>f</sup> You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. <sup>v</sup>

4 You adulterous people! <sup>6</sup> Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God. <sup>w</sup> 5 Or do you think it's without reason that the Scripture says: The spirit he made to dwell in us envies intensely? <sup>h,x</sup>

6 But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says:

**God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.** <sup>y</sup>

7 Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>z</sup> 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your

<sup>a</sup>2:18 The quotation may end here or after v. 18b or v. 19. <sup>b</sup>2:23 Gn 15:6 <sup>c</sup>3:1 Or *brothers and sisters* <sup>d</sup>3:6 Or *places itself, or appoints itself* <sup>e</sup>4:1 Or *war in your members* <sup>f</sup>4:2 Or *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war.* <sup>g</sup>4:4 Lit *Adulteresses* <sup>h</sup>4:5 Or *Scripture says: He jealously yearns for the spirit he made to live in us?* or *Scripture says: The Spirit he made to dwell in us longs jealously?* <sup>i</sup>4:6 Pr 3:34

hearts, you double-minded.<sup>a</sup> <sup>9</sup> Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.<sup>b</sup> <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

<sup>11</sup> Don't criticize one another, brothers and sisters. Anyone who defames or judges a fellow believer<sup>a</sup> defames and judges the law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.<sup>c</sup> <sup>12</sup> There is one lawgiver and judge<sup>b</sup> who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?<sup>d</sup>

#### OUR WILL AND GOD'S WILL

<sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit."<sup>e</sup> <sup>14</sup> Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring — what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."<sup>g</sup> <sup>16</sup> But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.<sup>g</sup> <sup>17</sup> So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it.<sup>h</sup>

#### WARNING TO THE RICH

**5** Come now, you rich<sup>i</sup> people, weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you. <sup>2</sup> Your wealth has rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten.<sup>j</sup> <sup>3</sup> Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure in the last days.<sup>k</sup> <sup>4</sup> Look! The pay that you withheld from the workers<sup>l</sup> who mowed your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Armies.<sup>m</sup> <sup>5</sup> You have lived luxuriously on the earth and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts<sup>n</sup> in a day of slaughter.<sup>o</sup> <sup>6</sup> You have condemned, you have murdered the righteous, who does not resist you.<sup>p</sup>

#### WAITING FOR THE LORD

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.<sup>q</sup> <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near.<sup>r</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door!<sup>s</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name as an example

#### VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.* JAMES 5:14–16

See *From Elation to Depression* on page 168

of suffering and patience. <sup>11</sup> See, we count as blessed those who have endured.<sup>e</sup> You have heard of Job's endurance<sup>t</sup> and have seen the outcome that the Lord brought about — the Lord is compassionate and merciful.<sup>u</sup>

#### TRUTHFUL SPEECH

<sup>12</sup> Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath.<sup>v</sup> But let your "yes" mean "yes," and your "no" mean "no," so that you won't fall under judgment.<sup>o</sup>

#### EFFECTIVE PRAYER

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises.<sup>w</sup> <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.<sup>x</sup> <sup>15</sup> The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.<sup>y</sup> <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.<sup>z</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land.<sup>aa</sup> <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.<sup>ab</sup>

<sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if any among you strays from the truth,<sup>ac</sup> and someone turns him back,<sup>ad</sup> <sup>20</sup> let that person know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.<sup>ae</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 4:8 2Ch 15:2; Is 1:16; Jms 1:8  
<sup>b</sup> 4:9 Mt 5:4; Lk 6:25  
<sup>c</sup> 4:11 Mt 7:1;  
Jms 1:22; 1Pt 2:1  
<sup>d</sup> 4:12 Mt 10:28; Rm 14:4  
<sup>e</sup> 4:13 Pr 27:1; Lk 12:18–20  
<sup>f</sup> 4:14 Jb 7:7; Ps 102:3  
<sup>g</sup> 4:15–16 Ac 18:21;  
1Co 5:6  
<sup>h</sup> 4:17 Lk 12:47–48;  
Jn 9:41; 2Pt 2:21  
<sup>i</sup> 5:1 Pr 11:28; Lk 6:24  
<sup>j</sup> 5:2 Jb 13:28; Is 50:9; Mt 6:19–20  
<sup>k</sup> 5:3 Rm 2:5; Jms 5:8  
<sup>l</sup> 5:4 Lv 19:13; Jb 24:10–11;  
Jr 22:13; Mal 3:5  
<sup>m</sup> Dt 24:15; Rm 9:29  
<sup>n</sup> 5:5 Jb 21:13; Am 6:1  
<sup>o</sup> Jr 12:3; 25:34  
<sup>p</sup> 5:6 Heb 10:38; Jms 4:2  
<sup>q</sup> 5:7 Dt 11:14;  
Jr 5:24; Hs 6:3  
<sup>r</sup> 5:8 Rm 13:11;  
Php 4:5; 1Pt 4:7  
<sup>s</sup> 5:9 Mt 24:33; 1Co 4:5;  
Jms 4:12; 1Pt 4:5

◇

<sup>t</sup> 5:11 Jb 1:21–22;  
2:10; 42:10–12  
<sup>u</sup> Ex 34:6; Nm 14:18;  
Mt 5:10  
<sup>v</sup> 5:12 Mt 5:33–37;  
23:16–22; Mk 7:9–13  
<sup>w</sup> 5:13 Ps 50:15; Col 3:16  
<sup>x</sup> 5:14 Mk 6:13; 16:18  
<sup>y</sup> 5:15 Is 33:24; Mt 9:2;  
Mk 2:5; Lk 24:47  
<sup>z</sup> 5:16 Nm 11:2; Mt 3:6;  
Jn 9:31; 1Pt 2:24  
<sup>aa</sup> 5:17 1Kg 17:1; 18:1;  
Lk 4:25; Ac 14:15  
<sup>ab</sup> 5:18 1Kg 18:41–45;  
Jms 3:17–18  
<sup>ac</sup> 5:19 Mt 18:15;  
Gl 6:1; Jms 3:14  
<sup>ad</sup> Ps 51:13; Dn 12:3;  
Mal 2:6; Lk 1:16  
<sup>ae</sup> 5:20 Pr 10:12;  
Rm 11:14; 1Pt 4:8

<sup>a</sup> 4:11 Or his brother or sister

<sup>b</sup> 4:12 Other mss omit and judge

<sup>c</sup> 5:11 Or persevered

<sup>d</sup> 5:12 Other mss read fall into hypocrisy



# LEARNING THE POWER OF PRAYER

(JAMES 5:17)

ELIJAH HAD ALREADY proven that he was a man of prayer. As James reminds us, Elijah “prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land” (Jms 5:17). However, his greatest opportunity to trust God in prayer still lay ahead: facing the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1Kg 18:20–40). To prepare Elijah for this challenge, God orchestrated another opportunity for him to grow in his prayer life and in his faith. It happened in his encounter with the widow of Zarephath.

## ELIJAH'S GREATEST TEST

Sometime after Elijah came to live with the widow, her son became ill. The boy's health slowly deteriorated until he stopped breathing (17:17). Predictably, the widow poured out her deep feelings of anxiety and distress: “Man of God, why are you here? Have you come to call attention to my iniquity so that my son is put to death?” (17:18).

Looking for an explanation for this tragedy, the widow's thoughts turned inward. She had come to know Elijah well. He was definitely no ordinary man. And the more she came to know him—what he believed, how he lived, and his mission in life—the more she became aware of her own sins. He must have been a true man of God.

This woman was tempted to do what many of us do when tragedy strikes—to wonder if God was punishing her for some sin. To add to her bewilderment, this widow knew that it did not seem logical for Elijah to save both her and her son from starvation (17:8–16), only to turn around and take her son away from her. From this vantage point, we can understand her questions, fears, and confusion.

## ELIJAH'S HUMANNESS

At this point, we also see Elijah's doubts and fears. He too was confused and distraught. He had no human explanation for what had happened, and he felt God's reputation was at stake. In his own grief, he took the boy in his arms, climbed to the upper room where he had been staying, laid him on his own bed and began to pray earnestly, wondering why the Lord would bring such tragedy upon this woman (17:19–20). Then Elijah “stretched himself out over the boy three times” and cried to the Lord to restore the boy's life (17:21).

In his mercy, the Lord answered Elijah's prayer. When the widow saw what happened, the words that flowed from her mouth spoke volumes: “Now I know you are a man of God and the LORD's word from your mouth is true” (17:24).

God not only honored Elijah's persistence in prayer, but also honored his honesty and forthrightness regarding his own doubts and disillusionment.

The Lord gave the boy new life. But more than that, the widow believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was especially important to Elijah since his own people had turned to false gods. In essence, this was why Elijah was headed for Mount Carmel—to take a stand for the one true God. Through this test, God was continuing to prepare Elijah for his greatest challenge.

## PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY

*Principle 1: God prepares us for the big challenges in life by providing us with opportunities to face the smaller challenges victoriously.*

In some respects, this is a scary thought—at least it is for me. I can look back at some very difficult and painful crises I've considered to be tests of faith. Frankly, in my humanness, I don't want bigger challenges! But the good news is that God is entrusting us with his work and he doesn't want us to fail. He wants to increase our faith so that bigger challenges seem even smaller when we're adequately prepared.

*Principle 2: It is in the midst of situations that are beyond our control that we really learn to pray.*

This was certainly true in Elijah's experience. In some respects, it's unfortunate that we have to be in a position where our backs are against the wall before we take the privilege of prayer seriously. Fortunately, God understands our human tendencies. He never turns a deaf ear. Though the outcome may not always be what we might choose, God responds with what is best.

Never hesitate to pray when you're facing a serious problem—even though you may neglect this important spiritual exercise when things seem to be going well. It's natural that we pray more fervently during difficult trials.

*Principle 3: God understands our anxieties, fears, disappointments, and disillusionments.*

Some people view God as an angry father figure who is ready to pounce on them when they share how they really feel. Not so! If this were true, God would act before we speak, for he already knows what we think and feel before we express those thoughts and feelings. Consequently, we might as well tell him. We should never be fearful of expressing these thoughts and feelings to him in prayer.

*Principle 4: God is particularly responsive to our prayers when we are able to get beyond our own concerns and focus on other people's needs—but especially on his reputation.*

When Elijah faced the crisis with the widow's son, he appealed to God based on his concern for the







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