

T H E R E F O R E
let us confidently
approach the
THRONE of Grace
to receive M E R C Y
and find G R A C E
W H E N E V E R
we need help

MEMORY VERSE

For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.

Hebrews 4:15-16

Hebrews

INTRODUCTION

Our High Priest

The Book of Hebrews presents an argument about the deity, humanity, and majesty of Christ. The author illustrates the superiority of Christ, showing His authority and power over angels, prophets, sacrifices, and the priesthood. The Book of Hebrews clearly explains the supremacy of Christ over all.

Hebrews may originally have been a sermon, or it could have been a letter. While the original format is unclear, the message is evident. After a brief introduction (1:1–4), the author explained the superiority and sacrificial work of Christ (1:5—10:18). The author then described elements of the faith, with a tribute to those in the past who were examples of great faith (10:19—13:17), and he concluded with a benediction (13:18–25).

While the author of Hebrews is unknown, scholars offer many theories about who the original author and audience were. Some believe the original audience was a group of Jewish Christians because the book focuses on Jewish rituals and themes. The author uses several Old Testament quotations, perhaps assuming the audience was familiar with the writings. The date of the Book of Hebrews is also unknown; however, it is believed to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Hebrews is an excellent place to find solid doctrine and an explanation of the nature and character of Jesus Christ. To love Him greatly, we must know Him well. Hebrews encourages us as we come to know Christ, the importance of His sacrifice, and His authority and power over everything. The author presents Christ as our mediator who allows us to approach the throne of God. He is our great High Priest, restoring our relationship to the Father through His life, death, and resurrection.

Angola

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Portuguese

POPULATION

31,802,000

UNREACHED POPULATION

376,000

PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

91.4%

Say a Prayer Today

Pray for restoration for the people of Angola after a long history of war (1962–2002).* Pray the church would be a light to those suffering with the lasting effects of such long-term devastation.

HISTORY BIT

Joseph Barreira arrived in Angola in 1579. He was a Portuguese Jesuit (a Roman Catholic order of priests) who conducted successful missionary work with the people there.**

Source Information:

<https://joshuaproject.net/countries/AO>

*Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 7th edition (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 105.

**John Bowden, *A Chronology of World Christianity* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2007), 290.

Cambundo's Home



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Her Journey

CAMBUNDO'S STORY

Growing up in Angola, I faced many challenges. Despite all of the challenges, difficulties, heartaches, and fears, I have always found encouragement in God's Word. Hebrews 4:15–16 is my favorite example. It says, "For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help."

As I read these verses, I am reminded I need to depend on Jesus daily. I find great comfort in the truth that He can help me when I face trials and temptations. Jesus was not spared from temptation because He was God. Jesus was fully human, yet He remained sinless.

Whenever I face darkness in my life, I rest in the truth that Jesus understands my feelings and struggles because He, too, was tempted. I can come before Him and find mercy and grace, no matter what I've done. In His presence I find strength to face all that life throws at me.

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, I am free from the control of sin and free from shame and condemnation. I can approach Him with confidence because He knows my weakness, and accepts me anyway. He is always willing to meet my needs, and He always offers compassion.

6 WEEK READING PLAN

LOVE HIS WORD

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Hebrews 1:5-14	Hebrews 2:1-4	Hebrews 2:5-18	Hebrews 3:1-6
	SOAP Hebrews 1:3-4	SOAP Hebrews 1:8-9	SOAP Hebrews 2:2-4	SOAP Hebrews 2:10-12	SOAP Hebrews 3:3-4
2	Hebrews 3:7-19	Hebrews 4:1-13	Hebrews 4:14-16	Hebrews 5:1-10	Hebrews 5:11-14
	SOAP Hebrews 3:18-19	SOAP Hebrews 4:12-13	SOAP Hebrews 4:15-16	SOAP Hebrews 5:8-10	SOAP Hebrews 5:12-14
3	Hebrews 6:1-12	Hebrews 6:13-20	Hebrews 7:1-10	Hebrews 7:11-28	Hebrews 8:1-6
	SOAP Hebrews 6:11-12	SOAP Hebrews 6:19-20	SOAP Hebrews 7:1-2	SOAP Hebrews 7:11-12	SOAP Hebrews 8:6
4	Hebrews 8:7-13	Hebrews 9:1-10	Hebrews 9:11-14	Hebrews 9:15-28	Hebrews 10:1-18
	SOAP Hebrews 8:7-8	SOAP Hebrews 9:8-10	SOAP Hebrews 9:9-13	SOAP Hebrews 9:25-26	SOAP Hebrews 10:1-2
5	Hebrews 10:19-25	Hebrews 10:26-39	Hebrews 11:1-7	Hebrews 11:8-22	Hebrews 11:23-31
	SOAP Hebrews 10:23-25	SOAP Hebrews 10:36-39	SOAP Hebrews 11:1-2	SOAP Hebrews 11:8	SOAP Hebrews 11:26-27
6	Hebrews 11:32-40	Hebrews 12:1-13	Hebrews 12:14-29	Hebrews 13:1-19	Hebrews 13:20-25
	SOAP Hebrews 11:39-40	SOAP Hebrews 12:1-2	SOAP Hebrews 12:14-15	SOAP Hebrews 13:8-9	SOAP Hebrews 13:20-21

INTRODUCTION: GOD HAS SPOKEN FULLY AND FINALLY IN HIS SON

1 After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets,² in these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world.³ The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*⁴ Thus he became so far better than the angels as he has inherited a name superior to theirs.

THE SON IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, *“You are my son! Today I have fathered you”*? And in another place he says, *“I will be his father and he will be my son.”*⁶ But when he again brings his firstborn into the world, he says, *“Let all the angels of God worship him!”*⁷ And he says of the angels, *“He makes his angels winds and his ministers a flame of fire,”*⁸ but of the Son he says,

*“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
and a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.*

⁹ *You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.
So God, your God, has anointed you over your
companions with the oil of rejoicing.”*

¹⁰ And,
*“You founded the earth in the beginning, Lord,
and the heavens are the works of your hands.*

¹¹ *They will perish, but you continue.
And they will all grow old like a garment,*

¹² *and like a robe you will fold them up
and like a garment they will be changed,
but you are the same and your years will never run out.”*

¹³ But to which of the angels has he ever said, *“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”*?¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?

WARNING AGAINST DRIFTING AWAY

2 Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.² For if the message spoken through angels proved to be so firm that every violation or disobedience received its just penalty,³ how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him,⁴ while God confirmed their witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

EXPOSITION OF PSALM 8: JESUS AND THE DESTINY OF HUMANITY

⁵ For he did not put the world to come, about which we are speaking, under the control of angels.⁶ Instead someone testified somewhere:

REFLECT

How did God speak to people before New Testament times? How did He speak to people during the New Testament? How does He speak to people today?

“What is man that you think of him or the son of man that you care for him?”

- ⁷ *You made him lower than the angels for a little while. You crowned him with glory and honor.*
⁸ *You put all things under his control.”*

For when he *put all things under his control*, he left nothing outside of his control. At present we do not yet see *all things under his control*,⁹ but we see Jesus, who was made *lower than the angels for a little while*, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by God’s grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone.¹⁰ For it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.¹¹ For indeed he who makes holy and those being made holy all have the same origin, and so he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,¹² saying, *“I will proclaim your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you.”*¹³ Again he says, “I will be confident in him,” and again, *“Here I am, with the children God has given me.”*¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil),¹⁵ and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.¹⁶ For surely his concern is not for angels, but he is concerned for Abraham’s descendants.¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

JESUS AND MOSES

3 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, take note of Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess,² who is faithful to the one who appointed him, as Moses was also in God’s house.³ For he has come to deserve greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house deserves greater honor than the house itself!⁴ For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.⁵ Now Moses was *faithful in all God’s house* as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken.⁶ But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. We are of his house, if in fact we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope we take pride in.

EXPOSITION OF PSALM 95: HEARING GOD’S WORD IN FAITH

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks!

⁸ *“Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of testing in the wilderness.*

⁹ *“There your fathers tested me and tried me, and they saw my works for forty years.*

¹⁰ ***“Therefore, I became provoked at that generation and said, ‘Their hearts are always wandering and they have not known my ways.’***

¹¹ ***“As I swore in my anger, ‘They will never enter my rest!’”***

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has an evil, unbelieving heart that forsakes the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called “Today,” that none of you may become hardened by sin’s deception. ¹⁴ For we have become partners with Christ, if in fact we hold our initial confidence firm until the end. ¹⁵ As it says, ***“Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*** ¹⁶ For which ones heard and rebelled? Was it not all who came out of Egypt under Moses’ leadership? ¹⁷ And against whom was God provoked for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, *whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?* ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear they would never enter into his rest, except those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief.

GOD’S PROMISED REST

4 Therefore we must be wary that, while the promise of entering his rest remains open, none of you may seem to have come short of it. ² For we had good news proclaimed to us just as they did. But the message they heard did them no good, since they did not join in with those who heard it in faith. ³ For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, ***“As I swore in my anger, ‘They will never enter my rest!’”*** And yet God’s works were accomplished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this way: ***“And God rested on the seventh day from all his works,”*** ⁵ but to repeat the text cited earlier: ***“They will never enter my rest!”*** ⁶ Therefore it remains for some to enter it, yet those to whom it was previously proclaimed did not enter because of disobedience. ⁷ So God again ordains a certain day, “Today,” speaking through David after so long a time, as in the words quoted before, ***“Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts.”*** ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken afterward about another day. ⁹ Consequently a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God. ¹⁰ For the one who enters God’s rest has also rested from his works, just as God did from his own works. ¹¹ Thus we must make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by following the same pattern of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from God, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

JESUS OUR COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST

¹⁴ Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted

REFLECT

How is Jesus able to sympathize with our weaknesses? What does this show about His character?

LOVE TO GROW

EXHORT ONE ANOTHER

HEBREWS 3:13

Have you ever been discouraged? It's a terrible feeling, isn't it? Discouragement comes when we lose confidence in ourselves, others, our circumstances, or even our faith. Every person struggles with it from time to time.

Discouragement can lead to a host of other problems. It can cause some to give up and others to give in to sin. Maybe for you discouragement leads to laziness, a bad attitude, or a loss of faith.

The author of Hebrews knew this. He understood that discouragement is a big deal, and he showed us a way to fight against it.

Exhort one another each day, as long as it is still called "Today," that none of you may become hardened by sin's deception (Heb 3:13).

Our shortcomings, our sin, the world, and the devil all try to tear us down. We need to be encouraged and reminded of truth. Exhortation is a kind of building up that makes us stronger and more effective.

The gospel is one giant word of encouragement. Jesus lived a perfect life, and our faith in Him credits us with His righteousness. His good works perfect our imperfect ones. His death pays for our sins, and our penalty and debts to God are removed. His resurrection gives us victory over death and power to overcome sin in our lives. We are no longer slaves to our failures, but we are freed by the blood of Jesus. The encouragement found in the gospel is what we need to preach to ourselves and to other believers in seasons of discouragement.

Exhorting one another provides us strength and motivation so we can continue to live out our callings and overcome the sin that so easily creeps into our lives.

Let's speak words that give hope. Let's speak words that dispel discouragement and make the burdens others carry a little lighter. Most of all, let's speak words that bring the gospel to a hurting world.

in every way just as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.

5 For every high priest is taken from among the people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He is able to deal compassionately with those who are ignorant and erring, since he also is subject to weakness, ³and for this reason he is obligated to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. ⁴And no one assumes this honor on his own initiative, but only when called to it by God, as in fact Aaron was. ⁵So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest, but the one who glorified him was God, who said to him, “*You are my Son! Today I have fathered you,*” ⁶as also in another place God says, “*You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.*” ⁷During his earthly life Christ offered both requests and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his devotion. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience through the things he suffered. ⁹And by being perfected in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰and he was designated by God as high priest *in the order of Melchizedek*.

THE NEED TO MOVE ON TO MATURITY

¹¹On this topic we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing. ¹²For though you should in fact be teachers by this time, you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God’s utterances. You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food. ¹³For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice to discern both good and evil.

6 Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, ²teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this is what we intend to do, if God permits. ⁴For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, ⁶and then have committed apostasy, to renew them again to repentance, since they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt. ⁷For the ground that has soaked up the rain that frequently falls on it and yields useful vegetation for those who tend it receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is useless and about to be cursed; its fate is to be burned. ⁹But in your case, dear friends, even though we speak like this, we are convinced of better things relating to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints. ¹¹But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of your hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises.

REFLECT

What does it mean to be spiritually mature? How can we pursue maturity in our walk with God?

¹³Now when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, “***Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly.***” ¹⁵And so by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and the oath serves as a confirmation to end all dispute. ¹⁷In the same way God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable, and so he intervened with an oath, ¹⁸so that we who have found refuge in him may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us through two unchangeable things, since it is impossible for God to lie. ¹⁹We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became ***a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.***

THE NATURE OF MELCHIZEDEK'S PRIESTHOOD

7 Now this ***Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him.*** ²To him also ***Abraham apportioned a tithe of everything.*** His name first means king of righteousness, then ***king of Salem***, that is, king of peace. ³Without father, without mother, without genealogy, he has neither beginning of days nor end of life but is like the son of God, and he remains a priest for all time. ⁴But see how great he must be, if Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of his plunder. ⁵And those of the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office have authorization according to the law to collect a tithe from the people, that is, from their fellow countrymen, although they too are descendants of Abraham. ⁶But Melchizedek who does not share their ancestry collected a tithe from Abraham and blessed the one who possessed the promise. ⁷Now without dispute the inferior is blessed by the superior, ⁸and in one case tithes are received by mortal men, while in the other by him who is affirmed to be alive. ⁹And it could be said that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid a tithe through Abraham. ¹⁰For he was still in his ancestor Abraham's loins when Melchizedek met him.

JESUS AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

¹¹So if perfection had in fact been possible through the Levitical priesthood—for on that basis the people received the law—what further need would there have been for another priest to arise, said to be in the order of Melchizedek and not in Aaron's order? ¹²For when the priesthood changes, a change in the law must come as well. ¹³Yet the one these things are spoken about belongs to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever officiated at the altar. ¹⁴For it is clear that our Lord is descended from Judah, yet Moses said nothing about priests in connection with that tribe. ¹⁵And this is even clearer if another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become a priest not by a legal regulation about physical descent but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For here is the testimony about him: “***You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.***” ¹⁸On the one hand a former command is set aside because it is weak and useless, ¹⁹for the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand a better hope is

CHALLENGE

Read Genesis 14:17–24. Who was Melchizedek? What does it mean that Jesus was a priest in the order of Melchizedek? What kind of authority does this mean Jesus has?

LOVE TO GROW

REMEMBER YOUR ANCHOR

HEBREWS 6:18-19

We are quick to forget about our anchor.

Like boats we float through our days, bobbing along with the current. Sometimes a tidal wave comes and we toss and turn wildly and the winds dictate our drift. Other times, we're caught in a major storm, our boat goes topsy-turvy, and we get seasick, disoriented, and panicked.

Sometimes we act as if we have no anchor at all. The waves and the storms might as well take us out to sea, far from the shore, and destroy us completely. That is not our plight.

We have an anchor. His name is Jesus.

He is secure and firm. He is comfort and safety and hope. He is always with us. The hope we have in Jesus is based on certainty, truth, and the unchangeable Word of God. Our anchor isn't on a chain at the bottom of the sea. Our anchor is in heaven.

In the midst of our chaos and confusion, we focus on our circumstances rather than our anchor. Instead of trying to weather the storms of life on our own, we must turn to Him, remembering that He alone can replace our worries and fears with peace. He can open our eyes to the goodness of God in all circumstances.

One synonym for the word *anchor* is *hold*. Jesus is our hold. We can hold on to hope in Christ because He holds us. Winds and waves of doubt and discouragement will come, fear will crash over us, and worry will threaten to sink us, but our anchor of hope is secure and unmovable.

Remember your anchor.

introduced, through which we draw near to God.²⁰ And since this was not done without a sworn affirmation—for the others have become priests without a sworn affirmation,²¹ but Jesus did so with a sworn affirmation by the one who said to him, “*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever’*”—²² accordingly Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.²³ And the others who became priests were numerous, because death prevented them from continuing in office,²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently since he lives forever.²⁵ So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.²⁶ For it is indeed fitting for us to have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.²⁷ He has no need to do every day what those priests do, to offer sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people, since he did this in offering himself once for all.²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men subject to weakness, but the word of solemn affirmation that came after the law appoints a son made perfect forever.

THE HIGH PRIEST OF A BETTER COVENANT

8 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who *sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven*,² a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer.⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.⁵ The place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he says, “*See that you make everything according to the design shown to you on the mountain.*”⁶ But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry, since the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted on better promises.

⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one.⁸ But showing its fault, God says to them,

“Look, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

⁹*“It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant and I had no regard for them, says the Lord.*

¹⁰*“For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people.*

¹¹*“And there will be no need at all for each one to teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.*

¹²*“For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer.”*

¹³When he speaks of a new covenant, he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and aging is about to disappear.

THE ARRANGEMENT AND RITUAL OF THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY

9 Now the first covenant, in fact, had regulations for worship and its earthly sanctuary. ²For a tent was prepared, the outer one, which contained the lampstand, the table, and the presentation of the loaves; this is called the Holy Place. ³And after the second curtain there was a tent called the holy of holies. ⁴It contained the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered entirely with gold. In this ark were the golden urn containing the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. ⁵And above the ark were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Now is not the time to speak of these things in detail. ⁶So with these things prepared like this, the priests enter continually into the outer tent as they perform their duties. ⁷But only the high priest enters once a year into the inner tent, and not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. ⁸The Holy Spirit is making clear that the way into the Holy Place had not yet appeared as long as the old tabernacle was standing. ⁹This was a symbol for the time then present, when gifts and sacrifices were offered that could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰They served only for matters of food and drink and various ritual washings; they are external regulations imposed until the new order came.

CHRIST'S SERVICE IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

¹¹But now Christ has come as the high priest of the good things to come. He passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, ¹²and he entered once for all into the Most Holy Place not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, and so he himself secured eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled consecrated them and provided ritual purity, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

¹⁵And so he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance he has promised, since he died to set them free from the violations committed under the first covenant. ¹⁶For where there is a will, the death of the one who made it must be proven. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it carries no force while the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸So even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood. ¹⁹For when Moses had spoken every command to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰and said, "***This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded you to keep.***" ²¹And both the tabernacle and all the utensils of worship he likewise sprinkled with

blood.²² Indeed according to the law almost everything was purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.²³ So it was necessary for the sketches of the things in heaven to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves required better sacrifices than these.²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands—the representation of the true sanctuary—but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God’s presence for us.²⁵ And he did not enter to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the sanctuary year after year with blood that is not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the consummation of the ages to put away sin by his sacrifice.²⁷ And just as people are appointed to die once, and then to face judgment,²⁸ so also, after Christ was offered once to *bear the sins of many*, to those who eagerly await him he will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation.

CONCLUDING EXPOSITION: OLD AND NEW SACRIFICES CONTRASTED

- 10** For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.² For otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers would have been purified once for all and so have no further consciousness of sin?³ But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year.⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.⁵ So when he came into the world, he said,
*“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
 but a body you prepared for me.*
⁶ *“Whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings
 you took no delight in.*
⁷ *“Then I said, ‘Here I am: I have come—it is written of me
 in the scroll of the book—to do your will, O God!’”*

⁸ When he says above, *“Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you did not desire nor did you take delight in them”* (which are offered according to the law),⁹ then he says, *“Here I am: I have come to do your will!”* He does away with the first to establish the second.¹⁰ By his will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.¹¹ And every priest stands day after day serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again—sacrifices that can never take away sins.¹² But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, *he sat down at the right hand of God*,¹³ where he is now waiting *until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet*.¹⁴ For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying,¹⁶ *“This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,”*¹⁷ then he says, *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer.”*¹⁸ Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

LOVE TO GROW

DRAW NEAR

HEBREWS 10

Have you ever felt as if you had to earn God's approval? That you had to be a "good person," one who follows all the right rules, in order for God to be fully pleased with you?

I have, and it is exhausting. Every day our sin proves we cannot be good enough or do enough to meet God's perfect standard. All hope seems lost. Thankfully, Hebrews 10 holds some incredible news.

In the Old Testament, God gave the law to Israel. The law was good: It regulated the Israelites' behavior and revealed to them exactly who God was. Following the law, which included animal sacrifices, was the means by which an unholy people could commune with their holy Creator. Even so, the law never brought any person salvation or complete forgiveness of sin.

For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship (Heb 10:1).

Ultimately, the law and Israel's ability to follow it proved ineffective. The law only foreshadowed something better.

Jesus Himself was the perfect sacrifice. He died "once for all" (Heb 10:10). His death is completely sufficient for all who believe in Him. Animal sacrifices were never intended to be the final way in which we relate to God. Jesus, who is now at the right hand of the Father, has made a relationship with God possible. We are now considered holy in His sight, dressed in the righteousness of Christ.

Jesus was our sacrifice, the fulfillment of the law.

Jesus has done all the law required. Though He is God, He took on flesh and came to earth to die so we can live. Now, because of what Jesus has done, we can have a deep and meaningful relationship with Him. We don't need to strive any longer. We have His approval. Let's draw near to Him in gratitude.

REFLECT

What assurance do we now have that the ancient Israelites did not have through the Levitical system?

DRAWING NEAR TO GOD IN ENDURING FAITH

¹⁹Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings, because we have had our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. ²³And let us hold unwaveringly to the hope that we confess, for the one who made the promise is trustworthy. ²⁴And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works, ²⁵not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near.

²⁶For if we deliberately keep on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins is left for us, ²⁷but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a *fury of fire that will consume God's enemies*. ²⁸Someone who rejected the law of Moses was put to death without mercy *on the testimony of two or three witnesses*. ²⁹How much greater punishment do you think that person deserves who has contempt for the Son of God, and profanes the blood of the covenant that made him holy, and insults the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know the one who said, "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay*," and again, "*The Lord will judge his people*." ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³²But remember the former days when you endured a harsh conflict of suffering after you were enlightened. ³³At times you were publicly exposed to abuse and afflictions, and at other times you came to share with others who were treated in that way. ³⁴For in fact you shared the sufferings of those in prison, and you accepted the confiscation of your belongings with joy, because you knew that you certainly had a better and lasting possession. ³⁵So do not throw away your confidence, because it has great reward. ³⁶For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised. ³⁷For *just a little longer* and *he who is coming will arrive and not delay*. ³⁸*But my righteous one will live by faith, and if he shrinks back, I take no pleasure in him*. ³⁹But we are not among those who shrink back and thus perish, but are among those who have faith and preserve their souls.

PEOPLE COMMENDED FOR THEIR FAITH

11 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see. ²For by it the people of old received God's commendation. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were set in order at God's command, so that the visible has its origin in the invisible. ⁴By faith Abel offered God a greater sacrifice than Cain, and through his faith he was commended as righteous, because God commended him for his offerings. And through his faith he still speaks, though he is dead. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he did not see death, and he was not to be found because God took him up. For before

his removal he had been commended as having pleased God. ⁶Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, when he was warned about things not yet seen, with reverent regard constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family. Through faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, and he went out without understanding where he was going. ⁹By faith he lived as a foreigner in the promised land as though it were a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren and he was too old, he received the ability to procreate, because he regarded the one who had given the promise to be trustworthy. ¹²So in fact children were fathered by one man—and this one as good as dead—*like the number of stars in the sky and like the innumerable grains of sand on the seashore*. ¹³These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth. ¹⁴For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He had received the promises, yet he was ready to offer up his only son. ¹⁸God had told him, *“Through Isaac descendants will carry on your name,”* ¹⁹and he reasoned that God could even raise him from the dead, and in a sense he received him back from there. ²⁰By faith also Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the future. ²¹By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and **worshipped as he leaned on his staff**. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, mentioned the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave instructions about his burial.

²³By faith, when Moses was born, his parents hid him for three months, because they saw the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. ²⁴By faith, when he grew up, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to enjoy sin’s fleeting pleasure. ²⁶He regarded abuse suffered for Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for his eyes were fixed on the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt without fearing the king’s anger, for he persevered as though he could see the one who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the one who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. ²⁹By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if on dry ground, but when the Egyptians tried it, they were swallowed up. ³⁰By

REFLECT

Why is faith so important to God? What does it mean to be sure of what we hope for and convinced of what we do not see?

faith the walls of Jericho fell after the people marched around them for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the prostitute escaped the destruction of the disobedient, because she welcomed the spies in peace.

³²And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets. ³³Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, put foreign armies to flight, ³⁵and women received back their dead raised to life. But others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain resurrection to a better life. ³⁶And others experienced mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, sawed apart, murdered with the sword; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins; they were destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸(the world was not worthy of them); they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and openings in the earth. ³⁹And these all were commended for their faith, yet they did not receive what was promised. ⁴⁰For God had provided something better for us, so that they would be made perfect together with us.

THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, ²keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and *has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne* of God. ³Think of him who endured such opposition against himself by sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and give up. ⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed in your struggle against sin. ⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons?

“My son, do not scorn the Lord’s discipline or give up when he corrects you.

⁶ “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts.”

⁷Endure your suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? ⁸But if you do not experience discipline, something all sons have shared in, then you are illegitimate and are not sons. ⁹Besides, we have experienced discipline from our earthly fathers and we respected them; shall we not submit ourselves all the more to the Father of spirits and receive life? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a little while as seemed good to them, but he does so for our benefit, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹Now all discipline seems painful at the time, not joyful. But later it produces the fruit of peace and righteousness for those trained by it. ¹²Therefore, ***strengthen your listless hands and your weak knees,*** ¹³and ***make straight paths for your feet,*** so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but be healed.

DO NOT REJECT GOD'S WARNING

¹⁴Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness, for without it no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no one be like *a bitter root springing up* and causing trouble, and through it many become defiled. ¹⁶And see to it that no one becomes an immoral or godless person like Esau, who *sold his own birthright for a single meal*. ¹⁷For you know that later when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no opportunity for repentance, although he sought the blessing with tears. ¹⁸For you have not come to something that can be touched, to a burning fire and darkness and gloom and a whirlwind ¹⁹and the blast of a trumpet and a voice uttering words such that those who heard begged to hear no more. ²⁰For they could not bear what was commanded: ***"If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned."*** ²¹In fact, the scene was so terrifying that Moses said, ***"I shudder with fear."*** ²²But you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the assembly ²³and congregation of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of something better than Abel's does.

²⁵Take care not to refuse the one who is speaking! For if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less shall we, if we reject the one who warns from heaven? ²⁶Then his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ***"I will once more shake not only the earth but heaven too."*** ²⁷Now this phrase ***"once more"*** indicates the removal of what is shaken, that is, of created things, so that what is unshaken may remain. ²⁸So since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us give thanks, and through this let us offer worship pleasing to God in devotion and awe. ²⁹For our ***God is indeed a devouring fire***.

FINAL EXHORTATIONS

13 Brotherly love must continue. ²Do not neglect hospitality, because through it some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³Remember those in prison as though you were in prison with them, and those ill-treated as though you too felt their torment. ⁴Marriage must be honored among all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, for God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers. ⁵Your conduct must be free from the love of money and you must be content with what you have, for he has said, ***"I will never leave you and I will never abandon you."*** ⁶So we can say with confidence, ***"The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can people do to me?"*** ⁷Remember your leaders, who spoke God's message to you; reflect on the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever! ⁹Do not be carried away by all sorts of strange teachings. For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not ritual meals, which have never benefited those who participated in them. ¹⁰We have an altar that those who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat from. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood the high priest

brings into the sanctuary as an offering for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²Therefore, to sanctify the people by his own blood, Jesus also suffered outside the camp. ¹³We must go out to him, then, outside the camp, bearing the abuse he experienced. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. ¹⁵Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, acknowledging his name. ¹⁶And do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.

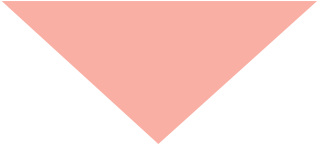
¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work. Let them do this with joy and not with complaints, for this would be no advantage for you. ¹⁸Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to conduct ourselves rightly in every respect. ¹⁹I especially ask you to pray that I may be restored to you very soon.

BENEDICTION AND CONCLUSION

²⁰Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, ²¹equip you with every good thing to do his will, working in us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

²²Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, bear with my message of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you briefly. ²³You should know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he comes soon, he will be with me when I see you. ²⁴Greetings to all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵Grace be with you all.





But be sure
you LIVE out
the Message
and DO NOT
merely LISTEN to it
and so deceive
yourselves

MEMORY VERSE

But be sure you live out the message
and do not merely listen to it and so
deceive yourselves.

James 1:22

James

INTRODUCTION

Follow God's Word

The Book of James is full of practical instruction for living the Christian life. With a focus on faith that produces good works, James explained how fruit is always present in the life of a believer. James also offered great encouragement to those experiencing trials and difficulties. He assured his audience even though trials may seem overwhelming and unending, they are always producing endurance and maturity.

This book is comprised of four main sections. The opening section encourages believers to endure trials and lean on God for wisdom (1:2–18). James then said believers are to be quick to listen (1:22—2:26), slow to speak (3:1–18), and slow to anger (4:1—5:12).

The most probable author is James, the half brother of Jesus. James was the leader of the Jerusalem council and later became well-known in the church. He did not mention his relation to Jesus in the letter but expressed his servanthood to Him. While the date of writing is unknown, evidence points to the letter having been written around A.D. 46, making it one of the earliest books of the New Testament.

The Book of James says “faith without works is dead” (2:26). James was not contradicting the teaching of Paul that says salvation is through grace alone. He extended the doctrine of grace by explaining how faith in Christ will produce good works. When we love God greatly, good works will overflow from our lives. The Book of James offers many practical teachings for the Christian longing to please God.



Japan

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Japanese

POPULATION

126,730,000

UNREACHED POPULATION

123,979,000

PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

2.2%



Eli's Home

*Say a
Prayer Today*

Pray for Eli and her family as they serve as missionaries. Pray they would be faithful ministers of the gospel, bringing the truth of Christ to lost people.

HISTORY BIT

In 1554 Luis d'Almeida, a wealthy Portuguese merchant, traveled to Japan as a missionary. He founded an orphanage, a home for the homeless, and a hospital.*

Source Information:

<https://joshuaproject.net/countries/JA>

*John Bowden, *A Chronology of World Christianity* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2007), 281.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Her Journey

ELI'S STORY

“But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves” (Jas 1:22).

The truth in this verse is both a blessing and a reminder. It challenges us to live a life of active faith that God calls us to as believers.

In order to live out God's Word, we need to know God's Word. If we are going to live out the message of His Word, we have to first read and study the Bible. For God's Word is true, given by Him, and useful for teaching, correction, instruction, and training in righteousness.

When we live out the message of God's Word, we allow it to teach, correct, and guide us.

God will continue to work in my life as I continue to seek Him. As I seek to know His Word, it equips me for doing good works. I always want to be ready for God's work, and I want to be a blessing to others in what I do.

My family and I have been called to serve God as missionaries in a foreign country. Everyday I think on God's truth relative to the place we live. I pray our testimony would reveal the true and living God to those around us.

It is not easy living far from home, but we are convinced that God has called us to His work in Japan. Everyday we work hard to live out the message of the gospel and encourage one another to do the same.

4 WEEK READING PLAN

LOVE HIS WORD

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1	James 1:1-4	James 1:5-8	James 1:9-11	James 1:12-15	James 1:16-18
	SOAP James 1:4	SOAP James 1:5	SOAP James 1:9-10	SOAP James 1:12	SOAP James 1:17
2	James 1:19-21	James 1:22-27	James 2:1-7	James 2:8-13	James 2:14-26
	SOAP James 1:19	SOAP James 1:22	SOAP James 2:5	SOAP James 2:8-9	SOAP James 2:22-23
3	James 3:1-5	James 3:6-12	James 3:13-18	James 4:1-6	James 4:7-12
	SOAP James 3:3-5	SOAP James 3:8-10	SOAP James 3:17-18	SOAP James 4:4-6	SOAP James 4:7-8
4	James 4:13-17	James 5:1-6	James 5:7-12	James 5:13-18	James 5:19-20
	SOAP James 4:15-17	SOAP James 5:1-3	SOAP James 5:7-8	SOAP James 5:16	SOAP James 5:19-20

SALUTATION

1 From James, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. Greetings!

JOY IN TRIALS

2 My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. **4** And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything. **5** But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him. **6** But he must ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind. **7** For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, **8** since he is a double-minded individual, unstable in all his ways.

9 Now the believer of humble means should take pride in his high position. **10** But the rich person's pride should be in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a wildflower in the meadow. **11** For the sun rises with its heat and dries up the meadow; the petal of the flower falls off and its beauty is lost forever. So also the rich person in the midst of his pursuits will wither away. **12** Happy is the one who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him. **13** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. **14** But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. **15** Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to death. **16** Do not be led astray, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change. **18** By his sovereign plan he gave us birth through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

LIVING OUT THE MESSAGE

19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. **20** For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness. **21** So put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the message implanted within you, which is able to save your souls. **22** But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves. **23** For if someone merely listens to the message and does not live it out, he is like someone who gazes at his own face in a mirror. **24** For he gazes at himself and then goes out and immediately forgets what sort of person he was. **25** But the one who peers into the perfect law of liberty and fixes his attention there, and does not become a forgetful listener but one who lives it out—he will be blessed in what he does. **26** If someone thinks he is religious yet does not bridle his tongue, and so deceives his heart, his religion is futile. **27** Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their adversity and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

REFLECT

How can we turn trials into joy?
How do we do this on a practical, daily basis?

LOVE TO GROW

EVERY PERFECT GIFT

JAMES 1

James wrote this letter as though he might run out of ink. He included no flowery phrases or unnecessary words. It would be easy to read this jam-packed epistle as a bunch of unconnected threads of wisdom, but that would be a mistake.

In the middle of chapter 1, James described God's perfect graciousness and some of the ways we are tempted to disregard His giving nature. He said, "the believer of humble means" is in a "high position" in contrast to the rich person, who will pass away "like a wildflower" (James 1:9–10). He also praised believers who endure testing, for they will receive "the crown of life" (James 1:12). He warned against claiming God is tempting us, because we are tempted by our own desires (James 1:13–15).

This instruction culminates in verse 16: "Do not be led astray, my dear brothers and sisters." Each of these different messages (regarding wealth, testing, and temptation) describes a means by which we are distracted from this truth: God is the faithful, unchanging Giver of all good gifts (James 1:17).

*Wealth, testing, and temptation distract us from
the truth of God's gracious nature.*

Wealth leads us to put our hope and trust in material possessions. It makes us feel invincible, secure, and protected, but even the wealthiest people will ultimately pass away, no matter how much they have accumulated.

While wealth can tempt us toward independence, testing places us in true dependence on God. We are forced to reckon with our own weakness and smallness. Testing usually strips away the things we run to, allowing us to turn to God in our desperate need.

This testing does not mean God is tempting us, as James reminds us (James 1:13). We cannot blame Him for our sin, because He is the source of all good things and nothing less.

In this seemingly random group of instructions and insights, James was most concerned with where we find our security. Do we seek it in material possessions that make promises of safety they can never fulfill? The discomfort or danger we face as believers is not temptation but testing, which pushes us away from the sources of comfort we idolize. This testing is a loving gift from the perfect Giver, as He reaches in and directs our attention to our only true hope, Jesus Christ.

PREJUDICE AND THE LAW OF LOVE

2 My brothers and sisters, do not show prejudice if you possess faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. 2 For if someone comes into your assembly wearing a gold ring and fine clothing, and a poor person enters in filthy clothes, 3 do you pay attention to the one who is finely dressed and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and to the poor person, “You stand over there,” or “Sit on the floor”? 4 If so, have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil motives? 5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! Did not God choose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor! Are not the rich oppressing you and dragging you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme the good name of the one you belong to? 8 But if you fulfill the royal law as expressed in this scripture, “**You shall love your neighbor as yourself**,” you are doing well. 9 But if you show prejudice, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as violators. 10 For the one who obeys the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11 For he who said, “**Do not commit adultery**,” also said, “**Do not murder**.” Now if you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a violator of the law. 12 Speak and act as those who will be judged by a law that gives freedom. 13 For judgment is merciless for the one who has shown no mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment.

FAITH AND WORKS TOGETHER

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,” but you do not give them what the body needs, what good is it? 17 So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead being by itself. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear.

20 But would you like evidence, you empty fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that his faith was working together with his works and his faith was perfected by works. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “**Now Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness**,” and *he was called God’s friend*. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we will be judged more strictly. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If someone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect individual, able to control

CHALLENGE

Why are works a result of faith? Read Genesis 22:1–19. How was Abraham’s faith displayed through his actions?

REFLECT

How does our speech reveal what is in our hearts? Why is it important for us to control our tongues?

the entire body as well. ³And if we put bits into the mouths of horses to get them to obey us, then we guide their entire bodies. ⁴Look at ships too: Though they are so large and driven by harsh winds, they are steered by a tiny rudder wherever the pilot's inclination directs. ⁵So too the tongue is a small part of the body, yet it has great pretensions. Think how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. ⁶And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence—and is set on fire by hell.

⁷For every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature is subdued and has been subdued by humankind. ⁸But no human being can subdue the tongue; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people made in God's image. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters. ¹¹A spring does not pour out fresh water and bitter water from the same opening, does it? ¹²Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a vine produce figs? Neither can a salt water spring produce fresh water.

TRUE WISDOM

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct he should show his works done in the gentleness that wisdom brings. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfishness in your hearts, do not boast and tell lies against the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come from above but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶For where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and not hypocritical. ¹⁸And the fruit that consists of righteousness is planted in peace among those who make peace.

PASSIONS AND PRIDE

4 Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from your passions that battle inside you? ²You desire and you do not have; you murder and envy and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask; ³you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions.

⁴Adulterers, do you not know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? So whoever decides to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy. ⁵Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says, "The spirit that God caused to live within us has an envious yearning"? ⁶But he gives greater grace. Therefore it says, "**God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.**" ⁷So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and make your hearts pure, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn, and weep. Turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into despair. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

REFLECT

What does it mean to resist the devil? Why is this important?

LOVE TO GROW

CONFLICT

JAMES 4:1-4

Conflict can be painful.

It causes discomfort, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those we love. Left unresolved, it may even cost us a relationship. Whether you're someone who runs from dealing with conflict, or someone who charges in ready for a fight, you'll probably agree that the outcome can cause significant damage. Conflict is a tool for relationships that can cause them to be built up into something stronger, or torn down and destroyed.

The disagreements we experience come from the desires that battle within us. These desires demand our attention and affection. Unless we turn to God to meet these longings, they will bubble up to the surface and clash with others' unmet desires. We want a circumstance to go our way, and our friend wants it to go their way. To give in could mean we are both left with unmet desires. Both parties are scared that if they don't look out for themselves, no one will.

James points out we do not have what we want because we do not look to God for it. He isn't implying we can turn to God, ask for anything we wish, and expect it will be ours immediately. He is saying all those clanging desires find fulfillment in God alone; therefore we should look to Him for everything we need.

Turning to God with our desires affects the way we deal with conflict.

In some cases we may not get into conflict in the first place. In other cases we may be more willing to compromise or lay aside our own desires because we are satisfied in all God has given us.

Instead of blaming the conflicts in our lives on external circumstances, we can look inward and ask whether there are desires battling within us we need to take to God. Perhaps we are looking for another person or situation to fulfill us when we should be looking for God. Instead of pursuing "friendship with the world" (James 4:4), let's choose to love God and allow Him to meet our needs. When we do this, we reduce the amount of painful conflict in our lives and find ourselves truly fulfilled.

¹¹Do not speak against one another, brothers and sisters. He who speaks against a fellow believer or judges a fellow believer speaks against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but its judge. ¹²But there is only one who is lawgiver and judge—the one who is able to save and destroy. On the other hand, who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that town and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” ¹⁴You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like? For you are a puff of smoke that appears for a short time and then vanishes. ¹⁵You ought to say instead, “If the Lord is willing, then we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶But as it is, you boast about your arrogant plans. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷So whoever knows what is good to do and does not do it is guilty of sin.

WARNING TO THE RICH

5 Come now, you rich! Weep and cry aloud over the miseries that are coming on you. ²Your riches have rotted and your clothing has become moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you. It will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have hoarded treasure! ⁴Look, the pay you have held back from the workers who mowed your fields cries out against you, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. ⁵You have lived indulgently and luxuriously on the earth. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered the righteous person, although he does not resist you.

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

⁷So be patient, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s return. Think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for it until it receives the early and late rains. ⁸You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord’s return is near. ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates! ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord’s name. ¹¹Think of how we regard as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job’s endurance and you have seen the Lord’s purpose, that *the Lord is full of compassion and mercy*. ¹²And above all, my brothers and sisters, 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 into judgment.

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

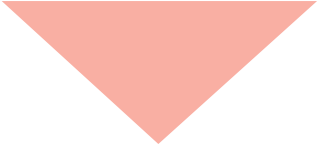
¹³Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you ill? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with olive oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and

REFLECT

What does James teach us about the power of prayer? How can you be more faithful in prayer this week?

the Lord will raise him up—and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness. ¹⁷Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and there was no rain on the land for three years and six months! ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land sprouted with a harvest.

¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, ²⁰he should know that the one who turns a sinner back from his wandering path will save that person's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.



But you are a
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a royal PRIESTHOOD,
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a people of His own,
SO THAT you MAY proclaim
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MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

1 Peter



INTRODUCTION

You Are Wanted

The Book of 1 Peter offers powerful encouragement to those facing persecution and trials. The Christians in Asia Minor during the first century experienced great hardship; they found living for Christ meant enduring suffering. Peter wrote this letter to uplift these believers, explain the reasons for their pain, and give them hope of the reward and glory to come.

The Book of 1 Peter contains five themes. First, Peter explained that Christians can expect suffering as part of following Christ because God often uses struggle to bring about godly character. Peter urged his readers to continue to live holy and righteous lives, no matter their experiences. Peter encouraged the believers to understand that suffering was part of their service to God, not a result of sin in their lives. He challenged the believers to submit to others for the sake of the gospel, and finally, he affirmed the central truths of the gospel.

Peter likely wrote his letter sometime between A.D. 62 and 64. While some modern scholarship challenges Peter as the author, early church tradition affirms the apostle was the writer of this letter.

This book was and is an encouragement to believers in Christ. Peter reminded his readers that as followers of Christ, we are a chosen people. Christ Himself chose us to follow Him and to show His love to a lost and broken world. Peter exhorted all Christ-followers, as we sometimes suffer for our belief, to anticipate “an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” that is “reserved in heaven” for us (1:4). Such a reward should build our endurance and enable us to love God greatly.