

HOLIDAY MESSAGES 2020
STUDY SIX

Here's Something Worth Remembering

James 4:11–17

James is not a dreamer. He has a very practical mind. So, he speaks bluntly, and I will do the same. James isn't worried about whether you like him. He isn't worried about whether you feel good after you read what he writes. I feel the same after telling you what I say. My responsibility is not to make you feel good. My responsibility is to tell you the truth. I need to tell you the truth, whether you like to hear it or not, because only by truth can you deal with reality.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ONE of the most resounding themes that echoes throughout the Bible sounds in just five words:

YOU ARE NOT IN CHARGE!

Many read those words, take a deep gulp, and shudder—as if it were frightening news. Others might read that statement, raise an eyebrow, and baulk—as if it were surprising, perhaps debatable. But it's not. The Bible doesn't leave you in a state of fright and surprise as it sings this song.

The Bible heralds that theme as great news. A good and powerful God rules the world. Not a whimsical, profane dictator or violent, colossal crowd or chaotic, unpredictable natural disaster. *God is in charge*—a truth to take comfort in and orient our lives around. Now that's something worth singing about!

In the last study, we reviewed the importance of self-examination at the start of a new year. Paul taught us how we need to forget certain things in our past that shackle us or block us from fully embracing God's call on our lives.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Here's Something Worth Remembering

James 4:11–17

For now, we'll explore what we need to remember. Specifically . . .

WE ARE NOT IN CHARGE!

Pastor Chuck Swindoll expounded this vital theme heard in James 4:11–17—the focus of today's *Searching the Scriptures* study. Jesus' half-brother presents this truth with such booming force that we do well to let it repeat within us every day.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Proverbs 1:7 states, “Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge.” We gain wisdom by acknowledging that God exists, has acted in human history, and has provided all we need to know about His ways and His will. True knowledge rests on our belief that God is in charge—and that we are not.

Prayer is the appropriate first response to this truth. Take time now to pray. Express your dependence upon your heavenly Father. Ask for His guidance through this time in His Word. Request His blessing.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

James wrote as a prophetic sage. He wrote plainly using simple imagery, short sentences, and lots of commands—59 imperatives in 108 verses! His words don't soar up into the theological clouds. Rather, he writes as one whose feet are on the ground to help you keep your feet on the ground so you can walk with God in the way of the righteous.

James teaches that you don't have to know much to live a significant life. You just have to take the simple truths of Jesus' message and incorporate them into every aspect of your life. James helps you do just that.



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James 4:11–17



Observation: Two Ways We Aren't in Charge

We'll observe below how James 4:11–17 teaches we aren't in charge.¹

We Aren't in Charge of Others—James 4:11–12

Observe *James 4:11–12*. What is James' primary command at the beginning of 4:11? How did he explain the meaning of that command later in the verse?

What did James say about God in 4:12, and how did he contrast God's identity with our identity?

Our sinful nature leads us to speak ill of others behind their back and without the full story. God leads us to do the exact opposite. We seek out the full story, speak directly with the one whom we believe is in the wrong, and hold a humble posture as a fellow sinner who's accountable to the same God.

If it's so bad and if something needs to be confronted and it's for the good of the other individual, wait until you're alone and at the right time and in the right tone confront the person to his or her face. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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We Aren't in Charge of Ourselves—James 4:13–16

Observe *James 4:13–16*. Verse 13 speaks of five presumptions arrogant boasters make. List those presumptions below.

What corrections did James make to these presumptions in 4:14–16?

James' key truths we'd all do well to build our life upon:

- 1) *As mere mortals, we have no guarantee of tomorrow.*
- 2) *As mere humans, we have no clue what the future holds.*
- 3) *As mere creatures, we have no right to ignore our Maker's will.*

Talk about something worth remembering!



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James 4:11–17



Interpretation: To Know and to Do

Effective interpretation always leads to solid theology. We don't stop with grammar, history, or culture. We end with theology—unshakable principles and truths about God and life. Sometimes, unearthing that theology takes some excavating. Other times, it sits closer to the surface. Thankfully, James makes his theology explicit.

Read *James 4:11–17* and summarize the key ideas about God and why those ideas are significant according to James. Don't forget to consult your trusted Bible study *resources* and *commentaries* during this stage. We recommend you add Pastor Chuck's clear, practical, and engaging *commentary* on James to your library if you don't already own it.

Pray like this when you plan: “Lord, You’re in charge. This is Your day. It’s on loan to me. Thank You for allowing me to live it, but it’s Yours. It’s got Your name written all over it. I want it to be for Your glory. I don’t want to be involved in anything that You don’t want. So stop me. Turn me. Reverse my plan if needed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How is 4:17 logically connected to 4:11–16?



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James 4:11–17

In his excellent commentary, James Moo discusses the connection between verses 17 and 15 which state that failing to consider God in all our plans leads to the sin of omission. He writes:

James's reminder here is an important one. For we have a tendency, when we think of sin, to think only of those things we have done that we should not have done. I know my own confessions before the Lord tend to focus on these kinds of sins. But I should also consider those ways in which I have failed to do what the Lord has commanded me to do. Perhaps I did not reach out to help a "neighbor" in need; or perhaps I failed to bear witness to a co-worker when I had the opportunity. These also are sins for which I must seek God's forgiveness.²



Correlation: In All Your Ways, Acknowledge Him

Numerous passages throughout the Bible address the two key topics that James 4:11–17 addresses: *we aren't in charge of others, and we aren't in charge of ourselves*. Carefully read the passages below, reflect upon them, and then summarize how they complement what you learned above.

Proverbs 3:5–6

Matthew 7:1–6



Here's Something Worth Remembering

James 4:11–17

To plan for ourselves and to correct others are very noble and wise actions to take so long as we do them with the right attitude and in the right way. We plan with open hands in pursuit of God's will—not gleaming eyes of self-assurance. We correct with open hearts of love—not hammering words to drive people down.

Application: Do, Build, Give

James wrote with vigor as he unfolded the truths that *God is in charge* and *we are not*. How important to remember for the new year ahead! To help you apply these truths, Pastor Chuck boiled down these truths into three points of application. Read each point. Reflect on your life as it relates to that point. Record one very specific way you wish to apply that point this year.

1) *Don't be satisfied merely knowing God's Word; do it.*

God wants us to know and do, to learn and apply, to reflect and act. What is one way you can apply this to your life this year that will foster your spiritual growth?

2) *Don't tear people down; build them up.*

God grants us the ability to speak. God reveals to us the truth of His ways. God gives us truth and words as a stewardship to love others, to build them up. What is one simple way you can begin incorporating this truth into your daily routine?



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3) *Don't ignore God; give Him all the controls.*

Forgetting God leads to unwise decision making to say the least. It leads to distorted views of reality and concrete expectations that break when unmet. Acknowledging God in all our ways makes us wise planners receptive to His will. What is one basic way you can give God all the controls this year?



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A FINAL PRAYER

Horatio Bonar penned a beautiful hymn that extols God's control of our lives. You can take comfort in that fact. Ponder the hymn below to end your time in God's Word.

Thy Way, not Mine, O Lord

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
however dark it be;
lead me by thine own hand,
choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,
it will be still the best;
winding or straight, it leads
right onward to thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might:
choose thou for me, my God,
so shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
is thine, so let the way
that leads to it be thine,
else I must surely stray.

Take thou my cup, and it
with joy or sorrow fill,
as best to thee may seem;
choose thou my good and ill.

Choose thou for me my friends,
my sickness or my health;
choose thou my cares for me,
my poverty or wealth.

Not mine, not mine, the choice
in things or great or small;
be thou my guide, my strength,
my wisdom, and my all.³

ENDNOTES

1. To review Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org or grab a *copy* of the book for your library. Pastor Chuck also uses *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.
2. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 208.
3. Horatius Bonar, "Thy Way, not Mine, O Lord," Hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/thy_way_not_mine_o_lord.

