



LET'S BEGIN HERE

A faith not expressed remains ceremonial at best—left to sit idly collecting the dust of life.

When James, the half-brother of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem, wrote his letter to believers scattered across Europe, he wanted to make sure they understood that a faith without works “is dead” (James 2:17). A lifeless shell of knowledge or tradition will prove to be of no help to anyone desiring to live out his or her Christianity, especially in tough times.

That’s why James pulled no punches. From the beginning of his letter, he exhorted his readers to embrace a *hands-on Christianity* that includes both head knowledge as a foundation and some sturdy legs to stand on that could spring into *action* regardless of the circumstances.



Getting Started: An Overview of James

If you were to visit an unfamiliar city with a large metropolitan area such as Los Angeles or Dallas, maps and travel guides would be invaluable. Once you understood the big picture and got your bearings, finding your way through the city would become a bit easier.

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you’re studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You’ll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

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Quotable

Surprisingly, the greater part of the Bible is directed to the saint or the “Christian.” And it tells the believer how to walk with the God he or she has come to know.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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MM01
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Take a few minutes to get an overview of the book of James by reading through the resources you've gathered on James (**pages 4–5**). Also, study the chart provided at the end of this Message Mate. You may want to print the page that includes the chart so you can keep it for future reference.



Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Take some time to make notes, either in the space below or on a separate sheet of paper, about what you see as major themes in James 1.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

Who was James? How did he describe himself?

To whom did James write? And why? (Turn to your commentary to find insight, or read through the notes in your study Bible.)

Look up the word *diaspora* in your Bible dictionary. How would you define this term in your own words?



James referred to “the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” in James 1:1. How does your understanding of *diaspora* help you grasp the situation James’ readers were experiencing?

Will the Real James Please Stand!

If you scan the New Testament, you’ll discover several individuals identified by the name *James* (page 7):

- The father of Judas (not Iscariot) (see Luke 6:16)
- Son of Zebedee, brother of John (see Matthew 4:21)
- James the Less, son of Mary (see Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10)
- Son of Joseph and Mary, half-brother of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Jude 1:1)

Many scholars and Bible teachers agree that the author of the book of James was the half-brother of Jesus. Imagine growing up alongside the Creator of the universe, the Savior of the world! Jot down a few thoughts about what this may have been like for James.

Correlating James 1 with Mark 3:20–21 provides insight to James’ initial response to his older brother’s ministry. Read Mark 3:20–21. Now read a few verses before verse 20 and following verse 21.

What is the context of this passage? What were some of the people’s responses to Jesus?

How did Mark describe the reactions of Jesus’ family to His ministry?



Now read 1 Corinthians 15:3–11. What was Paul describing?

Notice Paul mentioned James in 1 Corinthians 15:7. How does this verse relate to what Mark described in Mark 3:20–21?

How did seeing Jesus alive after the resurrection transform James' response to Him?

Ultimately, James believed in Jesus after the resurrection. Faith moved James from unbelief to belief—from an inactive indifference to an active, vibrant, *hands-on* trust in Jesus.

Based on this study, write down three practical applications on the role of faith in changing a Christian's perspective on . . .

Prayer _____

Sharing his or her faith _____

Enduring adversity _____



OVERVIEW OF JAMES

Faith	When stretched, it doesn't break.	When pressed, it doesn't fail.	When expressed, it doesn't explode.	When distressed, it doesn't panic.
Deeds	Authentic stability	Authentic love	Authentic control and humility	Authentic patience
	Greeting Trials Temptation Response to Scripture CHAPTER 1	Partiality and prejudice Indifference and mere intellectualism Obedience and action CHAPTER 2	The tongue The heart The will CHAPTERS 3–4	Money matters Sickness Carnality and correction CHAPTER 5
Background	The difficulties of life caused the scattered saints to drift spiritually, leading to all forms of problems — unbridled speech, wrong attitudes, doubt, strife, carnality, shallow faith.			
Characteristics	“The Proverbs of the New Testament,” James contains many practical, straightforward exhortations. Emphasis is on importance of balancing right belief with right behavior. The book has many Old Testament word pictures and references.			
Theme	Real faith produces authentic deeds.			
Key Verse	2:17			
Christ in James	Jesus is the glorious Lord, who inspires true faith and authentic works (2:1, 14–26).			

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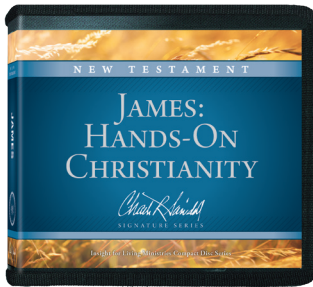


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
A Case for Practical Christianity
James 1:1–12

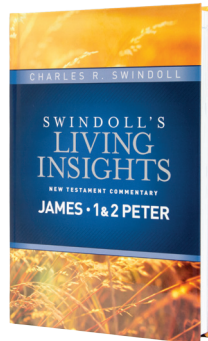
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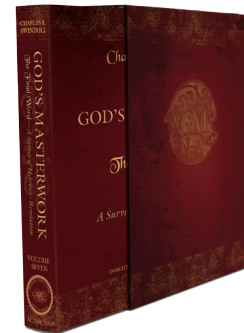
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MM01
6



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Maybe you've asked with the psalmist of old:

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me? (Psalm 13:1)

David's extended period of adversity had started to erode his confidence in the Lord's presence. Ever been there? Are you there today?

Adversity is part of the human experience. In fact, you probably know by now that it's not a matter of *if* hard times will come but *when* hard times will come.

In this study, we will look closely at how James explained both the significance of trials in our lives and how God uses them to deepen our spiritual character.



Getting Started: God's Intent for Our Trials

As we begin, remember that when searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

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Motivating Christians to take time to search the Scriptures can be a challenge. Most people lead very busy lives. But the need for encouragement and direction in hard times often drives people to consider turning to the Word of God for answers.

Quotable

*God flings upon
us a particular
kind of test, and
then another one
comes along. It's as
if God is saying,
"My child, I'm
allowing this so
that you might
know this area of
your life needs much
attention." Trials
have a purpose.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



In the space provided, describe a time in your life when you found hope and encouragement from your personal study of the Scriptures.

James wrote to a group of Christians who were experiencing adversity as a result of being scattered from their homeland. He wrote to “the twelve tribes who are *dispersed* abroad” (James 1:1, emphasis added).

In the last study, you discovered the meaning of the word *diaspora*: Christians who fled their homeland because of religious persecution in Jerusalem. Describe how you think it would feel to be a Jewish Christian family forced to leave their homeland and live among non-Jewish people in a completely strange culture.

What are some of the “trials” they may have faced as a result of being “dispersed”?



Helpful Hint

This would be a good time to consult one of the maps in your study Bible or skim through a Bible atlas. Look for a map that indicates the various places where Jewish Christians fled during the first-century persecution in Jerusalem (**page 2**).





Your Turn in the Scriptures

In this message from James chapter 1, Chuck mentions two truths about trials we all must embrace.

Trials are *inevitable*. Life can cave in on us in many different ways. James referred to these events as “various trials,” meaning they can take on many forms and carry varying degrees of intensity. Also, trials may originate purely from outward circumstances—such as religious persecution, threats from a political enemy, a tragic personal event, illness, a job loss, or even some catastrophic weather event. But trials can also come from within—emerging from the shame of our past, the weight of guilt from a recurring pattern of sin, or a debilitating sense of inadequacy or low self-esteem.

That leads us to the second truth about trials. Trials have *a purpose*, whether they originate from without or within. God allows and uses these periods of adversity to shape our character and deepen our trust in Him.

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

Read again James 1:1–4 Read the verses slowly and make notes below or on a separate sheet of paper about what you observe. Is this a warning passage? Or is it meant to be instruction? How do you know? What clues does the text offer you?

James began verse 2 with the word *consider*. What kind of word is “consider”? Is it an action (motion) word, an attitude word (mind-set), or a feeling word (emotion)? Explain the reason for your answer.



Now pay close attention to James 1:3. Based on this verse, what did James say is the purpose of our trials? And what is the primary target? Explain your answer in your own words.

Locate your Bible dictionary or read through the section on James 1:3 in your Bible commentary. Try to discover what James meant when he said, “The testing of your faith produces endurance.” How would you explain the meaning of the word “testing”?

Circle the word below which you believe (based on your study) best reflects God’s purpose in testing our faith:

Correction Approval Growing

Now read James 1:5–11. As you read, make some notes about what you see. Did James repeat any words? If so, what are they?

James made clear that receiving wisdom from God is particularly important for enduring hard times. According to James 1:5, how is such wisdom gained?



How does James 1:6 relate to James 1:5? What illustration from nature did James use to stress the significance of praying without doubting? Explain how that helps us pray during trials.

In James 1:9–11, we see the contrast between the response of a person of humble means to adversity and the response of a wealthy person to adversity. Make some notes in the space provided about the differences between the two.

What illustration from nature did James use to make his point about the fleeting nature of earthly success? Why is this significant?

Whether rich or poor, humble or exalted, everyone will experience hard times. James made that abundantly clear. Left to ourselves, we are tossed about like a wave on the sea—directionless and without purpose—and our faith quickly wanes like grass and flowers wilting under a scorching sun. But when we invite God into our circumstances, everything changes. By turning to Him in prayer, our trials become a joyful experience of gaining greater wisdom and developing more resilient faith—and both promise to outlast any present heartache or temporary trouble.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how thankful I am for this trial because it has forced me to turn to You and to Your Word. I ask for wisdom to know Your purpose and plan and the faith to believe what You reveal to me through it. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

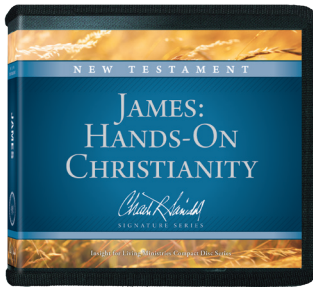


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
When Troubles Won't Go Away
James 1:1–12

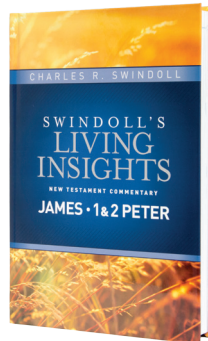
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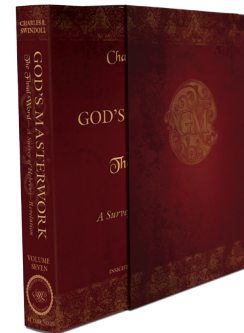
Tools for Digging Deeper



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MM02
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

If you're breathing, then you've faced the struggle against temptation.

You may be battling a lustful thought or fighting the urge to lash out in revenge, even as you begin this study. You are not alone. In fact, none of us are strangers to the constant assault of temptation. Thankfully, in this New Testament letter that emphasizes a *hands-on* Christianity, James confronted this menace head-on, offering both practical wisdom about the nature of temptation and genuine help for getting loose from its relentless grip.



Getting Started: The Nature of Temptation

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

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Take a few minutes to read through all of James chapter 1. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time.

Quotable

*James makes
very clear that we
simply cannot say,
“The Devil made
me do it!” That
is definitely not a
biblical response.*

*The lure of
temptation lies
deep within the
shifting shadows of
every human heart.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 1:13–18, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

James wanted us to understand the nature of temptation. He wrote, “Let no one say when he is tempted: ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust” (James 1:13–14).

Study the illustration below. Then go back and read James 1:13–15.

The Slippery Slope of Sin

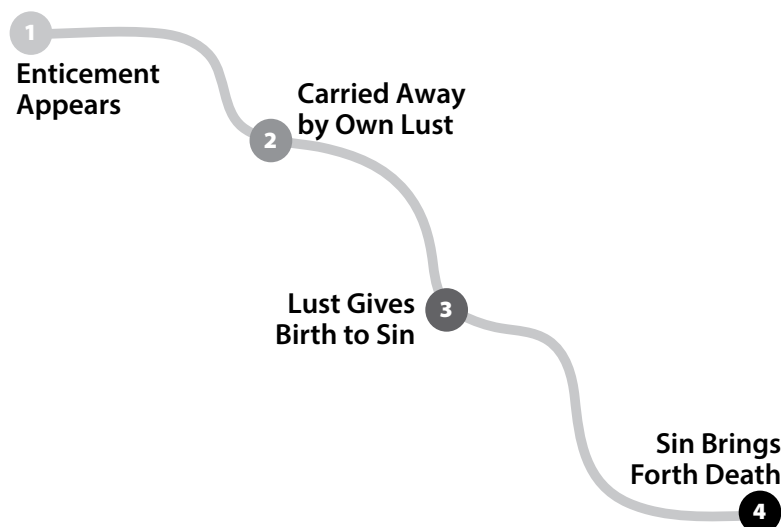


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Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

What observations can you make about how James described the nature of temptation? What verbs or action phrases did James use to illustrate temptation's slippery slope (**pages 28–31**)?

If you have a Bible dictionary, look up the word *lust*. Read through the definition and corresponding notes on the meaning of this word and the various passages in the Bible where it is used. Where else in the Bible is this word used?

How would you summarize its meaning, based on these multiple uses? (Remember: This is the very important aspect of *correlation* in the searching the Scriptures process!)

Obviously, lust is only one area of our lives in which we find ourselves tempted to sin. What are some other areas of temptation with which we as Christians struggle?

Once you've identified several areas of temptation, go back and read aloud James 1:14–15. Each time you read the word *lust*, replace it with another word that represents an area of temptation.

For example, *anger* . . .

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own [*anger*]. Then when [*anger*] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

Or perhaps, *worry* . . .

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own [*worry*]. Then when [*worry*] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”



Now try a few on your own.

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own _____. Then when _____ has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

As you heard in Chuck’s message, he identified two powerful applications that encourage us to embrace God’s provision for overcoming temptations. Read James 1:16–18. In the spaces next to these applications below, write down the words and phrases you find in these three verses from which you think Chuck draws these principles. Then explain your thinking (**pages 34–35**).

*Principle for Victory #1: **Victory comes through dwelling on the good.***

Chuck based this principle on what verse/word/phrase? _____

How would you explain your answer? _____

*Principle for Victory #2: **Victory comes through living in the truth.***

Chuck based this principle on what verse/word/phrase? _____

How would you explain your answer? _____

Imagine you are preparing to lead a Bible study on the principles for overcoming temptation, based on James 1:13–18. Write down two applications for each principle for victory above that Christians could use in their own lives.



Victory comes from dwelling on the good. (James 1:17)

Applications:

1. _____
2. _____

Victory comes through living in the truth. (1:18)

Applications:

1. _____
2. _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Turn to Psalm 139:23–24. Read these verses aloud as you close this study, and make these words your personal prayer for the Lord's gracious assistance in helping you overcome temptation's power.

Our Father, as David pleads in Psalm 139, by Your grace, help me overcome temptation's power. Thank You for Your faithfulness in providing the truth and power to lift me from this struggle. I pray in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, amen.

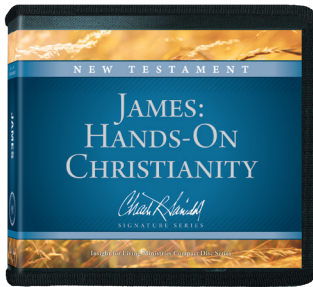


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Plain Talk about Temptation
James 1:13–18

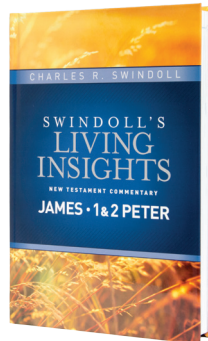
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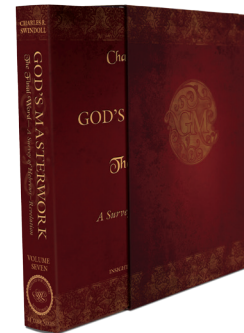
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MM03
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

You've likely heard someone say, "If you're going to talk the talk, you need to walk the walk."

The idea is that you simply cannot say you believe something is true if what you say does not align with how you act. James' New Testament letter to first-century Christians agrees! A faith declared but not expressed in obedience is no faith at all. In this study we will take a closer look at the great divorce between being a "hearer" of the Word but not a "doer" of the Word.



Getting Started

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Take a few minutes to read through all of James chapter 1. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time. You might try reading the same passage in a couple of different versions to spur your thoughts.

Quotable

*Churches are
filled with activist
Christians who
don't really know
what God has said.
There are also
churches filled with
people who take in
what God has said,
but it doesn't change
them, because they
simply don't apply
truth to their lives.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Try This: Often a single verse helps put together the ingredients of the wider truth being presented in the passage. That happens to be the case with James 1:19. Using the technique of observation, Chuck Swindoll identifies four guiding principles for interpreting this section of James' letter.

- Imperative truth (a command) "This you know, . . ." is followed by a series of commands. Try to identify them here:
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
- Family truth (based on relationship) ". . . my beloved brethren." An idiom is used to emphasize intimate relationship.
- Personal truth (the plural reference) "But everyone . . ." The commands to follow are to be applied personally.
- Logical truth (includes the force of progression) ". . . must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." There is a logical progression from one to the others.

Simply by incorporating the observations from above, you could prepare a ten-minute devotional on "Keeping Your Cool in Conflict." Read through and study the following example:

Devotional Title: Keeping Your Cool in Conflict

Passage: James 1:19

Opening thought: If we are in relationship with other people, conflicts will be inevitable. Can you recall a time recently when you lost your cool? What elements of James 1:19 did you fail to abide by during the conflict? Were you slow to listen, and instead spoke too quickly and allowed your anger to rise up in a moment? That's usually how things get out of hand!

Insert a brief, personal story (maybe use some humor) about a recent argument you had with someone close to you.

Say: God has given us a better way:

First, be ready to listen to how the other person really feels. Few things help diffuse someone's frustration than when someone is willing to hear them out.

Second, hold your tongue! Be slow to speak. Even though the urge is strong to speak your mind, try waiting and consciously determining to remain silent.



Finally, manage your emotion. Find a way to keep your cool and not allow your anger to best you. This better way ensures that you maintain good relationships and avoid hurting someone you value.

Go back and read the entire verse, pointing out the words that emphasize the importance of relationships in the body of Christ. Close your devotional by making three applications:

1. Next time you find yourself in an argument or conflict

2. Finish the following sentences:

I can be quick to hear by _____

I can be slow to speak by _____

I can be slow to anger by _____

3. Ask the Lord to help you _____



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

One of the reasons our lives are often divorced from the truth is because we do not really hear what God is saying. Hearing God's truth requires the necessary preparation as James outlined for us in James 1:19–27. Several key prerequisites are mentioned. Using the technique of correlation, look up the following related passages and make some notes about how they compare to what James teaches:

- An open ear . . . being willing to listen. Correlated passage: Matthew 15:8–11

- A controlled tongue . . . being slow to speak. Correlated passage: Mark 14:60–65



- A calm spirit . . . a managed response. Correlated passage: Galatians 5:22–24

- A clean heart . . . a pure spirit. Correlated passage: 2 Thessalonians 2:13

James also made clear that our attitude when hearing God’s truth causes us either to be more receptive to His voice or resistant to it.

Read James 1:20–21 carefully. What “attitude” or “emotion” words did James use in these two verses?

If I am angry at the point of hearing God’s truth, in what ways will that powerful negative emotion hinder my reception of it? Try to be as specific as possible. Give an example from your own experience when a negative attitude or emotion caused you to resist God’s truth.



Now read James 1:21. What is the key mind-set James said is essential for willingly receiving the truth of God?

How does genuine humility ensure you will receive God's truth willingly and obediently?

Write down examples of people in the Bible (Old and New Testaments) who resisted truth because of pride or anger.

Write down examples of people in the Bible (Old and New Testaments) who in humility received truth and obeyed God's voice.

When our attitudes are right and we have genuine openness to God's truth, it becomes much easier to move beyond being mere "hearers" of the Word to become enthusiastic "doers" of the Word. The image James used to communicate this powerful truth is a mirror. God's Word, when it is read or heard, is a mirror that we can look into and see clearly how our lives measure up against God's righteous standard. We either see what is revealed and choose to walk away or we receive the truth, accept the honest assessment of our lives as it is reflected in the mirror, and move toward making changes. That's obedience. That's faith in action. That's a *hands-on Christianity*.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the truth of Your living Word. Put a desire in me to be a doer of Your Word and not just simply a hearer of it. Bring about lasting transformation, making me more and more into the image of Your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose mighty name I pray these things. Amen.

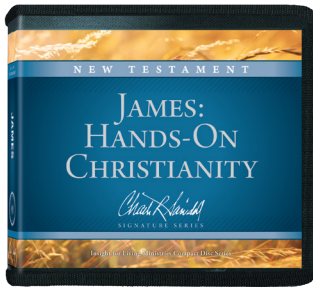


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
The Great Divorce
James 1:19–27

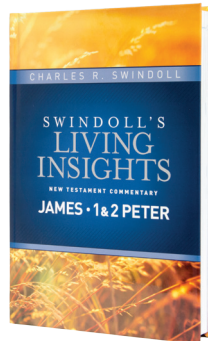
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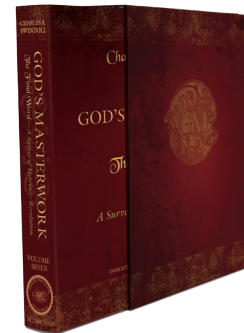
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MM04
6



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Most people have felt the sting of favoritism. Who hasn't slinked their way through the first class section of an airliner to find their cramped seat tucked far back in coach! Or who among us hasn't looked down with envy from the dizzying heights of section triple D hundreds of feet above the wealthy patrons in their courtside seats awaiting the beginning of a playoff game!

But what if someone was invited to enjoy such special seating based on appearing wealthy rather than actually being rich enough to pay their way? That wouldn't be right at all! That's what James called *favoritism*. And he wanted to make clear that it's a form of prejudice totally unacceptable among those who follow Christ.



Getting Started: No Playing Favorites with God

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Read through all of James chapter 2. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time.

Quotable

*Prejudice is
inconsistent with
God's method.
God doesn't look at
the face and say,
"I receive you" or
"I don't want you."
That's partiality.
He looks at the
heart.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 2:1–13, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Take a few moments to read through the material on James 2:1–13 in your commentary or in that section of your study Bible. Also, look up this passage in either a Bible dictionary or a Bible background commentary. Make some notes about the cultural and religious context surrounding James' teaching (**pages 48–55**).

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

Try to imagine what it may have been like to be a Christian in Israel and throughout the Roman Empire during the days in which James wrote. Based on what you have read, what might a typical worship service have been like? Where did Christians go for worship?

Were you able to discover anything about how the poor were treated under Roman rule? If so, what did you learn that would help understand James' teaching here?



Read James 2:1–13. As you read, underline or note on a separate sheet of paper any words or expressions James used to describe his concern regarding showing favoritism. What stands out to you as significant?

How many questions do you find in James 2:1–13? What do you think is significant about James' questions for these Christians to whom he wrote?

Doing a careful word study of a key term in a biblical passage helps you understand what the passage means. James used the Greek word *prosopolempsia*, from the root word meaning “face.” James warned against showing favoritism toward people who *looked* wealthy (page 48).

Have you ever felt that someone was given special attention by a ministry leader or individual based simply on outward appearance? If so, describe the setting. According to James, why is this a problem in the church?

James' exhortation against favoritism finds its roots in the knowledge of God and in His righteous nature. Read James 2:8–13. Underline in your Bible or make a note on a separate sheet of paper the places where James quoted from Old Testament passages.

Take some time to turn to the Old Testament passages James quoted. Write down your observations about the context and significance to James 2 for each passage. Read a few verses prior to and after each Old Testament verse to find clues.

Leviticus 19:18

Context: _____

Significance: _____



Prejudice Is a Sin

James 2:1–13

Exodus 20:13–14

Context: _____

Significance: _____

James desired that the Christians to whom he wrote replace their tendency toward prejudice with the virtues of righteousness reflected in Christ. He exhorted them and us to follow three worthy principles for relating to all people, regardless of their standing in society or their cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic situation.

1. Let Scripture be your standard. Rather than relying on political correctness, gut instinct, or cultural norms, let the Word of God be the standard by which everyone is received (James 2:12a).
2. Let love be your law. When encountering all manner of people, especially in regard to welcoming them into Christian worship, love is our ultimate motivation and law (James 2:12b).
3. Let mercy be your message. There is no place for severity of judgment or rigidity in practice in the body of Christ. We are all in need of mercy, and we ought to be joyful and generous dispensers of it to everyone we encounter (James 2:13).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how thankful I am that You looked at me in my sinful condition and offered mercy, not judgment, grace, not condemnation. By Your Holy Spirit, enable me to be a consistent and loving example of mercy and grace to those who need it most. In the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, amen.



JAMES Hands-On Christianity

Prejudice Is a Sin

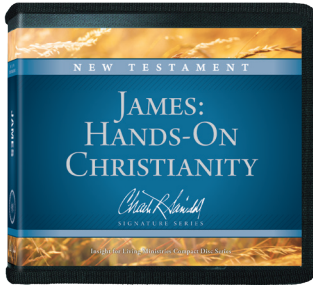
James 2:1–13

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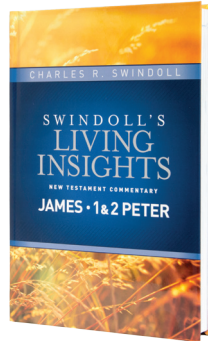
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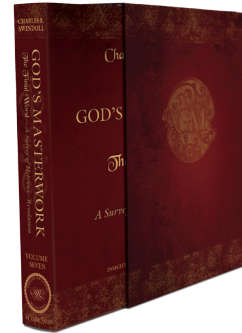
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MM05

5



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Someone once said that faith is like calories: you can't see them, but you always notice their results. That is the major theme resonating through James' letter—*results!* Faith produces works. And nowhere is that theme more passionately argued than in James 2:14–26. Let's take a closer look.



Getting Started: Faith Takes Action

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through all of chapters 1 and 2 of James to ensure continuity in your mind as you begin. Remember: At times it's helpful to read the same passage in multiple versions for comparison.



Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 2:14–26, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.

Quotable

James is not the kind of book that you can read and sleep through. You either slam it shut or you leave it open and you look at it with a great concern about how you're living your life.

— Charles R. Swindoll





Your Turn in the Scriptures

James began this section of his letter with a couple of questions:

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? (James 2:14, emphasis added)

In typical form, James headed straight to the point by forthrightly demanding that his readers examine the vitality of their faith.

Read through James 2:15–20. As you do, pay close attention to the progression of James' argument. Scroll through the passage verse by verse. What did James list as strong indicators of an active faith?

Verses 15–16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

Correlation is the Bible-study technique that draws upon related Scriptures to discover insight and depth into the meaning of the passage you're studying.



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
You Can't Have One without the Other
James 2:14–26

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Read the following New Testament passages. For each one, make some notes on how each correlates with what is being taught in James 2:14–26.

Luke 10:25–37

1 John 3:17–18

One very effective means for strengthening a biblical point in preaching and teaching is to offer examples of people who've actually lived out the principle in life. It answers an inevitable question: *What does that look like?*

James answered that question by highlighting two contrasting individuals in Old Testament history: Abraham, the father of faith, and Rahab, the prostitute from Jericho. James recounted specific examples of faith in action from Abraham's and Rahab's lives. Take a few minutes to read James 2:21–25 and answer the following questions.

What two events in Abraham's life did James highlight as examples of faith in action?

In what ways are the two events alike? How are they different?

According to James, how did Rahab demonstrate an active faith?



You Can't Have One without the Other

James 2:14–26

Why do you think James used these two individuals to illustrate his point? Be as specific as possible in your response.

How would you use these two stories and this passage from James 2 to encourage someone struggling to believe that God could actually use his or her faith to accomplish something significant? What would you say?

Read through the sample e-mail below. Imagine you just received this note from a struggling friend. Based on what you've discovered from James 2:14–26, write out a brief but encouraging response.

To: you@faiththatworks.org

From: judy@canGodreallyuseme.com

Subject: Need some help

Hey, you! I really want to make my life useful to the Lord. But with my past and my lack of biblical knowledge, I really don't think He can use me. Do you have any thoughts?

Reply:

To: judy@canGodreallyuseme.com

From: you@faiththatworks.org

Subject: re: Need some help





A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, I'm sorry my faith has seemed lifeless. Thank you for this powerful reminder that my faith without action is dead. Stir in me a willingness to live out all that I believe, and use me by Your Spirit to bring glory to Your name. Through Christ, I pray, amen.



JAMES Hands-On Christianity

Prejudice Is a Sin

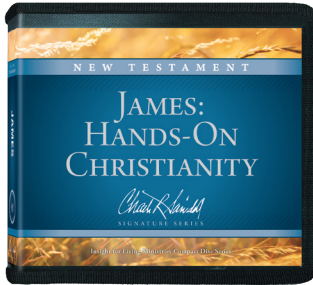
James 2:1–13

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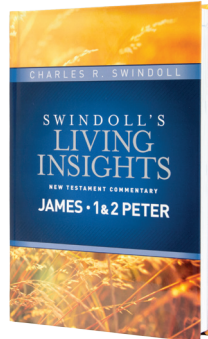
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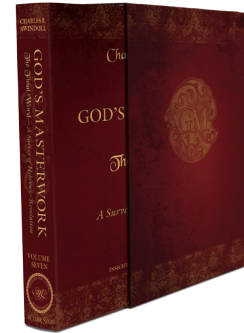
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MM06

6



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Words, words, words, words. They have the power to bless and the power to destroy. In this very convicting section of James' letter to Christians, he delivered a penetrating reminder of the power of the tongue—both for good and for evil. Anyone desiring to live out his or her faith with a *hands-on Christianity* must take heed to this pointed lesson on the importance of what we say.



Getting Started: What's That You Said?

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Read through all of James chapter 3. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time.

Quotable

*An unchecked and
unguarded tongue
can assassinate
someone's character.
It can destroy
a life. It can ruin
a church.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 3:1–12, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Take a few moments to read through the material on James 3:1–12 in your commentary or in that section of your study Bible. Also, look up this passage in either a Bible dictionary or a Bible background commentary.

To get the juices flowing, write down as many Bible passages that you can think of which deal with speech or the proper use of words. You may want to start with the Old Testament book of Proverbs. In fact, if you have a Bible concordance, look up the word *speech* or *tongue* and see how many entries you can find in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Look up several examples and make some notes below about what you discover.

Notes about *speech* and the *tongue* from the Scriptures:

Summarize in one sentence the overall biblical teaching on the power of words, based on your initial search of the Scriptures.



Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

In James 3:1–2, we read find a strong warning for anyone desiring to be a teacher in the church (pages 66–67).

What is the command James issued to these believers (verse 1)?

What is the explanation James offered for the command (verse 2)?

Did James say that it is *wrong* to desire to become a teacher in the church?

Let's take a few minutes to examine a correlating passage: 1 Timothy 1:1–7. It might be helpful to read 1 Timothy 1 in its entirety, but pay close attention to verses 1–7 and Paul's specific instructions to Timothy in regard to his teaching ministry at Ephesus.

How does this passage relate to what James was concerned about in James 3?

How does this passage differ from James 3?

Describe briefly how you might use this passage in a Bible study or small group to shed light on James' serious warning about becoming a teacher in James 3:1–2.



In the searching the Scriptures process, after you've done a good amount of study of a passage, you are ready for the process referred to as *exposition*. If you recall from the *Searching the Scriptures* study series, exposition is drawing principles and application *from* the biblical text, verse by verse, and presenting those principles in ways that will be helpful to those with whom you are communicating.

Take some time to read carefully through James 3:3–12. James organized his instruction in three sections. Each section concerning the tongue could become a Bible study, sermon outline, or main points in a brief devotional prepared for a group. Take a close look at the following expositional outline. Fill in some observations next to each set of verses about what seems significant to you.

The Tongue . . . *Small but Powerful* (James 3:3–5)

- Illustration: a horse with bit and bridle . . . (verse 3)
- Illustration: a ship with a small rudder . . . (verse 4)
- Illustration: a fire with a small spark . . . (verse 5)

What would you say is the overarching principle regarding the tongue, based on these three illustrations?

Principle: _____

The Tongue . . . *Necessary but Dangerous* (James 3:6–8)

- Fire . . . a danger that has its roots in Satan's realm (verse 6)
- Beasts . . . and their relationship to humans (verse 7)
- Poison . . . the grim perspective of an uncontrolled tongue (verse 8)

What would you say is the overarching principle regarding the tongue, based on these three illustrations?

Principle: _____



The Tongue . . . *Helpful but Inconsistent* (James 3:9–12) James explained that the human tongue, in offering both blessings and curses, is wholly inconsistent with nature.

- An illustration from humanity: *With our words, we can either bless others or harm them with a curse.* (verses 9–10)
- An illustration from nature: *Both bitter water and sweet water cannot flow from the same fountain.* (verses 11–12)

How did James use an example from nature to make his point about the inconsistency of our words?

Imagine you're teaching this passage to a small group of college students preparing to leave on a week-long mission trip to Haiti. Write down three specific applications they can apply as they interact with each other during the trip, based on the preceding exposition.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, only You truly know the intentions and motivations of my heart. I'm sorry for the words that I have spoken recently that have been dishonoring to You and harmful to others. Place a guard over my mouth, Father, so that by Your Holy Spirit, only gracious words that build others up flow from my mouth. In the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, I pray, amen.

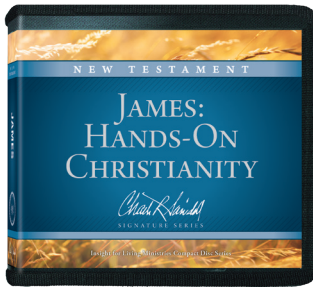


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Bridling the Beast in Your Body
James 3:1–12

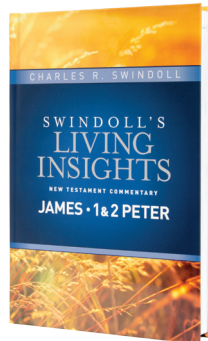
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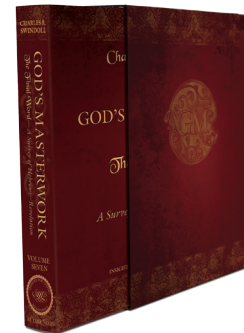
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MM07
6



LET'S BEGIN HERE

If you could be guaranteed the receipt of any request from the Lord, for what would you ask? One of the most famous men in the Bible was presented with that very opportunity. Do you know what he requested? Riches? Great success? World fame? Long life and good health? None of the above. Solomon, the king of Israel, replied to the Lord's astounding offer: "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?" (2 Chronicles 1:10).

That's right. Solomon asked for wisdom—not earthly wisdom but wisdom that could only come from God. James wrote to Christians in the first century that they would be wise to seek the same from heaven.



Getting Started: What You Need Is Wisdom

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through all of chapters 1 through 3 of James to ensure continuity in your mind as you begin. Remember: At times it's helpful to read the same passage in multiple versions for comparison.

Quotable

James says,
"Resting neatly in
the secret place of
the human heart
are two basic
motivations: one is
jealousy, the other
is selfish ambition."

Both reside in
the recesses of the
unwise heart.

— Charles R. Swindoll



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18



Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 3:13–18, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

James understood how critical wisdom is for enduring trials. But he also knew the human tendencies to rely on self-guidance, common sense, and worldly advice when tough times arise. That's why he wrote:

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom (James 3:13, emphasis added).

Based on this verse, what are two clear evidences of godly wisdom?

A reliable principle for living is it's not only important what we do in response to trials but how we do what we do. How does James 3:13 support that wise principle?

What would be an example of someone doing what is good but not in the right frame of mind?



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18

Correlation is the Bible-study technique that draws upon related Scriptures to discover insight and depth in the meaning of the passage you're studying.

Put your hands on a Bible dictionary or a theological dictionary of the New Testament. Look up the word *wisdom*. Read through the entry for this word that is used in both the Old and New Testaments. What did you discover?

How is wisdom used in the Old Testament as compared to or in contrast with its use in the New Testament? What examples did you find?

Now take a few minutes to read James 3:13–14. Read carefully and pay close attention to James' development of this thought. After you've read and studied these two verses, answer the questions below as specifically as possible.

James contrasted *divine wisdom* and *human wisdom*. Let's look a bit closer at these two distinctions. Divine wisdom is *genuine* (James 3:13):

- Marked by *good behavior*. What do you believe James meant by this? Try to support your answer with correlated passages in the New Testament. (Hint: Read Romans 10 and Colossians 3.)

- Marked by *gentleness*. Why did James include this as one of the markers of godly wisdom? (Hint: Read Galatians 5.)



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18

Human wisdom is counterfeit (James 3:14).

Did you notice the phrase *in your heart*? James made clear that the two corresponding markers of human wisdom — bitter jealousy and selfish ambition — reside deep within the motive chamber of the unwise heart.

Read Matthew 12:22–37. Take some time to carefully study this passage. Who are the players involved? What is the context for this classic confrontation?

How does the response of the Pharisees to Jesus' ministry popularity and success correlate with James' teaching about bitter jealousy? Would you characterize their reaction as wise or unwise? Why?

James also indicated *selfish ambition* to be a clear sign that someone was operating by human wisdom. What did he say would be the result of living by such sinful motives (James 3:16)?

What did James say would be the results of someone living by godly wisdom (3:17–18)?



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18

Now turn in your Bible to Proverbs 3. Take a few minutes to read through the entire chapter. As you do, write down instances, words, or phrases that align with James' teaching on wisdom in James 3.

What do you see?

A Scenario for You to Consider:

A friend stuck in a bad situation has come to you. She absolutely does not know what to do and needs to make a decision fairly quickly. By nature, she is bright, resourceful, highly educated, and very experienced in what she does professionally. But she seems to be paralyzed by indecision. Using Proverbs 3:1–6 and what you have learned from James 3:13–18, write a brief but personal note to her about how she can turn to God and His Word and find direction for her decision. Don't preach. But try to be clear and use examples from Scripture.

Dear FRIEND:

Praying for you,
Your friend, _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, You are so gracious when You provide so generously the wisdom I need to walk in obedience to You and Your perfect will. Thank You for Your Word and for Your Holy Spirit which light the path through the darkness of each trial I face. Help me to wait on You and trust Your leading today. In Jesus' name, amen.



JAMES Hands-On Christianity

The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

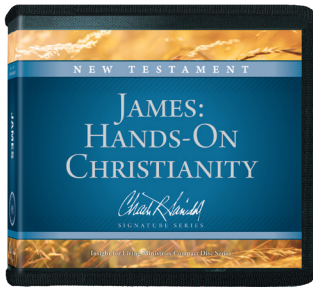
James 3:13–18

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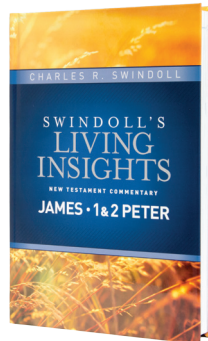
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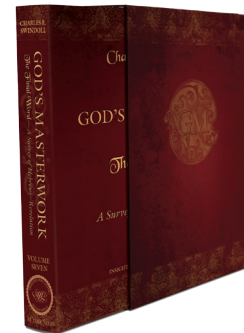
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MM08

6



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In this penetrating letter, the author, James, made clear that the wisdom we ought to seek and desire is the wisdom that comes from God. God's wisdom forms in us by His Spirit the fruits of the Spirit. Those byproducts are produced and grow in us as a result of our faith. In this second lesson on godly wisdom, let's take a closer look at the genuine results of putting the wisdom from the Scriptures into action.



Getting Started: Water for the Desert of Our Lives

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Read through all of James chapter 3. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time.

Quotable

*The wisdom
from above
produces in us
first the fruit
of purity, then
peace, and
then gentleness.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part Two)

James 3:14–18



Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 3:14–18, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

One of the most helpful processes to pursue when looking at a passage of Scripture is to determine the genre it represents. James, for example, is an epistle, or letter, that is part of the New Testament. But in content, it has echoes of much of the Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament.

Wisdom Literature is found mainly in the *poetry books*—Job through Song of Solomon, including the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Take a few moments to scan through the pages of a few of these books. Look for the theme of wisdom and how it is developed. In the space provided, make some notes about what you see, writing down specific Scripture passages that you find helpful.

What connections do you see between Old Testament principles on wisdom and what James was teaching?

Summarize in one sentence the overall biblical teaching on the value of gaining godly wisdom in contrast to trusting in human wisdom. (Hint: See 1 Corinthians 1:18–25.)



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part Two)

James 3:14–18

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

James took great care in explaining the characteristics of divine wisdom in James 3. He mentioned several. Let's take a closer look at each.

But the wisdom that comes from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy (James 3:17, emphasis added).

Purity

What is the significance of purity in the New Testament? What other passages in the New Testament come to your mind on the fruit of purity in the Christian life?

An excellent correlating passage is 1 Peter 3:1–2. Read that passage and make some notes about how Peter's teaching compares to James 3:17 in respect to purity of motives.

Peace

What form of the word *peace* did James use in this verse? What do you feel is the significance of someone who is *peaceable*? In other words, explain how you cannot be *peaceable* without having the fruit of *peace*.

How might being peaceable as a result of God's wisdom in your life help you be a more effective member of the body of Christ?



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part Two)

James 3:14–18

Gentleness

Read through your commentary on this section in James 3. Locate the information on verse 17. Most commentaries offer specific insight to main words in the passage. In this case, what do you find on the word translated “gentleness”? How would you differentiate between being “peaceable” and being “gentle”?

Reasonableness

James described a fruit of God’s wisdom as “reasonableness.” Again, by turning to the Old Testament, you can find many of these New Testament principles on full display in the lives of those who walked with God by faith.

Abraham is a sterling example of reasonableness in action. Read the story in Genesis 13:1–9. What evidence do you see of Abraham employing reasonableness in his response to the situation? Be as specific as possible in your response.

Using the above questions as a guide, and using the resources you have, explain the significance of the remaining results of embracing the wisdom of God. Include in your response an Old Testament passage where the principle is on display and a correlating New Testament passage

Full of mercy and good fruit

Old Testament passage: _____

Details of the story or example: _____

New Testament passage: _____



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part Two)

James 3:14–18

Unwavering

Old Testament passage: _____

Details of the story or example: _____

New Testament passage: _____

Without hypocrisy

Old Testament passage: _____

Details of the story or example: _____

New Testament passage: _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for offering Your wisdom to us from Your Word. Thank You that Your perfect wisdom has ultimately been revealed in the person of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Make me more and more into His likeness. For the praise and glory of Your great name, amen.



JAMES Hands-On Christianity

The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part Two)

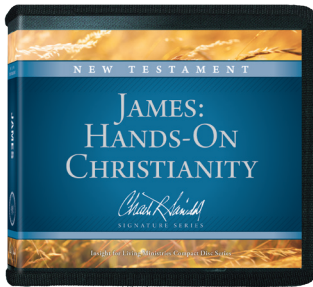
James 3:14–18

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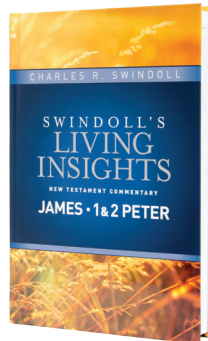
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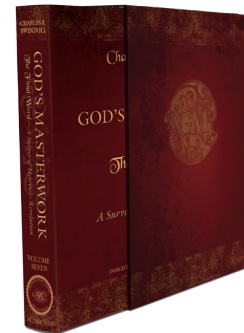
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MM09

6



LET'S BEGIN HERE

From the beginning, conflicts have been part of the human experience. Starting in a field with Cain and Abel, the sons of the first parents, all the way to our present day, the arc of human history is more easily marked by rocky paths of conflicts than by accomplishments. And nowhere has that been more true than in the body of Christ. Not surprisingly, when James determined to write to early Christians about a *hands-on Christianity*, he inserted some pointed lessons on the source of and solution to conflicts. Let's take a closer look at what he wrote and learn some valuable lessons of our own.



Getting Started: What You Need Is Wisdom

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through all of chapters 1 through 4 of James to ensure continuity in your mind as you begin. Remember: At times it's helpful to read the same passage in multiple versions for comparison.

Quotable

*Like a parent
stepping into the
middle of a sibling
squabble, James
asked his readers,
“What started
all of this?”
Why are conflicts
so common?
James has answers.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 4:1–10, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

In typical form, James got right to the point when he asked: “*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?*” (James 4:1a, emphasis added).

James used two different words in this question. First, *quarrels*, followed by *conflicts*. Locate the section in your biblical commentary that covers James 4:1 and see what you can learn about the distinction between these two words. What stands out to you? How would you summarize the difference in your own words (page 88)?

Describe a situation where you have experienced a conflict either between larger groups or between two individuals. What do you feel was the root cause of the fighting?

James followed his initial question with a second one: “*Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*” (James 4:1b, emphasis added). What do you think James meant by “pleasures” as a source of the conflicts?



What did James mean by “members”? How might you discover what his precise intention was in this phrase?

James proposed that there are two primary causes of fighting, both among larger groups and among individuals. Let’s take a closer look at each cause.

First Cause: Inner Desire (4:1–3)

How do we know that one root cause of conflict is a sinful, inner desire?

Read James 4:1–3. Write down the words or expressions you see that indicate James had inner desires on his mind as a source of conflict.

Take a close look at James 4:3 where James described the problem of wrong motives. What concern did he express about this aspect of our inner lives?



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
How Fights Are Started and Stopped
James 4:1–10

Second Cause: Worldliness (4:4–6)

In these next three verses, James indicated three additional reasons we find ourselves in conflict with others. For each one, explain what you believe to have been James' meaning, and then write down some correlating passages in the Bible where the principle is on display or supported.

Friendship with the world . . . (4:4a)

What does that mean? _____

Examples in Scripture: _____

Hostility toward God . . . (4:4a)

What does that mean? _____

Examples in Scripture: _____

Arrogance toward others . . . (4:6b)

What does that mean? _____

Examples in Scripture: _____



Now, using your skills of *observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*, take some time to study James 4:5–10. In this section, James offered some powerful principles for solving deep, personal conflicts. Make sure to use your commentary, Bible dictionary, concordance, and any other resource you have available to gather your notes. Spend as much time as you are able in your study of the passage. Then, prepare a twenty-minute lesson on *God's Game Plan for Resolving Conflict*. Use the prompts below, if you prefer, to help organize your thoughts.

God's greater grace explained (James 4:6)

He _____ the proud.

He _____ to the humble.

Seven commands:

Submit to _____ (4:7)

Resist the _____ (4:7)

Draw near to _____ (4:8)

Cleanse your _____ (4:8)

Purify your _____ (4:8)

Turn your joy into _____ (4:9)

Humble _____ (4:10)



Take some time to write down a few ideas about how you might summarize what you have discovered in a brief but personal lesson on resolving conflicts. Briefly describe a personal story that you could share to illustrate how James' teaching on conflict resolution actually proved successful.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You demonstrated to us the perfect resolution to our conflict with You when You sent Your own Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to be a substitute for our sin. Thank You for providing a living example of genuine humility, submission, and obedience. Create in me a deep and lasting desire to humble myself before You and to live in full surrender to Him. Amen.

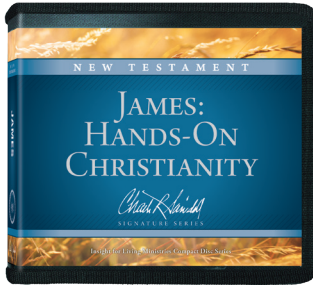


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
How Fights Are Started and Stopped
James 4:1–10

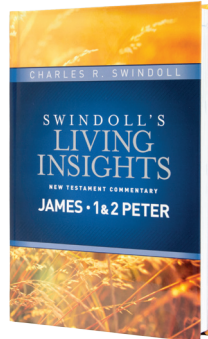
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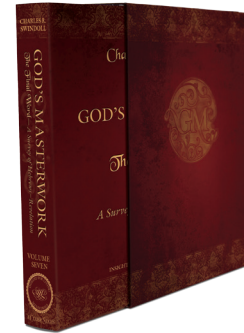
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

James warned that playing God with others and ourselves can be a very dangerous game. Coming off some pointed words about the sources of and solutions to relationship conflicts, James continued his candid teaching on the value of humility and genuine submission to the will and purposes of God.

Pour yourself a generous cup of coffee or tea and be ready to swallow some pretty large pills here!



Getting Started: Playing God with Others and Ourselves

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 4. The context of any given passage you're studying is very important. A good rule of thumb is to read a few verses prior to the opening of a new chapter or the verses that follow the passage you are considering. Remember: At times it's helpful to read the same passage in multiple versions for comparison.

Quotable

If you determine to play God, you are viewing yourself as qualified to be a critic and put other people down. That attitude is unacceptable in the family of God.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 4:11–17, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 4:11–17, apply the four primary techniques for searching the Scriptures to study this important teaching from James. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries and Bible dictionaries that covers this section of James 4. Feel free to jot notes as you go in the margins of your Bible or on a separate sheet of paper. Then go through the following techniques to make your discoveries.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, questions, connecting words such as *but* or *therefore*, and images or figures of speech. Make notes as specific as you can at this stage.

James 4:11–12



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
The Peril of Playing God
James 4:11–17

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James 4:13–15

James 4:16–17

Interpretation: What does it mean?

James 4:11–12

According to these verses, how do we play God when we judge other people?



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MM11
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Why did James introduce the idea of the “law” in this section? What was he referring to?

Who did James identify as the only one qualified to judge the actions and motives of others? Why is this significant?

James 4:13–15

Why was James concerned about how Christians tend to make presumptions about the future (4:13)? How did he develop this point?

What image from nature did James use to describe the brevity of the human lifespan? Why would he use an image rather than simply saying, “Your lifespan is extremely short”? What deeper truth was he perhaps hoping to convey?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages in your Bible, and write a note or two as to how these verses help confirm the meaning of the passage in James 4.

Numbers 12:1, 8



Job 19:1–3

Psalms 50:20

Matthew 7:1

John 7:24

Romans 2:1–3

1 Corinthians 5:12–13



Application: What difference does it make?

After coming under the teaching of James in this section of his letter, if someone desires to stop playing God, there are two applications to consider embracing (James 4:17).

First, you must know the right thing to do. That means you must evaluate your attitudes, actions, words, and thoughts; bring them up against the scrutiny of the Word of God; and determine what needs to change.

Second, you must then follow through and do the right thing. Once the Lord reveals to you those areas where you are playing God with others or with yourself, you must be willing to repent of them and start doing what is right—which is to leave the judging to Him, the only One qualified to make those judgments, and commit to living your life in submission to His will.

In the spaces below, write out two additional personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 4:11–17.

1. _____

2. _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the pointedness of Your Word and for the way in which You speak clearly to me from its pages. Continue to teach me to be as responsive and open to Your voice as I need to be, for the glory of Your great name. Amen.

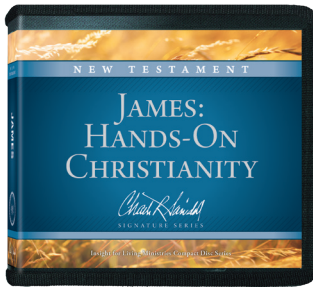


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
The Peril of Playing God
James 4:11–17

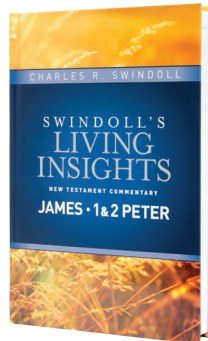
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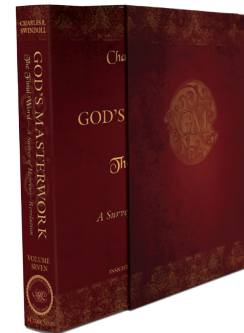
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MM11
7

JAMES

Hands-On Christianity

Warnings to the Wealthy

James 5:1–6

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

With a righteous fire in his bones, James warned followers of Jesus to avoid playing God by presuming on the future. Let's face it, playing God is not only an ancient problem. We also fall all too easily into the rhythm of self-sufficiency in our day-to-day decision making, with only the ceremonial hat-tip to God. And the most common way we play God? With our resources, our money, our work—and our hallowed calendars and long-term plans! James shot straight in his warnings to the wealthy. Get ready: James' advice isn't just for people who possess great riches—it's just as applicable to the pauper in Christ as to the prince.



Getting Started: Playing God with Wealth

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study in the same way you would gather the ingredients necessary to prepare a meal. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it's the first time you've read them. Reflect for a few minutes on what you've read, then pause to ask the Lord to lead you in your study.

Quotable

God's concern is not with actual wealth but our attitude toward wealth. When we keep, we rot. When we give, there is a refreshing stream of God's blessing.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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1



Helpful Hints

- Reading different Bible versions can help you read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you.
- Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 5:1–6, make some initial observations about what you see. For instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:1–6, apply the four primary techniques—*observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*—in the searching the Scriptures process. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. As you go, feel free to jot notes in the margins of your Bible or on a separate sheet of paper. Then proceed to make your discoveries.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Make your notes as specific as possible at this stage.

James 5:1–3



JAMES

Hands-On Christianity

Warnings to the Wealthy

James 5:1–6

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James 5:4–6

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Who exactly was James talking to when he said, “you rich”? James referenced the rich earlier in his letter (James 1:10–11; 2:6–7), but in chapter 5, he nailed rich unbelievers to the wall with conviction.

James didn’t have a vendetta against *materially* rich people; his warnings were specifically for those who *possess material wealth but exist in spiritual poverty*.

James mentioned “the last days” in James 5:3 and then discussed how believers should live “until the coming of the Lord” in 5:7. The warning is clear: trusting in the strength of riches instead of trusting in Christ will end in disaster. (page 104)

Psalm 62:10 says,

Do not trust in oppression
And do not vainly hope in robbery;
If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.

James had in view those who abuse their work, their money, or their influence to enrich themselves at the expense of others. Also, James was warning those who commit idolatry by placing their faith in stuff rather than in God. *Anyone from any tax bracket can be guilty of trusting in treasure rather than God.*

James 5:1–3

What ultimately happens to the possessions of the rich?

How did James react to those who “store up [their] treasure”?



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James 5:4–6

In these verses, how do valuing and hoarding possessions affect the way the materially rich/spiritually poor treat their workers?

How do the materially rich/spiritually poor “play God” in relation to their workers?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Interact with the following passages. Write a note or two describing how each passage adds context, confirms, or illuminates James 5:1–6.

Psalms 119:11

Proverbs 21:6

Isaiah 5:7–9



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Warnings to the Wealthy
James 5:1–6

SEARCHING
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Jeremiah 22:13–17

Matthew 6:19–24

Matthew 12:33–37

Mark 10:21–27

Luke 3:10–14

Luke 21:1–4



JAMES

Hands-On Christianity

Warnings to the Wealthy

James 5:1–6

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Application: What difference does it make?

Four Kinds of Wealth and Poverty				
Physical Condition	Spiritual Condition	Description	Prescription	Biblical Example
Poor	Poor	Having few of the world's goods and not living in God's love, the doubly poor are in a most miserable condition.	Provide essential physical needs to express God's love; <i>for unbelievers</i> , point them to salvation in Christ; <i>for believers</i> , exhort them to trust in Christ to provide both physically and spiritually.	Those who are both physically and spiritually afflicted (Isaiah 61:1)
Rich	Rich	Having been blessed in both material wealth and heavenly riches, the doubly rich use their prosperity to help others.	Provide opportunities for giving and serving others with time and resources.	Job before and after his trials (Job 1:1–3; 42:10); Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57)
Poor	Rich	Having few of the world's goods, the externally poor are often in need of food, clothing, and shelter; but they have a strong faith and often give what little they have.	Provide essential physical needs and give opportunities to minister to the spiritual needs of others.	The poor widow (Mark 12:42–44); the poor of this world who are rich in faith (James 2:5); the church in Smyrna (Revelation 2:9)
Rich	Poor	Having an abundance of the world's goods, the spiritually poor forget that their blessings come from God in order to bless others.	Provide correction; <i>for unbelievers</i> , exhort them to trust in Christ instead of riches; <i>for believers</i> , encourage them to submit their wealth to the lordship of Christ.	Unbeliever: the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21) Believers: the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:17)

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Hands-On Christianity

Warnings to the Wealthy

James 5:1–6

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How do we stop playing God with our stuff and, instead, allow Him to be the steward of our wealth and the focus of our hearts? There are a few gut-checks we can remember in this all-important discipline of examining our hearts:

- God's concern is not with actual wealth but our *attitude* toward wealth.
- We should never be conceited. We ought never find security in our dollars.
- Instead, we can humbly fix our hope on God and be rich in good works.

In the spaces below, write out two additional personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 5:1–6.

1. _____

2. _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, everything I have is Yours. My life. My money. My employees and employers. My family and friends. My children and grandchildren. You own everything, Lord. Keep my heart humble and my hands open to receive and to give according to Your will. I am blessed with every spiritual blessing, and in Christ, I have all I will ever need. Thank You for Your generosity and love toward me. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.



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JAMES Hands-On Christianity Warnings to the Wealthy

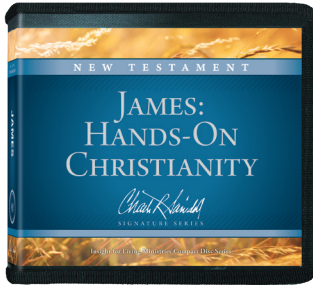
James 5:1–6

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

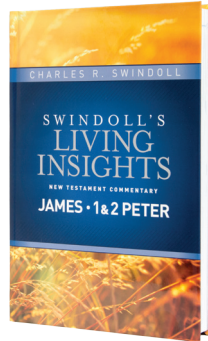
STUDY



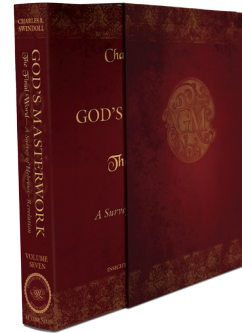
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Encouragement is often used in Christian circles to describe a kindness shown or a well-timed word. In cultures where Christianity is not threatened or perceived as threatening, the word may even lose a bit of its edge—a pity, when the crux of the word is rooted in *courage*. In the context of James 5:7–12, “encouragement” was exactly that: James, with his words, rallied his original audience to develop the grit—specifically the “strength of heart”—to patiently persevere in righteousness despite unjust and harsh circumstances. Two millennia later, what does it mean to be a courageous Christian? Let’s discover the answer together.



Getting Started: Patiently Resisting Revenge

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you’re studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You’ll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you’ll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it’s the first time you’ve read them.

Quotable

*You witness
to others every
time you respond
graciously to an
ungracious act.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hints

- Reading different Bible versions can help you to read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you.
- Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 5:7–12, make some initial observations about what you see. For instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:7–12, apply the four primary techniques—*observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*—in the searching the Scriptures process. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Jot notes in the margins of your Bible as you go or on a separate sheet of paper.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Make your notes as specific as possible at this stage.

James 5:7–9

James 5:10–12



Interpretation: What does it mean?

James 5:1–6 was addressed to “you rich,” but James’ audience changed to “brethren” beginning in verse 7. You should definitely perk up at this point, because James’ advice definitely applies to *all* Christians. Here are some universal principles that James proffered as encouragement:

- Patience is a virtue that should mark all Christians.
- Our hearts are strengthened during times of patient suffering when we know that the Lord’s coming is near. Vengeance belongs to God, and in the Day of the Lord, all wrongs will be made right (Obadiah 1:15).
- When we are wronged, we lean into God. We still trust in God’s compassion and mercy, like Job did.
- Don’t use God’s name to cosign your own agenda (taking an oath).

James 5:7–12

What concepts are illustrated in the metaphor of the farmer? Specifically, how does one wait for rain? Who brings the rain?

What are two circumstances James mentioned as worthy of judgment? (See verses 9 and 12.)

What are some ways that the prophets serve as examples of suffering and patience?



What is the link between patience and swearing oaths? Is swearing an oath a form of “playing God”?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two as to how they help confirm the meaning of James 5:7–12.

Genesis 50:20

Psalms 55:22

Romans 8:18

Romans 8:28



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Doing Right When You've Been Done Wrong
James 5:7–12

SEARCHING
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2 Corinthians 4:17–18

SERMON NOTE

Waiting . . . suffering. These two topics can be challenging to teach, especially in cultures that value do-it-yourself comfort, convenience, and immediacy. Young people growing up in a “right-now” culture are most prone to instants: instant fame, instant wealth, instant answers. How would you communicate the message of James 5:7–12 to a group of teenagers? How would you define *suffering*? What would you emphasize as their biggest challenges? What encouragement would you offer this generation?

Some encouragement might be:

- The interconnectedness of this generation creates new opportunities to support persecuted and suffering Christians and to pray for both local and global challenges to the church.
- This generation is passionate about justice and compassion. They can follow the example of the prophets by speaking out against those who have “condemned and put to death the righteous” (James 5:6) and by demonstrating the compassion and mercy of God (5:11) to those in need.
- While cyberbullying and social media revenge are popular responses to mistreatment, a Christian stands out as godly when he or she shows restraint online.

Application: What difference does it make?

When you've been wronged, don't ruminate endlessly on the situation, or you'll be consistently angry. Don't focus on yourself, or you'll be filled with self-pity. Don't focus on someone to blame, or you'll complain—a fruitless endeavor. Don't focus solely on the present circumstances.

Instead, practice patience. Be strong and stay objective, as much as you're able, by realizing that God's purposes in present circumstances may not be immediately clear. Insight doesn't usually come until later.

In the space below, write out a few specific personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 5:7–12.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for being full of compassion and mercy. I am amazed by You. Though You are holy and I am a sinner, You didn't seek revenge or judgment, but in Your compassion, You rescued me. Because You have given me life, forgiveness, and mercy, I pray that You will help me to extend compassion and mercy to others. Help me to turn over to You any vengeful desires. May I find favor in Your sight by serving others with patience and kindness. I trust that in Your time, You will make all things new. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

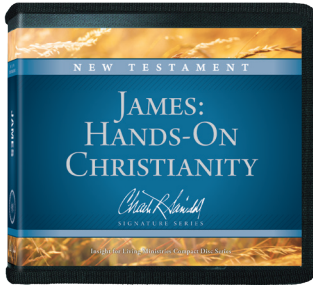


JAMES
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Doing Right When You've Been Done Wrong
James 5:7–12

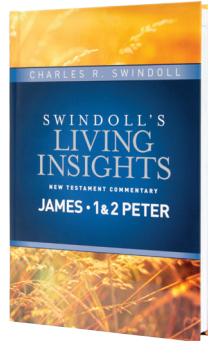
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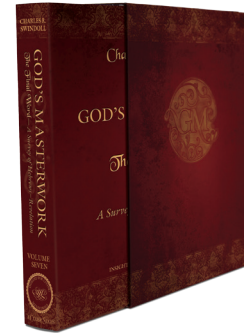
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

In Scripture, we at times witness God miraculously healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, giving mobility to the lame, even raising the dead. Whether the healing was carried out by prophets in the Old Testament or Jesus Himself in the New Testament, often the question wasn't *if* God would heal but *how*. So, has God changed? The truth is that many believers today who suffer must accept the fact that they might not be healed in this life. Inevitably, deep questions about God's faithfulness and love surface when pain endures, illnesses progress, and the prognosis seems bleak: "Where is God when I'm suffering?" "Didn't Christ heal all kinds of paralysis and sicknesses?" "Is there unconfessed sin in my life?" "Should I visit a healer?" "What process does God use to bring about healing today?" Let's turn to James 5:13–16 to answer many of these questions about suffering and healing.



Getting Started: Patiently Resisting Revenge

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. The same way you'd gather ingredients before preparing a nutritious meal! Make certain you have handy a Bible dictionary and a concordance, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it's the first time you've read them.

Quotable

I believe in divine healing. I do not believe in divine healers. I believe in faith healing. I do not believe in faith healers. There is a great difference.

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hints

- Reading different Bible versions can help you to read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you.
- Remember: *Observation* helps you put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture and begin to identify its central idea. Paying particular attention to James 5:13–16, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:13–16, apply the four primary techniques or ingredients (*observation, interpretation, correlation, and application*) in the searching the Scriptures process to your study. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. *Pray* for the Spirit's guidance. Jot notes in the margins of your Bible or on a separate sheet of paper.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Make notes as specific as you can at this stage.

James 5:13–14

James 5:15–16



Interpretation: What does it mean?

Reread James 5:7–12 from the previous lesson. What was James’ point in this passage? Notice his focus on patient endurance. In your own words, how does James 5:7–12 prepare the foundation for understanding James 5:13–16?

Before we dig into James 5:13–16, let’s explore five foundational truths about suffering:

- There are two classifications of sin: original sin (Romans 5:12) and personal sin (3:23).
- Original sin introduced sickness and death to the human race (5:12).
- Sometimes there is a direct link between personal sin and sickness (1 Chronicles 10:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:30).
- Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sin and sickness (Acts 3:2–8).
- It is not God’s will that everyone be healed (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

James 5:13–16

If you were to look up the Greek word for *suffering*, you would discover that it means “in distress” or “afflicted.” With this in mind, look at James 5:13. Who did James address in verse 13? How should these two groups of people respond to their circumstances? Why?

Finding Yourself in the Story

Many believers today suffer indescribable physical and emotional pain because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Others have witnessed the violent executions of loved ones, or have been separated from their families because of persecution. Take a few moments to imagine what it might be like for someone experiencing the anguish of persecution. What might they be feeling? How might this passage from James apply to their plight? Pause for a few moments and pray for the persecuted Christians around the world.



If you have a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*, read the section about James 5:14–15 (119). If you do not have this commentary, here is an important quote that will help us understand James 5:14–15.

James prescribes a specific response by the elders of the church: prayer and anointing. . . . We find two distinct uses of anointing with oil in the Bible. One involves a religious or ceremonial act as a symbol for consecration—as in the anointing of David as king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). A second type of anointing was more mundane and common—for medicinal or hygienic purposes. . . .

Most likely James has the second use of oil in mind. The idea behind the use of both prayer and anointing is that the church should seek to come to the aid of both physical and spiritual needs of a sick person. The medicinal use of oil provided physical comfort and promoted the healing process. Note that James sees no conflict between prayer and medicine.

In verse 14, James addressed “the sick,” which refers in the original Greek to those who have no strength and who are “ill to the point of being incapacitated.”¹ What did James tell “the sick” to do? What character traits does a person exhibit (for example, humility and courage) when he or she follows James’ advice in verse 14?

In James 5:14, what does it mean for the elders to anoint and pray “in the name of the Lord”?

A better translation for *restore* in James 5:15 is “save” (119). If salvation (both spiritual and physical) is the ultimate goal of prayers for healing, how does that change our understanding of the phrase “and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him”?



What did James say will happen to “the sick” as a result of calling the elders and receiving anointing (representing the best medical care of James’ time) and then prayer? (See verse 15.)

Because sickness *sometimes* results from unconfessed sin, what can we learn and apply from James 5:16?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two as to how they help confirm the meaning of James 5:13–16.

Psalm 38:1–22

John 9:1–3

James 5:19–20



SERMON NOTE

Suffering with no remedy in sight can discourage even the strongest saint. With so-called “faith healers” claiming divine power to alleviate sickness on one side and well-meaning believers on the other side refusing all medical treatment, it’s no wonder we’re confused on the topics of suffering, sickness, sin, and healing. How would you communicate the message of James 5:13–16 to a group of elderly individuals who might be enduring chronic pain or illness? How would you address their deep questions about God’s character? How would you emphasize the importance of prayer and confession in the midst of suffering?

Application: What difference does it make?

From the beginning of James 5:13–16 to the end, prayer is the point. Prayer connects a believer’s heart with the sovereign plan of God. If we have joy and health, we should sing praises to God. If we suffer with mental, emotional, or physical pain, we must pray for healing, confess our sins, and entrust ourselves to God’s perfect plan.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are totally sovereign and full of compassion. Though You don’t always choose to heal the sick, You have promised to Your children resurrection life—a glorious life free of suffering, sadness, and sin. Father, help me to hope in Your Word and to place my trust in You, regardless of the depth or length of my trials. Bring peace to my anxious heart and hope when I despair. In the powerful name of Jesus Christ, our victorious Lord, amen.

Endnote

1. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 142–43.

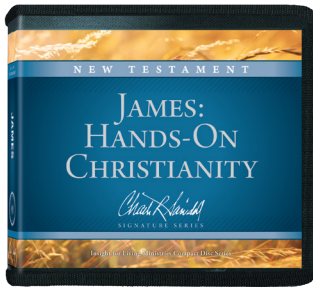


JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Suffering, Sickness, Sin—and Healing
James 5:13–16

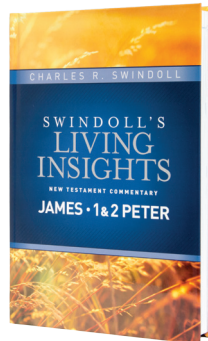
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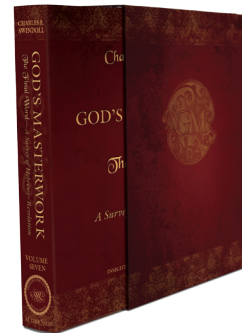
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JAMES

Hands-On Christianity

The Power of Effective Kneeling

James 5:13–18

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Sometimes we think of prayer as something we do as a last resort after we've exhausted our resources, called in our last favor, and run out of options. "Well, all I can do now is pray," we say, resigned — as if prayer is impotent and inconsequential.

Not true.

Prayer to the God of the universe is never useless. Prayer is the honest admittance of our utter dependence on the Lord, no matter how few or how many resources He's given us. God is *always* able and He is *always* willing to listen to us. Let's remember that we have the ear of the God of the universe and can call on Him at all times.



Getting Started: Prayer Changes Everything

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have handy a Bible dictionary and a concordance, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

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Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it's the first time you've read them.

Quotable

*True faith
exhibited
through patience
manifests itself
in prayer.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Helpful Hints

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- Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 5:13–18, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:13–18, apply the four primary techniques—*observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*—in the searching the Scriptures process. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. *Pray* for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Jot notes in the margins of your Bible as you go or on a separate sheet of paper.

Pause . . . take a few minutes to do two things prior to beginning your study. First, reflect on what you already know and even feel about the passage you are about to study. Recall some past lessons or sermons on this passage and how those impacted you. Second, bow in prayer and ask the Lord to guide you in your study. Ask specifically that He reveal insights that you have not discovered previously and how they may apply to your or someone else's experience.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Your notes can be specific and detailed as you examine the passage.

James 5:13–15



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
The Power of Effective Kneeling

James 5:13–18

SEARCHING
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SCRIPTURES

STUDY

James 5:16–18

Interpretation: What does it mean?

James 5:13–18

According to James, what are some specific circumstances that call for prayer? List them.

Praise is another form of prayer (James 5:13). How is praise distinct as a form of prayer?

Is prayer strictly an individual activity? When should prayer involve other people, according to James 5:13–18?

How did James associate confession and forgiveness with healing? Is this healing just physical? Just spiritual? Both?



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Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two as to how they help confirm the meaning of James 5:13–18.

1 Kings 8:27–53

Psalms 54

Proverbs 15:8

Matthew 21:21–22

Mark 11:25



Acts 2:42

Ephesians 6:18

Philippians 4:6

1 Timothy 2:1–8

Application: What difference does it make?

Here are four simple, practical, relevant lessons to invigorate and encourage your prayer life:

- *Prayer is to be continuous.*
- *Prayer is designed for every part of life.*
- *Prayer is not a substitute for responsibility and intelligent thinking.*
- *Prayer is not for the perfect; it's for the imperfect.*



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
The Power of Effective Kneeling

James 5:13–18

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In the space below, write out a few specific personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 5:13–18.



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, thank You for hearing my prayer. By Your Spirit, help me to patiently wait for Your timing in all things. Remind me that prayer is not a last resort but a continuing act of dependence and submission. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.



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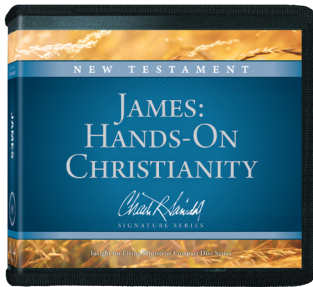
James 5:13–18

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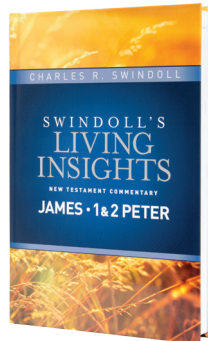
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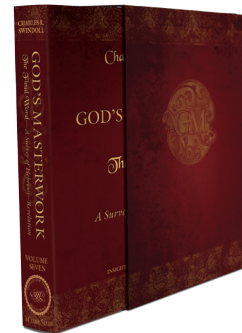
Tools for Digging Deeper



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LET'S BEGIN HERE

You're on lifeguard duty during a placid day at the beach. As you gaze upon the shore, you spot a person caught in a rip tide, her head bobbing up momentarily before it is submerged again by torrents of water.

What do you do?

You plunge into the waves with skill, battle the current, and carry that flailing person to safety.

When someone is drowning, you immediately spring into action in order to rescue.

It's the same in the Christian life: We're a community of faith in the midst of a world adrift, and many find themselves in a helpless struggle against the rip tide of sin. When we see a believer getting carried away by the world, we pursue that person and help him or her to safety.



Love Covers; Love Rescues

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have handy a Bible dictionary and a concordance, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: You might notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it's the first time you've read them.

Quotable

*Your prompting
to speak,
encourage, or
help another
should always
be motivated by
a heart of love.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hints

- Reading different Bible versions can help you to read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you.
- Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 5:19–20, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:19–20, apply the primary approaches to studying the Scriptures—*observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. *Pray* for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Jot notes in the margins of your Bible as you go or on a separate sheet of paper.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Your notes can be specific and detailed as you examine the passage.

James 5:19–20

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Previously in James 5:13–18, James described prayer as not just an individual activity. Prayer involves a continual conversation with the Lord; confession of sin to other Christian brothers and sisters; and willingness to ask others for help.



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
How to Handle Straying Saints

James 5:19–20

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Here in James 5:19–20, James again stressed the need to be active in a believing community. If we aren't in relationships, how can we notice that a brother or sister is missing? To whom are we accountable? There is no restoration without relationship.

James 5:19–20

Can you be a saint—one whose faith is planted in Jesus—and still stray?

When a person turns a straying saint back to the truth, what two actions does he or she accomplish (5:20)?

Describe a time when someone brought you back to God's truth. What captivated you to listen and take heed?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two as to how they help confirm the meaning of James 5:19–20.

2 Samuel 12:1–15



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Proverbs 27:9

Matthew 7:1–5

Luke 19:10

Application: What difference does it make?

How do we help a brother or sister who has been tempted to wander from the faith?

- *Be filled with the Spirit.*
- *Possess a gentle attitude.*
- *Adopt an attitude of humility.*
- *Let love prompt your involvement.*

These attributes are critical to leading wandering Christians back to the truth, but they also serve as safeguards for our own walk with Christ.



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
How to Handle Straying Saints

James 5:19–20

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STUDY

In the space below, write out a few specific personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 5:19–20.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me to handle the log in my own eye before I call out brothers and sisters with specks in theirs. Give me the wisdom to pray for Your guidance in all of my circumstances. May Your Spirit form in me the gentleness and self-control to encourage others and be obedient to You. In the matchless name of Your Son, Jesus, amen.



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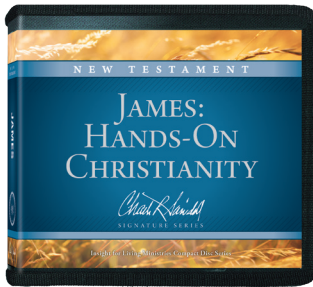
James 5:19–20

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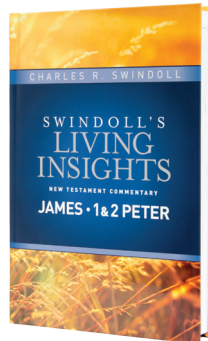
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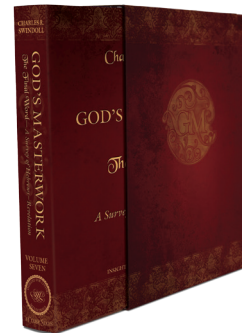
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