

Questioning James

Chapter 1

Questions Based on the
New Testament Epistle of James

Answers Based on the
Whole of God's Word

— by Lance Ponder

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Introduction to Questioning James

If we ask questions of the book of James we can learn a great deal. What follows is a list of questions. From these, perhaps together we can seek answers from God's Word and gain wisdom from it. *2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

I began this study seeking to be trained in righteousness so that I would be better equipped to do whatever good works God has prepared for me (Eph 2:10). I make every effort to be as complete and thorough as possible in this study, which is why 27 verses of a chapter that takes up so much space here. There's truly a lot to learn from James.

To aid in this study I consult primarily three English translations. The Authorized Version, better known as the King James Version (KJV), is a word for word translation. This and its poetic style to the modern ear are its primary virtues. The archaic word usages and syntax are the primary drawbacks.

The second English translation I use is the New International Version (NIV). The primary advantages it offers include being easy to read and very commonly used by lay people. The disadvantage is that it is a thought for thought translation rather than a literal translation. By its nature anything other than a literal word for word translation is tainted to some degree by the translator. Still, being a very common version it is almost mandatory we explore its unique qualities to gain the most broad understanding possible.

A relatively new English word for word translation is the English Standard Version (ESV). This version is highly accurate, like KJV, but with updated syntax and sentence structure it is far easier to read and in that respect is much more like NIV. While it is my personal preference, its prime disadvantage is that it is still relatively new and therefore uncommon. In spite of that minor problem, I will use ESV for all scripture quotes not otherwise specified. Note that scripture references are embedded in the text in *italics*.

For the sake of breaking this study into bite sized portions, our study is divided into chapters based on verses of James. At the start of the study of each verse I include the whole paragraph containing the verse for the sake of context. There may be several paragraphs in a broad theme, but each paragraph tends to have a more precise theme. At the end of each paragraph we study there is a brief summary, which is an attempt to tie together some study concepts which may seem at a tangent to the theme of the paragraph under our microscope at the time.

James 1:1

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. — NIV

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. — KJV

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:1 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

Iaeiros [2385] *James* **theos** [2316] *God* **kai** [2532] *and* **kurios** [2962] *Lord, Master, Sir* **iesous** [2424] *Jesus* **christos** [5547] *anointed, messiah, Christ* **doulos** [1401] *slave* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **dodeka** [1427] *12* **phule** [5443] *tribe* **ho** [3588] *the* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **ho** [3588] *the* **diaspora** [1290] *dispersion, scattering* **chairo** [5463] *greetings, God speed, fairwell, hello, etc. (friendly salutation to greet or part company).*

1.1.0 Introduction to James 1:1

Verse 1 is a welcome providing an introduction to the author, his position in Christ, and states who the letter is addressed to. The author is generally accepted to be James, the half-brother of Christ.

1.1.1: Who was James?

The author identifies himself as James. This James is generally accepted to be the biological half-brother of Jesus (Jn 7:2-5).

Mt 13:55 *“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”* This verse tells us about a James who is not the Apostle James who was with Jesus through his ministry. This James didn’t even get along with Jesus while he was alive in the flesh. Obviously he came into his salvation at a later time, almost certainly after the resurrection. He became well known and a leader of church council in Jerusalem - Ac 15:13, 2:8, Jude 1, Gal 1:19, 2:9. Secular records indicate he was martyred 62 AD. There’s some debate, but many scholars hold that he probably wrote the book around 45-50 AD. This makes it one of the earliest books. The Apostle James was martyred earlier than this period.

There was some debate in the early church as to whether this book was authentic, but after much deliberation and the weight of available evidence at the time this book was accepted as cannon some time in the second or third century AD. Much of the debate came from the perception that this book has a very “Jewish” flavor with greater emphasis on the practical outward display of works than most other New Testament writings. The book refers to God or Lord while Jesus is only mentioned by name in this first verse. This lead some to believe it was an older Jewish writing adapted for new Christians. While this is something of a curiosity, there are several reasonable explanations. I believe this deep and extended study will only serve to support the balance of old and new testament scriptures. The perfect agreement we

shall discover only serves to validate the presumption this book is the inspired work of our Lord and God Almighty.

If I had to sum up the book with one sentence it would be: “The Book of James – An Operator’s Manual for Christianity.”

1.1.2: How does James identify himself?

James 1:1 *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.”* James here identified himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Assuming he was the Lord’s half-brother, it seems telling to me that he identified himself in this way and didn’t use his clout as Jesus’ sibling. Of course how could we expect otherwise? With this opening remark it seems he is placing himself at a level equal to other believers and *below* the level of his pseudo-sibling - God incarnate.

1.1.3: What are the qualities of a servant?

A servant serves, of course. A servant is in the employ of a master. The servant DOES what the master requests. The 4th chapter of James talks about this, and it is a common theme throughout the entire bible.

Jn 4:34 *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”* Jesus said he came to work.

1 Cor 1:10 *“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”* Here we see that servants share a common purpose with their master. Jesus’ own words confirm this in Jn 5:17 *But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”*

In the passage Romans 13:1-7 we are given instructions about servanthood, both worldly and Godly. Ro 13:4 *for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.* This is very telling with regard to the “other side of the coin.” It is a stark warning to be faithful in service. If God gives the sword to our earthly masters to punish us for wrongdoing, how much more so will God punish those who fail to serve him?

Jn 4:24 *“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* A servant of God will worship in spirit and truth.

Rev 2:23 *and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.* This verse makes it startlingly clear that we cannot hide what is in our hearts any more than Adam could. Service not done from our hearts (spirit and truth) is of no value and will be “repaid.” Notice in Rev 2:23 that our “deeds” are repaid based on what is in our hearts. I find this intensely sobering.

1 Pe 1:13 *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope*

fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter offers guidance and hope in light of what we just read. To be a good servant, we must prepare our minds, be self controlled, and put our hope in Jesus. If we put our hope in anything else, our hearts will follow it to the wrong places.

Perhaps my favorite verse on the subject is Jn 12:26. *“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My father will honor the one who serves me.”* I think people take this the wrong way and think that where they go Jesus will also be. That’s just plain wrong. It clearly says we must follow him. He will be with us because we’re where he, and this is because we followed him there. The great part is the promise that we won’t be forgotten, that we will be “honored” by God for our service - service offered with the right heart.

1.1.4: What about humility?

Humility is the foremost character trait of a servant. This main question is actually comprised of several smaller questions:

a) Was James humble? James identified himself as a servant. James did NOT identify himself in a way which showed he had a special relationship with Jesus, though as far as know he was Jesus’ half-brother. In v2 he refers to fellow believers as brothers, placing himself at the same level as them, once again not as a brother of Jesus. Personally, I think James was a no-nonsense kind of guy, privately humble, but unafraid to be bold publicly for Christ.

b) What did James have to say on the subject of humility? Jas 4:10 says *“Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.”* In fact, the whole principle of the 4th chapter is humility to God, what it is, and what the benefits are, and the dangers of turning from humility.

c) Is humility Christlike? Col 2:16-19, in particular v18, addresses this question nicely. There’s a lot of meat in this passage, but with regard to humility in particular v 18 reads *Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind...* Verse 19 goes on to say that this indicates the person has lost their connection to “the Head”, aka God. You have only to read the gospels and the account of Jesus washing Peter’s feet to gain a better understanding of Jesus’ humility; not to mention dying on the cross.

d) How does humility help us with respect to one another? Eph 4:2 says *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.* Humility makes it possible to get along, and more than that it allows us, in mutual submission to a common master, to be of a like mind and to be effective in service. After all, it was the subject of Service that sparked this conversation on humility.

As for myself, I hope I am humble in this study. I hope and pray I am not like the person described in Col 2:18. I hope God blesses each and every reader of this. I hope together we are all growing closer to Christ. I encourage you to test yourself, test me, and in so doing test the spirits to see that they are of God (and immediately discard any which are not of God).

1.1.5: Why does James differentiate God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

This is admittedly a touchy subject, but since James brought it up, we must deal with it. I know many God fearing Jesus loving Christians who struggle with the concept of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the whole supernatural aspect of who and what Jesus really is.

1 Cor 8:6 *yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.* This verse is similar to Eph 4:6 and 1 Tim 2:5 identifying God as a lone supreme being.

Jn 1:1-4 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* This passage describes Jesus by addressing his divinity.

Jn 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John ties together the divine with the human in this verse.

We know all scripture is divinely inspired, we know God doesn't lie, so we therefore know that no matter how some passages may appear to our eyes to be in conflict, the conflict lies in our understanding rather than God's word.

It is interesting to note the word "trinity" does not appear in scripture. Rather, this is a man-made term to try and capture an understanding of the essence of God the Father, God incarnate as the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. It seems that God presents himself in each of these capacities so that we might better know him in totality. To try to divide God is a common error. God is larger than our ability to comprehend, so he gives us what we can comprehend. The spiritual family (Father, Son, Spirit) are one, yet presented in scripture as three. In our minds it is a three-way experience, but God is not nearly so limited. God has many names in the bible. The simplest, the one God used with Moses (Ex 3:14) was also used by Jesus (Jn 8:58): I AM. Jesus himself made it clear he was God when he spoke of himself this way, albeit living in human flesh for his divine purpose.

1.1.6: Who is the Message For?

James 1:1b (NIV) *"to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings."*

James 1:1b (KJV) *"to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting."*

James 1:1b (ESV) *"To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings."*

James uses the phrase "12 tribes" to describe his target audience, however each of the three versions of scripture above describe these tribes differently. James was basically running the church in Jerusalem, so if he was writing a letter it stands to reason it would be to someone some distance away. To have become a book of the bible at all it had to have been mass produced and copies distributed far and wide. There are lots of other requirements as well I'm sure, but this is enough for now. Let's break this down a bit...

a) To the Jews only?

Ro 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to*

everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Paul provides good perspective here. The message went to the Jews first, but certainly to the gentile believers also. Don't get caught up here thinking James is limited only to Jews.

b) Who then are the 12 tribes?

This is not a fight worth having. Again, Paul explains this nicely in Ro 2:9-11 *There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.* The message is addressed to the Jews because the Jews were to receive it *first*, but not *only*. It isn't implicitly stated, but I think it is also obvious that James is writing firstly to fellow believers. The persecution of the early church came primarily from the Jews, so certainly it wasn't to all the Jews or just Jews. The remainder of the letter feels like it is written specifically for the benefit of all believers, not just Jews or Jewish believers in general. On close examination James only serves to confirm Paul.

c) What were the “12 tribes” doing?

Mt 28:19-20 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* Carrying out The Great Commission is the paramount thing that they were doing, or at least supposed to be doing. These were “scattered” people. That's what the early Christians did, they spread the Good News to all the world. True enough that only the Lord could manage such a structure, but through James He expressed himself with this wonderful, practical, and pertinent letter to all the new believers as far as the letter could be carried.

d) Where were they?

Scattered, of course. They were spreading out all over the civilized world and beyond. Ps 24:1 says, *“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.”* God is a global God. Gen 1:1 declares the beginning and His mighty hand in making the majesty that is greater than the capacities of all the hard drives on all the universities of the world to hold. Ps 67:1-2 further explains the purpose of this letter James wrote: *“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.”*

The ESV translation accurately translates the Greek word diaspora as Dispersion. The Jews were dispersed as a result of the first and second exiles, first by Assyria then by the Babylonians. Even when the temple was rebuilt by Nehemiah many Jews remained spread across foreign lands. The spreading of the good news to distant Jews was a part of the Great Commission. Of course the plan of Christ was to make believers of all the people dispersed through all the world, not just Jews as one might want to interpret James.

e) Does God play favorites?

If you looked up Ro 2:11 you already know the answer. Here's another reference - 1 Tim 5:21 says, *“I charge you in the sight of God and Jesus Christ and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.”* This last question is one we must look in the mirror to answer. Do you follow the same instructions given to

Timothy? Who wants to see a bum off the street walk into their service? Are you frustrated by the disruption of a crying baby? Maybe the boss in the corner office doesn't need your witness because he's too important or has too much money. Who do you NOT tell them the Good News? Why? What are your prejudices?

1.1.7 How are you at telling the good news?

The following are a series of personal questions for you to ask yourself...

Who have you shared the Good News with lately? How did you first hear it? Do you feel different now? Are you involved in any international missions? Do you think it is fair if God has favorites yet we're not supposed to? Who do you serve?

Now I know why vampires hate the mirror. When God looks through your eyes into a mirror, He can see right through you.

1.1.8 Summary of James 1:1

James 1:1 *James, a servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. (ESV)*

**or slave or bondservant*

In this verse of our study we learned the author was most likely James the half-brother of Jesus. James didn't get along with Jesus prior to the crucifixion, but later became an important figure in the Jerusalem church. This was probably one of if not the first NT book written. It was written to aid the early Christians, at that point primarily Jews, who had by this time left Jerusalem in obedience the Great Commission issued by Jesus (Mt 28), helped along by persecution of the Jewish leaders.

James 1:2

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [temptations] of many kinds, ³because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. — NIV

²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. — KJV

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:2 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

pas [3956] *all, any, every* **chara** [5479] *joy, gladness, cheerfulness, delight* **hegeomai** [2233] *deem, consider, esteem, count, command, lead* **adelphos** [0080] *brother, sibling (connected by womb, literal or figurative)* **mou** [3450] *I, me, my* **hotan** [3752] *when, while, till* **poikilos** [3986] *various, diverse, motley, of uncertain derivation* **peirasmos** [4045] *prove by: experiment, temptation, or adversity* **peripipto** [4164] *fall into or among, be surrounded with* **poikilos** [3986] *various, diverse, motley, of uncertain derivation*

1.2.0 Introduction to James 1:2

In this verse James begins his letter in earnest. The very first subject he addresses is the difficulty of life. He smacks the reader upside the head with the instruction to take joy in all sorts of hard times. In our study of verse 2 we will explore this instruction in depth.

1.2.1 What is a brother?

James uses the phrase My brethren (or my brothers) to begin the body of the letter. Of course the nature of the sentence structure allows this phrase to go nearly anywhere inside verse 2, but I would prefer to cover the subject of brotherhood before going into other things. The Greek word used for brother is adelphos. It means from the same womb, nation, nature; of equal rank and dignity; associate. It could be translated as either “brothers” or “brothers and sisters.”

We know the term brother, as used here, is not limited to the males only. I don’t think it literally means the same womb, either, although (if we assume this James was Jesus’ half-brother) we know James did share the same womb with Jesus. James did not make his physical relationship with Jesus an issue, and in fact was effectively nullifying his half-brother physical status in favor of his brotherhood with fellow believers. James knew Jesus wasn’t just a man, He was divine. He was God wrapped in flesh.

Ro 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* Of course we are not equal to Jesus, but we are in a brotherhood, sharing at least a bit of the nature of God by having the indwelling Spirit. We are of the same “nation” as God by having our home in the eternal. We

are aliens here, as Abraham noted. Be cautious with this, though. Some would be tempted to say we are made in God's image, and that justifies our brotherhood. This is not so. We are the clay. We can share brotherhood only in as much as the amount of the Spirit of God is put into our pot. It is a supernatural pot filled with its creator. The pot is not a "brother" unless it is filled with the stuff making it so. Don't fall for a lie here. If you are full of the world, there's no room in your pot. It is empty if you try to fill it with anything but the Water of Life (Jesus). We will speak much more on the authentic vs. inauthentic later.

Proverbs 17:17 *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* This Proverb adds another interesting angle, one which I think is a wonderful comfort. Jesus referred to us as friends as well as brothers. Earlier we talked about being servants. This verse supports the one where Jesus says there's no greater friend than the one who lays down his life for another. Jesus called us his friends. That's better than being a servant, don't you think? Now we have as part of our identity being brethren together, of the same Spirit of God, children together of God. We get more than a gold watch for our service, we get a piece of inheritance. Praise God!!! As to this Proverb, it says a brother is born for adversity. If you have a sibling, or know anyone who has a sibling, you know siblings tend to fight amongst themselves at times. You also know that's okay until someone else picks on a brother, then whoa to the outsider. Jesus and the Holy Spirit indwelling and outpouring comfort us in adversity, help us in various ways, and lead us through difficulties to something better.

1.2.2 Why did James appeal to fellow Christians by calling them brothers?

Do you think it was to suck up? Do you think it was just a common manner of speech? Do you think he was trying to identify with other believers away from Jerusalem? Was he simply trying to get their attention? Maybe he was trying to make it clear this message was directed at fellow believers and not merely wannabes?

I think part of this does have to do with James' unique position of being Jesus' half-brother. He was demonstrating that he was no better, or that other believers were no worse (depending on whether you're a glass half-full or half-empty kind of person.

Another advantage of launching this way is its diplomatic effect. They say people don't care what you know until they know you care. James started the letter in a very friendly and personal way. We already saw there are plenty of scriptures to sustain the concept of fellow Christians being brothers with each other and being children together of God. In light of this phrase from James' letter my attention was brought to Mt 5:9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God."* Are you a peacemaker?

1.2.3 Are fellow Christians your brothers?

This question is really two...

a) Do you feel close to fellow Christians, as like brothers?

This is a personal question. For me, I feel an immediate kinship with someone I recognize as a fellow believer. After asking this question of others I know many people do not quickly accept others as siblings in Christ. There's at least something we all have in common. I don't expect to agree on politics or even theological details, but Jesus Christ doesn't change, nor his Lordship or Sovereignty.

b) Do you think of them as brothers?

This is kind of the same question, but rather than the subconscious feeling, do you make it conscious? Philemon 16: *no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*

1.2.4 Regarding family problems...

Again, this is a multi-faceted question:

a) Do you always get along with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Its not a perfect world - not yet anyway. The closer we draw to Jesus, the closer we will draw to each other, I think. Historically, it is sad to note that the church (little 'c') is often referred to as the only army which shoots its own wounded. This is a sarcastic stereotypical view of christianity (little c), but unfortunately it is well earned. Christians are called to take care of their own first and foremost, and to then share that kindness with others. Now this can easily be taken the wrong way, so don't think I'm saying its supposed to be some exclusive club. I'm just saying we need to always be mindful of our family and take care of them. Don't let a brother or sister languish in pain if you can help them. Don't let them be hungry or naked. Don't put them down and prevent them working. Help them avoid getting into a position of ridicule for their own foolish mistakes.

b) What about when I have problems with a 'brother'?

There's a wealth of scriptures that deal with brotherhood. Mt 5:23-24 helps with this question: *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* There are others, but this one speaks to the importance of dealing with personal conflicts. I think our purpose for being in this world is to help others with their journey in this world. If you have a personal problem with a 'brother' then it stands to reason you need to work that out, not let it fester. Those kinds of things get in the way of your relationship with Jesus. The wisdom of this passage in Matthew to me is that you'll find peace and help another wounded person if you take care of the issue sooner rather than later. It will please the Lord and make your offering more acceptable.

c) How does it affect you if you've got a problem with a brother?

1 John 2:9-11. *"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded him."* Perhaps a discussion of the meanings of love and hate are in order, and if you feel the need to discuss it that's what the comments are for. I'm going to leave off this and let the verse stand on its own merits as an answer to this question.

1.2.5 Are we really supposed to find joy during trials and temptations?

This is kind of a bogus question. James 1:2 tends to be a poorly understood passage because of the word "when." Many people somehow think you should enjoy the experience of a trial or temptation. That is not what James is saying. It is more appropriate to think of the word "when" as referring to the result of the trial, not necessarily the experience as it is happening. The trial isn't the joyful part, rather it's the result of the trail.

I know people who have a lot of trouble with God because they think they're supposed to be happy when they get hit in the face with five flavors of crap slung by five different people. Some get from verse this that God gave them the hard way to go and they're supposed to be happy anyway. Nonsense. God has a magnificent way of taking manure and turning it into something beautiful. Satan destroys, but God creates. It takes fertilizer to grow a flower. If you only had sunshine, would the crops ever yield? You don't have to like the rain, and you don't have to like the crap, and you don't have to like to the trials and temptations. God uses (not necessarily creates) problems we face to make us grow in our faith, to grow closer to Him. If we react as we're instructed in this passage we will grow in our perseverance and we will one day lay hold of the prize.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Mal 3:2-3 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.

Certainly being the silver or gold going through the refinement isn't a lot of fun. It's the high quality product at the end of the process God is interested in (and therefore WE should be interested in). God seeks perfection. We aren't perfect. When we love God and let him refine us and accept his refining process, we become purified, his Grace being the staple of this, the atoning blood of Jesus providing the opportunity for grace.

1.2.6 What is meant by the term diverse temptation (trials of many kinds)?

According to my interlinear and other sources I checked, the Greek words "poikilois peirasmos" translate directly to "diverse temptation." Diverse meaning "of many kinds" and the word for temptation also having possible connotations as trial or difficulty.

The Greek words poikilois peirasmos are the words translated here. I struggled with the different languages of NIV vs KJV, but with a little help from an online interlinear I gleaned a few things to help clarify.

The Greek word poikilois is translated as "diverse" in KJV and as "of many/varied kinds" in the NIV/ESV. These are all reasonable.

Greek word peirasmos is translated in KJV as "temptation," but in NIV and ESV as "trial." It was used more often in the NT mostly as what we traditionally think of as temptation, as from the devil. Some other places used include Mt 6:13, Mt 26:41, Lk 4:13, 1 Co 10:13, 1 Ti 6:9, to name a few. Here's the literal translation:

Peirasmos:

1. an experiment, attempt, trial, proving: the trial made of you by my bodily condition, since condition served as to test the love of the Galatians toward Paul.

2. the trial of man's fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy
 1. an enticement to sin, temptation, whether arising from the desires or from the outward circumstances
 2. an internal temptation to sin 1b
3. of the temptation by which the devil sought to divert Jesus the Messiah from his divine errand
 1. of the condition of things, or a mental state, by which we are enticed to sin, or to a lapse from the faith and holiness
 2. adversity, affliction, trouble: sent by God and serving to test or prove one's character, faith, holiness
4. temptation (i.e. trial) of God by men
 1. rebellion against God, by which his power and justice are, as it were, put to the proof and challenged to show themselves

The Greek word more commonly translated as “trial” is “dokime.” It literally means proving, trial, approved, tried character, or a proof - as in a specimen of tried worth. In James 1:2 it seems either trial or temptation is acceptable, though later in James 1 the subject of temptation is dealt with in more detail. Temptation makes more sense in a no-nonsense view of what God wants to tell us. Trial, however, is more all-inclusive to the overall message James is conveying in this paragraph. Since either word is arguably valid we shall discuss both. We need to look for the good that comes from difficult challenges, whether presented by men, Satan, or God. Trials or temptations aren't typically fun in and of themselves, but certainly when we persevere the gold we've purchased was well worth the price (ref Rev 3:18).

1.2.7 Do you feel pulled in many directions? Lots of distractions? Is it difficult to focus on God?

Phil 3:13-14 *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* Paul framed his fleshy experience walking in the world for Christ as a metaphor, in this case of a race. Paul used sports because races were popular. The first Olympics were during that era. Races were something people could relate to. I mention it in relation to the words of James because the antidote for distractions is to focus. Paul didn't say it was easy to focus, in fact he said he strained (kicked at the goads). He didn't say it was automatic, either. He said he was pressing toward the goal to with the prize he felt called toward, and in fact said he didn't feel he'd yet taken hold of that prize.

We can become cocky if we think our salvation is secure on any given day of the week. Jn 15:4 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.* Jesus warns us to remain in him, speaking about the vine and branches. The world is one gigantic distraction. Cars, TV, work - these are the innocuous things that distract us, never mind the more overt temptations like sex, money, gluttony, and so forth. I spend a lot of time and effort breaking down these verses and doing commentary. Lots of details. My goal isn't to dissect in great detail, but to grow closer to my Master and share Him with anyone willing. It is a temptation to me to focus on these fine details and forget the reason for the message - to reach a lost world with a message of hope.

Jn 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* Jesus declares he is the source of eternal life.

Rev 21:4 gives enough of a glimpse at what this life will be like to know it is worth any price. *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*

The good news of Eph 2:8-9 is that the price was paid by another and for us it is free. *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Jn 3:18 *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* John makes it clear that there is a string attached: "believe." This is a verb, and it requires action. Jn 15:5 tells us to abide in Jesus. Jn 5:14 warns us to stop sinning - our sin has consequences. Jn 15:6 gives us a glimpse as to what those consequences are. Focus on the goal, and press on.

1.2.8 What is joy?

Joy is often confused with fun or happiness. My pocket explanation is as follows: Fun is pleasure, physical and light hearted. Happiness is the external expression of pleasure. Joy is internal, spiritual, deep, and consuming. From the dictionary:

Fun:

1. A source of enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure.
2. Enjoyment; amusement: *have fun at the beach.*
3. Playful, often noisy, activity.

Happiness:

1. Characterized by good luck; fortunate.
2. Enjoying, showing, or marked by pleasure, satisfaction, or joy.
3. Being especially well-adapted; felicitous: *a happy turn of phrase.*
4. Cheerful; willing: *happy to help.*
5. Characterized by a spontaneous or obsessive inclination to use something. Often used in combination: *trigger-happy.*
6. Enthusiastic about or involved with to a disproportionate degree. Often used in combination: *money-happy; clothes-happy.*

Joy:

1. Intense and especially ecstatic or exultant happiness.
2. The expression or manifestation of such feeling.
3. A source or an object of pleasure or satisfaction: *their only child, their pride and joy.*

1.2.9 How do you feel about having to face trials and/or temptations? How do you "count it joy" when things are tough?

Ro 8:28 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* For starters, know God is calling you and your journey will include carrying a cross. Ultimately, however, it all works out in the end.

Neh 8:10 *Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”* Joy is a source of strength. That isn’t obvious, but experience only proves God’s word given in this verse.

Ro 5:3-5 *More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* This passage reads almost as though Paul were quoting James, though Paul puts a little different spin on the subject. The source of joy is the Holy Spirit. This is why I think of joy as internal and spiritual rather than external.

Col 1:9-12 *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.* Yet another example of Paul standing in firm agreement with James, amplifying his words, but in no way taking away or changing the meaning of God’s message. Joy here is tied to patience and endurance, strength, knowledge, and obtaining the ultimate prize in eternity.

Happiness is contingent upon exterior conditions. Joy is contingent upon interior conditions. If we count it joy (internal) to fall into diverse temptations (external), we are able to persevere in the Lord (internal) during the trials (external). ‘When’ denotes inevitability. Even the non-believer faces diverse trials/temptations. James 1:2 is a preparation verse, girding the saint for what lies in his path. Over time you can grow in faith to the point where trials aren’t distractions dividing you from the Lord, but rather they are the things that propelled you toward the Lord.

And so, the question above looms: Are you able to find the joy?

1.2.10 What is temptation?

In an earlier question we looked at the Greek word *peirasmos* translated “temptation” in the KJV and “trial” in the NIV and ESV. For now we are going to concentrate on temptation.

Websters defines “temptation” (n) as the act of tempting or the state of being tempted, or as an enticement. The root word, *tempt* (v), means to entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure; it also means to make a trial of a test; to provoke, to induce; to cause to be strongly inclined.

Lk 4:1-13 illustrates the Temptation of Christ that took place in the desert at the start of Jesus’ ministry: *And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” And the devil took him up and showed him all*

the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Jesus went straight from his water baptism by John to the desert where he fasted 40 days, preparing for his encounter with Satan. Satan tried three times to tempt Jesus. First with food. Second with power. Finally to tempt him to prove who he was. There are probably a hundred lessons we can take from this passage, but in context with our study we see that what Satan did met the textbook definition of temptation. The same Greek word used for temptation in this passage of Luke is also used by James.

While Jesus overcame the temptation, in Acts 5:1-10 we see an example of a temptation that wasn't overcome by Ananias and Sapphira, and the result. James 1:13-15 explains the process of how temptation becomes sin, but we'll discuss that later.

1.2.11 Who Tempts Us?

James 1:13 *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.* Satan is the ultimate – if not direct – source of temptation. God does not tempt. Temptation is not just an enticement to do wrong in exchange for pleasure. The pleasure is a lie because after you've sinned you always feel empty, dirty, sick, and there is no pleasure. Most people would call this your conscience. The promise of pleasure was a lie. Duh: it was Satan making you the promise. What else did you expect?

Heb 12:7 *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?* The source of discipline is God. Discipline may seem unpleasant at the time, but the results are good – unlike temptation which is manifested in sin. (Heb 12:11 *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*)

Tests/trials may be of God, of Satan, or of man. Not necessarily enjoyable themselves, still God uses for good what was intended for evil. We are told to test (prove – KJV) all things and hold onto the good (1 Thess 5:21), so testing can certainly be humanly induced. Testing (proving) is the kind of righteous judgment we are authorized to undertake. Testing by God divides good from bad, like the pruning of Jn 15. Satan is also judgmental, but he's looking for prey. Unrighteous judgment is a tool, in fact a temptation, he uses to lure us into division.

	DISCIPLINE	TEST/TRIAL	TEMPTATION
FROM	God	God/World/Satan	Satan
RESULT OF	Disobedience / Ignorance	Following God	Pride/Exposure
HOW TO TELL	Fits Crime	Proves Faith	Leads Astray
FEELING	Painful	Challenging	Enticing
RIGHT RESPONSE	Repent	Persevere	Resist
DO NOT	Make light of	Shrink Back	Fall Into
GOD SAYS	We're sons	His name's in us	Flesh is weak
ENDS WITH	Fear & Holiness	Death & Glory	Sin or Victory

1.2.12 Why does Satan try to tempt us?

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* This verse makes it clear the devil is looking for prey. He will steal our souls if we let him (Mk 13:22). Short of that he'll do whatever he can to prevent us from being effective in our service to our Master (2 Pe 1:3-15). At every turn he will try to steal our joy (2 Cor 12:7).

The bible calls Satan a deceiver (Rev 20:8), an accuser (Rev 12:10), and a tormentor (2 Cor 12:7). Satan does so well because he looks so good (2 Cor 11:14). One of Satan's greatest successes was in the garden (Gen 3). One of his greatest failures was in the desert (Lk 4).

James 1:15 *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* Temptations play on our carnal desires. If the lies can be sold to us through convincing deception (and our nature is to want to hear what we want to hear) we let the desire turn into sin. If Satan could cause the fall of the perfect creation of God (Gen 1:31, 3:6), don't you think he can get to us? Especially if we don't seek (Jn 15:7) a "hedge" of protection from God (Job 1:10).

I heard it said that Satan is just trying to make us ineffective, that he can't harm us directly. Don't be deceived! Remember the parable of the seeds (Lk 8)? They all got the same seeds, but Satan can try and all too often succeeds at taking away the faith. Do you think *you* can't fail in faith? Then you have already accepted a lie. The warning is 2 Pe 2:21. No faith, no salvation (Jn 3:18).

1.2.13 Are we alone when we face temptation?

1 Peter 5:9 *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* Do you ever feel like you're fighting the good fight, but you're doing it all by yourself and there's nobody else out there on the same team? You've heard it said that misery loves company. While I take that as a worldly euphemism, I think its true for many that comfort and strength can be drawn from knowing that you are not alone in your struggles. Jesus faced temptations (Lk 4), too. Aside from Christ, none of the prophets or disciples were perfect, they all struggled, and most of them had it pretty bad. Whatever you are struggling with today, abide in the company of the Lord (Jn 15:5) and you will find help (Ps 121) when you ask (Jn 15:7).

1.2.14 What should we do about temptation?

Before I even try to answer, let me tell you there's a big difference between what to do about Satan and what to do about temptation. People tend to get confused about this, so I'll try to be as clear as possible. There are two basic choices: fight or flight. Which is right?

Avoid it. 1 Thess 5:22 *“Avoid every kind of evil.”* Make every effort not to be put into a bad position.

Abstain from it. 1 Peter 2:11 *“Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”* As Nancy Reagan liked to say, “Just Say No.”

Flee From it and Replace it. 2 Tim 2:22 *“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”* This verse is extremely good because it contains two parts, and the second is the real key, in my humble opinion. Like the other verses above it tells us to run away from the bad, but this one states what should be obvious - run to what is good. Replace the desires of the flesh with a desire for the Lord. If you’re concentrating on what is good, it will be more difficult for the selfish desires to get hold of you. 1 Cor 6:18 and 10:14 also provide instructions to flee temptation.

Deny Self. Lk 9:23 *“Then he said to them all, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”* This verse, like the one above it, essentially says to turn from your self (your selfish desires which capitalize on temptation) and seek the Lord instead. I think this is the distilled essence of repentance.

Put your confidence in the Lord. 1 Cor 10:13 *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so you can stand up under it.”* Solomon said there’s nothing new under the sun. I just love that saying.

Nowhere in scripture does it tell you to fight temptation. Nowhere does it say use willpower to stand up to temptation. The word tells us to avoid it, escape it (flee), replace it with what is Godly. In fact, in my bible’s concordance it lists the word ‘flee’ 6 times, 5 of those are about fleeing temptation (the other says you can’t flee God). Don’t give temptation a foothold to get inside your tent.

1.2.15 What should we do about Satan?

First, consider this: What are we supposed to do about God? Well, chiefly we are to worship him. What does God do? Among other things, God creates. As part of the creation, we like it and therefore worship him. We don’t worship creation, do we? No, we accept and appreciate and cohabitate with the rest of creation, but worship is reserved for God alone.

As to Satan, we know he doesn’t worship. He lies and destroys. If someone came into your home and tried to kill your children, wouldn’t you fight them? If you wanted to reduce the risk of this happening, you would move to a better neighborhood, get a good set of door locks, get an alarm system, join a neighborhood watch, and so forth. You would take preventative action. Yesterday when we spoke of temptation and what to do, we were taking preventative actions. With regard to Satan’s attacks, we shift from the passive action of preventing a problem to facing and dealing with a problem in progress.

Jas 4:7b *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* With temptation we were told to flee. With Satan, we are told to resist. Resist is an interesting word. It implies a defensive confrontation. We aren't instructed to pick a fight, rather to defend ourselves when the enemy presents himself.

Eph 6:10-18 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...* This is known as the "Whole Armor of God" passage. It is included here in its entirety so you can see for yourself what it entails. God wins, not us. Satan schemes against us. Our enemy is not merely men. Most of the armor is defensive. Only the "Spirit, which is the word of God" is an offensive weapon of attack. Of all the components, this item is purely God and not at all human. Finally, we are instructed to use constant prayer to maintain communication with the battle commander. If we stop communicating with God, we then take matters into our own hands. Of what value is our only offensive weapon if we cannot wield it?

We don't do battle against temptation because it is unrealized sin. We avoid sin by avoiding temptation. Satan seeks to devour (1 Pe 5:8), so him we have to face and fight.

Dt 31:6 *Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.* We aren't alone. If we don't "abide" in Jesus, can we expect to have God's help and his authority to make Satan flee? No, I don't think so. None of this scripture stands alone. It must be taken as a whole and in context to understand the full gravity of what is going on. That's why we need the full armor of God. We can't win alone.

Various authors say not to give Satan authority he doesn't have. I would say don't be deceived about the authority he already has (Gen 3, Ro 5, Eph 6:12, Rev 12:9). We don't need to give him authority because God already has done that. I've also heard that Satan can't be everywhere at once and he doesn't attack and tempt us directly all the time. Be very careful if that's what you think. We don't know how quickly Satan can move from place to place and we don't know what God permits Satan to do in any given situation (remember Job?). We know Satan isn't alone. There's plenty of demons who do the same work and we have no idea how many of them there are - all are classified as "devil" as far I can tell. And, the "dark principalities and powers of this world" are the men who do the bidding of Satan (evil). They're certainly lurking all around us, too, and they're visible!

The desire to sin already lies in our flesh. In Romans 5 we see a sinful nature is passed down from Adam, brought to him courtesy of Satan, thus we are susceptible to temptation and sin. Satan doesn't have to be personally and directly involved for you to "feel" temptation. He is the ultimate author of sin and lies. The world (property of Satan) provides plenty of common temptations courtesy of its author.

Why must we deny the self and pick up our cross daily and follow Christ if not to fight?

1.2.16 Should we fear Satan?

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* It is worth noting that the rescue might be more like Stephen's case where you are "rescued" to heaven (Acts 7:54-60) rather than Peter's escape from prison (Acts 12:1-17). Either way, God makes provisions according to His will. We aren't taught to fear Satan, but to resist him. Resist implies defensive fighting rather than offensive, but it is still fighting. We are only told to fear God (Pr 1:7). Fear him because he can more than kill you, he can throw you into hell (Lk 12:4-5).

Short answer: No.

James 1:3

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [temptations] of many kinds, ³because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. — NIV

²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. — KJV

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:3 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

ginosko [1097] *know, be certain, feel, perceive* **hoti** [3754] *that, which... (conjunction)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **dokimion** [1383] *determination of trustworthiness through: testing, try, trial* **humon** [5216] *you, your, yourselves* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **pistis** [4102] *belief, assurance, faith, fidelity, moral conviction, system of religious truth* **katergazomai** [2716] *accomplish, finish, perform, work out* **hupomone** [5281] *endurance, constancy, perseverance, patience while waiting*

1.3.0 Introduction to James 1:3

This verse continues the flow of thought from the previous verse by adding a purpose to the perplexing problems of life. While studying this verse we shall explore the concepts of faith, testing, and perseverance.

1.3.1 Why are we subjected to testing?

Zech 13:9 *And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'* Surely if it's the work of God, it is for the best possible purpose. That's a good reason to find joy in your struggles.

Actually, James 1:3 answers the question quite nicely without the help of Zechariah, although it illustrates with poetic beauty of what perseverance, patience, or steadfastness is really all about.

1.3.2 How can we determine if something is a temptation toward evil or test to develop Godliness?

First, let's understand the word translated as "testing" in NIV/ESV or "trying" in KJV. This particular word in the Greek is transliterated dokimion. It appears only twice in NT scripture: here and 1 Pe 1:7 *so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* NIV translates dokimion as "prove". The word appears to have the same basic meaning when read in context, regardless of the version.

To paraphrase Webster's, a "test" essentially is a critical observation, examination, evaluation, or procedure to *prove or disprove* something supposed. A trial may also be defined similar to test, which is to say a trial proves or disproves something.

Ro 5:4-5 *and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* Romans 5:1-5 needs to be read to see the entire context, but verses 4-5 are critical to supporting and expounding on James 1:3. God's tests prove us to be his, and cleanse us along the way, making us better (more Godly) people, and strengthens our relationship with our Lord and thus our hope in the prize which we strive for.

1 Thess 5:21 *but test everything; hold fast what is good.* I'm kind of turning the question around here, but I think it's also a valid approach. If we want to know the source of a test, then we must test the test, so to speak. If it is good, or rather if the results are good, then we are proving God's work. Again I would refer you to Zech 13:9, or you can look up "refine" in your concordance. See also Gal 5:22-23, the "fruit of the spirit" passage.

If something results in our falling into sin, it was probably a temptation and we were probably suckered. If the test was of God and we still failed, its because Satan was offering us the wrong answer – which probably looked easier and better and right to our minds – when our minds aren't focused as they should be on God. I don't think God sets us up for failure. God promises not put more on us than we can handle. But still, Satan will take advantage of our weakness for harm just as God will use our weakness to Glorify himself.

1.3.3 What about when we flunk a test?

Heb 12:5b-6 (quoting Prov 3:11-12) *"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."* This is a loaded question. To be fair, I don't think we "flunk" tests. If God knows all, then He knows the outcome of the test before it happens. He still allows it because it fits in with His divine purpose. Whether or not we choose what is right in a situation, we grow from the experience.

Pr 12:1 *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.* We already know why God tests us. It isn't a matter of pass or fail. It always comes back to the condition of our heart. In Luke 10:27 Jesus speaks very clearly when he says, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."*

1.3.4 May we test God?

Lk 4:12 *And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* Here is speaking directly to Satan during the wilderness temptation. This verse seems to say No.

1 Thess 5:21 *but test everything; hold fast what is good.* This verse seems to say yes.

1 Jo 4:1-2 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from*

God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, This verse helps put the other two in perspective.

There's a big context difference between the verses I quoted from Luke and 1 Thessalonians. In Luke Jesus is speaking directly to Satan. Satan already knows who Jesus is. Satan wasn't trying to determine whether Jesus was good or evil. To think so would be absurd. The reference from Paul is an instruction to determine the source of things. It isn't saying put God on trial, its saying find out if something is from God. Its only after you know something's from God that you tread thin ice by testing further. The reference from 1 John is a practical aide in making such judgments and even goes so far as to explain why its important to do so.

Test things to determine (prove) whether they are from God. More than a good idea, this is an explicit instruction. See also 1 Cor 12:9.

Do not put God on trial or tempt him, so to speak. See also Ps 77:13, Dt 32:4, Isa 55:8, Job 23:10. The Lord proclaims his way is right. Who are we to judge? The real issue is doubt versus faith. Once you determine something is from God, you display a lack of faith if you test God further and outright sin if you disobey.

1.3.5 Is it fair that God tests us and we're not supposed to test him?

Zech 13:9 And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, "They are my people"; and they will say, "The LORD is my God." We're tested to be refined. God needs no refinement. He tests us because of His love for us. God proves Himself in His faithfulness to us all the time.

Ro 9:20-21 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? We are merely the clay and must never forget this. It is an essential understanding, not just to grasp the concept of testing, but the very concept of salvation itself. If we seek to place God on trial, we do as Satan suggested Eve do. Satan told Eve she would be like God. She bought the lie. If we buy the lie, then we forget we are the molded clay. The first step toward salvation is the realization we are imperfect created beings, not sovereign unto ourselves, and in need of the perfect sacrificial salvation courtesy of God's grace – the unearned free gift of our loving creator.

James 1:4

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [temptations] of many kinds, ³because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (NIV)

²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (KJV)

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (ESV)

Greek Transliteration of James 1:4 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

ho [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)*
hupomone [5281] *endurance, constancy, perseverance, patience while waiting* **ergon** [2041] *toil, work, labor, doing, deed, act* **telieos** [5046] *complete, full age, perfect* **echo** [2192] *hold, accompany, count, next* **hina** [2443] *in order that, because, lest, so that* **o** [5600] *may, might, can, could, would should...* **telieoi** [5046] *complete* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **holoklaria** [3648] *integrity, physical perfection* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **medeis** [3367] *none, not, nothing* **leipo** [3007] *leave, fail, absent, lack, destitute*

1.4.0 Introduction to James 1:4

Verse 4 continues the flow again from the preceding verses. It instructs us to utilize what we gain from our adversities for maximum benefit and expounds with even more good reasoning. While studying this verse we will dig deeper into the concepts of patience, perseverance and steadfastness. That is followed by an extended look at maturity and completeness.

1.4.1 What are patience (KJV), perseverance (NIV) and steadfastness (ESV)?

Patience may be a virtue, but you don't get it overnight. This isn't fast food faith here, and we're not going to rush patience. In the last verse we focused on testing. We saw, among other things, that the positive result of testing is patience/perseverance. As we move into this verse we're going to explore a bit this concept of patience/perseverance. The definitions below are from <http://dictionary.reference.com>, the online interlinear resource I use is <http://bible.crosswalk.com/InterlinearBible>, and an older Interlinear Greek translation (Dr. George Ricker Berry, 1943).

Patient (The definition of patient is required to fully understand patience):

1. Bearing or enduring pain, difficulty, provocation, or annoyance with calmness.
2. Marked by or exhibiting calm endurance of pain, difficulty, provocation, or annoyance.
3. Tolerant; understanding: *an unfailingly patient leader and guide.*
4. Persevering; constant: *With patient industry, she revived the failing business and made it thrive.*

5. Capable of calmly awaiting an outcome or result; not hasty or impulsive.
6. Capable of bearing or enduring pain, difficulty, provocation, or annoyance: “My uncle Toby was a man patient of injuries” (Laurence Sterne).

Patience

1. The capacity, quality, or fact of being patient.
2. *Chiefly British.* The game solitaire.

Synonyms: *patience, long-suffering, resignation, forbearance*

These nouns denote the capacity to endure hardship, difficulty, or inconvenience without complaint. *Patience* emphasizes calmness, self-control, and the willingness or ability to tolerate delay: Our patience will achieve more than our force (Edmund Burke). *Long-suffering* is long and patient endurance, as of wrong or provocation: *The general, a man not known for docility and long-suffering, flew into a rage.* *Resignation* implies acceptance of or submission to something trying, as out of despair or necessity: *I undertook the job with an air of resignation.* *Forbearance* denotes restraint, as in retaliating, demanding what is due, or voicing disapproval: “It is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other” (Patrick Henry).

Persevere

To persist in or remain constant to a purpose, idea, or task in the face of obstacles or discouragement.

Perseverance

1. Steady persistence in adhering to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose; steadfastness.
2. *Christianity.* The Calvinistic doctrine that those who have been chosen by God will continue in a state of grace to the end and will finally be saved.

Steadfast

- 1: marked by firm determination or resolution; not shakable; “firm convictions”; “a firm mouth”; “steadfast resolve”; “a man of unbendable perseverance”; “unwavering loyalty”
- 2: firm and dependable especially in loyalty; “a steadfast ally”; “a staunch defender of free speech”; “unswerving devotion”; “unswerving allegiance”

Synonyms: *firm, steady, unbendable, unfaltering, unshakable, unwavering, staunch, unswerving, faithful*

The root word, *stead*, literally means fixed, as fixed in place.

Greek: hupomone

The interlinear transliteration of the word rendered *patience* (KJV), *perseverance* (NIV), and *steadfastness* (ESV) in James 1:4 is *hupomone*. The word appears 31 times in the NT. I don’t have a good resource to know about NIV without actually looking up each reference, but I’m not sure it really matters. The ideas conveyed by the word *perseverance* seem to be consistent with that of *patience*. Both terms speak to enduring a difficulty while remaining steadfast in one’s purpose and belief. In fact, my own interlinear bible actually translates the Greek word *hupomone* as *endurance*.

I think it is absolutely critical that we understand the words we are using if we what to know completely what this passage is really saying. That said, as we go through the next few questions I may use the terms perseverance, patience and endurance interchangeably.

1.4.2 Why do we need patience/perseverance/steadfastness?

Prov 14:29 *Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.* The Proverb is a very practical reason for needing patience. The patient person isn't seen as a fool. They are thought of as thoughtful and wise. Of course how God sees us and how people see us are different, but certainly if you're going to be an effective witness to others you need to be respected.

Eph 6:13 *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.* If you are wondering why I chose this verse as a reference, consider what it takes to stand up to adversity. Does adversity come quickly and leave quickly? Well, it may seem to come quickly but rarely are problems solved as quickly. It takes perseverance/steadfastness to see through a troubling situation to the end and come out standing tall on the other side. It takes patience to deal with all the crap along the way and not lose your cool, thus your footing, and become the man of folly from the Proverb above.

Ro 15:4 *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* I think this verse is both relevant and interesting with regard to our question. God is eternal and so His perseverance, steadfastness, and endurance are indeed perfect and eternal. If the Word of God is real, then it stands to reason that the Word is likewise eternally steadfast. It is unchanging and error free.

1.4.3 What can cause us to lose our perseverance/steadfastness?

James 1: 2-8 *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* Doubt is unbelief. It makes you wishy-washy. Certainty of faith makes you steadfast – completely unshakable and stubborn for the Lord.

When I am certain of something, I'm very steadfast about it. Or, as my lovely wife will attest, I am stubborn. When I doubt, though, I am more easily tripped up. Both Paul (Ro 9:33) and Peter (1 Pe 2:6-8) reference Isaiah 8:14 speaking of Jesus as the stone which causes stumbling of the unbelieving, but is a cornerstone to those who do believe. The opposite of belief (and the killer of belief) is doubt! James explains very clearly and eloquently in 1:6-8 what the doubter faces. Just like Paul and Peter, James explains in his own words the critical importance of having a faith that is deep, sure, and true. It must be based on the Rock, Jesus Christ, and it must be devoid of doubt. If your faith is solid and you are sure of what it is you believe in, you will be very stubborn indeed about it, and you will not fall when you are pushed by the world.

1.4.4 How do we become equipped to persevere?

2 Tim 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”* God’s Word seems to be a pretty good place to start.

1 Chron 28:9 (David speaking to his son, Solomon) *“And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. **If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.**”* (Emphasis added.) The carrot always seems to have a stick behind it, but key part for now is in bold. Start in the word, then go to the Lord in person (i.e. in prayer).

Lk 9:23 *And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’* This verse impacts so many subjects, and here it is again. Once we learn, and we’ve gone to the Lord and we have that personal relationship, we must step out in trust and obey him. True enough: we are saved by grace; but we were also created to do good things (Eph 2:8-10). When we deny ourselves and take up his cross we are putting actively developing perseverance. Can you learn the piano by studying a book or speaking with the teacher? No, those are important steps and can’t be skipped, but they’re not enough to make you a pianist. You must practice. You’ll need the teacher’s help, and you will need sheet music, but you absolutely must put your hands on the instrument and play in order to truly learn and be good enough to play a real song. Oh, this is such a fine analogy, I hope I don’t need to go on.

If you go back and review the definitions from question 1.4.1 you will see that perseverance is developed over time through action. The action is guided by the Master, directed, and made possible by the Lord. Still, we are the performers. His stage, his audience, his “piano,” but we are the players. He will clap when we succeed, and lovingly correct us when we miss a note. As we get better we will be able to play beautifully for the most horrendous crowd and will not be distracted by the hecklers. Don’t fret, because God is holding the cue cards for the audience. Just trust him, and go out there and play.

1.4.5 What are we persevering against?

1 Tim 4:1-2 *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.* If you were thinking ahead I bet you were expecting me to quote Eph 6:12. And that would be another great verse to use, but I like what Paul is telling Timothy because it is so very practical. It illustrates exactly what the passage in Eph 6 is talking about. The point is, we are persevering against the lies and the liars. Of course the first, greatest, and father of lies is Satan, but we also oppose the natural man living in his sinful selfish nature. The sins of Adam carry down to us all, so we ought not get haughty and think ourselves above our flaws or we become the hypocrite. We must persevere against the lies and the liars. When we persevere, we stand and are not pushed or fooled by the world and its lying liars.

1.4.6 How long must we persevere?

1 Thess 4:15-17 *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

Until then. That's how long.

This passage is one of great mystery and beauty to me. It identifies clearly (if not plainly) what we have our hopes set upon. Rev 21:4 also speaks to me of what it is I am hoping for. I can't explain the form and function beyond the scriptures, I can only trust God to keep his word about all the other stuff he says in his instruction manual. He will keep his word about what we are looking forward to.

1.4.7 What is meant by 'mature and complete'?

Mt 18:3-4 *Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* This verse wouldn't seem to be describing maturity or completeness, but it does. It is the very most essential aspect of spiritual maturity. It is the utter acceptance of those who know that they don't know anything, that they are just a babe, and that they look with awe and wonder and absolutely devoted trust and faith to their loving father. God said he would confound the wise. Are you confounded?

1 Cor 13:11 *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.* In this passage Paul is speaking of childishness, not the characteristics of being childlike. Childish and childlike are utterly different concepts. When we first believe we are spiritual newborns, thus in our faith we are childlike. As our spirituality matures, we grow in faith and wisdom.

1 Pe 2:2 *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation* — This verse talks of craving milk as a newborn (new convert). Hebrews 5:11-14 expounds on this by telling believers that you can't remain a babe in the spirit: *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.* Just as your flesh matures, your spirituality is expected to mature. Verse 14 even tells you why. Mature so that you can tell good from evil. If you can do that, it is much easier to endure the pushing of the world and remain standing. When you mature the opportunities for doubt diminish and you are less likely to be blown about, and you will be stable. Maturity means you will be able to earn rewards (fulfilled expectations) from the Lord (Jas 1:7)

1.4.8 What are some benefits of maturing?

Maturity is the absolute faith and loyalty of a child, but without the childish (selfish) behavior that goes with being a literal child. Okay, so what's the big deal?

Heb 5:13-14 *for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.* I know we referenced this in the previous question, but this time it's the primary answer. When you become more mature you get solid food. If you're a baby then maybe you only want milk. Is that the kind of faith you want to have? Do you want only the soft stuff? I want to grow and be strong. I want meat and potatoes. I want to chew, and grow tall. I want to be able to stand. The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. The wind blows in the same fashion. The world pushes. The liars lie, and the lie is the same whether you are strong or weak. Better to be strong so as to endure, and at the end to be standing. If you can't tell good from evil, you probably won't be standing when the wave rolls back.

1.4.9 How are maturity and completeness demonstrated?

Maturity: Gal 5:22-25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.* A lot of people can quote v22-23, but how many have v24-25 memorized as well? These are much more challenging words to accept and hold dear, but they are no less important. The fruit demonstrate maturity, to be sure. But foundational is the crucifixion of our natural selves, the selfish people who we were as when unregenerated. The old man was crucified when the seed was planted in us, but if we are actually walking in step with the Spirit then we must surely enjoy the benefit of our carnal passions and desires being displaced by the Holy Spirit.

Completeness: Jn 15:4 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.* We are complete when we are grafted into and remain in Christ. The sapling doesn't bear good fruit, but the mature plant is complete and it bears fruit. If grafted to the good vine it bears good fruit. That's complete.

1.4.10 Perfect or Mature?

Telios: The Greek word is telios is defined as:

1. brought to its end, finished; 2. wanting nothing necessary to completeness; 3. perfect; 4. that which is perfect: 4a) consummate human integrity and virtue; 4b) of men: full grown, adult, of full age, mature

The term translated "mature" in NIV is translated "perfect" in every other version I've looked at including KJV, NASB, and ESV. Given the context and the definition of the Greek word provided by my online Greek lexicon, "mature" is at least a possible rendering. As such, the study of maturity from the last few days is not completely out of place. In context with the balance of the paragraph and the chapter as a whole, I'm okay with the word mature.

The word “perfect” is also a very acceptable word and is likewise suitable in context. To those of us steeped in the English language, however, the word “perfect” tends to have a different atmosphere to it. Perfection is something unattainable outside of God, therefore it stands to reason we need God in order to even approach perfect. To me, maturity implies seniority. Perfection implies being utterly and completely remade and new, whole, and complete. Is it just me, or does maturity not seem to be something less than perfect?

I then looked up the word translated “complete” (holokleros). This word is translated complete in every version except KJV, which uses the word “entire.” Okay, I’ll buy that. Combined with telios, holokleros adds emphasis to the concept of fullness of being.

Finally, the phrase “lacking in nothing,” or “not lacking anything,” or “wanting nothing” all mean pretty much the same thing. It means you don’t need anything else in order to be complete, whole, mature, or as I like to say: in the fullness of being.

In context with the balance of the passage, James is talking about how God uses the challenges we face to show us how to persevere, which refines us, thus making us whole and complete. When we are made whole, through life experiences walking with God, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, through study of God’s Word, and through the shedding of what is worldly within us, we are purified, perfected, made whole, we lack nothing, and have nothing extra which is unnecessary.

It is this last concept I want to dwell only a moment longer. We talked earlier about the refinement process, how God uses trials and tests to refine us as gold or silver. These elements are found in the earth as ore. Most of the time the ore, while it contains what is pure, also contains a lot of other rock which must be burned away in order to obtain a sample which is *only* made of the pure elemental substance. Being whole, entire, complete, mature, and perfect all imply that the debris (all the impurities) have been removed. Please do not let this aspect be lost on you when considering what James is telling us.

The perfecting work of God is not only to add all that which is good, but to remove all that which is bad.

1.4.11 Summary of James 1:2-4

James 1:2-4 ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (ESV)

James begins his letter by consoling the believers about the difficulties they face. He explains that God uses those difficulties to make us stronger in faith, more mature as believers, and pure. These are things to be happy about in spite of the hardships involved with attaining those qualities. He encourages the reader with a message of joy, even in the face of it all. He lets the reader know that while yes, we are tested, that testing is a good thing and has good results. Steadfastness, perseverance, and patience - whichever word you prefer - are all good and noble qualities, but most importantly they are qualities that make it possible for the believer to endure hardships through the course of life and to be able to lay hold of the eternal life which they've hoped for all the while. As for me, I think stubborn might be just as good a word. I want to be stubborn for God.

By examining and comparing different versions we were also lead to study and gain a better understanding of the nature of temptation, trials, discipline, and tests. While these terms seem on the surface to be nearly equivalent, we learned by looking deeper into scripture and seeking a better understanding of both modern English and ancient Greek that there are some very important lessons to be taken from the nuances. Satan is the father of lies and God cannot lie. Satan tempts, God does not. Discernment is needed, and it is a gift from God to be discussed in the study of upcoming verses.

Another fine nuance found in the fourth verse is "let." It is a very important word and one of two direct and specific instructions given in this paragraph. The first is "count." They are both verbs, both direct, both commands. We must let (i.e. allow, not prevent) the stubbornness (e.g. steadfastness / perseverance / patience) take over. That's when we are pure. In other words, James is saying we need to *stubbornly* let the Holy Spirit do its job and we reap the reward of purity and joy.

The question has come up about what appears to be a doctrine of works held forth by James whereas Paul preaches a doctrine of grace by faith. I see no difference. In fact, I see perfect agreement - albeit with complimentary (not counter) instructions. As we progress through the balance of James, particular when we someday get to the part about "faith without works is dead" we will come to understand the deeper meanings and if you stay with us that long, I believe we will together come to a much deeper appreciation of what the Holy Spirit does through us, that we are incapable of doing it ourselves, and that no works of human hands are worthy. The works James speaks of are those performed by the Spirit, not our hands alone. Ah, but I don't mean to spoil the joy to come...

James 1:5

James 1:5-8 “5If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” – NIV

James 1:5-8 “5If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” – KJV

James 1:5-8 “5If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:5 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

ei [1487] *if, whether, that (conditional participle)* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)*
tis [5100] *anyone, anything, someone, something, somewhat* **humon** [5216] *you, your, yourselves* **leipo** [3007] *leave, fail, absent, lack, destitute* **sophia** [4678] *wisdom* **aiteo** [0154] *ask, beg, crave, desire, require* **para** [3844] *near* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **didomi** [1325] *give* **theos** [2316] *God* **pas** [3956] *all, whole* **haplos** [0574] *bountifully* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **me** [3361] *not, no, none, never* **oneidizo** [3679] *reproach, chide, defame, taunt, revile, upbraid* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **didomi** [1325] *give* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)*

1.5.0 Introduction to James 1:5

Verse 5 launches a new stream of ideas beginning with wisdom and ending with foolishness. James often uses stark comparisons to make vivid points. This passage is one of many examples. Verse 5 starts with a recommendation to seek wisdom by asking it of God. James assures us God will be generous in his answer to such a request. Verse 5 does not stand alone, however. Verse 6 establishes a specific requirement directed to us. In our study of Verse 5 we will explore wisdom, asking God for things, the nature of prayer and answers to prayer, and giving.

1.5.1 What is wisdom?

The word translated as wisdom in this passage is the Greek word “sophia.” According to an online Greek Lexicon, “sophia” is found 49 times in the New Testament. According to this lexicon it means: wisdom, broad and full of intelligence; used of the knowledge of very diverse matters

1. the wisdom which belongs to men: a) spec. the varied knowledge of things human and divine, acquired by acuteness and experience, and summed up in maxims and proverbs b) the

science and learning c) the act of interpreting dreams and always giving the sagest advice d) the intelligence evinced in discovering the meaning of some mysterious number or vision e) skill in the management of affairs f) devout and proper prudence in intercourse with men not disciples of Christ, skill and discretion in imparting Christian truth, the knowledge and practice of the requisites for godly and upright living

2. supreme intelligence, such as belongs to God a) to Christ b) the wisdom of God as evinced in forming and executing counsels in the formation and government of the world and the scriptures

From an online dictionary, the word “wisdom”:

1. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight.
2. Common sense; good judgment: “It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things” (Henry David Thoreau).
- 3a) The sum of learning through the ages; knowledge: “In those homely sayings was couched the collective wisdom of generations” (Maya Angelou).
- 3b) Wise teachings of the ancient sages.
4. A wise outlook, plan, or course of action.
5. Wisdom - *Bible*. Wisdom of Solomon.

1.5.2 How valuable is wisdom?

Prov 3:13-18 *Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.* There can be little doubt that wisdom is highly prized, a thing of great value to God, which is why God gives it freely and generously to those who ask.

Prov 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.* If the “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of wisdom, then this “fear” must be even more valuable than the wisdom itself. The word translated fear has additional meanings which include reverence, respect, and piety. This verse is much more well known than understood. It is central to the understanding of salvation and salvation is certainly of greater value than wisdom. I say it is central because, if you consider Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus (Jn 3) and again with the woman at the well (Jn 4), in both cases the point Jesus made was that he was in fact Lord. The woman didn’t fully comprehend it in theological terms, but she quickly grasped the concept that the man she encountered had both power and authority and, as a benevolent power, she was more than happy to submit to Jesus’ authority. With regard to Nicodemus, Jesus’ dialog with him was according to what he understood. There was no mistake in either his or the woman’s mind who Jesus claimed to be, nor was there any doubt that Jesus required acknowledgment and submission to that authority.

1.5.3 How do we get wisdom?

Jn 14:14 *“If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”* **Method 1: Ask for it.** As if our feature verse wasn’t enough. Read the context of Jn 14:14 for a full understanding.

Dan 1:17 “As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” **Method 2: God knows you need it, so He imparts it** whether you seek it or not. In this case, those who received were called by God for a specific purpose and the giving of special insight was necessary for them to carry out the assigned task. I think there are many great examples of this in scripture. Noah comes to mind as another good example. Information was certainly thrust upon all sort of people in the bible. Of course, they were almost always people God was using, people who were seeking God. They found him, all right.

Gen 3:6 “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise¹, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” {(1) or to give insight} **Method 3: We get it for ourselves, from sources not intended by God.** That’s pretty common. In fact, there’s a lot in the bible about false teachers and false prophets and such. Satan is the father of lies. You don’t have to encounter Satan in person to encounter lies. Of course the tree of knowledge had God’s good fruit on it, but the wisdom Eve came by was the result of *listening to* a lie. She wasn’t supposed to have it. But when we seek and accept knowledge from sources other than God, we will find lies in place of God’s true wisdom. When we find truth through unintended sources, it’s usually referred to as losing innocence.

Ps 111:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!” **Method 4: Seek God** and you will start the process of obtaining wisdom. Remember Prov 3:18 from the previous question? The key part was “She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.” Certainly wisdom, at least a form of wisdom, is imparted with true salvation. Wisdom is part of the package deal with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The ultimate fruit? Eternal life.

1.5.4 How much wisdom can we get?

1 Ki 4:29 “And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore.” This verse illustrates what is available. The passage in context goes on at length to describe a few areas of Solomon’s expanded wisdom, but suffice it to say God is God, and he can give as much as he sees fit to whom and when he sees fit.

We know there are various ways to acquire wisdom. Since we know there’s plenty to be had, then ask yourself, how much wisdom do you need? Consider Solomon’s life. He enjoy a great gift from God. Still, in his latter years he grew headstrong with his gift, taking about 1000 women as wives and concubines and such, and drifted further and further from the Lord. He was morose and depressed, and his writings expressed these sentiments. As for me, I seek to know what the Lord wants me to know. I seek discernment. I seek to know and to the degree possible understand his will. I seek to share what knowledge and wisdom I receive. I seek to give him the glory for what I receive, and for being that much wiser to know what not to give me. The free gift most valuable of all is the gift of eternal life, and that comes by faith, not wisdom. Wisdom comes from God, to those with faith, and it is not the other way around (Jas 1:6-7).

1.5.5 What do we do with wisdom?

Phil 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* Imagination is probably the biggest limitation. That said, some things are more worthwhile than others. Here's a few I'd suggest:

Mt 28:19-20 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* Certainly the most important work we can do in service to our Lord is to share the good news of his gift with other so that they too might share.

1 Pe 3:15 *but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;* This is where the rubber hits the road, so to speak. Every person is unique and every situation is different. Wisdom is necessary in order to adapt to situations and people, to communicate with them in a way they understand, and to demonstrate love in the most meaningful way possible to that individual so that they will open their hearts to receive the good news. For us as individuals this means being prepared with the armor of God and being skilled like a surgeon with your sword, which is the Word of God.

1 Jn 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* (Read v1-6 for the full context.) While service to others is the most noble endeavor, and being prepared for the task of sharing the gospel is the most useful application, discernment is also essential for each of us as individuals. We must be able to discern Truth so that we cannot be fooled and lead astray, lost to temptation, or drawn into arguments of circular logic or otherwise drawn away from telling the complete and accurate message of the good news.

I would summarize discernment as a type of wisdom specific to dealing with incoming information, regardless of the form of sensory perception used.

1.5.6 What kind of responsibility does wisdom entail?

Jas 4:17 *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* It seems one could define wisdom as the opposite of sin. Maybe that's why wisdom is so important.

1.5.7 To whom is wisdom available?

Referencing our focus verse, the answer seems to lie within. Speaking to the believers scattered about, James says "if any of you..." From this we know at a minimum, believers can receive divine wisdom because that is to whom his letter was addressed. James then instructs us to ask God. So, perhaps it is only to the believers who ask. Well, we know from one of our earlier questions that divine wisdom comes from God for various reasons and in various ways. Requesting it, however, does ensure availability. Next, James says God "gives generously to all." You might jump on this and say God's wisdom is then available to anyone, whether they believer or not, only for the asking. I've got three problems with such a thought. First, the word "all" modifies the "him" who is asking. "All" does not stand on its own in this sentence. My second problem is derived from the passage in Jn 14:13-14 where Jesus assures the believer

that requests made “in his name” would be granted. Third, and most important, is to continue reading James 1:6 and beyond for the full context of these few words we are concentrating on today. James 1:6 says, *But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind.* This definitely places a bit of a restriction on availability. In fact, it clearly confirms and conforms to the first two issues I brought up.

When we ask God for something, we are communicating with Him. Prayer takes a lot of forms. Making requests is one of those forms. We are given plenty of instructions about how to pray. Jesus said to worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). Jesus also proclaimed he was Truth (Jn 14:6). Mt 6:7-8 form a preamble to the Lord’s Prayer and tell us how to pray. These instructions conform perfectly to the instructions about worship, which is why I brought up the subject. To me, prayer is a form of worship. I’m not entirely certain scripture says that specifically, but I am at a loss as to how to say prayer isn’t a form of worship. So, the instructions about worship would seem to also fit perfectly with prayer. My point with all this is to say, it isn’t just the asking, but asking and believing, and if you’re asking with true faith you will be asking not for your own sake, but for the sake of the Lord that you receive his gift of wisdom. In fact, wisdom is only one of many things you can request from God. James merely focuses on wisdom so that the reader will be able to gain divine understanding of the Word. What greater desire is there short of salvation itself?

But that’s not all, folks. James goes on to say “gives generously to all without reproach.” KJV uses the words “giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.” Knowing the limitations of “all,” you also need to remember divine wisdom is a gift. Like salvation, it cannot be earned, only requested. The request is valid only when made in true faith. When the request is made in true faith, God does promise to answer in the affirmative such a request. In fact, more than answer yes, we are promised a generous (liberal) share. So, the news only gets better!

The phrase “without reproach” or “upbraideth not” says to me that God not only will say yes, but he is seeking us to make this request. He longs to provide us with divine wisdom, if only we will ask. Certainly, the act of physically making the request is not always required, but the only sure way to get the gift is to ask.

Finally, will notice a subtle change in this lesson. I’ve been referring to “divine wisdom” rather than simply wisdom. I think there are different kinds of wisdom. All have value. Divine wisdom, unlike worldly wisdom or simply acquired information (knowledge), is special because it isn’t something we can lay hold of without supernatural involvement. I wanted to make this very clear because it is easy to be confused.

1.5.8 How does wisdom differ from knowledge?

Knowledge (as defined by Dictionary.com):

1. The state or fact of knowing.
2. Familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study.
3. The sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered, or learned.
4. Learning; erudition: *teachers of great knowledge.*
5. Specific information about something.
6. Carnal knowledge.

To me, knowledge means to have a certainty about information.

To me, wisdom is essentially putting information to work by discerning and making the best possible choices based on available information (certain or otherwise).

Prov 1:20-22 *Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Godly wisdom cries out for the lost. It begs for the lost to come and know the Lord. If you know the Lord, if you understand salvation, of what value is it if you do not stretch out your hand with your information as a gift to those who need it? They may resist, longing to remain carnal, but the wise will cry out, weeping for the lost, seeking to teach them about the Lord and Savior.*

Prov 8:12 *I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.* Wisdom is seeking. Wisdom not only seeks to share itself with the lost, but to grow and increase itself along the way. There is no way to fully know everything there is to know about God. But, that does not excuse us from making the effort to grow in our knowledge, love and obedient service of him every day.

We've looked at wisdom many ways and could surely write a book exploring it, but to what avail? Would it be wise to use so much time learning *about* wisdom rather than *growing* our wisdom? I think not.

James 1:6

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. “But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” — NIV

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” — KJV

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.” ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:6 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

aiteo ask, beg, crave, desire, require **de** [1161] and, but, now... (conjunction) **en** [1722] preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through... **pistis** [4102] credence, moral conviction, reliance on Christ, belief, faith, fidelity **medeis** [3367] none, not, nothing **diakrino** [1252] withdraw from, oppose, discriminate, contend, discern, doubt, judge, be partial **ho** [3588] the (article or indefinite pronoun) **gar** [1063] verily, therefore, yet, no doubt, as, because that **diakrino** [1252] withdraw from, oppose, discriminate, contend, discern, doubt, judge, be partial **eiko** [1503] resemble, be like **kludon** [2830] rush or surge of the sea, raging wave **thaddaios** [2281] Thaddaeus (one of the Apostles) **anemizo** [0416] toss or drive with the wind **kai** [2532] and, also, even, so then, too **rhipizo** [4494] breeze up, agitate waves, toss

1.6.0 Introduction to James 1:6

Verse 6 adds a critical clause to verse 5 by stating in effect that doubt voids the promise in verse 5. One could think of this as a technicality or loop hole, but the simple fact is that faith in our Lord is required for salvation and our eternal hope, so it only seems reasonable to require faith for anything we seek from our Heavenly Father. James also paints a wonderful picture with words here as he describes the nature of one whose faith is insecure. Verse 6 explores faith and how to makes request of God.

1.6.1 What is faith?

Heb 11:1 *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

“Faith” — from Dictionary.com:

1. Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing.
2. Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. (Ref. Synonyms at of belief and trust).

3. Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance: *keeping faith with one's supporters.*
4. often Faith Christianity. The theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will.
5. The body of dogma of a religion: *the Muslim faith.*
6. A set of principles or beliefs.

It is pretty obvious from this passage James is instructing us to ask with faith in God. Not ourselves. Not others. Certainly not Satan. We are asking God for wisdom, it is in God we should have our faith. James goes on to proclaim that God doles out wisdom generously and will not be unhappy with such a request, nor will he be picky about who he gives this gift to. One of my personal favorite verses is 1 Thess 5:24, which states "*He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*"

1.6.2 Faith: Sell, Tell, or Do?

Gen 25:29-34 *Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. Faith can be sold. I agree it's not a good idea, though.*

Mt 7:21 *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Do tell of your faith, but live your convictions else your words will not be heard by man or God.*

Heb 11:8-9 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. Faith isn't to be sold or told. It is to be lived. By living, I mean doing. By doing, I mean acting upon your convictions. To say you believe something (to tell) means nothing if you aren't living the life of which you speak. Of course the great commission commands us to go forth and spread the good news, but even in the going we are acting in faith. The act of telling is an act, I admit. Even so, the telling presupposes a lifestyle of action, living out the articles of what you believe. Else the telling is just wind rustling the leaves.*

1.6.3 Have you asked for wisdom or something else you thought God should honor and not received it? Why Not?

There could be more than one answer. Everyone is unique, and God treats us all as such. These are some answers I found. If you know of others, please add them to the list...

Ps 69:13 *But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. Sometimes it's a matter of timing.*

Ro 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

Sometimes God knows our request isn't what is best for us. This is usually because we are making requests outside his will. It is wonderful that the Spirit knows us better than we know ourselves, and God knows not only our needs, but the needs of others and his own divine plan. Sometimes we are too weak to make the right request - whether weak in knowledge or wisdom or body or spirit or faith. This is not a license, rather it is insurance.

John 4:23-24 *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.* How we make petitions is as important as what we petition for. God already knows our hearts and our needs. He awaits our requests in expression of our faith. We need to come humbly, though, and say our prayers with the fullest honesty of our hearts, with an attitude of worship as well as faith.

Mt 21:21 *And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen.* Doubt is the biggest reason prayers go unanswered.

1.6.4 How do we ask?

The passage itself does nicely answering several important aspects of this question. For one thing, don't be doubting. That's a sure fire way to miss God's ear with your request. Faith is critical to receiving wisdom or just about anything else we request. Here are a few other supporting verses...

1 Jo 5:14 *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* We need confidence in Him (faith again) to be heard, but we also need to be making requests that are in accord with His will.

Jn 15:14-16 *You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* In this passage Jesus is revealing to his disciples not only the honor of being able to make requests with expectations of an answer, but the surrounding verses reveal a great deal about our end of the bargain. For one thing, Jesus is telling the disciples that they are more than mere servants, they are also friends. He declares them as friends because they DO what Jesus has requested of them. He also indicates that the divine revelations of knowledge are of God (spoken through the very mouth of Jesus thus far, but later also through the Holy Spirit) are given to them for their friendship. These guys were selected as friends because up to that point they obeyed, the Lord knew he could expect them to continue in obedience, and had specific missions for them to perform in the future. For the purpose of carrying out the missions given by God, God promises to equip them with anything they need to get their jobs done by simply asking.

There's a lot of meat to this passage from John 15, more than we have time to explore, but consider this example from real life. If you work for an employer, you exchange your time

and effort in exchange for pay. You are assigned specific duties. Isn't it reasonable to expect the boss to give you the things you need to get the job done? Would you be a receptionist and not be given a phone? Sometimes our bosses don't know what we need to do our jobs, they overlook things, they are trying to penny-pinch, or they just want to see if we can figure out what we need on our own. God isn't quite like any of those, but He does want us to rely on him because he is true and dependable, he wants a relationship beyond boss-slave. He is faithful to us and only seeks the same courtesy to be returned. He will give us what we ask so that we might be what we were designed to be, the workmanship of his hand to do the good work he has for us (Eph 2:10). We are not saved by works, but we were designed to live out works, performed in love and obedience, fully equipped as sewers of the good seed.

Mt 6: 9-13 *Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* The Lord's Prayer is useful to this discussion for several reasons, but my focus will be on the mood. The prayer Jesus uses as an example is gushing with humility. We must realize that if we are making a request, it is because we are asking for something we cannot obtain on our own and we need the Lord. We must indeed be dependent and broken, asking wholly in faith. Why would you pray for something if you could get it or make it or do it yourself?

1.6.5 Why does God answer NO?

I'm first going to summarize a few points about how we get to the point of God having something to answer. First, there's the asking. Ask something outside of God's will you generally get a big fat NO. Ask for something out of selfishness, again you will probably get a NO. Ask for something and not believe God will hear you or answer, another likely NO. If you get a yes to any of these, either the answer didn't come from God, or God has a plan that happened to include what you wanted in spite of you.

Then there's the tough ones like illness, injury, and "Paul's thorn." Sometimes we have very real problems. That's how we see them, anyway. We may have all the faith to move a mountain and all the patience to ask a million times, but we just don't recognize how something could be outside God's will. We pray in faith, we pray in the spirit, and we believe, and still get zilch. Here's some hope for you...

Isaiah 55:8 says, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.* Our field of vision is limited. We aren't all knowing. We aren't all seeing. We aren't all powerful. These are all good reasons to be asking, but they are also all good reasons to for a NO answer. This leads to the next scripture reference...

2 Cor 12:9 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* Sometimes God has a higher purpose for what we think of as a problem. We want the problem fixed because we perceive it to be a weakness. In our limited minds we think God could better use us if we weren't so broken. This very well may not be the case at all. It isn't up to us how God uses us, it is up to Him. It is still okay to ask, but we should

find joy in our trials when he uses those trials for His glory. Our weakness is for His sake, but it is also for ours. We just don't see it that way. Would we realize our need for God if we were already perfected in this life? As for me, I'm not sure I would say yes.

1 Cor 13:11-12 *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* We start our walk with the Lord as children, new creations, born again. Children ask many questions. We do our best to answer them. Children often don't understand, or at least don't fully understand the answers we give. Sometimes we give a NO answer to a child to protect them from harm or to protect their innocence. Sometimes we say NO because we have something better we want to give them. Sometimes we say NO because their birthday is coming up and its already been purchased as a present for them. I think God does a lot of things like that, but I also know that just as Paul says here, we can look forward with hope to having full understanding when we are in the Lord's presence. Another aspect to consider is our spiritual maturity. As we grow, we learn. We learn what to ask and how. Our faith grows. Our love grows. Our discernment grows. Our wisdom grows.

Rev 21:4 *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* This to me says that the hard things will be dealt with, though perhaps not in this life. The day will come when every tear will be wiped away. Maybe you find this comforting and maybe you find it frustrating. For me it is a comfort.

As for what you asked for: Some things, like wisdom, are promised without strings (James 1:5), except of course for asking in faith. What draws us toward God is pretty much a given. What distracts us from God is not.

1.6.6 How much faith is required in order to receive?

– Mt 17:20 *“Because you have so little faith, I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to the mountain move here to there and it will be moved. Nothing will be impossible for you.”* To put this in context, the disciples asked Jesus why they were unable to drive out a demon. This was Jesus' reply. If it only takes the faith of a mustard seed to drive out a demon, it seems unlikely the Lord would require any greater faith to answer a prayer for something he wants to give you, like wisdom.

In the dialog between Jesus and the woman at the well in Jn 4, Jesus speaks of worshipping in spirit and truth (v. 23-24). Ro 8:26 speaks of how the spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. I bring these items up because the overall context of this paragraph from James has to do with the central concept of making a request to the Lord for wisdom. Communication with God can take many forms, but to me it is all prayer. To come with a right attitude, humbly, to acknowledge the sovereignty of God (Lk 11:1), is the essence of worship. When we make requests, to be “in spirit and truth” they are by definition within the will of God. Even they the Lord may not answer as quickly as we like or exactly in the manner we would like, but still he will provide for us what is best for the Kingdom.

1.6.7 What is doubt?

Based on the combined definitions of the English word doubt from the dictionary and the Greek word translated doubt or wavering, in layman's terms I would say doubt is an active skepticism, an unbelief in something that would prevent trusting or taking action based on what is doubted.

From the dictionary:

(Verb form)

1. To be undecided or skeptical about: began to doubt some accepted doctrines. 2. To tend to disbelieve; distrust: doubts politicians when they make sweeping statements. 3. To regard as unlikely: I doubt that we'll arrive on time.

Archaic. To suspect; fear. 4. To be undecided or skeptical.

(Noun Form)

1. A lack of certainty that often leads to irresolution. See Synonyms of "uncertainty". 2. A lack of trust. 3. A point about which one is uncertain or skeptical: reassured me by answering my doubts. 4. The condition of being unsettled or unresolved: an outcome still in doubt.

No Doubt: Certainty, Probably.

From a Greek lexicon:

Greek transliteration - Diakrino

NT Usage - 18 times - doubt 5, judge 3, discern 2, contend 2, waver 2, miscellaneous 5

Definition - 1. to separate, make a distinction, discriminate, to prefer 2. to learn by discrimination, to try, decide 3. to determine, give judgment, decide a dispute 4. to withdraw from one, desert 5. to separate one's self in a hostile spirit, to oppose, strive with dispute, contend 6. to be at variance with one's self, hesitate, doubt

1.6.8 Why is doubt such a poison to our prayers?

Ro 14:23 *But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.* The second sentence here is the focus.

We know the law stands. We know that Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law on our behalf. We know that while works are important and have their place, it is grace alone which saves because our works cannot perfect us. While Paul was speaking of food in the first sentence, the second sentence here seems to stand on its own and would also seem to apply universally.

I bring up this verse from Paul because faith appears to me to be in almost every sense the opposite of faith. Just as faith leads to good works, doubt leads to bad works. James does an excellent job of presenting contrasts throughout the first chapter of his letter. We will see many more examples as we go.

How faith and doubt are similar:

Just like faith, doubt in and of itself is an intangible. It is like a psychological seed. What we think, we do. What we believe, we act upon. Also, both faith and doubt

are related to how we respond to information presented to our various senses. For example, if you read a newspaper, we can believe or doubt the weather forecast. The information was presented, we read it, and we elect our response. Faith and doubt are both decisions.

How faith and doubt differ:

The difference is our response to information. The actions of the response are the outer works resulting from our inner decision. Faith is the seed which grows into works based on an affirmative hope in the good news of Jesus. The seed of doubt grows into active denial of the Lord and His grace.

Doubt poisons because:

Faith and doubt cannot both hold our attention at the same time. Ro 14:23b (*For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin*) indicates the obvious. Faith and doubt are mutually exclusive. Since faith is the requirement for salvation, if doubt crowds out faith there's no salvation.

1.6.9 Why do people doubt Jesus? (Are you one of them?)

– Jn 20:24-25 *Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”*

Based on the definition given earlier and the various things scripture has to say about doubt, I would say that the reason for doubting the good news of Jesus Christ can be summed up as **refusal to accept the information as fact and trust it to be accurate**. The real question then is, why is the information (gospel message) not trusted?

1 Thess 5:24 *but test everything; hold fast what is good. **The information comes from an unknown or dubious source.*** There is nothing wrong with taking steps to verify the accuracy of a message. Be sure God is speaking. If you find it is in fact God speaking, then you have no excuse for not obeying. If you find it to be a false source, then you need to use your armor.

Jn 8:14 *Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. **Not enough information.*** At some point things have to be taken on faith. That said, if you simply don't have enough information, how can you make a good decision? The modern church is riddled with “easy believism” theology. Many flocks are not being fed with the nutrients needed to grow strong and stand firm. If the gospel were presented in its complete and raw form, some would find Christ who were not convinced by the simple messages while some of the simple message lovers would be shown for who they are.

Lk 22:60 *But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. **Fear.*** It is natural to fear the unknown. Throughout scripture we are chastened to fear the Lord. That isn't quite the same as fearing a

snake or a spider. Fearing God is like fearing your father's belt — it is more like respect. In this case, Peter was afraid for his life. He forgot the promises of Jesus and reacted out of fear rather than faith. Peter forgot the words of David in Ps 118:6 *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*

Lk 23:34 *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.* **Denial.** Sometimes we are in denial because we like how things are and we refuse to accept something new and different. The guards casting lots we eye witnesses of God's power. They saw the signs.

Mt 19:21-22 *Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* **Difficulty.** When we realize we have to do something that isn't easy, sometimes we give up. The rich young man in this encounter is a prime example.

Isaiah 28:21 *For the Lord will rise up as on Mount Perazim; as in the Valley of Gibeon he will be roused; to do his deed—strange is his deed! and to work his work—alien is his work!* **Strangeness.** God is a mystery. He does things we can't fathom. Some just can't grasp the gospel because it too foreign to the worldly things they do understand.

2 Jn 1:7 *For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.* **Competing Information.** Many would dilute or modify the good news of Jesus Christ. The world itself offers a great many things (temptations) to also serve as distractions. Satan uses every means at his disposal to try and keep us from obedience.

1 Tim 4:12 *Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* **Bad Examples.** It is no wonder we aren't successful in communicating the good news when we don't give an example of its value to the world.

1.6.10 What command does Jesus give regarding doubt?

Jn 18:17 *The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."* To put Thomas into perspective, we will examine Peter's example of doubt. Peter illustrated perfectly the fruit of doubt. Peter expressed doubt through action whereas Thomas expressed doubt in words. Thomas is often looked down upon by modern Christianity, but he was honest enough to admit he doubted and explained what it would take to remove the doubt. Peter, on the other hand, said one thing and did another. Doubt became sin when Peter denied knowing Jesus.

Jn 20:8 *Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed* This verse takes place immediately after the girls find the tomb empty and they've called the men to see the empty tomb. We cannot be certain who the "other disciple" was, but we know that for them, seeing meant believing.

Jn 21:17 *He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was*

grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” Jesus forgave Peter for his moment of doubt. Just as Peter’s doubt was an act rather than mere words, Peter was given specific work to do in order to act in faith.

Jn 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” First, Jesus revealed himself just as he did to the other disciples following the resurrection. It was only after Jesus removed the excuse for doubt that he told Thomas to stop doubting and believe.

In word and deed, Jesus commands that we put aside doubt and replace it with belief.

1.6.11 How do you suppose God feels about doubt?

Jn 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Lk 24:36-40 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

Both with Thomas and with those gathered and waiting, there was doubt. In both cases Jesus recognized the doubt and took away their excuses for it. To me this indicates a great deal of mercy from one who obviously doesn’t need to stoop to our level. Rather, Jesus – the divine manifestation of God in the flesh – proactively addressed doubt directly. I am grateful for the testimony of mercy given here, because without the loving mercy, our all powerful almighty God would have no reason not to squash us like bugs and dispose of us like vermin. Surely God doesn’t have much use for doubt because he admonishes us to turn from doubt to belief. That’s the summary of his mission on earth. He proved his mercy and in so doing sought to return our attention and trust to His glory rather than our own.

1.6.12 How should you treat someone who has doubts?

Jude 22 “And have mercy on those who doubt.” Just as the Lord takes mercy on us in our doubt, actively intervening in our lives to overcome our doubts, he wants us to be merciful toward fellow believers who doubt. This does not mean we accept doubt, but rather we should follow Christ’s example of dealing with doubt by demonstrating the truth and removing all excuse for doubt. Love them, help them, show them, teach them challenge them and get them to think deeply and independently as you have. As they grow, go with them until they can persevere on their own. Don’t enable, don’t do it for them, but encourage and motivate them so they will succeed. I think this is a great way to show God’s love, and love covers a multitude of sins.

1.6.13 What does doubt cause you to do?

Our focal passage (Jas 1:5-8) speaks nicely to this question. It says doubt causes us not to

receive anything from the Lord. This question ties together all the other questions previously raised about doubt. Doubt was defined as essentially the opposite (or absence) of faith. If one doubts God, they lack faith and in fact are in a condition of unbelief. Without belief we cannot be saved (ref Jn 3:16) and we will act in disobedience (ref Heb 4:6). James says that the doubter is double-minded and unstable. He essentially says the doubter is wishy-washy and gullible. The doubter is a sucker. W. C. Fields said “There’s a sucker born every minute.” Sadly he was right. If we are true believers, no small part of our obedience to our Lord is to reveal our Lord accurately to non-believers and believers who have doubt.

If you doubt and are therefore unstable in your values, you will be easy prey for temptation. Temptation begets sin which begets death (ref James 1:14-15). Doubt is like the AIDS virus. It doesn’t kill directly, but makes you susceptible to death by common disease (common temptation).

1.6.14 Do you think doubt is the same as worry?

Some people confuse doubt and worry. Doubt is the opposite or absence of faith.* Worry means to be anxious, which is to say being troubled with cares. While the two concepts are unique, worry tends to lead to doubt. We can worry about a lot of things, but aside from reducing our productivity, when we worry we tend to dwell on the “what if” scenarios in our minds. Worry may generate fear, but it may just as easily cause us to start justifying our concerns and taking control away from God. When we do this, we do the same thing as Eve – we presume to become like God in our superiority, doubting God’s authority by replacing it with our own.

To illustrate worry, consider Mt 6:27 in the following translations:

ESV: And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

KJV: Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

NIV: Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Each of these popular translations conveys the concept of worry differently. After researching the Greek further I would be satisfied to accept any of the three renderings of the verse, though in this case KJV does a more accurate job of rendering cubits to stature as opposed to the other versions which render hours to life. The word translated worry (NIV) and thought (KJV) appears to be most accurately translated as anxious (ESV).

Okay, forget all the technical stuff. The point is no, doubt and worry aren’t the same, but odds are favorable that worry could lead to doubt.

*Someone pointed out to me that momentary doubt is okay, we can grow either faith or sin from moments of doubt. I disagree completely for several reasons. For one, if we doubt, it is only when we decided to trust that the doubt is overcome by faith. For this to happen, by grace the excuse for doubt is removed and facts are accepted so that our doubt is replaced by faith, even for a moment. The second reason I disagree is that in times of stress our genuine selves are exposed. When we have time for calm and composure it’s easier to say or do the “right” thing. Under stress, however, what we really think and feel and believe tends to be exposed. If

we say we're believers, any doubts we have are exposed in the moments of stress. I don't believe in momentary doubt, only momentary exposure of the doubt. God tests us in order to expose the doubt. If He can reveal it, we can see it, then He can refine us into faith by revealing himself in ways that remove the doubt and strengthen our faith. If our faith grows after expressing doubt, it is the supernatural effect of God refining us and releasing us from the doubts. Doubt, left on its own, is always a negative.

1.6.15 Why the sea analogy?

Isaiah 43:1-2a *But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;*

Have you ever been to sea? The ocean can be a violent and dangerous place. I spent four of my six years in the Navy at sea, stationed aboard the USS Tinosa (SSN-606). Submarines are strange vessels. For one thing, they're designed to sink. We had this saying: "A sub really only belongs one of two places – either tied to the pier or at least 400 feet below the surface." For all you land lubbers out there, this means you don't want to be sitting on the surface in a vessel shaped like an oblong bobber. The depths of the ocean are always stable, but on the surface, even in relatively mild seas, the boat is constantly shifting under your feet. In heavy seas it can be difficult to remain standing. I remember once when we came to periscope depth in the North Sea, I woke up in a bunk across the aisle from my own and one level lower after being ejected by the power of the waves against the hull.

The waves of the sea are pushed about according to whatever winds are pressed upon the waters. To survive the force of the sea, a vessel must be well made, which is to say solid and secure, something that will persevere and be steadfast in spite of the storms. Anyone can flail about out there in the waves, and those out there in the waves will only go where the winds take them, for only in Christ do we have a secure vessel that can carry us safely home. Remain in the safe ship (Christ) and you will make it to port (heaven).

James 1:7

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” — NIV

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” — KJV

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:7 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

me [3361] *not, no, none, never* **gar** [1063] *verily, therefore, yet, no doubt, as, because that* **oiomai** [3633] *make like ones self, suppose, think, image, be of the opinion* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **anthropos** [0444] *human, certain person* **ekeinos** [1565] *he, it, that...* **hoti** [3754] *that, which... (conjunction)* **lambano** [2983] *accept, attain, bring, have, hold, obtain, take up away* **tis** [5100] *anyone, anything, someone, something, somewhat* **para** [3844] *near* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **kurios** [2962] *Lord, Master, Sir*

1.7.0 Introduction to James 1:7

After describing the catch to receiving promises from God in verse 6, verse 7 spells it out very plainly. If you lack faith your requests will go unfilled. In this verse we look more deeply into why doubt is a reason not to receive from God. We also look at what it means to receive.

1.7.1 Why should the doubter not expect anything from the Lord?

Nu 21:4-9 *From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.* Passage provided for context.

Nu 21:4 *the people became impatient on the way.* (ESV). KJV says *and the souls of the people became much discouraged because of the way.* Either rendering seems to imply the people doubted Moses and, by extension, God. The doubt (lack of faith) caused the Lord to send the snakes (serpents) to bite them with poisonous venom. God made a provision, though, so as they were dying they had the choice to look upon the bronze serpent and live. The doubters couldn't expect to live, but the ones with enough faith looked and did live. Truly it takes a tiny amount of faith to find salvation, but you have to fix your gaze upon the true source of salvation. I also like this passage because it illustrates how faith can be restored and the doubt overcome. The grace of a God who allows us to return to him after wandering away in our consumption with self-pity, worry and doubt is humbling and remarkable.

1.7.2 What does receive mean?

The dictionary has a rather lengthy answer to this question which I will distill as follows: to take or acquire, get; to hear or see information; to have bestowed on oneself; to meet with or experience; bear the weight or force of, support; take or intercept the impact of; take in, hold or contain (such as a tank); to admit; greet or welcome; perceive or acquire mentally; regard with approval or disapproval; listen to and acknowledge formally and authoritatively.

In context with James 1:7, the question really has to do with receiving from God. As there is nothing we can earn from God, per se, anything we receive from Him is a gift. This includes anything from wisdom (v5) to salvation. In keeping with the context of our focal passage, receiving does depend on first asking, and then with a stipulation (faith).

The word “receive” is very important. Any gift isn't a gift until given. The giving isn't complete until the gift is received. Until the gift is used, it isn't fully received. It takes faith to use what God gives (see Nu 21 discussion from previous question). God offers wisdom, even to the point of writing a book and putting in our hands, but until we open that book and read it, we have not received it. How much faith does it take to simply open a book and read it? The same could be said of hearing the Word through preaching, observation of creation, or anything else.

What God says must be more than heard (or read), it must be obeyed. Obedience is the culmination of receiving, the full use of any gift given by God. This explains why obedience (deeds) is so closely associated with faith. When the snake bitten people looked at the bronze snake (Nu 21:9), they were obedient, thus demonstrating faith, thus the gift of salvation from the poison was received.

James said faith without works is dead (James 2:7). Some would say his teaching is contrary to Paul's, but they are wrong. In Eph 2:8-9 Paul preached the very important message that we must have the right attitude and think rightly, believing. The natural result of believing is obedience (works). James understood this principle. A lot of people ignore Paul's expression of the same concept in Romans 2:13. Understanding the concept of receiving from God, a topic generated by James 1:7, proves it. Eph 2:10 shows Paul also understood this principle. Faith is the requirement, and the purpose of believing is to become a doer of the Word. Just as faith without works is dead, Paul merely preached that works without faith is dead. The two principles are two sides of the same coin, thus I contend that James and Paul really preached messages which are in total agreement, completely without contradiction.

James 1:8

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” — NIV

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” — KJV

James 1:5-8 “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:8 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

aner [0435] *male individual* **dipsuchos** [1374] *double-minded, two-spirited, vacillating*
akatastatos [0182] *unstable, inconstant* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **pas** [3956] *all, any, every* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **hodos** [3598] *road, route, mode, means, journey, way* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)*

1.8.0 Introduction to James 1:8

James completes the paragraph by painting another picture with words. He describes the man lacking faith as double-minded and unstable. In this portion of the study we will look at even more deeply into doubt as well as instability.

1.8.1 How are double-minded and unstable defined?

Lk 16:13 *No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.* Although this passage from Luke’s gospel is talking about money, the principle of double-mindedness is well expressed. Jesus says you can’t have it both ways. One who is double-minded is a person who believes they can have it both ways in spite of the Truth that they cannot.

Double-minded. The Greek transliteration is dipsuchos. This Greek word is used only twice and both times by James. It literally means double-minded, uncertain, doubting, wavering, and divided interest.

Unstable. The Greek word akatastatos is defined as unstable, inconstant, and restless.

Since each of the major translations bring these words to English the same way, it seems safe to assume they are good words for us to use in this context.

1.8.2 How does worry contribute to this instability?

Mt 6:27 *And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?** Worry is a waste of time. Time wasted on fruitlessness means time not spent in obedience. The greater the worry, the greater the waste of time. The more time you waste, the less time available to obey. Excessive worry not only makes you less effectual, it can make you ineffectual to the point of being luke warm and summarily spat out. Satan loves the worrier because they aren't serving God, but they are slaves of their own cares.

Mt 6:24 *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.* If you are a worrier, you are given time which belongs to God and wasting it. Your mind is consumed with the world and your life and whatever else it is you worry so much about. Worry seems to have a lot to do with the development of doubt and subsequent instability which in turn leads to susceptibility to temptation, then sin, then – gulp – death. It is a wide road.

*Each of my major translations renders Mt 6:27 very differently, though the concept remains the same. For example, one version says worry and another says thought where ESV says anxious. KJV speaks of adding cubits to your stature where the other versions speak of adding hours to your life. For all you KJV fans out there, your version appears to be closest to the literal Greek on that last part of the phrase.

1.8.3 What can we expect from God if we are distracted by the world?

Jas 1:7 *For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;* It only takes a mustard seed's worth of faith to move a mountain (because we tell it to move in faith that God will move it as we've asked), but without faith our requests fall on deaf ears. If doubt means we won't receive and faith means we do receive, it only stands to reason that doubt opposes faith. Belief unites us into one body in Christ, but doubt divides us. Division causes instability. James merely reinforces this reason prayer goes unanswered by expounding in verse 8, explaining instability through doubt (double-mindedness), or if you prefer he's explaining doubt through instability.

1.8.4 What exactly does “ways” mean?

Greek [odios], syn.: road, progress, route, journey

Jn 14:6 *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* James use of the phrase “in all his ways” is the most compelling part of the passage for the argument that he speaks of a prolonged condition of doubt being the root cause of instability and unanswered prayer. We are instructed to ask God questions, seeking Him and His wisdom, so it is important not to confuse doubt (skepticism) with questioning. A question is asked when the answer isn't known. Doubt is disbelief of the answer. A moment of doubt may be thought of as a brief reluctance to accept an answer, and in some cases this may be true. The doubt which James speaks of, however, is certainly a state of mind which permeates the conscious mind and renders their faith null. Just as an instability

in a bridge will cause it to fracture and collapse, doubt causes faith to become unstable and collapse.

1.8.5 What is the remedy for the doubter?

Jn 20:27-28 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Thomas confessed his doubt before this encounter with Jesus. Jesus responded by taking away Thomas' excuse for doubting. Jesus commanded him to not disbelieve, but believe. Thomas then responded to Jesus in the only way that makes any sense at all. He exclaimed the divinity of Jesus and the full impact of Jesus' identity must have struck him to the quick. I can only imagine Thomas falling to his knees in abject humility. Jesus wasn't scolding Thomas in this encounter, rather he demonstrated incredible grace by giving Thomas the very thing he was bold enough to ask for: proof of Jesus authority, divinity, power, and mercy. In that moment Thomas came to know Jesus as his Lord. Is Jesus that real to you? Do you bow humbly before him as your Lord and Master? Yes, he is our friend. Yes, we are granted permission to cry Abba Father. But with that familiarity we must not lose perspective and forget that Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

1.8.6 Summary of James 1:5-8

James 1:5-8 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." — ESV

In the framework of these few verses we have learned a great deal. Wisdom was a topic that could have been the subject of its own book, but the important things to remember are that true wisdom comes from God, he gives generously, and he gives without prejudice.

We learned about how to make requests of God, and about requesting wisdom in particular. This led to discussing the chief requirement made of us when asking, and that is faith. James explains to us the nature of doubt and its impact on requests made of God, even of something as basic and as freely available as God's wisdom.

Faith is also the single requirement of salvation (Jn 3:16), though as we will learn later in the study of James, faith is not passive and it is not an intellectual knowledge. It takes substance in the form of behaviors which are based on core beliefs and values.

Worry distracts, making it easy to doubt, doubt leads to susceptibility to temptation, temptation to desire, desire to sin, and sin to death. The vaccine for this process is faith.

James 1:9

James 1:9-11 ⁹Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: ¹⁰But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. ¹¹For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. – KJV

James 1:9-11 ⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. – NIV

James 1:9-11 ⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:9 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
kauchaomai [2744] *boast, glory, joy, rejoice* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **adephos** [0080] *brother, sibling (connected by womb, literal or figurative)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **tapeinos** [5011] *base, depressed, cast down, low degree, humble* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **hupsos** [5311] *elevation, altitude, the sky; or be exalted, high degree* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)*

1.9.0 Introduction to James 1:9

This passage beginning with verse 9 continues through verse 11. Here James contrasts the high with the low, again using word-pictures, to illustrate how high and low socio-economic stature relate to spiritual conditions. Verse 9 talks about how the believer in a low social or financial status can rejoice in his high place with the Lord. While studying verse 9 we will concentrate on the nature of the “lowly brother.”

1.9.1 What does James mean by “lowly” brother?

The Greek word *tapeinos* is rendered low degree (KJV), humble circumstances (NIV), or lowly (ESV). *Tapeinos* literally means not rising far from the ground and metaphorically means a) as a condition: lowly, of low degree b) brought low with grief, depressed c) low in spirit, humble d) in a bad sense, deporting one’s self abjectly, deferring servilely to others. This word is used 8 times in the New Testament and in each case has a fundamentally similar rendering in English.

In context, James appears to be speaking of one’s societal or economic status more than their state of mind, particularly when you see James go on to contrast against the rich man in verse 10. When you step further back and look at this statement in context with the whole of the NT and consider the audience (James 1:1), the societal status of being rejects of the Jewish leadership places almost all of the believers in the category of lowly brothers. If you think of it

this way, the rich might also mean those rich in religion, but poor in spirit whereas the lowly Christian brother is beneath the contempt of the Sanhedrin yet is rich in spirit.

1.9.2 What exaltation can a lowly brother boast about?

James 2:5 *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?* From this reference it would seem that God favors the poor. This cannot be the right understanding, though, because we have specific instructions not to be prejudiced based on social status, and that includes the wealthy. Instead, I am reminded of the passage in 1 Peter 2 where Peter talks about Jesus as the cornerstone of our faith, yet also as the stumbling block of non-believers.

In Mt 9:13 Jesus says to the Pharisees: *Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.* Jesus offers something we must realize we need. Those who realize they are sinners in need of salvation are the ones who realize their low position. These are the people who humble themselves before God.

Mk 10:31 *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.* James merely reinforces what Jesus said. The exultation (lifting up) of the lowly is chiefly salvation, but extends to understanding and wisdom, receiving the Holy Spirit, and other features and benefits you receive as a part of the body of Christ.

Prov 28:11 *A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out.* They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The same can be said of wealth. The man who is rich in his own eyes is near sighted because he doesn't see beyond his worldly wealth. If a man can see beyond his own wealth to the wealth of God in the form of salvation, which is to say living in the eternal presence of the Lord in Heaven, he would be akin to the man Jesus describes in Mt 13:46-56 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.* Whatever we have in this world is nothing. When we realize that, when we allow ourselves to be poor in this world and reckon ourselves as such, then we may be exalted.

1.9.3 How is exultation or high position defined?

Greek: Hupsos. Defined as height 1) of measurement; 2) of place, heaven; 3) metaphorically rank or high station. The Greek word hupsos appears 6 times in scripture and in KJV is rendered "be exalted" only once, here in James. In the other cases it is rendered high, on high, or height.

In Lk 1:78, Lk 24:49, Eph 4:8 the hupsos used to describe a location. In Eph 3:18 and Rev 21:16 it is used to describe physical dimensions. James 1:9 is the only instance where hupsos is used metaphorically to describe a person's condition.

As we have seen several times already and will undoubtedly see many more times in our study, James artfully illustrates points by comparing and contrasting opposites. In this passage (James 1:9-11), James compares the lowly brother to the rich man. James compares the high or exalted position of the lowly man to the humiliation of the rich man. It seems logical that hupsos would, in context, mean the opposite of tapeinosis, the Greek word in James 1:10 translated as low (KJV and NIV) or humiliation (ESV). If one uses high for one, then low would

be the reasonable contrast. If one uses exalted, then humiliation would be the reasonable contrast.

English definitions:

Exalt: 1) to raise in rank, character, or status; to elevate. 2) to glorify, praise, or honor. 3) to increase the effect or intensity of, heighten. 4) to fill with sublime emotion - elate.

High: 1) having a relatively great elevation; extending upward. 2) extending a specified distance upward. 3) far from a reference point. 4) being at or near the peak or culminating stage. 5) advanced development 6) slightly spoiled or gamy or having a bad smell (as spoiled meat) 7) sound pitch as a large number of cycles per second 8) latitudes closer to a pole 9) great importance, rank, status, serious, climax, lofty stirring of events or themes 10) lofty or exalted in quality or character 11) greater than usual or expected in magnitude, cost, or degree 12) favorable 13) great force or violence 14) luxurious or extravagant 15) of or relating to vowels produced with part of the tongue close to the palate as in the long e sound 16) of or relating to gear configuration as in an automotive transmission producing maximum vehicular to engine speed ratio.

In my humble opinion either word (high or exalted) works. The metaphorical use of the original Greek word in context seems to convey a sense of condition. That condition (v9) shows the elevation of the low person. The first time examining the definitions of exalt and high one might conclude that they mean fundamentally the same thing and would be interchangeable. The word “exalt,” however, seems to convey more of a concept of a transition in progress toward higher position rather than already being at that higher position as with the word “high.” Since we don’t realize the fullness of God’s grace and glory in this life, only tasting it here, we hope for its fullness in Heaven. A person in low physical circumstances, therefore, is a person in the process of traveling along the narrow road to heaven. There can be no greater exaltation than salvation where we can come into the presence of Jesus and be allowed to remain. There can be no greater humiliation than being rejected by the ultimate source of grace. That said, to me the use of low and high as words to describe the conditions of poor and rich men seems insufficient when words like exalted and humiliated are available.

1.9.4 What is an example of the “lowly brother?”

2 Cor 6:10 *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.* Here Paul was discussing the nature of his ministry. Included in this description he counts himself as poor, yet making many rich. Paul describes himself as poor, having nothing. Paul understood that nothing in this world will last, and that our new bodies will live in a new place. We can’t take anything from here with us, so since we have nothing to keep, we are indeed poor as the world reckons poor. At the same time Paul indicates he possesses everything. This sounds foolish, but if you realize that having obtained salvation means eternal life basking in the love of our Savior where there will be no more tears, then truly he does possess everything he needs eternally. Paul speaks of making many rich. The only work of eternal value is working with the harvest. God will assign the specific work and the season for your labor, but the work is there to be done. The work of making others rich does not mean “working for the man,” but rather sharing the good news with others so that they too may become rich with knowledge of the Lord unto salvation.

James 1:10

James 1:9-11 ⁹Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: ¹⁰But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. ¹¹For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. – KJV

James 1:9-11 ⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. – NIV

James 1:9-11 ⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:10 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
ho [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)*
plousios [4145] *wealthy, rich* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **tapeinosis** [5014] *depression (in rank or feeling), made low, low estate, vile, humiliation* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **hoti** [3754] *that, which... (conjunction)* **hos** [5613] *while, even as, as soon as, since, so that... (adv)* **anthos** [0438] *flower, blossom* **chortos** [5528] *court or garden of vegetation* **parerchomai** [3928] *come near, approach, pass by or away; fig: perish, neglect, avert, past, transgress*

1.10.0 Introduction to James 1:10

Verse 10 establishes the contrast by introducing the rich man. It offers the rich man hope by instructing him how to come to the same joy as the poor man and why he needs to do so. In the study of this verse we shall examine the nature of riches, pride, and passing away.

1.10.1 How do you define wealth?

Col 2:2-3 *that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Paul was writing to folks he knew of behalf of other believers who hadn't actually met him face to face. Paul wanted to share with them the very most important thing he could share. Paul was a very wealthy man in the spirit. Though he certainly had the means to live comfortably in the world, he counted understanding and wisdom of God as more valuable than anything worldly. These treasures he sought to share, and no matter your opinion of Paul, he wrote more words which are today accepted as part of the NT than any other single NT author, and nearly all of them are letters to distant believers with whom he desperately desired to share from the riches of his trove of wisdom poured out to him from the Spirit.

Prov 10:22 *The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it. [1] ([1] alternate: and toil adds nothing to it)* I included the sub-note with this verse because it would sound more logical in English this way. For those of you who prefer KJV or NIV, they read like ESV here also, so it isn't just my translation. The note doesn't explain the reason for the alternate translation, either. I find the variation is important, however, for the sake of understanding the nature of true Godly wealth. Eph 2:8-9 proclaims grace comes by faith and not by works. This verse from Proverbs explains that the blessings of the Lord not only make us rich, but (using the alternate interpretation) no works we can do will change His blessing of richness. To me this confirms yet again that Jesus never changes, his words are a constant, and that salvation has always been available through unearned grace, requiring faith.

1.10.2 Does God care if you have material wealth?

Mt 19:16-26 *And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Here Jesus is saying it is hard, but then he says it is possible. The problem isn't the person having the possession. The problem is possessions having the person.*

Looking for examples from scripture to help answer this question, Job is the first person I would look at. Job 1:2-3 says, *There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.* Job started out with great material wealth. Job cared for God and for his children. So much so he daily gave offerings on behalf of his children because his heart so yearned that they love God as he did (Job 1:5). God cared about Job, not his things. That's why he allowed Satan to take everything from Job, short of his life. In the end Job remained faithful to God. He wasn't perfect, and God did straighten Job out about a few things, but when the test was complete Job was given far more than he'd started with (Job 42:10-17). Through all the ups and downs, Job and God cared more about each other than things or words of other men. Regardless of what rewards might be available to us in this life, if our heart is constantly yearning for and seeking God such that we obey Him in our love, then our ultimate reward will far greater than anything we could hope for in this life.

There are many more examples like this, such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, even Jonah. People who sought God through various trials and went through ups and downs, but whether they

were enjoying a period of earthly prosperity or loss, they kept their eyes on the Lord who saw them through it all.

So to answer the question, I really don't think God cares how "well we do" in terms of material wealth if we keep our attention on Him. Whatever wealth we have (or don't have) serves His purpose. We fool ourselves to think our purpose is our own, so we should just simply accept His purpose and embrace it.

1.10.3 What should you do with material wealth?

Mk 10:21 *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* Jesus did one thing consistently, and that was to confront people with whatever lie they believed. He always told them what the lie was, and that they must forsake that lie and align themselves with Truth, which is to say accepting the fact Jesus is Lord and submitting accordingly. In this case, Jesus confronted the rich young man with his false god, his wealth. If the man would have turned from his false god (wealth) and accepted the Lordship of Jesus, he would have been happy. Instead, he went away sad. The man might have known Proverbs 10:15 and simply misunderstood it. Or perhaps he felt the money brought him happiness and Jesus wasn't offering what he thought was better. That's the flaw discussed in the third reference today (below).

Prov 10:15 *A rich man's wealth is his strong city; the poverty of the poor is their ruin.* Most people would read this and think God is saying we need to accumulate wealth in this life as best we can to protect our families and avoid ruin. I confess, I thought the same thing myself when I first read it. Then, with prayer, God revealed something more to me. There are at least two other ways of looking at this passage. First, the spiritual wealth of the Holy Spirit places you in the company of fellow believers, a part of the Body of Christ. There is strength in numbers, and the New Jerusalem is surely going to be a fine city. The poverty of the poor, in contrast, speaks to the spiritually poor who will face ruin in that day. Second: Yet another revelation about this verse can be drawn from the "golden rule." If you share your wealth, you build a stronger community. Share your material wealth with your fellow believers who are less fortunate and your whole group benefits. It tears down strife and envy and you fulfill what James calls a good religion (Jas 1:27). The poor, and more specifically those who see themselves as having very little, thus are unwilling to share what little they do have and are ruined by their hardened hearts. They are truly ruined.

Rev 3:15-18 *I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.* In this passage the Lord is speaking to the Church of Laodicea. This passage could be the subject of weeks of study, but I'm going to get to what I think applies to the question at hand. The Lord is telling these people they don't realize how wretched they are, wallowing in their wealth instead of helping those who really need it. These are people who are well to do and

think they've gotten what the Lord has to give them. They don't see they've been deceived. Their wealth is a lie, distracting them from true obedience to the Lord's highest command – to love one another. If they loved one another, they would serve each other while serving the Lord. In fact, they would serve those in need because in doing so, they are serving the Lord. If they would see themselves as God sees them, they would realize the need to zealously help those less fortunate and would step into the mission field right before their eyes. You don't have to travel 5000 miles to be a missionary. Sometimes 5 feet will be far enough. By repenting (changing their thinking to align themselves to God), they would through their obedience by buying the gold of true wealth, the white robes which cover our shame, and the anointing which allows us to see clearly what is now so dim.

1.10.4 What do you think about these situations (Straw Man Exercise):

1. If a man steals a million dollars from a bank, should he tithe it?
2. If you represented the church receiving money from a criminal, would you have any problems accepting the money once you found out where it came from?
3. Now replace "steals" with "wins", replace "bank" with "casino", and replace "criminal" with "winner". Would it make any difference? Why or why not?

About Theft

Ex 20:15 *You shall not steal.* This makes the thief a sinner. We know that through the merciful Grace of Jesus that any sin may be forgiven. Forgiveness of sin and erasure of earthly consequences are not the same thing. God doesn't want to receive the stolen goods (Mal 1:13). It's a felony. Legally it would be your responsibility to turn in the thief, no matter their intended use for the ill-gotten gain.

About Gambling

Ex 20:17 *You shall not covet...* I read numerous well written arguments concerning gambling and concluded that gambling violates the tenth commandment. The purpose of gambling is to acquire money through no honest work, and to quickly accumulate that wealth. It is the desire for wealth that drives gambling, circumventing God's intended methods accumulating wealth.

Isaiah 65:11-12 refers to people who *set a table for Fortune and cups of mixed wine for Destiny.* Fortune and Destiny were both ancient far east gods representing what amounts to gambling. In that passage the Lord goes on to say death awaits them because they forget the Lord, delighting in evil.

2 Ki 18:23 is part of a passage that speaks of a wager offered by the King of Assyria to King Hezekiah. In context this would seem to support a position against gambling, but it isn't explicit.

Lottery

Searching for the subject of casting lots I found more than 20 entries. In most cases those casting lots were determining God's will. Some examples include Aaron, Joshua, Saul, David, Joel, Obediah, Jonah etc. That seems to run counter to our notions about gambling. Pr 16:33 puts these events in context by explaining why the people of God would gamble for their decisions: *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*

Where the casting of lots may be a tool God can use for decision making, casting lots to gamble money is entirely different matter, falling clearly into the purview of Isaiah 65. It is from casting lots that we get our modern term lottery.

Straw Man Summary

The bottom line is the money from theft or from a get-rich scheme such as gambling is tainted and unacceptable to the Lord. To receive such would be like the priests described by Malachi (see 1.10.5). You have civil responsibilities if the money was obtained illegally and a responsibility to God even if it wasn't illegal. It makes no difference what charity the money goes to, anonymous or otherwise. Until the sinner is reconciled to God the money given would only be an anchor around his neck. Nothing that man can do can repay his sin (Eph 2:8-9). Only grace can preserve life eternally. Of course God can use the money anyway, if He chooses, and since His ways are not our ways it isn't my place to judge if and how he could turn the tainted into the pure since he certainly has that authority. Beware, dear pastors and church reps, that if you knowingly accept such money, you are as guilty as the sinner who brought it to you.

1.10.5 Does God care how you obtain material wealth?

Malachi 1:13 *But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord.* (For complete context read the whole chapter.) The Lord says stolen goods or money will not be accepted by Him, whether the priests accepted on His behalf them or not. God wants your best, from what is honest and true and pure, whether it is a material offering or an offering of the heart.

1.10.6 How does material wealth affect your faith?

Mk 10:22 *Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* The rich young man's wealth stood between him and what he really needed to believe in. Jesus confronted him with the purest and most stark choice, and he chose to believe in his earthly wealth instead of Jesus. After seeing this example and seeing what kinds of true wealth is available with genuine faith, would you make the same choice as the young man?

Prov 11:28 *Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.* This scripture stands in stark contrast with Prov 10:15, proving it must mean something other than what it seems to say on the surface. Prov 11:28 explains that earthly riches are temporary, but Godly riches (in the form of righteousness) are eternal.

Rev 3:17 *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.* The rich man, like most people, trusts what he knows. He knows what money can do. Giving up what you know, particularly when you know that thing (wealth) brings you a sense of physical security and comfort, is extremely difficult for most people.

1.10.7 Are you rich?

The Greek word *plousios* appears 28 times in scripture and every time is translated as the word rich. The literal definition is wealthy, abounding in material resources. It metaphorically means abounding or abundantly supplied, as with Christian virtues or eternal possessions.

Mt 14:16-20 *But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” And he said, “Bring them here to me.” Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.*

How much “stuff” do you have? Stuff can include money, time, skills, information, trust, or anything else of value. Are you doing what you should with that stuff? Do you have stuff another person needs? How about the eternal stuff? Do you have enough of that stuff? The great thing about eternal stuff is the more you give away, the more you have left. This is an important aspect of Jesus feeding the 5000. If it is from God, and you obey God and give away what came from God, He – being the creator that He is – will see to it you have more left than you started with. Do you have your mustard seed?

1.10.8 What advice is given to the rich?

1 Tim 6:17-19 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.* This passage speaks for itself.

1.10.9 Where is your treasure?

Heb 11:24-27 *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.* Moses chose the reproach of Christ over all the wealth of Egypt. His example of treasure is humbling.

1.10.10 Why does James talk about riches in the context of an overall discussion about temptation and trials?

The consistent theme of James as a book is one of determining the substance of faith in the form of action, which is to say how we live our lives. James begins his letter by cutting straight to the issue of testing faith through trials and temptations. Material wealth is certainly a temptation to many. Remember what the temptation of money did to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Finance is one of the most popular topics in the whole of the bible, touched on to one degree or another by nearly every biblical author. Given the nature of James’ letter, it’s a wonder he didn’t write more on the subject of materialism.

1.10.11 What does James mean by humiliation (ESV), low position (NIV) or made low (KJV)?

The Greek word used is tapeinosis. It appears 4 times in scripture. This is a form of the same Greek word used in James 1:9 to characterize the status of the brother as lowly. (Tapeinos, the form of the word used in James 1:9 was covered by question 1.9.1.) After expanding my research, I learned KJV always translates tapeinosis as some form of the word low. NASB,

however, renders tapeinosis as either humiliation or humble state each time it is used in scripture. Grammatically, humiliation or low position is an adjective which modifies the rich man via the preposition translated “in.”

In context, it seems obvious the abundant resources of the rich man are at best a strike against him. From lessons learned through earlier questions we know the rich man will have more difficulty laying hold of salvation than a man of humble means (Luke 18:25). The more of anything a person has, the more God will expect of that person regarding what they’ve been given. This is true of all gifts from wisdom and knowledge (James 3:1) to money (1 Tim 6:17-19), just as Jesus taught in the Parable of the Talents (Mt 24:14-30).

To actually answer the study question, though, the humiliation or low state the rich man is brought to could be metaphorical just as easily as physical. Each person is unique and special, so to each person God may uniquely apply this wisdom, I think. Certainly the best thing is when the heart is humbled and the attitude of the rich man is brought into alignment with the Will of God. When a man’s material wealth is taken, a humbling before God may be the result. I think the Lord would be more pleased, though, if we humble ourselves first and submit to give God what is His first.

1.10.12 Why do people desire material things?

1 Pe 2:11 *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* The key word is passion, and it all goes back to the fall of Adam. We cannot know for sure, but it seems likely neither Adam nor Eve even contemplated disobeying God’s instructions about the trees or anything else until the deceiver came. Satan was able to create a desire in Eve through the introduction of his lie. Desire for things other than God have carried down through all men since. Peter reminds us that our earthly passions war against us. What the body desires, from money to sex, is a natural genetic defect and it opposes God.

Ex 20:17 *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”* The 10th commandment uses the word covet rather than desire or passion or want, but the idea is the same. People want. Who wants what they already have?

After eating the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, the first couple came to knowledge of their failure, that they were found lacking. As a result of the fall, God was no longer in communion with them as He was before. The false desire to be like God led to the fall and the subsequent breakdown in the man-God relationship. Since then man has sought to replace what was lost in the fall. The flesh always desires. The unregenerate man lives as a slave to the desires of the flesh, seeking to replace what was lost with things of the world.

The good news is that God came to repair the damage. The healing process began with Christ in his victory over death (Jn 20:19-20) and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Ac 2:1-4) to indwell the believers (Jn 3:16), regenerating them (2 Cor 5:17). The process also ends with Christ (Rev 21:6) returning and bringing the believers to their home (Rev 22:14).

1.10.13 Who will pass away?

Pr 11:4 *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*

Grammatically it appears James is saying the rich will pass away. This in no way means that the lowly will not also pass away, but rather it speaks to the rich man specifically as a reminder that his wealth will pass from him when he passes away. Though his wealth might help him in this life, his money won't extend his earthly life or help him with eternity. Only righteousness can be stored up for Heaven.

James 1:11

James 1:9-11 ⁹Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: ¹⁰But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. ¹¹For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. — KJV

James 1:9-11 ⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. — NIV

James 1:9-11 ⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:11 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

anatello [0393] *make rise, spring up, at rise of, be up* **gar** [1063] *verily, therefore, yet, no doubt, as, because that* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **helios** [2246] *sun, light* **sun** [4862] *union, with, together, companionship, possession, beside* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **kauson** [2742] *a glare, high heat* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **xeraino** [3583] *shrivel, dry up, wither* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **chortos** [5528] *court or garden of vegetation* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **anthos** [0438] *flower, blossom* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **ekpipto** [1601] *drop away, become inefficient, fall, cast down, fail* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **euprepeia** [2143] *gracefulness, good suitableness* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **prosopon** [4383] *front view, countenance, appearance, face, person's presence* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **apollumi** [0622] *die, destroy fully* **houto** [3779] *likewise, in this manner, thus* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **plousios** [4145] *wealthy, rich* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **poreia** [4197] *travel, journeying, proceedings* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **maraino** [3133] *extinguish, fade away, pass away*

1.11.0 Introduction to James 1:11

Verse 11 expounds on verse 10 with poetic beauty. A great deal of time is spent talking to the rich man in this passage when you compare it to the brief message to the poor man given in verse 9. Questions for verse 11 primarily address the temporal.

1.11.1 What is the significance of the reference to the sun rising?

Ps 74:16 *Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.* First of all, we know God created the sun.

Ex 16:21 *Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.* In this example, Moses had commanded the people to gather the manna first thing in the morning before the sun grew high in the sky and melted it, thus causing it to spoil. We have all observed that as the sun grows higher in the sky through the morning it gets warmer and warmer. The summer sun is very hot as morning heads toward midday. With respect to the context of this passage, James seems to be drawing an allegory from the manna of the desert wanderers to the wealth of the rich man. James is saying that although the manna was good first thing in the morning, it spoiled over time as it was exposed to the sun's heat. Likewise, the money a man collects takes time to lose its luster in the eye of its holder. As a man acquires more, what he had before just isn't good enough. Eventually the man who lives for his riches will find his life to be hollow and spoilt. A time will come when none of it will matter anymore and he will die, leaving all of it behind for others to bicker over.

Jn 9:6 *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* The sun may light the world, but it's Jesus who lights the way to eternal life.

1 Cor 15:40-44 *There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Just as this life is a but a seed to the next, I think the light and heat of our sun will eventually be replaced by the light of our Lord. His light will fill the city as described in Rev 22:5 *And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.**

Rev 20:12, 15 ¹²*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* ¹⁵*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* As with the sun's scorching heat that withers the grass while the rich man fades away, hell fire is reserved for those not found in the book of life. This will be the final judgment of Christ on the dead where those not written in the book will fade away altogether forever.

1.11.2 Why the flower and grass illustration?

Ps 103:15-18 *As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.* James appears to be quoting Ps 103:15, at least in part. Grass and flowers live for a season. So it is with men. The rich pass away just as do the poor. Even if you clip the flower and press it in a book to retain its beauty for a longer time, its life is still gone – no more a living beauty.

Isaiah 40:6-8 *A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of*

the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. This is another passage James seems to draw from. Like the Psalms reference, the point seems to be the brevity of human accomplishment, no matter how grand, compared to eternity.

As our study of James progresses we will see the hope of eternal life revealed, that revelation being woven into the fabric of James' epistle (1:18, 1:25, 2:5, 4:10, 5:20).

1.11.3 What doesn't last?

Pr 28:20 A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

Pr 28:22 A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him. Money is temporary. "Unfortunate" things can happen in a heartbeat. A car accident can take your money and your wealth. An illness can break you financially. You could be sued. Your riches are as fragile as your life, if your checkbook is what you count as wealth.

1.11.4 What does last forever?

Phil 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Being perfected as a result of the "upward call" of God is the prize Paul speaks of.

1 Thess 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. No matter when you think this event takes place, we know it eventually does.

Jn 6:54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. Jesus spoke in a metaphor here, but his message in this verse explains much. Feeding on his flesh means to receive his words, to believe in him, to accept him completely and yield ourselves to him, to his sovereignty, and to his eternal Lordship. To drink his blood means we accept his atoning blood sacrifice on the cross in place of our death as payment for our sins. The promise, in exchanging our will for his, is eternal life. The Lord lasts forever. He offers us an opportunity to join him.

1.11.5 Summary of James 1:9-11

James 1:9-11 ⁹*Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.* — ESV

There are fundamentally two types of wealth. Worldly wealth is temporary. In this life it serves a purpose. We are called to be stewards of what God gives us. He promises that when we share, we receive back even more. If we are stingy and hoard it, what we have will eventually be taken away. It is as temporary and fragile as our flesh and in the end can do nothing to sustain our flesh or our souls. People who are materially wealthy will find it challenging to please God, but there's plenty of direction in scripture as to how to overcome the world. James explains this is done by humbling ones self to God and man by first realizing the funds come from and belong to God, and their only meaningful purpose is to care for others.

James contrasts the material wealth with spiritual wealth. A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit has minimal physical needs. God will take care of the earthly needs of those who submit to His will, no matter how materially poor that person may be. The poor are exulted to eternal glory while the rich must humble themselves and reckon themselves as less than the least in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

Prov 13:7 *One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.* You can live humbly or as a snob whether you have a lot of money or not. Our material possessions mean nothing. We have what we perceive ourselves to have, which is to say what we claim to have. Claim God and you have great wealth. Claim material wealth and you have nothing.

James 1:12

James 1:12 ¹²Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. – KJV

James 1:12 ¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. – NIV

James 1:12 ¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:12 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
makarios [3107] *supremely blessed, fortunate, well off* **aner** [0435] *male individual* **hos** [3739] *who, which, what, that* **hupomeno** [5278] *stay behind, remain; fig: bear trials, persevere, endure, suffer* **poikilos** [3986] *various, diverse, motley, of uncertain derivation* **hoti** [3754] *that, which... (conjunction)* **dokimos** [1384] *approved, tried, acceptable* **ginomai** [1096] *to become...* **lambano** [2983] *accept, attain, bring, have, hold, obtain, take up away* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **stephanos** [4735] *crown, badge of royalty, elaborate prize of games* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **zoe** [2222] *life* **hos** [3739] *who, which, what, that* **epaggelia** [1861] *announcement, message, promise* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **agapao** [0025] *love (social or moral sense)* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)*

1.12.0 Introduction to James 1:12

In some translations verse 12 is heaped into the same paragraph as verses 13 through 15. For the sake of our study it is not necessary to keep all these verses together strictly for context. To that end verse 12 stands nicely on its own. In fact, verse 12 actually ties together the overall theme of verses 2 through 11 by promising a blessing for endurance through temptation and trials in the form of the crown of life. Always meticulously clear, James does not forget to specify the catch: it is a promise to those who love God. Verse 12 affords us an opportunity to explore several key terms, the nature of the test which results in a crown, the crown itself, promises of God, and love.

1.12.1 Are there any definitions critical to unlocking this verse?

For convenience, definitions for several Greek terms used in this verse are provided.

Makarios (Greek): 1) Blessed 2) happy. Most often translated as blessed, as in the first word of each English version used here of this verse.

Hupomeno (Greek): 1) To remain as in to tarry behind 2) to remain as in abide and not recede or flee; to persevere holding fast to faith in the face of trials, to endure bearing bravely and calmly.

Hupomeno is used 16 time in the New Testament and is translated to numerous English words. In the three translations used in this study the word is rendered differently each time (endureth, persevere, and steadfast), though in each case with substantially the same meaning.

Peirasmos (Greek): 1) An experiment, attempt, trial, proving. 2) trial of a man's fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy (this meaning is associated with temptation toward sin) 3) of the temptation which the devil, a condition or mental state by which we are enticed to sin or lapse in faith or holiness 4) an adversity, affliction or trouble sent by God and serving to test or prove one's character, faith, or holiness 5) temptation of God by man – rebellion against God by which man tests and challenges his power and justice.

Peirasmos may be translated as test, trial, or temptation depending on context. Since it may be used in any such case, context must be used to determine the most appropriate English translation to use. In most versions other than KJV the word is translated as trail in this verse. While either trial or temptation may be used, trial would seem a more appropriate choice considering the definitions of the English words test, trial, and temptation (each given below).

Test: An evaluation or method of evaluation.

Trial: 1) Examination 2) state of pain 3) difficulty 4) legal proceeding to determine innocence or guilt.

Temptation: 1) something that seduces or the quality to seduce 2) the desire for something you know you should avoid 3) the act of influencing by exciting hope or desire 4) solicitation toward that which is evil

Dokimos (Greek): Accepted, pleasing, acceptable.

Dokimos is most often translated as approved in KJV and NASB, though in this one case KJV uses the word tested. ESV and NIV both translate this Greek word into the phrase “stood the test.” This is an interesting and compelling context clue that in this application the word Peirasmos almost certainly is better translated trial rather than temptation.

Epaggello (Greek): 1) To announce that one is about to do or furnish something 2) to promise (of one's own accord) to engage voluntarily 3) to profess.

Although epaggello is sometimes translated differently elsewhere in scripture, it is translated as promise in all versions of this verse.

1.12.2 What is blessed?

The Greek word for blessed was defined in the previous question. The definition of the English word blessed can be summarized as follows: to make or honor as holy, or to confer or bestow well being or prosperity upon.

Mt 5:10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great

in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Although this passage is only a portion of the famous beatitudes in Mt 5, these verses speak directly to the issue central to James 1:12. While Matthew tells us what brings the blessing, James tells us what the blessing actually is: Withstand persecution for the name of Jesus and you will receive the crown of life.

1.12.3 How do you survive a trial?

Eph 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Perhaps this verse sounds cliché, but you cannot escape a deeper examination of the armor of God if you are serious about survival.

Ro 5:2-4 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope Get your faith in order and stand firmly in the Lord's grace. From a position of grace it is much easier to see over and through the mist of worldly sufferings, enduring those sufferings with your eye on the hope. In so doing you develop endurance and character which are important components in the recipe for ultimate survival.

Heb 10: 36-39 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Once you come into a saving relationship with Jesus, you are a new creation that walks on legs of faith. Never shrink away, for the faith you stand on will preserve your soul for eternal life.

1.12.4 If standing the test for a crown is like a running a race for a crown, then what is this race all about?

1 Cor 9:22-27 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. Paul uses athletics as a metaphor to help us understand the concept James is discussing. The mission is to bring salvation to others. The Good News is only news if it is told to others. Paul then contrasts a worldly race where men compete for a single prize that only one can win. He then transitions into an instruction to us to run such a race. Unlike an worldly race, however, there is one common prize to be won by all who finish or, as James puts it, those who endure and stand to the end. That prize, in the words of James, is the crown of life.

Notice that Paul has more to say on this subject which is often overlooked by popular Christianity. Paul says he disciplines his flesh and controls it so he himself doesn't lose his own race in the midst of his effort to help others. Paul makes it clear he knows that only by enduring to the end and being constantly vigilant, constantly seeking, and constantly serving

will he win his prize. This is an example of faith in action, put to work and not idled. Going to church one day a week isn't sufficient. Singing a praise song and dropping coin into a bucket isn't enough. Nothing is ever enough. That's the point of grace. Grace, however, is not a license for laziness. We must constantly be making the effort, constantly pursuing the goal with single mindedness. As we reach further into the heart of the James Epistle, this subject will continue with us as the underlying theme.

1.12.5 Who or what are we standing or racing against?

Eph 6:12 *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* If you take the time to really examine this verse from Ephesians, you'll see what appears to be a contradiction. Paul first says the threat isn't from men, but then talks of rulers and authorities. What are they but men? The riddle is answered by reading the rest of the verse. Our world is in darkness because individuals and whole groups of people do not have Christ's love and indwelling spirit.

Jn 9:6 *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* As long as there are people without Christ, there will be darkness in the world. Paul explains that these people who live in darkness are slaves to a different power. Paul describes this other power as spiritual evil emanating from heavenly places. Men are not the source of evil in and of themselves, rather they are the willing conduit of evil. Such men seek power as they are lead to seek it, rising to positions of worldly authority. These spiritually evil authorities are what we wrestle against, standing against, and run against.

1.12.6 Can we win on our own?

Jn 15:4 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.* Jesus makes it clear we can't do it alone. We must abide in and with him. Just as other men rely on spiritual evil for power, to stand against such men we must rely on Jesus.

Ro 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would help us.

1 Thess 3:1-2 *Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith* We saw that Jesus came, was and is the light of the world, and was and is the embodiment of the Word of God. We saw that the Holy Spirit came to indwell and help us. In our walk of faith, we are commissioned also to aide one another, being an aide and accepting help and encouragement from one another.

1.12.7 What is the crown of life?

Gen 2:9 *And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.* In the very beginning God created the tree of life. It was one of two trees in the center of the garden, presumable standing next to the forbidden tree of

knowledge. When they ate of the forbidden fruit they were kicked out of Eden before they had a chance to eat of the other. If God wanted man to forever live in a loving relationship with Him, then why not let them eat of it? Perhaps it was because God knew in advance of man's fall and all that would have to happen to correct this foreknown fall. After all, what motivation would man have for seeking and submitting to God if his life was already eternal?

Gen 3:22-24 *Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.* The reason we don't enjoy eternal life today is that God prevented man from eating that fruit after he'd eaten the forbidden fruit.

Rev 2:10-11 *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.* We are warned that Satan will orchestrate trouble for us, in some cases to our bodily death. We are to take comfort from knowing that such a first death simply means exemption from the second death described in Rev 20:14-15.

Rev 22:2 *through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* We are promised to see the tree in the midst of New Jerusalem standing beside the river of life, bearing fruit each month, and the leaves will be used. It doesn't say explicitly that we must eat from the tree to obtain the eternal life. This may be metaphoric anyway, representing the gift of eternal life for those whose names are in the book of life. It appears eternal life is given by Lord Christ, not taken by eating.

The crown represents the prize. The prize of life is literally eternal life.

1.12.8 What are the conditions for receiving the Crown of Life?

Pr 28:13 *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.* (See also Ro 10:9-10) You can't hide your sin from God. It didn't work for Adam and it won't work for you. Confess your sins to receive cleansing, thus mercy. Surely there can be no greater mercy than to be pardoned from sin and granted eternal life as a gift. By confessing you are acknowledging your position in humility as being the creation, not equal to the creator. Remember, Eve was tempted with the idea of being like God.

Ro 8:5-8 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* After confession comes submission. Submission comes by putting your focus on God, His Word, and His Spirit with a servant's heart and hands.

Jn 3:18 *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* You must recognize who Jesus is and believe in him. This must be more than an intellectual knowledge, it is a commitment.

1 Cor 10:21 *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.* This verse supports and expounds on Jn 3:18. Commitment to Christ means you can't ride the fence. You can't serve evil and at the same time you serve God.

Mt 28:19-20 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* In the great commission we see what Jesus meant in Jn 14:15 when he said *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* The Good News is only news if you tell it. Go and tell it.

To summarize these several verses into something easy to remember: **ADMIT, SUBMIT, COMMIT, and TRANSMIT.** I'm not one who likes to put faith into a formula, but if I were to publish a formula, this would be it.

1.12.9 To whom is the crown promised?

Jn 3:3 *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* In the well known conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, Jesus gives the answer to our question. This leads to the next obvious question, much as Nicodemus inquired: what exactly does being born again mean?

Jn 3:5-6 *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* Jesus first says we must be born of both water and of spirit and in the next verse he explains the metaphor as birth by flesh and spiritual birth. The birth of the flesh came about as a result of parental conception. Birth of the spirit comes about when our spirit is renewed or regenerated through grace. Spiritual conception takes place when we hear the Good News and spiritual birth takes place when we choose to adopt it as our reality, which is to say we believe it and live it (Jn 3:16).

Following the analogy of the cycle of life, after birth we are babes, then we grow and mature. We speak words we learn growing up. Spiritually it is very similar. When we first believe we don't begin to comprehend it all, but we have a new spirit which has at its core the Holy Spirit to guide and teach it, drawing it toward the Father through Jesus Christ and all the tools he gives us. Sadly, just as we can lose our life through carelessness and foolishness, if we fail to remain steadfast in our faith, living out what we confess to believe, our spiritual life may die prematurely as described in the parable of the sower (Mt 13:1-9). This is why endurance is so important, hence the reason for the extended study of topics like testing, trials, endurance, perseverance, and endurance.

1.12.10 What is a promise?

The Greek word *epaggello*, here translated as promise, literally means 1) To announce that one is about to do or furnish something 2) to promise (of one's own accord) to engage voluntarily 3) to profess.

The English word promise can be defined in summary as a pledge, vow, or declaration assuring you will or will not do a specific thing.

1.12.11 Is a promise conditional?

In a contract, a promise is an asset to the one receiving and a liability to the one promising. If the one receiving has no liability, they legally have no grounds for holding the promissory to their promise. In other words, a contract is really two promises, or you might think of it as a mutual promise between two parties. In a contract, one party promises something of value in exchange for a promise from the other party of something else of value. For example, loans and service agreements are common and easily understood contract concepts. The purpose of a written contract is to provide documentation of the promises so they can be legally enforced by either party.

Whereas a contract is an explicitly conditional mutual promise, a covenant is an unconditional promise. In other words, one party declares they will do a certain thing without regard to any exchange or any sort.

The answer to the question may be yes or no depending on whether there is a mutual promise (contract) or a strictly one-sided promise (covenant).

Ro 4:13 *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.* A promise made by God is conditional except in those special instances where a covenant was made. The prime condition is righteousness, and righteousness is culmination of faith. Many words can be used to quantify this quality, but I would boil it down to trust, love, respect, and obedience.

1.12.12 What does it mean to break a promise?

Deu 23:23 *You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.* First of all, don't break a promise. It could be hazardous to your health.

Neh 5:13 *I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.* The threat was very clear to the people Nehemiah spoke with here. They understood the relationship between the dust being shaken from the garment and them being shaken from their homes and jobs. When people realize their home and livelihood are on the line they tend to straighten up quickly. Most people will endure a great deal of unpleasantness to maintain a job or to keep their family intact. It shouldn't be unpleasant to obey God, but in this particular case the people had done something wrong and Nehemiah was using a clear threat to ensure they came through on their promise.

Ex 20:16 *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.* To bear false witness, in simpler terms, means to lie. Ultimately, a broken promise is nothing less than a lie. A broken promise is a broken commandment. A broken commandment is a sin. Sin results in death.

Ro 6:23 *The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.* I personally am as guilty as anyone reading this document of this sin. I deserve the death penalty for my sin.

2 Cor 7:10 *For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.* We are blessed indeed that God sees fit to allow us to humble ourselves with a repentant heart and receive his gracious mercy and an undeserved gift, courtesy of the blood of Jesus Christ.

1.12.13 Can God break a promise?

Joshua 21:45 *Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.* If God cannot lie (Nu 23:19, below), we know then any promise He makes will come to pass.

Nu 23:19 *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?* God doesn't lie. Since he doesn't lie, and a broken promise is a lie, then he will not break a promise.

Jer 26:13 *Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you.* The Lord may change his mind, if given cause. There are other instances in scripture where God also changes his mind when moved by man, whether grieved of a promise as a result of man's failure or moved to hold back a promised curse by a repentant heart.

1.12.14 What is your favorite promise from God?

Take a moment to reflect on God's promises. Make a brief list of your favorite promises. Choose the one most important to you and write out why it is so important to you and how you've had that promise fulfilled in your own life.

Ps 121 is my own personal favorite promise and my favorite chapter in all of scripture. The Lord used this one day when I was in my deepest moment of despair to tell me He will always be there, any time of the day or night, to comfort, protect, and guide me, from now through eternity, and he has the power and authority to do as he has promised.

1.12.15 Summary of James 1:12

A crown is something awarded to a victor. While the crown of life might in fact be literal, it is certainly representative of the promise of eternal life. The race itself represents our life and its many struggles. Our principle enemy we race against is Satan and on our own we cannot win against him. We are assured of victory, however, if we rely on Jesus with true and enduring faith. Some promises are conditional and some are not. Either way, once God declares he will do a thing, it will be done. Any time God places a condition on a promise he offers us responsibility. If we respond by using that responsibility to place our faith in him we will surely receive the promise.

James 1:13

James 1:13-15 ¹³Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. – KJV

James 1:13-15 ¹³When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. – NIV

James 1:13-15 ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:13 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

medeis [3367] none, not, nothing **peirazo** [3985] test, entice, tempt, prove, try **lego** [3004] systematic discourse: put forth, speak, tell, describe, boast **hoti** [3754] that, which... (conjunction) **apo** [0575] off, away, separation **theos** [2316] God **peirazo** [3985] test, entice, tempt, prove, try **ho** [3588] the (article or indefinite pronoun) **gar** [1063] verily, therefore, yet, no doubt, as, because that **theos** [2316] God **apeirastos** [0551] untried, not temptable, not to be tempted **esti** [2076] he/she/it is, them/they are **kakos** [2556] worthless, depraved, wicked **peirazo** [3985] test, entice, tempt, prove, try **de** [1161] and, but, now... (conjunction) **autos** [0846] her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun) **oudeis** [3762] no, none, nobody, nothing, never

1.13.0 Introduction to James 1:13

James 1:13-15 stands together as one of the simplest, most straight forward explanations anywhere in scripture of how we fall from innocence, reach a condition of sin, and become dead as a result. Verse 13 sets up the discussion by making it crystal clear the God is not the source of temptation and we are well advised not to try and blame him when we experience temptation. God is holy and does not tempt us, nor can he be tempted. Our study of verse 13 goes to great lengths to shed light on these various ideas.

1.13.1 Is the same word used in this verse for temptation as was used in James 1:2 and 1:3?

James 1:2 — Yes, or more specifically peirazo is actually a form of the same word. Context must be used to determine the appropriate English translation. In this case peirazo is translated as tempted in all three English versions we referenced for this verse. Because the reference here has clearly to do with luring rather than proving, it seems only logical to agree with tempted as the choice of English words as indicated in KJV, NIV or ESV.

James 1:3 — No. The word used in James 1:3 has the much more strict interpretation of trial.

1.13.2 Why does James 1:13 Generate Controversy?

Deut 32:4 *The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.*

2 Sam 22:31 *This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*

3 Jn 1:11 *Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.*

God is perfect and God is good. There are literally hundreds of verses that confirm these two truths. To suggest God would lure man toward evil smacks of blasphemy to me. I'm aware of 2 Thess 2:11 which, to paraphrase, says God sends a delusion so that people who are already wicked will be condemned (for more information review the passage in context). This is harsh, and seems to fly in the face of God's goodness and the words of James, but I don't think there's really a contradiction here. First, delusion and temptation are different. Second, Jesus explained the wheat and tares would be separated – this is merely a mechanism to that end. Third, what people hear and what God says may be two very different things. God speaks truth, but it isn't always plain, nor is it easily accepted. God can speak plain truth and people will still hear what they want to hear, twisting it to suit their own desires. This is what I believe to be the nature of the delusion Paul spoke of in his letter to the Thessalonians.

1.13.3 What happens when you say God is tempting you?

Ex 20:7 *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.* You are associating God with evil. That equals using His name in vain. Profaning God's name has serious consequences.

Eze 36:23 *And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.* This passage amplifies Ex 20:7 and goes on to say that the believer has a role to play in defending the good name of the Lord. You can't have it both ways – either you defend the Lord or you must defend yourself from Him, and we all know how that will turn out.

1.13.4 What happens when you try to tempt God?

Luke 4:1-13

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment

of time, and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The Paradox Resolved

James 1:13 says that God cannot be tempted. This passage is one place in the New Testament where it clearly indicates Jesus was tempted. If Jesus is truly God, then how can this be? As is so often the case, one must examine both passages in proper context. When James says “God cannot be tempted with evil” he is literally saying any attempt to tempt God with evil will not succeed. God does not prevent you from trying to tempt him, he simply refuses to fall into sin through temptation. There is an enormous difference. The passage from Luke chronicles just such an attempt by Satan himself and we see that while the man Jesus was “put in harm’s way” courtesy of the Holy Spirit’s leading him to the desert, we see the Almighty Lordship of Jesus in his refusal to be baited. Jesus provides us with invaluable insight and an exquisite example of how to face temptation.

Results of Attempted Temptation of God

In answer to this study question, first of all Satan was not successful. If Satan can’t successfully tempt God, who are we to imagine we could? We cannot tempt God. Neither can Satan. That’s not for lack of trying either by us or by Satan. What I mean is that God can’t be tempted, not that we can’t try to tempt him.

Jesus was lead into the wilderness by the spirit. He was lead to remain there for 40 days. Satan came there and tempted (attempted to tempt) Jesus. If you read it carefully you’ll see the Spirit didn’t lead him to temptation, but to the place where the Devil came to tempt him. There’s a subtle but important distinction here, and one which is usually missed. The Holy Spirit filled Jesus and lead him to the place. Satan came to that place and tried to tempt Jesus.

In the end Satan departed. This speaks not only of God’s character, which repels evil, but also of the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer. If you live a spirit filled life, give God authority in your life, enduring for His name’s sake, and putting your faith, hope, trust and love in Him, when Satan comes he will end up going away empty handed.

1.13.5 What is blaspheme?

According to the dictionary the word “blaspheme” literally means to speak of God in an irreverent or impious manner. I believe there’s a lot more to it than this definition.

Eze 20:27 Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: In this also your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me. This passage explains blaspheme as dealing treacherously with God. When you tie together the concept of speaking “irreverently” about God with treachery, it seems to imply that blaspheme more specifically means saying bad things about God as though you were speaking “behind his back.” Slandering God is perhaps the best way to explain blaspheme. Another explanation I once heard of blaspheme is it’s when you attribute evil to God.

Jude 8-9 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” To fully understand this passage you need to read the preceding verses, but the idea here is that “these people” were mocking God by doing wrong when they knew what was right. Jude then gives the compares them to the example of Michael who did the right thing by not presuming to know better than God. When you do what you know is wrong, you are effectively saying you know better than God and your ways are equal to or higher than his. No wonder it makes God angry.

Mt 12:31-32 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. Our God is a forgiving God. Jesus lived with us, suffered like us, with us, and ultimately for us. The Holy Spirit is the most precious and effective gift we could possibly receive because it is God’s own Spirit. It is described as a comforter and teacher, among other things. If we slander the Holy Spirit by saying it is evil, giving it credit for doing evil or saying its good work is evil, or nullifying it for the purpose of or to accomplish what amounts to slander against it, then we blaspheme the Holy Spirit and perform the unpardonable sin. Blaspheme of the Holy Spirit is a very specific sin, I think. If not, there would be little hope for most of us.

Again consider the term “slander.” When you slander someone, you speak badly about them and run down their name and damage their reputation in the eyes of others. Blaspheming God hurts how others feel toward God.

Lk 17:2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. When you blaspheme you slander God. Also keep in mind that more than mere spoken words can damage God’s reputation in the eyes of others. As much as God hates blaspheme of Himself as Father or Jesus, His ultimate hatred is when God’s Holy Spirit is blasphemed.

A wise person once told me they felt grieving the Spirit (blaspheme against the Spirit) was something done over time and not a simple ill word spoken out of turn. I hadn’t put it into

words like that, but I think it stands to reason if one's lifestyle runs opposite the direction of the Spirit, yet the person claims to be Spirit filled, this would be the truest form of blaspheme of the Spirit.

1.13.6 What are you doing when you trash-talk God?

Eph 4:29-30 *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* By “trash talk” I’m referring to corrupting talk. Trash talk is street slang for running someone down. It effectively means slander or blaspheme. Interestingly enough, this passage also makes reference to the important instruction we have not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:28-29 below).

Lev 24:15-16 *And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.* There is a specific warning here not to curse God and not to blaspheme God. When I asked the question about “trash talking” God, I’m specifically referring to how we talk about God. This verse specifically says not to curse God. Using God’s name when cursing on or at another person is not the same thing.

Mk 3:28-29 *“Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”* Mt 12:31-32, referenced under the previous question, reads very similar to this passage from Mark. As it relates to this question, consider trash-talking the Holy Spirit. I wouldn’t personally recommend it. But then, if I did recommend it I would in essence be guilty myself, wouldn’t I?

1.13.7 Why doesn’t God tempt man?

Ex 20:20 *Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”* There are dozens of example in scripture of testing. There are examples of God testing man and man testing God. God’s tests do not lure man toward evil, but bring what is hidden into the light. If evil is in the heart of man, God’s test merely exposes it for what it is. This can be a very good thing if the person will then see what God shows them and deal with it, repenting and changing course. Fear has many ill effects on people and fearing God’s purification process is something naturally scares people. The flesh is weak or born from corruption. God’s tests are designed to teach us not to be sinful. This is the fundamental difference between God’s tests and temptation.

The short answer: Temptation is intended to lure us into evil while God’s tests are intended to make us respect God and turn from sin.

James 1:14

James 1:13-15 ¹³Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. – KJV

James 1:13-15 ¹³When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. – NIV

James 1:13-15 ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:14 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

hekastos [1538] *each, every* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)* **peirazo** [3985] *test, entice, tempt, prove, try* **hupo** [5259] *prepositional place (at, beneath, by, in, of, under...)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **idios** [2398] *one’s own* **epithumia** [1939] *longing, desire, lust* **exelko** [1828] *entice, draw away, drag forth* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **deleazo** [1185] *entrap, delude, allure, beguile*

1.14.0 Introduction to James 1:14

Verse 14 begins to take us down the path leading from our natural state to death. It begins with our own nature under exposure to temptation. In this part of the study we are reminded of the source of temptation, told how the process of death begins, and we get a chance to explore the nature of temptation and desire as they relate to us.

1.14.1 Who tempts?

This question should be review. Satan is the father of lies and temptation. When a man tempts he is only doing what Satan has taught him to do. When a man falls into temptation through his own desire he is acting on the fleshly nature passed down through the corrupted seed of Adam. [See also the questions from James 1:2 and 1:3.]

1.14.2 What is the route from Satan to death?

James 1:14-15 *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* The path begins with the originator of lies, Satan. Satan told the first lie in the Bible, followed by the newly corrupted Eve, then Adam. Eve experienced the sensation of desire when the enticement was put before her. She lacked the knowledge of good and evil at the time, though, so one could argue she didn’t have the capacity for comprehending the moral

implications of disobedience to God. Regardless, she found what Satan offered to be something she desired. The desire gave way to action, the action being sin because it was an action opposing the will of God. Ultimately, the fact Eve was deceived was no excuse. Sin earns death (Ro 6:23).

If God does not intervene in this progression and all of mankind suffers the genetic flaw of the corruption of flesh handed down from Adam and Eve, then there is no hope. The key then is to obtain God's intervention. The good news of the Gospel of Jesus is God's intervention plan.

Jesus took upon himself the sin, paying the penalty of fleshly death on our behalf to intervene and break this curse we took upon ourselves. He asks nothing of us that we weren't created with, namely that we come to Him, know Him, and believe in Him. He made it as easy for us as he could by stooping to our level, giving us not only atonement for sin through the blood of a perfect sacrifice, but a human face with human words and a human example we can look at and in so doing realize God spoke the Truth from the very beginning. We see it can be done, that death can be overcome, because it has been. Jesus told us ahead of time he would die on our behalf, he would come back from death, and he would go to heaven. He did these things. He promised more. If he can do these things, surely he can and will do the rest of what he's promised, including giving us eternal life in whatever form and whatever place He deems best for us.

1.14.3 What is the route from God to life?

The answer is weaved throughout the tapestry of scripture from the first few pages through the last. The verses to follow are but an overview of the totality of the answer.

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* The route to eternal life begins with God himself. He is the creator of life and the grantor of eternal life.

Luke 11:10 *For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.* We recognize the need to find the route to eternal life when we recognize we are on the road to death and we need to find the other route. Thus, the next logical step is to seek. In Jesus' own words we have a promise that when we earnestly seek him, we will indeed find him.

Jn 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* In the final analysis the route includes several steps, but belief in Jesus is the only step we ourselves can and must accomplish on our own.

Ac 17:30 *The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent* After you accept the fact of God's existence and you seek him, you find him, and you begin to believe in him, you will begin to change. The word "repent" literally means to change your ways. In the biblical sense it means to change from sinful ways to ways obedient to God. The word "command" implies specific direction from God. To believe in Jesus by definition includes submission to his authority to command us and subsequently obeying his commands.

Heb 4:4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.* Righteousness is the substance of faith. Righteousness is obedience based on faith.

Jude 21 *keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.* This verse speaks of our Lord Jesus' mercy and how it lead to eternal life. There are numerous other verses that speak of grace, mercy, and the subject of eternal life, but this one ties together in just a few words the very most important concepts. We are to hold onto the love of God, loving and being loved, enduring patiently for the mercy of Jesus. In the end it is a free gift, nothing we can earn, just something to be freely accepted. To believe and live that belief is how we accept it. This is the conclusion of the route to eternal life.

1.14.4 How does temptation work?

The passage from James provides excellent insight to the production of sin from raw temptation. Temptation plays on desire, manipulating it for the specific purpose of enticing us to carry out a sinful act.

Having spent a number of years in corporate marketing myself, I can tell you that the purpose of advertising is to create an interest and desire for a product. Once the potential customer is made aware something they might want is available, you then target the customer with information about the product that will make most attractive to that customer. Whenever possible targeted marketing programs provide information as specific and personalized as possible. When the customer is approached with something they recognize as desirable and it is presented personally with enticing messages designed to lead to a purchase, this is "good advertising." This concept of targeting selected information for a selected audience is also called propaganda. The term propaganda is generally associated with an organization having a specific agenda. A company manufacturing a product is an organization with a specific agenda, namely to sell their product and beat their competition in the process.

Temptation can be easily explained as Satan's marketing program. The devil's propaganda is designed to play on man's natural desires. While advertising as a great way to explain temptation, there is one important difference between them. Temptation is the form of advertising designed specifically to lure you to do something sinful. It attracts you toward doing something outside of God's will. Not all advertising has this purpose. Certainly telling the Good News of Jesus Christ doesn't fit the definition of temptation according to James.

Temptation is not sin. Sin happens when you "buy" the goods being sold by the devil. A purchase is an exchange of one thing of perceived value for another thing of perceived value where the buyer and seller agree that the exchange is mutually acceptable. Simply having a desire or being exposed to advertising which plays on that desire is not the same as sin. Sin, by definition, is disobedience toward God. It is helpful to always remember that temptation is a lie. It is a lie because what you get in return for your disobedience is never worth the price.

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also*

provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. The propaganda, no matter how well targeted and personalized, is not new or unique. Everyone is tempted by a common list of commercials. Different people tune in to different commercials (temptations) by natural inclination (desire). The good news is that we don't have to buy the lies. This verse alone doesn't begin to explain the mechanics of how God protects us from being overcome by our desires, but we have the promise that He can and will, and that's enough for now.

1.14.5 What is desire?

Synonyms include longing, want, wish, passion, covet, crave. Webster's uses the phrase: a feeling that accompanies an unsatisfied state. This would seem a highly accurate description of desire. If there is something unsatisfied within us, the resulting feeling draws us toward whatever we think will provide satisfaction. This feeling, called desire, makes us vulnerable to temptation. This explains how desire ties to temptation.

In this passage KJV actually uses the word "lust" in lieu of desire. The Greek word *epithumia* is translated lust, desire, longing, crave, covet, or some variation of any of these throughout the New Testament, depending on the translation you choose. Since we are concerned with understanding what is meant by the Greek and we are constrained to using English to do the job, it stands to reason we would want to use an English word that most closely approximates the meaning of the original language. I prefer the word desire when used in this passage in James because it doesn't have the more narrow sexual connotation of a word like lust or other more restrictive terms such as covet. Temptation is a very broad term and the word desire is equally broad. In researching the Greek term *epithumia*, I learned it is used to indicate a want of God just as much as a want for carnal satisfaction.

1.14.6 Where is the desire?

Ro 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* Desire springs up from within. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are deeply personal. Since desire is, by definition, the feeling of not being satisfied, this feeling comes from within the human heart. You may say it stems from the human spirit or from the human flesh. Any given desire may come from either one. Certainly a thirst for water after working in the sun is a physical desire while the desire to share a conversation or embrace is emotional. Emotional desires seem to come from the same place as all other emotions, a place we call (for lack of a better term) the human heart. Sin is the result of acting outside God's will to try and satisfy a feeling of dissatisfaction. Paul explains it is passed down to all mankind genetically. Our flesh and our spirits are born from the corrupt. It is part of who we are. It isn't what God wants us to be, however. The good news, of course, is that Jesus Christ's blood was shed to wash away the filthiness of our hearts and bodies and make us free from our sin, if only we accept His cleansing gift.

James 1:15

James 1:13-15 ¹³Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

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James 1:13-15 ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:15 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
eita [1534] *if, or, whether* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **epithumia** [1939] *longing, desire, lust* **sullambano** [4815] *catch, seize, take, conceive* **tikto** [5088] *produce, bring forth, bear, be born, be delivered* **hamartia** [0266] *a sin, an offence* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)* **hamartia** [0266] *a sin, an offence* **apotelleo** [0658] *complete, consummate, finish* **apokueo** [0616] *breed, generate, beget, produce* **thanatos** [2288] *death*

1.15.0 Introduction to James 1:15

Verse 15 draws us to the logical end for realized temptation, namely death. We also get to look at the concept of conception and how birth relates to the start of life and death.

1.15.1 How does desire become sin?

In verse 15 James uses the analogy of conception to explain the progression from desire to the fulfillment of sin. In the natural world conception takes two, namely a father and a mother. To paint the picture more clearly in your mind, think of the human heart as female and advertisements as male.

Anyone can advertise – Satan, the world, or God. Since we know what God offers doesn't lead to sin, let's remove Him from the equation first. Anything Satan offers is a deception and if we buy anything he has to offer we know that it's a sin. We also know Satan is the ruler of the world (Jn 12:31). That just means products advertised by the world are manufactured by Satan, Inc.

The human heart is a fertile place, much like a womb. It seeks fulfillment. Temptation is the kind of advertising that is appealing and plays on the natural desires of the heart. When a

person pays attention to Satan's (or the world's) commercial message, the force of the desire mates with the ad and if the person does not resist and there's no contraceptive (bible, Holy Spirit, etc.), the two will conceive. The conception yields action disobedient to the will and the Word of God. This is sin.

There is good news, however. Jesus Christ came to give us contraception for sin and offer us a way to find fulfillment by conceiving good fruit via the Spirit its good and imperishable seed. Every human has a need that can only be filled by the Lord. Our natural desire for God, when unrealized, is an opening for Satan to try and offer us something to fill the void in God's place. This is the common mechanism of human failure. Through Jesus' redeeming act of self sacrifice it is possible to wash out the alien from our heart so the Holy Spirit can fill us, satisfying that God given feeling of need for satisfaction. He is the only one that can truly and eternally satisfy.

1.15.2 Why conception?

Gen 16:1-4 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. In the biblical sense, to have sex with someone is to wed them regardless of ceremony. In God's eyes, sex is the ceremony. The biological purpose of sex is to conceive a child. God designed humanity to perpetuate itself. Our strongest physical urge after our most basic necessities is sexual.

Conception is the point where many people believe life begins. Regardless, birth can only happen after conception, thus conception is a necessary step. Conception happens as a result of a joining. Applying biology to James' sin analogy we see it is necessary for there to be a temptation and a desire that results in acting on the temptation. The act itself is the point of conception. Sin is the child born of the unholy union.

Ex 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." The tenth commandment addresses desire in the ugly form of coveting. This law was given because people wanted things that belonged to others.

Gen 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Eve wanted be like God, as if she could take equality from Him.

Gen 3:4-5 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Back up. Look at what precipitated her act. Satan came and advertised. Eve had no reason to want anything other than God and to obey God and be in perfect communion with God. Then Satan came along and introduced a new concept. He provided an inducement by advertising to

her the idea that God had something better than her, He wasn't sharing it, and she somehow ought to have it. It was an outright lie to claim there would be no penalty, but then lying is what Satan's good at. Had the idea not been put in her head, her desire would not have been aroused and she would not have been put in the position of having to choose whether to accept the offer.

It has been the speculation of scholars for centuries why Eve and her husband chose to accept Satan's offer when God told them up front about the penalty. Regardless, it is good for us that God provided a way to pay that debt on our behalf. We have eternity to thank Jesus if we will accept his atonement on our behalf and choose to buy (ie. put our faith in and believe in) what He alone "advertises" and not what comes from the world or Satan.

1.15.3 What is the Godly opposite of sinful conception?

1 Pe 1:23 *since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;* This verse is a key phrase within a broader yet critical message about the glorious redemptive work of Jesus. Seed is often used to describe what Jesus offers us through His word and Spirit. The good news is the advertisement God gives, one free of deceit. It is an offer we need only accept. There's no way we can pay our end of the bargain because what the Lord gives immeasurably exceeds what we can give in exchange. Unlike Satan's offer where you get less than you bargain for, with God you get infinitely more value than you bargain for.

Is 61:10-11 *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.* This passage is such a rich and beautiful expression of the true wedding analogy. It illustrates the courtship free of the serpent's sleaze.

Rev 19:7-8 *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.* The hope we have to come together with our Lord is wondrous beyond imagination. We will be restored to absolute purity and will enjoy the rewards of being joined together with God. This is not to say we literally become God, but rather we are welcomed to be with him and not left outside for eternity.

Gen 2:24 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* Where a man and woman join together physically, God and man join together spiritually.

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.* Where temptation begets sin and sin begets death, the Good News is consummated by purification and it begets eternal life. With temptation you give up something in order to be

deceived and loose even more. With God you receive salvation in order to receive eternal life and without cost. It seems incomprehensible anyone could refuse such an offer. The happily ever after at the end of this story is better than any fairy tale because its true, and its about you.

1.15.4 How does Satan’s wedding differ from Christ’s?

Rev 19:20 *And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.* Prior to the “1000 year reign” the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire.

Rev 20:12-15 *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* The first and last parts of this passage are most important, though the entire passage is included for the sake of contextual clarity. In this final judgment at the end of the 1000 years, those who aren’t found in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire. Marriage to Satan means joining him for a hot bath.

1.15.5 Is birth the start of life?

Jer 20:17 *because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great.* Many Christians argue that life begins at conception and birth is merely the transition of that life. There are dozens of references in scripture referencing the womb. Some are far better known, such as Jer 1:5, but few are more compelling to me for this argument than Jer 20:17. I say this because it specifies that he could have died in the womb. I present this as evidence and proof of the conventional perspective because something cannot be killed unless it is first alive.

Ps 58:3 *The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.* Ps 71:6 *Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of you.* I searched for examples of what definitely happens to change in a person’s life at the point of birth and instead found continuity from life in the womb to life outside the womb.

Ac 22:28 *The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.”* Birth is a benchmark used by society to mark your “entrance into the world” and to proclaim certain things such as your name, your family position, birthright, citizenship, and so forth.

It would seem based on these few bits of scripture birth isn’t the start of life, rather it is the start of our life in the world’s system.

1.15.6 Is birth the start of death?

Ro 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* If birth is the start of life within the world's system, then what is the destiny of world's system?

1 Jn 2:17 *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* Since the world is passing away, people who live within the world's system are destined for death. Both Paul and John speak very quickly after stating the damning truth of sin's reward that we have hope for eternal life. Death does not need to be the ultimate result of birth.

1.15.7 How does sin become fully grown?

Ro 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* This verse is often quoted as justification for the idea all sin is ultimately equal because all sin has the same ultimate penalty. This seems to me a very narrow conclusion drawn from a single line of scripture.

Jn 19:11 *Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."* The idea of sin growing must assume that some sins are greater than others. Jesus himself testified that some sins are greater than others. This verse is just one of many that dispel the popular myth built on a misinterpretation of Ro 6:23.

Lev 6:17 *It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. It is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering.* The subject of leaven and unleavened bread comes up many times in scripture. In every case God only permits the unleavened to be used for ceremonies and forbids leaven.

1 Cor 5:6 *Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* Leaven is yeast. A lot could be gleaned by looking at the properties of yeast, but suffice it to say its most profound property for baking is its ability to make bread rise. As bread rises it becomes less and less like its purest form. Note that it only takes a little to do a lot. It is the same with sin. A little sin causes us to deform from the purity God created us to be. As the sin takes hold of us, we not only puff ourselves up, but the sin takes hold throughout our entire being causing us to finally look nothing like the pure form, totally deformed and full of hot air. The pure (unleavened) bread was suitable for sin or guilt offerings (Lev 6:17) because it was undefiled, just as Christ is our undefiled sacrifice for sin and guilt. It is also worth noting that once leaven is added to bread it cannot be removed by natural means. Likewise, once we are stained by sin we cannot cleanse ourselves by our own power. It requires the supernatural intervention of Jesus to take away our sin.

1.15.8 Why does sin result in death?

Gen 2:7 *then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* God is life.

Deut 32:4 *The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and*

without iniquity, just and upright is he. God is also perfect and just, without iniquity. God is sinless.

Gen 2:17 *“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* Sin is outside of God. Anything outside of God is outside of life, therefore dead. This explains why God warned Adam that he would die the day he ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Death is separation from God. When Adam sinned, it inserted a chasm between man and God. The good news, quite literally, is that Jesus Christ made suitable and adequate restitution for the sin of mankind for all time, restoring fellowship with God and making eternal life possible for humanity.

1.15.9 Summary of James 1:13-15

James 1:13-15 ¹³*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. – ESV*

From questions asked about this passage we learned a great deal about the nature of temptation and God’s nature relative to temptation. We learned the process leading to death and the process leading to life. The very nature of life and of death has been discussed at length.

God is perfect and just. God doesn’t tempt according to the technical definition of temptation as given by this passage in James. Temptation is an invitation to sin. It is essentially a form of advertising designed to put ideas in your head that lead you away from God, into lawlessness. Temptation takes advantage of the natural human condition which seeks to satisfy an unfulfilled need. The lie making temptation so dangerous is that the need is false. Since the need is false, the solution to the need is false. The supposed solution is outside of God and by definition lawless and sin. Satan’s marketing plan is never the less effective.

Desire, the condition of feeling you are unsatisfied, is hard coded into the essence of our being. God put desire in us so we would be magnetized to Him. With the introduction of sin to the world courtesy of Satan’s first deception, human desire has caused humanity to seek satisfaction in things other than God. When we act on this feeling by pursuing anything other than God we sin. Sin divides us from God. God is life, therefore being outside of God means being outside of life. The only word we have to describe being outside of life is death.

Temptation isn’t sin, but it is an inducement that attracts us to sin. Once we sin, space develops between us and God. Without intervention the space tends to grow. How much it grows ultimately makes little different because once we’re divided from God we are dead. There is only one solution. Jesus Christ built a bridge. His sinless sacrificial death makes it possible for God to grant grace and mercy and let us finally come across that bridge. All it takes is enough faith to stand up and walk across that bridge. In other words, put your faith in Jesus and trust him, believe in him for he is the only way to eternal life.

James 1:16

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Do not err, my beloved brethren.

¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

¹⁸Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — KJV

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. — NIV

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:16 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
me [3361] *not, no, none, never* **planao** [4105] *to roam, go astray, wander, err, deceive, seduce* **adelphos** [0080] *brother, sibling (connected by womb, literal or figurative)* **moi** [3450] *I, me, my* **agapetos** [0027] *beloved, dear*

1.16.0 Introduction to James 1:16

Verse 16 is one of the shortest and seemingly most simple verses in the book of James. Naturally it will yield more questions for our study than most. This verse is generally brought into English as the first sentence of a paragraph consisting of verse 16 to 18. In the broader context it could also be applied as a follow-up to the preceding paragraph and broader still the overall theme of the chapter and book. It is a clear directive intended to grab and hold your attention. It is this directive and its meaning that will yield these next several questions.

1.16.1 What is the mood of this statement?

This question is admittedly subjective. However, there are clues. First, consider who is writing and who is being written to. A Spirit filled church leader, James the half brother of Jesus, is believed to be the author. Fellow believers whom James refers to as beloved brothers are the audience. The warning indicates a concern for the welfare of the audience. Concern demonstrates compassion. If James was willing to go to the trouble of writing a warning, framing it with love, he must have been passionate about the message he was trying to convey. In James 1:1 he refers to himself as a servant. This sense of humility is also seen in Verse 16. This statement is a directive, but you can almost feel James pleading with the reader to take to heart this message. Most other New Testament writers took a similar overall approach with their message, speaking with humility of self while still carrying the authority of Christ (ref 1 Cor 1:4; Heb 1:13-14; 2 Pe 1:2; 1 Jo 1:4; Jude 3). Jesus himself simultaneously exuded both humility and authority as he passionately sought to bring the message as well as the act of redemption.

Although James 1:16 is a brief verse and an incredible amount can be gleaned from this simple statement, taken in the broader context of James' letter this statement stands out as powerful and important by virtue of its passion.

1.16.2 Who is James warning?

James uses the term “brother” 4 times in ch 1, three of those with beloved (or similar language). It was established in the study of the very first verse that James is specifically addressing his letter to fellow believers in Christ. Fellow believers are brothers. We may not always get along with our brothers, but they are still family.

1.16.3 What is deception?

The Greek word here is *planao*. According to Strong's (KJV) it is used 27 times and the majority of the time it is translated as some form of deceive, but also as err, go astray, seduce and wander. *Planao* is defined as causing to lead astray as to lead from the right way where physically it means leading away from the correct path or wander about; metaphorically meaning to lead away from truth, to cause err, and lead toward sin.

In English synonyms include *deceive, betray, mislead, beguile, delude, dupe, hoodwink, bamboozle, double-cross.*

James 1:17-18 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* Most translations put James 1:16 as the first phrase of a paragraph which also includes James 1:17-18. It is important to see the context to fully understand and appreciate how emphatic James is being and why. The implication here is that obviously there are those out there preaching that not all good gifts are from God, that God isn't perfectly consistent, or that he didn't bring us forth by the word of truth to be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. We know that false doctrines were everywhere in those days – just as they are today. James was fundamentally warning fellow believers not to be suckered by false teaching and gave some specific examples, not just in the next two verses, but throughout his letter.

1.16.4 Who is the source of deception?

Jn 8:44 *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* In this passage Jesus was speaking to some Pharisees. The Pharisees were mere men, but Jesus charged them with doing Satan's bidding. Men may execute deception, but Satan's will is the true source of deception.

1.16.5 Does God deceive?

Titus 1:2 *in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began* (*or before times eternal)* By definition a deception implies intentional misleading or, more bluntly, it is a lie. God does not lie and therefore does not deceive.

1.16.6 If God doesn't deceive, then what about these verses?

There are many seeming contradictions people point to in the bible in an effort to prove it wrong and, by extension, to destroy the faith of those who believe the bible to be true and accurate. What follows are four passages used for that purpose which at first appear to contradict Titus 1:2 and similar verses. With each verse is an attempt to explain logically how these verses are misinterpreted, misunderstood, or taken out of context.

1 Ki 22:20-23 *and the Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the Lord said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has declared disaster for you.*" This passage is an excerpt from a story about a messenger named Micaiah who was – in these verses – telling the king what God had told him. The events that followed showed the prophesy was true. Perhaps this is only a technicality, but it is important to note from this passage that God himself used a willing spirit to go and lie. God didn't personally lie, though he did allow a lie. This should not be viewed as unreasonable or unusual since he allows us to lie all the time. We do not know the nature of the spirit God used.

2 Thess 2:11 *Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,* The Greek for delusion in this sentence is *Plane*, a form of the word translated *err* or *deceived* in James 1:16. Since God doesn't lie this is difficult to reconcile. One interpretation might follow 1 Kings 22, particularly since it is stated that God sends the delusion. It doesn't say God delivers or even authors the delusion. Perhaps he only is controlling the routing of a lie and not actually creating it. Another interpretation would suggest that the purpose of the delusion is to prove for the public what God himself already knows about the hearts of the people described in the context.

Rev 17:17 *for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.* In this passage no technicality can rescue God. Of course with God no technicality is actually required, but that's beside the point. First of all, notice that God had previously said he would do something and now he must fulfill what he said. This shows God will keep his earlier promise. Next, examine this verse in context. It falls within an angel's explanation of the vision of the great prostitute and the beast. Those who would have it "put into their hearts" to submit to the beast, at least for a certain time, are people who were already being presented with a lie by the beast. In actuality God is merely withdrawing from those men so that they would follow their own natural inclination to follow the beast.

Eze 14:9 *And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.* This passage is included in the text describing a test of sorts. In the greater context God is telling his prophet that some Israelites were worshiping idols, but was offering a chance for them to come to his prophet and seek God's council via that prophet. The Lord goes on to say he will listen and answer. Eze 14:9 is essentially saying if the prophet gets deceived

he's really a false prophet and will die. In following verse God warns that both the false prophet and those who sought council from the false prophet will die.

1.16.7 How important is it to avoid being deceived?

1 Jo 3:7-8 *Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* There are numerous passages like this, warning us to be on guard against deception. Here are a few such key verses, each to be read in context: 2 Thes 2:3, 2 Tim 3:1-7, Jude 17-18, 2 Jo 7, Heb 13:9, 2 Pe 2:1. The sheer frequency of similar statements should indicate relative importance. In the passage from 1 John 3:7-8 we are warned that the purpose of the appearance of the Son of God was to destroy the works of the devil. The very purpose of Jesus was to nullify the very work of Satan from the very beginning, in the garden. Death comes by sin and sin by the devil, but life comes by Jesus Christ.

1.16.8 What kind of people deceive?

3 Jo 9-10 *I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.* Diotrephes is an example of a person who deceives by putting himself above authority. Read the verse again and observe this man's character for yourself.

The book of Jude talks addresses false teachers at length and provides colorful character descriptions for those who listen to and do the bidding of the father of lies, Satan. There are many more examples, such as 2 Peter 2, you can also use to find out more about the nature of people who deceive.

1.16.9 Why is deception such a threat?

Mt 12:30 *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.* Christ gives a clear warning. Anyone who deceives is against Christ. Anyone who accepts a lie is pulled away from Christ and, according to this verse, stands against Christ.

Rev 3:16-17 *So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.* Believers who listen to deceptions become ineffective and luke warm. The ultimate result is rejection. Those who are deceived are ones who say they've made it, whether physically or spiritually, but who are in fact seriously lacking by God's standard.

1.16.10 How does deception begin?

2 Pe 1:20-21 *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* According to Peter, deception begins with the will of man, in his own mind, conceiving his own twisted view of scripture. From within himself comes false prophesy, for genuine prophesy comes only from God through the Holy Spirit.

Jas 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* James tells us that words without application leads to deception.

1.16.11 How do you recognize one who deceives?

2 Tim 3:2-5 *For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.* This passage provides a pretty good description of description of what you would automatically recognize as bad, right up to the point where it describes them as having the appearance of godliness but denying its power. This passage could describe many church leaders, orthodox or otherwise. It also describes many false religions, some touting themselves as denominations. Some of the characteristics described here aren't as obvious in clergy because they tend to cloak themselves well and worse, people tend to overlook their flaws even when those flaws are extreme. Is it any wonder they are hard for many to recognize without training?

Mt 15:8-9 *“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* Jesus describes deceivers as those who talk a good game, but their heart isn't in it. The way to discern the deception is to look into what is being preached and see if it is the Word of God or the word of man.

1 Thess 5:19-22 *Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* Those who deceive have no use for real prophesy and the Spirit, because they will do nothing but expose and destroy the deceiver. We are told to test everything and only keep what is good. It doesn't say be sure to keep what is good when you're keeping things, it says to keep the good and abstain from every form of evil.

1 Tim 1:3-4 *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.* Look for a different doctrine. If it doesn't match the gospel it is false. This passage is a little different from those above because it gives examples of some of the things false teachings would have you get involved with. In this case examples include devotion to myths, obsession with personal history, and promoting speculation rather than the firm facts of the bible. A steward is a manager and any instruction to poor management is a false doctrine.

Gal 6:3 *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* Sometimes you have to look in the mirror to see the source of deception. Satan is the father of lies. Do not allow yourself to be adopted into his family. If Satan believes his own rhetoric then he, too, has deceived even himself.

1.16.12 How can you avoid being deceived?

Jas 3:1 *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.* You have to want to avoid deception. If you aspire

to more, if you feel called to more, then you must live up to more. If it isn't real, don't try or you will only be digging your grave deeper and faster.

Jas 3:3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. If we shut up we can listen. If we listen to God he will speak to us. If he speaks to us we need to tell others what he gives us to say. If we don't control our tongues we won't be able to do this. As our tongues go, so goes our whole being.

Mt 10:16 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. This advice given from the mouth of Jesus is simple and direct. The advice is to be skilled, knowing the word and knowing how to apply it. All the while we are to keep our noses clean in the process. This passage seems to dovetail well with the one that says we are to be in the world yet not of the world.

1.16.13 What specific deception is James warning us about?

James 1:12-15 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. In the verses leading up to James 1:16, James talks about steadfastness and the promised crown of life for those who love God. He warns us not to fall into the temptation of thinking God tempts and reveals to us that temptation plays upon our own desire. He explains how our desire, coupled with temptation, leads to death. Even though verse 16 is generally considered the start of the next paragraph, it could certainly be considered a resounding epilogue for the preceding paragraph.

James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. I once heard a US Treasury agent explain how to detect a counterfeit bill. He said the best way to determine if a note is fake is to know the real thing so intimately you can immediately detect a flaw. James is essentially saying the same thing. Be convinced of the absolute accuracy of God's Word, that God is 100% consistent, and to be steadfastly certain of His plan for us. Don't be suckered by false teaching.

James 1:17

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Do not err, my beloved brethren.

¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

¹⁸Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — KJV

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. — NIV

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:17 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
pas [3956] *all, any, every* **dosis** [1394] *giving, a gift* **agathos** [0018] *good, benefit, well*
kai [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **pas** [3956] *all, any, every* **dorema** [1434] *gift, bestowment* **telieos** [5046] *complete, full age, perfect* **anothen** [0509] *from above, from the beginning, from the top* **esti** [2076] *he/she/it is, them/they are* **katabaino** [2597] *descend, come down, fall* **apo** [0575] *off, away, separation* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **pater** [3962] *father, parent* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **phos** [5457] *luminousness, light, fire* **para** [3844] *near* **hos** [3739] *who, which, what, that* **ou** [3756] *absolute negative (adverb)* **eni** [1762] *be in or among (contraction for third person singular)* **parallage** [3883] *transmutation, fickleness, variableness* **e** [2228] *or, and, but, except, rather, than, that, what (conjunction)* **trope** [5157] *turn, turning, revolution* **apokiasma** [0644] *shadow, shading off, obscuration*

1.17.0 Introduction to James 1:17

This verse includes two major themes. The first theme involves the greatness of what God has in mind for us. The second is the consistency of God as a source of light and all goodness.

1.17.1 What is the best gift from God?

Jn 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

1.17.2 What does the Lord give us in this life?

Mt 10:34-39 *Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Modern “pop-Christianity” tends to foist the idea that if you just pray a little and do a few good deeds life will be easier and you will enjoy bountiful blessings and abundance. Jesus did say he came to bring life in abundance (Jn 10:10), but I think this verse and others like it are often taken out of context and used to present the false impression of a rosy earthly life. If you go through any of the four Gospels and look at each instance where Jesus encountered people and gave them the Good News, he always told them they had to change. The first thing we must accept as a gift from Jesus is change. Change is hard for most people, and its perhaps even harder sometimes for those around the person who is changed. Division and strife often accompany change. Believing in Jesus results in the truest freedom, but freedom isn’t free nor is it easy. We are promised a real peace, an inner peace, but not the kind of peace the world desired by the world (Jn 14:27).

Mt 11:28-30 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. If we change from our ways to his ways, we are then able to enjoy true inner peace and joy because the heavy burden of our sins is taken from us. If you have ever been in debt, whether for a house or a car or a student loan or anything else, you know debt is like a weight – intangible yet oppressive. Sin is a debt. When our sin is removed, the weight is removed. I believe this is why the yoke of Jesus is so light.

Lk 11:10-13 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! Just because we will have to change and we will be put in difficult and challenging positions, it doesn’t mean he’s just cleaned us up and sent us on our way. Christ does not simply give us a book and smile. He provides us with an indwelling Spirit. It is called a deposit (2 Tim 1:14) for our eventual hope. This deposit is fully functional and useful, providing us with information, comfort, and much more.

1.17.3 What is a gift?

The Greek word is *dorema*. It appears only twice in the New Testament and both times it is translated as gift (KJV and ESV). According to Strong’s concordance the word literally means gift, bounty, or benefaction.

According to the dictionary a gift (in the sense of the Greek word used here) is something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation.

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. A gift is something unearned. God only gives good gifts and such gifts indeed cannot be earned.

1.17.4 What is God’s attitude toward giving?

2 Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. Jesus gave up everything for us, including life in the flesh. What better example is there of giving?

1.17.5 Who is the father of lights?

Gen 1:3 *And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.* God created light. This verse alone provides sufficient information to answer the question.

Ps 27:1 *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Light is a term used to describe the source of illumination, whether physical, mental, or spiritual.

Mt 4:16 *the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.* The very nature of illumination is to make a thing visible, which is to say revealing. As in this verse, the appearance of light results in revelation.

Jn 8:12 *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* Jesus proclaimed himself the light of the world and of life. Anyone who understands that God is the father of light would also understand that Jesus’ statement made it abundantly clear he was claiming to be God (Jn 10:30).

1.17.6 What is light good for?

Ps 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* Light reveals our surroundings. God’s word serves as a light to reveal the direction we are to go. Any path other than the one where the light shines is a path into darkness. God’s light leads us to God.

Ro 13:12-14 *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.* Light actually protects us in various ways. If we stay in the light we avoid getting into trouble. Darkness, which is by definition the absence of light, is dispelled when light encroaches. This essentially means light drives away darkness, so if we accept the light, we accept armor against the powers of darkness. Light exposes sin for what it is, calls it by name, and makes it possible to be dealt with. Put on Jesus Christ, the light of the world, and sinful desire will become empty and void because sin will not be able to withstand the constant and powerful light.

1.17.7 How consistent is God?

Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* I think the answer to the question is: completely.

James 1:17 uses much more poetic language. Shadows only vary or change with motion. “No variation or shadow due to change” not only indicates pure consistency, it indicates our Lord is unmoving and unswerving in character.

1.17.8 Why is God perfectly stable?

1 Jo 3:20 *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything* God knows everything. If God has absolutely accurate and complete knowledge, what could possibly cause him to be unstable?

Jas 3:11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? God's character is pure. There is no reason for God to be anything but consistent. If there is inconsistency, its in our perception.

James 1:18

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Do not err, my beloved brethren.

¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

¹⁸Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — KJV

James 1:16-18 ¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. — NIV

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Greek Transliteration of James 1:18 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

boulomai [1014] *be willing, intend* **apokueo** [0616] *breed, generate, beget, produce* **hemas** [2248] *us, our, we* **logos** [3056] *word, something said, communication, divine expression of Christ* **aletheia** [0225] *true, truth, truly, verity* **eis** [1519] *to, into... (prep. expressing motion)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **einai** [1511] *to exist (am, is, was, be...)* **hemas** [2248] *us, our, we* **aparche** [0536] *first-fruit, a beginning of sacrifice* **tis** [5100] *anyone, anything, someone, something, somewhat* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **ktisma** [2938] *an original formation (creation: product or creature)*

1.18.0 Introduction to James 1:18

This verse expresses the idea Christians are newly created, regenerated beings. It says that our new nature is the result of the action of the “word of truth” for the divine purpose of being a “kind of first-fruit” among all of creation. This statement implies what Paul says clearly in Eph 2:8-10, namely that regeneration is something accomplished by Christ (the word of truth) and not by ourselves and it is done for his purpose, not ours. It seems to me we have a divine purpose in our existence and to do anything other than fulfill that purpose with the gifts he’s given us seems like an insult to him.

1.18.1 What does James mean by “brought forth?”

Gen 1:24 *And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.* God initially brought forth everything in creation in the first chapter of Genesis.

The words of the Greek phrase have nearly identical meaning to the phrase in Gen 1:24. In each case the words used generally refer to birth, but in each of these cases they can and do also mean the act of creation. Birth, after all, is a step in the creative (or procreative) process.

Just as God created the world and all the living things in it, He created each of us as individual human souls and recreates (2 Cor 5:17, Gal 5:16) us through the act and process of being born again (Jn 3:3).

1.18.2 What is “born again”?

Jn 3:3 *Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* From the beginning of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus took charge of the conversation. He began with this statement to Nicodemus. Jesus didn’t use this language with most others he encountered. Using this language with Nicodemus was appropriate because he was a student of the scriptures. He would have understood the many references to repentance and renewal of heart.

Question 1.15.5 asked if birth was the start of life, but the scriptures dealing with birth had more to do with entering a system of living rather than the actual start of existence. It seems logical, then, that to be born again really means that you start living live under a new system.

Ez 36:26 *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* God cares about the condition of the heart above all else. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that he needed to experience a radical heart change.

Lk 13:5 *No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.* The word repent literally means to change. Jesus did not use the phrase “born again” here, but the meaning appears to be very much the same.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.* Indeed, to be born again implies an end to a previous life. It is a change of heart, a change of mind, a completely regenerated being. There is no room for the old.

1 Pe 1:3 *Blessed be the God of our Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* Peter also writes about being born again. The important point in this verse is “...he has caused...”. Man cannot cause rebirth, but can only experience it. It is a gift (Ro 3:24), something we cannot earn (Eph 2:8-9). As Peter says, Blessed be God.

1.18.3 How do we go about becoming born again?

In the realm of pop-Christianity the “Roman Road” is frequently used in personal evangelism. The goal of this technique is to illicit a confession of sin, faith, and prayer for forgiveness. While the steps of realizing one’s sin, admitting our inability to overcome it on our own and acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice in faith are necessary steps, they are only the beginning. A new and changed life is required.

Salvation isn’t an equation with a fixed number of steps to be carried out to a logical end. That’s why there are so many books in the bible written by so many authors. Each book tells a story and most include examples how salvation is sought and discovered, or missed.

Entering into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ isn't a light decision. The next few questions should perhaps be considered before advancing to a more proper answer of this one. We shall return to this question a bit later in the study...

1.18.4 Why would you want to be born again?

Rev 21:3-4 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* There will no longer be separation between man and God. God will live with man and there will be no more tears, no more death, no more pain. All the crap will be gone. Not only does life continue into eternity, but it will be the life described in this passage. This is prize Paul spoke of (1 Cor 9:24, Phil 3:14), the hope of the Glory of God (Ro 5:2).

1.18.5 Why wouldn't you want to be born again?

Rev 20:13-15 *And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* Anyone who wants to join Satan, the false prophet and the beast in the lake of fire (Rev 19:20), might not want to be born again. Anyone else who doesn't want to be born again simply doesn't understand or refuses to believe the implications of that decision.

1.18.6 Is it God's will for all to be born again?

1 Tim 4:10 *For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.* Either he's the savior of all people or he isn't. Or, just maybe, this passage doesn't really mean what we tend to think it means by only a casual reading. Let's examine a few more references for clarification.

Heb 5:9 *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him* Regardless of what happens to those who don't obey him, we have the promise of eternal salvation to those who do obey him.

Mt 1:21 *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* Jesus will save his people, but what about those who aren't his?

1 Cor 5:1-5 *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.* The man Paul is speaking of is a member of the Corinthian church. This member, supposedly a born again man, is living in heinous sin. Paul is advising the other members to throw him out. Paul goes on to say that Satan will destroy the man's flesh, but

Jesus would still save his soul. The grace of our Lord exceeds understanding and exists out of or in spite of linear time. Even so, this is not an argument for Jesus saving all.

Jn 3:5 *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Jn 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* Apparently it is possible to miss out on eternal salvation after all. Clearly not all will be saved (Rev 20:15).

As to reconciling 1 Tim 4:10 with Jn 3:5, I have a theory. In context one has to realize Paul was writing to Timothy, a fellow preacher. More specifically, examine the balance of 1 Tim 4 and in particular verse 6 where Paul makes it clear he’s addressing issues within the church. It stands to reason, then, that Paul’s use of the word “all” in verse 10 can justifiably be restricted to mean all within the church body.

1.18.7 How do you know if you’re born again?

Gal 5:22-24 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* I believe the concept of being born again is profound in both its simplicity and its complexity. Fundamentally it means you are living a new life. That new life necessarily includes spiritual regeneration with a desire and active effort toward obedience to Jesus. The passage from Gal 5:22-24 illustrates such an example.

1.18.8 What are the responsibilities of being born again?

Mt 5:17-20 *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. God is holy (Rev 4:8). We are called to be holy (Lev 11:45) because we are to follow Christ (Lk 9:23).*

1.18.9 What must we do to become born again?

Isa 55:1-3 *“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.* Just as a mother gives bodily birth to a new child, so the Spirit breathes life into our spirits, bringing them alive for the first time. Birth is only the start of a system of living. Follow Jesus. Listen to his words and hear him well so that you can do as he instructs and you will be living in the new system and thus born again.

I would like to mention a variable collection of passages commonly called the “Roman Road.”

While I don't have a problem with any of those verses – they are all part of scripture, after all – boiling the Gospel message down to a formula isn't the technique Jesus used. He speaks to individual hearts with individual messages. The heart changes and the behavior with it. If either changes alone then both are empty, assuming either could change without the other. People often think Paul and James say opposing things on this and that's just not true. They merely focus on different sides of the same coin. Jesus spoke to the heart and the positive results were seen in the form of action resulting from the changed heart.

1.18.10 What is the “Word of Truth?”

Jn 14:6 *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus established himself as Truth.*

Gen 1:3 *And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God spoke light into existence.*

Jn 1:1-5 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Jesus is the Word John spoke of. If all was created by and through Jesus, then it was Jesus who did the “leg work” of speaking light into existence. Jesus is both the Word and the Truth. Since we have long since established Jesus does not lie, he is therefore the Word of Truth.*

1.18.11 What is “Firstfruit?”

Lev 23:10-11 *“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. First fruit is literally the first of the harvest. Being first usually symbolizes best and always means specifically chosen. During the Jewish feasts, the barley sheaf is waved on the first day after the Sabbath during Feast of Unleavened Bread. This starts the period called Omer. The 50th day of Omer is called the Feast of Weeks when the first wheat sheaf is waved, yet another type of first fruit.*

Ro 8:23 *And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. This passage speaks of spiritual firstfruits. Here it speaks of what we receive, which is the chosen best of God.*

The Greek *aparche* is found six times in the New Testament. According to Strong's concordance it literally means to be of the first productions of the earth offered to God. The first portion of dough used for the consecrated loaves. This term was therefore used to describe persons consecrated to God for all time. Another definition being a person superior to others of the same class.

As used in James, firstfruits appears to indicate that we, either as humans or more specifically as the elect of Christ, are lifted above non-human life and/or unsaved people, at least in the sense of our eternal hope. Though less obvious, James could also be implying that as those

people chosen to live in the infancy of church age these believers were literally among the first to receive the good news and become born again. Traditional interpretation holds that believers are to receive a good and special position in the Kingdom of Heaven. While possibly true, it seems somewhat pompous to me to judge ourselves better than others for our faith. That is the Lord's decision, not ours. As for me, I am a poor excuse for a believer and unworthy to be of any of the Lord's fruit. If I were to be granted any position in His kingdom it would be an act of the purest grace and mercy.

1.18.12 What is the Feast of Weeks about?

Lev 23:9-14 (During the Feast of Unleavened Bread) *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the Lord with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.* This first fruit is actually barley. It starts a period called Omer which lasts 50 days. It ends with the Feast of Weeks which we know today as Pentecost.

Lev 23:15-21 (Feast of Weeks) *"You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the Lord. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. And you shall make proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.* The Feast of Weeks at the end of the Omer period is when wheat is waved to the Lord. Unlike the earlier first fruit, this is used to bake leavened bread. It seems the idea here is that Christ, who was without sin was raised first. Later, we who are but human and are deemed sinless only by grace are raised up.

Ac 2:1-4 *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* It is amazingly beautiful that the Lord would give the Holy Spirit in great power as the indwelling deposit on our eternal hope on this day. It shows his

grace at its fullest, demonstrating its promise in tangible power. Humans indwelt by God, blessed and redeemed, deemed worthy by grace and lifted up by God Himself.

1.18.13 Summary James 1:16-18

James 1:16-18 *¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — ESV*

This passage begins with a firm yet loving warning to wake up, be alert, and not be fooled. We learned that deception is a kind of lie, that God does not lie, but people do. Satan is the original liar and Jesus calls him the father of lies. James reminds us of the unchanging perfection of God and the goodness of all that comes from God. We may not always perceive the good, but that doesn't make it anything less. God is not only perfect, but unchanging. There is no hint of shadow, no room for wavering. We know it is the will of God, not our will, which brings us forward as firstfruits. Truly we are but invited guests in the Kingdom, yet we are welcomed as dear children, family of our holy and merciful Lord.

James 1:19

¹⁹Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: ²⁰**For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.**
²¹**Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. — KJV**

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰**for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.** ²¹**Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. — NIV**

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰**for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.** ²¹**Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. — ESV**

Greek Transliteration of James 1:19 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
eido [1492] *to see, know, be aware, consider, perceive, understand* **adephos** [0080] *brother, sibling (connected by womb, literal or figurative)* **mou** [3450] *I, me, my* **agapetos** [0027] *beloved, dear* **esto** [2077] *let them be (imparitive)* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)* **pas** [3956] *all, any, every* **anthropos** [0444] *human, certain person* **tachus** [5036] *swift* **eis** [1519] *to, into... (prep. expressing motion)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **akouo** [0191] *relating to hearing: give in the audience of, harken, be noised* **bradus** [1021] *figuratively slow, dull* **eis** [1519] *to, into... (prep. expressing motion)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* [2980] **bradus** [1021] *figuratively slow, dull* **eis** [1519] *to, into... (prep. expressing motion)* **orge** [3709] *violent passion: desire, ire, anger, wrath, vengeance, indignation*

1.19.0 Introduction

As we have seen many times already and will continue to see in James' style, concepts in this verse are presented with stark contrasts. In this case James refers to behaviors of hearing compared with speaking and anger. Hearing we are called to jump to while speaking and being angry are not to be done in haste. James forbids neither, but does counsel due mental process before acting. Verse 20 goes on to further explain the reasoning and verse 21 provides practical instructions how to accomplish the behavior outlined in verse 19.

1.19.1 Is James talking about every person or every believing person?

Jas 1:1 *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.* James originally intended the letter to go to fellow believers. The wisdom of James 1:19 is certainly not limited just to believers, though. Many religions espouse similar ideals for personal behavior. I think has a lot to do with good old fashioned common sense.

1.19.2 Hear what?

Jn 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* The Holy Spirit is a constant indwelling companion, always ready to counsel, advise and direct.

Rev 2: 29 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* Jesus was speaking to John in a prophesy here, but the idea expressed is valid in or out of context. Jesus is the Word (Jn 1:1, 14). He speaks to us through words he spoke and were recorded for us in scripture (Ps 119:105). He speaks via the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26, quoted above). Just as he spoke through prophets in the Old Testament, he still uses individuals to convey messages to other people (1 Cor 12:7-8, quoted below)

1 Cor 12:7-8 *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit* God speaks to us through others. Caution: Sometimes he uses unlikely vessels.

1 Thess 5:20-21 *Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.* In order to hear God, we have to listen to everything and be discerning. To be effective with personal evangelism, I believe you must be able to see and hear the person you are sharing the good news with. You must be able to relate to them at their level. Jn 3 and Jn 4 are two very different examples of Christ sharing the Good News. With Nicodemus he used a completely different technique than with the woman at the well, but in both cases he “listened” to their hearts and determined exactly what he needed to say and do. He knew Nicodemus understood the deeper meanings of the scriptures and was seeking to understand what seemed incomprehensible – his own sinful heart and the need for repentance, humbling, and spiritual regeneration. The woman at the well had sin issues and knew she was in no position to raise herself up. She didn’t need theology, she needed compassion and direction. We have to learn from Christ’s example even more than from his words.

1.19.3 What does James mean by “hear”?

akouo [0191] *relating to hearing: give in the audience of, harken, be noised* Based on the definition provided by the concordance for the word translated as “hear” in verse 19, the following verse seems to illustrate the concept nicely...

Pr 13:1 *A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.* James means to pay attention, not simply let it go in one ear and out the other.

1.19.4 How do we listen to people?

Pr 23:19 *Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.* Use your heart to listen to what the other person has to say. It is such an engrained part of man’s sinful nature to deceive that we often use words to camouflage what our heart seeks to express, so listen to more than the words of the person. Use all your senses, and when you’ve done all that use your heart.

Pr 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.* Most of

us think we've got it figured out, especially Christians (big or little "c"). The fact is, God created man as a social creature. By indwelling man with his Spirit, he provides a way for us to share social communion with God and men together. What we have now is a mere precursor to the social community of Christ in New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1-5). While we are here, though, we can and indeed must use one another (Pr 27:17).

Pr 24:6 *for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.* Building on Pro 12:15 – a word of caution: listen to good advice.

1.19.5 How do we listen to the world and to nature?

Mt 6:26 *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* The Lord provides us with endless lessons if only we will open our senses and our hearts to learn them. In this verse Jesus uses creatures to teach a lesson. There are many more examples where nature is used to teach, such as rock and soil, plants, weather, the sun, stars, and moon. We must see the fingerprints of God on all of His creation and be open to hearing his messages written by His divine hand.

Ex 15:26 *"If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer."* There are plenty of examples of what God can do, both blessing and curse, in nature as well as society. Open your eyes and you will be able to see truth.

1.19.6 How do we hear God?

Ps 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* God speaks to us through His written word, the bible.

Jn 14:16-17 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.* The Holy Spirit is a gift. One of its attributes is its ability to give us help in the form of knowledge (information) from God.

Pr 22:17 *Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge* People, particularly spiritually mature people are mouthpieces of God.

Jonah 1:1-2 *Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me."* Sometimes God speaks clearly and directly without middlemen.

1.19.7 How can you tell the voice of God from that of an evil spirit?

1 Thess 5:21 *but test everything; hold fast what is good.* This instruction is a simple directive and one which should not be ignored. The following scripture references expound on how to go about determining if a voice is speaking good or evil.

1 Cor 12:3 *Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.* The first litmus test is always the use of the name, Jesus Christ. False religions don’t make Jesus Christ their master with absolute and singular authority.

2 Pe 2:1-4 *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;* This chapter from 2 Peter is full of useful advice, but these verse seemed the most appropriate to share here. First, look for the false teaching and false doctrine in your midst. It is often introduced secretly. It denies Jesus. It may be sensual (geared toward self-satisfaction). It says something in opposition to scripture. It exploits people. Avoid such teaching and the people who teach it because they will get what is coming to them.

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* To determine if what you hear is truly of God, test it against God’s word and listen to the Holy Spirit’s education and information from within. God never varies, so his message – by any source – cannot oppose itself.

Ac 28:28 *Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.* Who is the target audience? If only members get to hear, there’s something wrong. The good news for those who need to hear it. This goes back to the warning about secrecy from 2 Peter (above).

Jn 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* Jesus promised – and as of Pentecost delivered – the Holy Spirit to help us. If the Spirit dwells within you, it will urge you one way or the other when you hear words being spoken. It will always agree with scripture and all prophesy of God will come to pass and not be proven false.

Mt 17:5 *He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”* Sometimes an obvious sign accompanies a message. The sign will prove the teaching true or false. Most often the sign is revealed over time rather than in the moment. When this happens, it is the proving of the message you ultimately care about.

1.19.8 Why should we be slow to speak?

Pr 12:14 *From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man’s hand comes back to him.* When you speak, people listen. When you do something, it cannot be hidden. Jesus isn’t the only one watching you, nor is he the only one judging you. Take time when you speak to be sure you’re speaking as prompted by the Holy Spirit and not your own ego.

2 Pe 1:20 *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.* Though ironically this verse is widely misinterpreted, suffice it to say you can't make up your own interpretation of scripture to fit your premise. Your premise must be based on the totality of scripture. Context is critical. Individual verses taken out of context are easily distorted in their explanation. In this study I make every effort to be as diligent as possible to avoid missing context sensitive applications, but I am as flawed as any other man. Only the Word is truly and purely accurate and then only in its entirety. Granted, when witnessing – or even in more casual speech – we can't just read whole passages without thinking about it. The point is, context matters, as does agreement with the whole of the Word.

1.19.9 Should we always be slow to speak?

Pr 18:2 *A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.* There are plenty of proverbs that warn us about fools and speaking. The point of this particular selection is to remember our opinions are always close to the surface. It isn't our opinion that counts. It's the Word of God. Prayerfully open your heart to the words of the Spirit, then speak what God would have you say rather than blurting out your own opinions.

Pr 23:9 *Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.* Sometimes speaking is a waste of time anyway. That doesn't necessarily mean it is wrong to speak, but sometimes the proverbial soil is just too rocky.

1.19.10 How do we know what to say?

1 Jn 4:6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* Pay attention to your audience. Knowing your audience is the first step in determining what to say.

Eph 6:18 *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints* You need to be in regular communication with the Lord. Ask for wisdom (James 1:7).

Mk 13:11 *And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.* This verse offers me great hope. It should not be taken as a blank check, however. The mind is prepared in advance by learning and learning comes from study of the Bible. Put it in your head. The Spirit will help you pull out what is needed. To use this passage as a crutch and an excuse for not studying amounts to tempting God.

1 Cor 12:8 *To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,* Wisdom and knowledge regarding communication with others is a gift given specifically to some. This doesn't mean the rest of us can't do it for in fact we must, but some receive special blessings in this area.

1 Pe 1:21 *who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.* Ultimately, the litmus test for our utterances should be whether God is glorified.

1.19.11 What is anger?

The Greek word used by James for anger is “ogre.” According to the concordance this word **orge** [3709] means: *violent passion — desire, ire, anger, wrath, vengeance, indignation*

By looking at this word in the Greek we see James is talking about more than a casual annoyance or even getting peeved in the common sense. He’s talking about the kind of anger that involves primal arousal to action. It might be equally valid to say we should be slow to wrath and slow to vengeance. Basically its about taking an action based on a powerful negative emotion.

It may be worth noting KJV uses the word wrath. This is an occasion where I find myself preferring KJV’s word choice. To me, wrath implies response motivated by a negative passion. Anger seems to imply the negative passion itself.

1.19.12 Is it okay to become angry?

Dt 9:20 And the LORD was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. In this example God [YHWH] was angry. Who are we to say it isn’t okay for God to be angry? It is also interesting to note what Moses was doing while God was fuming. Moses was praying, specifically interceding on his brother’s behalf.

Mt 21:12-13 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” This is the most well known case of Jesus displaying his temper. He wasn’t just mad at them for sinning, but angry for the Father’s sake because something of the Father’s had been defiled. In essence Jesus was defending someone else, namely the Father. I believe one of the lessons to learn from this event is that it is certainly okay to be angry when you see someone perpetrating a wrong against someone else. Since we know the kind of anger James speaks of involves wrathful or vengeful retribution, we can certainly see this example involving Christ’s temper is very fitting to this discussion. Elsewhere Jesus instructs us to turn the other cheek (Mt 5:39), but that’s with regard to our own defense, not the defense of the helpless.

Eph 4:26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger Anger is allowed, but the privilege comes with a warning. The need for the warning should be obvious. When we are angry we often act out of emotion, casting off reasoning and worse yet ignoring the Spirit’s direction. When Paul says not to let the sun go down on your anger what this seems to mean is not to let yourself brood. When sour emotion festers it eats away at our reasoning and only makes finding a resolution more difficult. Deal with the problem making you angry, then move on. It is hard to be productive when you’re riled up.

1.19.13 How can we gain control over anger?

Lk 11:9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. As with so many other “how can we” questions, one crucial method is always prayer.

Mt 16:19 *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed [1] in heaven.*” ([1]Or shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed) The footnote is included here because other versions translate this passage differently. The point, however, remains the same. When we are walking in true faith, the Name of Jesus is such a powerful tool that with His permission we can use it to bind or loose things. This presumably could include one’s own emotional responses such as anger. When we submit ourselves to the will of the Lord, we must include submission of our emotions. This does not mean we cannot become angry or to say anger is wrong. It does mean, however, we have the authority to bind our emotions so that the indwelling Spirit has an opportunity to resolve the source of the anger.

Ps 4:4-5 *Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.* The psalmist gives excellent advice here. Sit down (or lay down) and think about the situation. Use your mind to reflect in silence. Offering a right sacrifice simply means to put yourself into the proper perspective relative to God. Remind yourself of your position: creation. God is God and you are not. Accept it, surrender your will, and accept it is up to God to have control. You have no control over the external except whatever authority God grants (Jn 19:11).

Jonah 4:1-2 *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.* Jonah was downright ticked off at God. In spite of his anger he turned to God for guidance. He plead his case and took out his anger on God. Fortunately God has immense shoulders we can cry on or beat against. Either way He is willing to let us work through it and ultimate find the truth at the end, just as Jonah did. The lesson here is to lean on God rather than yourself and your own emotions for guidance.

James 1:20

¹⁹Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: ²⁰For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

²¹Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. — KJV

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. — NIV

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:20 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

orge [3709] *violent passion: desire, ire, anger, wrath, vengeance, indignation* **gar** [1063] *verily, therefore, yet, no doubt, as, because that* **aner** [0435] *male individual* **dakaioisune** [1343] *equity, righteousness, justification* **theos** [2316] *God* **ou** [3756] *absolute negative (adverb)* **ergazomai** [2038] *toil, labor, work, do*

1.20.0 Introduction to James 1:20

Verse 20 expounds on the subject of anger and explains why anger isn't a very helpful emotional response. James does not say anger necessarily produces sin, but he does say anger does not yield the kind of righteousness God wants from us. In later verses James goes on to talk about righteousness and if you try to look for a way to make anger a vehicle for achieving that kind of righteousness you will find it challenging at best. Questions for verse 20 dwell on the subjects of anger and righteousness and how they relate, both to us and to God.

You may notice there's a big discrepancy between the NIV and the ESV in the use of the term require vs desire in this verse. I want to call your attention to the Greek. While I'm no expert on Greek, it seems to me neither of these versions is accurate. The Greek word behind the phrase in each translation is ergazomai. It literally means work. Between the three translations given, for this verse KJV is by far the closest to the Greek.

1.20.1 How does anger of man differ from anger of God?

Rev 4:8 *And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"* God is holy and man is not (Ro 3:10).

Mt 5:22 *But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother [1. some manuscripts insert 'without cause'] will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. One man may become angry with another, but God is always in perfect agreement with himself (James 1:17).*

Jonah 4:1-2 *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, [1] and he was angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.* [Note 1: The literal Hebrew says ‘it was exceedingly evil to Jonah’.] Jonah’s anger is contrasted against God’s anger in this passage. Jonah was so quick to anger that he ran from God’s command to show mercy. Jonah in his piousness found God’s plan of redemption for the vile and filthy people contemptible. Jonah knew, however, that God was indeed slow to anger and full of love. God isn’t generally going to agree with us. Rather we must agree with him if we are to partake in the Lord’s victory – even we all our logic and all our force of emotion war against what God says to us.

Jn 7:23-24 *If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.* As John points out, man’s anger is based on the same thing as everything else a man responds to – the visible exterior of people and situations. God has the omniscience to see and know what lies beyond the reach of our perceptions. He is in a position to execute his anger and still remain holy and righteous while we, through our ignorance, can make no such claims.

1.20.2 What makes us angry?

Gen 4:5-6 *but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?”* There are probably many reasons, but pride is one of the biggest, if not the very biggest. There are definitely many reasons for pride. Cain believed in his own pride that his offering was just as good as Able’s, but he didn’t grasp what God wanted. His pride led to jealousy when God accepted his brother’s offering. God explained the problem to Cain, but he didn’t want to hear the truth. Everyone wants love. When his offering was rejected he felt personally rejected. It was a lie, of course, how often do we fall into the same trap today? We feel worthy and when our flaws are made known to us we take it as a personal assault and completely miss the point. God tells us our flaws to help us, chastening us to create purity, not punishing imperfection. Humility accepts the teaching, pride accepts punishment.

Hosea 7:10 *The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this.* Pride is the attitude of self-importance. Any time we feel we are more important than God, we are wrong. Pride is the reason Satan was thrown down from Heaven. Pride is the reason Cain killed his brother and was forced into exile.

Gen 37:11, 28 ¹¹*And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.* ²⁸*Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.* Most people have at least heard of the story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers. The reason, given in Gen 37:11 is jealousy. The act was one of wrath, indignation and retribution. Why else would there be jealousy, however, unless the brothers had more pride in themselves than humility toward God?

Jer 13:16 *Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness.* The ability to feel a sense of pride, which is to say the underlying capacity for the attitude we call pride, is a gift from God. The problem is when that feeling is directed toward ourselves. The attitude then takes on the title pride. The same basic attitude, when directed outward toward God is called giving glory. The principle is the same – an attitude of superiority. The difference is whether it is directed inward (pride in self and coveting praise, self superiority) or outward (giving glory to and recognizing superiority of God, self humility).

Any number of emotions can be attributed to an attitude if not an act of anger. The words for anger or wrath appear literally hundreds of times through the bible. The subject itself could be one of extensive study. Without drawing this out further than reasonably necessary I submit that in general, the sense of relative worth, whether in the form of pride in one's self or in defense of another who one deems to be of worth, is the most common and most powerful motivator of anger and wrath.

1.20.3 What makes God angry?

Dt 9:13-14 *Furthermore, the LORD said to me, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people. Let me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'* All of Dt 9 from verse 13 to the end provides great examples of God's anger. From this section we learn some things which make God angry, what he might do, and how a man who truly loves God can make a difference in the outcome of God's anger. Dt 9 includes the infamous story of the golden calf. This is a story of idolatry (see also Rev 14:10) and rebellion. Verses 22 to 24 go on to provide a second example and it clearly states God became angry because of rebellion. The calf idol was explained as an example and these later verses state outright it was the rebellion making God so angry. It is one thing to make a mistake, even to argue with God, but wholly another when you take matters into your own hands in direct defiance of God.

1 Ki 11:6-8 *So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.* This is another example of direct defiance and idolatry against God. Solomon knew right from wrong and deliberately chose to do wrong. Following verses provide gory details of God's wrath against Solomon for his intentional erring. God's retribution might not be sudden, but it is certain.

Ex 22:22-24 *You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.* If you want to make God mad, another sure method is to abuse the weak and helpless. See also Mk 9:42.

1.20.4 What happens when God gets angry?

Gen 6:6-7 *And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to*

his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” I find this passage fascinating. God comes as close to admitting error here as can be found in scripture. If you are at all familiar with the first few chapters of Genesis you know the context of this verse is the lead up to the great flood of Noah. Man’s rejection of God hurt His feelings. In His anger God wiped out man from the earth except one family.

1 Sam 15:28 *And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.”* God doesn’t have to wipe you out. Instead he may very well cast you, your family and your nation into deep suffrage. In this case it was King Saul who made God mad and he had to pay a personal price and live with the consequences.

Mal 4:1 *“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”* This old testament prophesy reminds me of Jesus’ parable of the wheat and weeds (aka tares) from Mt 13:24-30 and 36-43. I’m also reminded of how those who follow the beast are thrown into the lake of burning fire in Rev 19:20. Though I admittedly remain unclear as to the mechanics of these prophesies, it is crystal clear opposing God angers Him and the consequences involve both this life and eternity.

1.20.5 What happens when God relents from anger?

Gen 6:6-8 *And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.* In the previous question we used this passage to see what God does when get is angry. The very next verse is included here to demonstrate God’s prevision for the time when his anger would relent. God chose a man to survive the flood. This man Noah would later be greatly blessed and when God’s anger subsided he would receive a new covenant from God to preserve mankind and animals on earth for as long as it exists.

Jer 3:11-14 *And the LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, “Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the LORD. Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. This passage provides another example of God’s prevision to relent his anger. God provides an offer with a promise. The promise essentially is to forego anger in exchange for the return to faith. He promises to not be angry forever. He promises ultimately to bring the faithful to Zion.*

1.20.6 Is God’s anger righteous?

2 Chr 12:6 *Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD*

is righteous.” When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: “They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. God is righteous therefore his anger is righteous. God stays the hand of wrath when the disobedient turn from their sin and obey. If you read this particular passage in context you will see that God disciplines Jerusalem to train them in righteousness.

1.20.7 Can we have righteous anger?

Jn 16:7, 13 *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.* ¹³*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.* Before answering the question, first it is important to remember that obedient born again believers of Christ enjoy the continuous presence of the Holy Spirit who helps and guides us. We know God can be angered and remains righteous, so it stands to reason if we abide with the Holy Spirit and become angry we too can remain righteous even in our anger.

Ro 8:9 *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* God’s anger is righteous, therefore if follows that if God – which is to say the Spirit of Christ – is in you, you may have righteous anger when the anger is driven by the Holy Spirit.

Eph 4:26 *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger* Paul specifically instructs us to be angry without sinning. What is righteousness but behavior devoid of sin?

1.20.8 Why wouldn’t we produce righteousness from our anger?

Ro 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—* Apart from God we cannot be righteous. Righteousness is behavior obedient to God’s will. If we separate ourselves from God we are in rebellion and therefore unrighteous in all we do including whatever we produce as a result of our anger. We all suffer a sin nature in our flesh. In our anger we are often at our weakest with regard to clear thinking and our focus on God’s will. It is very easy to hastily act based on our own will rather than God’s when we are angry.

1.20.9 What is righteousness?

The Greek word *dikaiosune* appears 92 times in the New Testament and in every case (in KJV) it is translated as righteousness. According to the Strong’s Concordance this word is defined as follow:

1. in a broad sense: state of him who is as he ought to be, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God
 - a. the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain a state approved of God
 - b. integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting
2. in a narrower sense, justice or the virtue which gives each his due

As a part of speech this word is classified as a noun. It isn't tangible per se, but it is a quality with tangible attributes in the form of how one lives and the impact it has. This is why I think of righteousness as a behavior. Because it is by definition acceptable to God, it must be devoid of sin and hence my simplified definition of righteousness: behavior devoid of sin.

1.20.10 Why does God require righteousness?

1 Pe 1:16 *since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* God is holy. He promises to make us holy. One cannot be holy unless one is righteous.

Is 33:15 *He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil,* Righteousness hates evil and refuses to look upon it.

Ro 8:6-8 *To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* God is Spirit, but man is flesh. Being "born again" means our Spirit is born into the family of God. The Spirit looks forward to the hope of eternal life in spite of the flaws of the flesh. As Paul writes here, those whose mind is in the flesh cannot please God.

2 Cor 3:9 *For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.* In this passage the reference to "the ministry of condemnation" appears to refer to the law of Moses. As glorious as that law was, the "ministry of righteousness" is vastly better.

James 1:21

¹⁹Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: ²⁰For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. ²¹Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. — KJV

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. — NIV

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:21 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
dio [1352] *therefore* **apotithemi** [0659] *put away, cast off, put aside* **pas** [3956] *all, any, every* **rhuparia** [4507] *moral dirtiness, turpitude* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **perisseia** [4050] *surplus, abundance, superfluity* **kakia** [2549] *badness, depravity, wickedness* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **prautes** [4240] *mildness, humility, meekness* **dechomai** [1209] *receive, accept, take* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **emphutos** [1721] *implanted, engrafted* **logos** [3056] *word, something said, communication, divine expression of Christ* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **dunamai** [1410] *be able, can, could, may, might, possible* **sozo** [4982] *save, deliver, protect, heal, preserve, make whole* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **psuche** [5590] *breath, spirit, heart, life, mind, soul* **humon** [5216] *you, your, yourselves*

1.21.0 Introduction to James 1:21

The implied tone of James in this verse seems almost out of place. It sounds like the audience is behaving badly and James is calling them out on it. Beyond that, it sounds like James is speaking to non-believers in this verse and warning them to start believing. We know from the beginning of the chapter James wrote this to believers scattered out away from the city of Jerusalem. So is there a disconnect? I don't think so. This verse is tied to verses 19 and 20 based on grammatical implication, but it also seems to be a lead in to the hard hitting directives in the remainder of the chapter. It wouldn't be the first time I saw a translation to English seem to misplace the paragraph breaks. Regardless, James isn't speaking specifically or directly to non-believers. Rather, I believe James is providing guidance as a father would his children (ref. 1 Pe 2:2). The instruction is really preventative.

1.21.1 How do we put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness?

2 Cor 5:17-18 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old [creature] has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation* The question assumes you can.

James' instruction in verse 21 implies you can. Paul describes the believer as a new creation. Jesus spoke of being born again (Jn 3). The reference verse here indicates that being a new creation requires us to be "in Christ" and that "all of this is from God." Throughout the bible, including the New Testament, we are given clear instructions regarding our behavior. While our spiritual being is regenerated solely through the work of Holy Spirit as the free gift of Jesus by his sacrifice, our behavior is a function of our flesh. Our flesh is controlled by us. We can yield to the direction of the Spirit, as we ought, as James describes when he says "receive with meekness the implanted word," or not. If we choose to continue in our filth and live in rampant wickedness, this is when we grieve the Holy Spirit and we face losing our eternal hope.

2 Cor 9:7-8 Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. Since we have control of our own minds we have control of our attitudes. We need to start by choosing to be joyful and giving. Many people regard this passage as an instruction toward tithing. The fact is, we give much more than tithes to God. We give up our "old man" (2 Cor 5:17) and our burdens (Mt 11:27-30) to Christ. Those need to be given cheerfully as well. When we sacrifice our selfish self-will we give what God wants most and in so doing we necessarily give up our filthiness and wickedness.

Gal 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. The act we need to cheerfully perform is to give ourselves fully to Christ. In so doing the filthiness and wickedness is crucified. We are present and we are participants, but ultimately it is the Lord's will and the Lord's work which makes it possible to put away the filthiness.

1.21.2 What does filthiness and rampant wickedness look like in today's society?

Turn on the TV or pick up a newspaper. It is everywhere. Immorality comes in forms too numerous to name. Sex in the living room, homosexuality in high school hallways, lies from our highest officials, brutal beats, rapes, and murder, and school fundraisers. Okay, the fundraiser thing was a joke. Sort of. The point is, not all filthiness looks filthy. For example, most conservative Christians believe abortion is wrong, but many waffle when it comes to rape or incest. We pretend apprehension toward newsstand Christianity, but how many of us quote Televangelists as if quoting God? Is the "pledge of allegiance" idolatry? What do the Joneses have we don't? They're in the next pew, but they've got a better car? What about the gift God gave that Smith fellow, but didn't give you? Is there any dirt on your halo? We don't need to look far to find filth. At the same time, we can't allow our own shortcomings to keep us from obedience to our Lord. Wake up, shake it off, and get to work. Your soul is on the line (Eze 3:18-19).

1.21.3 What does it mean to receive?

The Greek word *dechomai* here translated as receive (except in NIV) may be translated as receive, accept, or take. The full definition includes:

1. To take with the hand, take up, take hold of
2. To receive:
 - a. As in a place receiving one

- b. As to grant access to, not refuse intercourse or friendship
 - c. Hospitality
 - d. Something spoken
 - e. Into one's family
3. To receive favorably – as to hear, embrace, approve, not reject
 4. To take upon one's self – as to sustain, bare, or endure
 5. To get, as in to learn

Gen 30:28 *Name your wages, and I will give it.* Some things we receive we rightfully expect because we earn them.

1 Pe 5:4 *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.* Some things we receive are things given to us as gifts, unmerited, not earned.

See also Question 1.7.2.

1.21.4 What are we to receive?

Jn 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* James said we are to “receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.” The Greek term James uses is the same one used by John to describe Jesus in Jn 1:1.

Jn 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* When we receive, accept, lay hold of, learn, give hospitality to, grant access to, and come into the family of Jesus through adoption by willfully believing and putting our trust in him we receive eternal life.

Rev 21:3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.* With eternal life we receive a dwelling place in the presence of God.

1.21.5 What is meekness?

The Greek word *prautes* is defined by Strong's as: mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, or meekness. Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. In the Old Testament, the meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend them against injustice. Thus, meekness toward evil people means knowing God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time.

Mt 5:5 *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* The Greek word used by Matthew is a different form of the same word used by James. According to Matthew's account of Jesus' words, those who rely on God rather than themselves for self defense and accepting unjust trials in order to be purified will be rewarded with the earth.

1 Pe 3:4 *but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.* In this verse the phrase

“gentle and quiet spirit” comes from the same word translated meekness in James 1:24. God delights in those who accept whatever befalls them, trusting Him to use it for good whether it was intended for good or not.

Based on this information, the concept of meekness is tied very closely to the concept of receiving. Meekness, however, is a much more specific form of acceptance. It accepts in submission with faith even what it does not like at the time, trusting it all is for the best and expecting deliverance from God in the end.

1.21.6 Why are we to receive the implanted word with meekness?

Jn 3:20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. By definition the meek willingly obey God. If we willingly obey, we walk in light and we are comfortable with our deeds exposed. If we do not, we then hate the light, thus hating our very Savior.

1.21.7 How is the implanted word able to save your soul?

Titus 3:4-7 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. We must accept it is nothing we ourselves can do. God set a standard which Jesus met on our behalf. Since clearing that hurdle he then pours out his Spirit to regenerate and justify us and grant eternal life.

Jn 14:23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. The Lord will keep his word (1 Thess 5:24). For our part, we are called to trust and obey. Ultimately this is what defines love. Call it anything you like, so long as you give God the credit. He does what he does by means we cannot fathom and in our arrogance we should not claim to fully understand such mysteries. We are but to accept these mysteries and trust in Him. And while salvation is not something we can earn or accomplish through works, the command to keep his word implies that genuine faith by definition must include baring good fruit.

1.21.8 What is your soul?

The Greek word rendered soul is psuche. From this we get our English word psyche. It is the only Greek word translated soul, though it is also translated as life, mind, and heart. It corresponds directly to the Hebrew nephesh. We know this from various places where Old Testament phrases are quoted in the New Testament. It is used to reference lower life forms, a man as an individual, the life of a person which can be lost, saved, or destroyed, as a part of speech to emphasize a pronoun (such as myself), and as the intense force of one’s being. The Hebrew term provides far more references to draw meaning from out of scripture.

Soul can perhaps be summed up as the animation of life in an individual creature/being characterized by breath. This is why when a count is taken on an airline they give the census as the number of souls, referring to the living people aboard.

It is interesting to note that God's name, rendered YHWH, means breathe. This would seem an apt name we would use for God because He breathed life into man when he was but a clay figure. Indeed, God breathed life into every living thing. Even plants breathe, albeit CO₂ in and O₂ out while we symbiotically do just the opposite.

1.21.9 Summary of James 1:19-21

James 1:19-21 ¹⁹*Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. — ESV*

Essentially a proverb of James, this passage gives sound advice about running one's mouth and ears, about anger, and about the best way to approach the gospel. We need to listen to others and not be quick to jump to conclusions. Don't dismiss someone out of hand. You never know who God will speak to, or who will speak through. Listen for messages from unexpected places. As for jumping to conclusions, that's often how anger flares up. We get irritated and angry over things of little consequence. It's okay to get angry, but be angry about injustice and evil rather than personal dissatisfaction. James then goes on to tell us we need to quit living lifestyles we know are wrong, instead submitting to the will of Christ trusting Him to have the better way. When we live such a life, embracing Christ and rejecting sin, we then make it possible for Christ to save our souls.

James 1:22

22But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. — KJV

22Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. — NIV

22But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:22 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
ginomai [1096] *to become...* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)* **poietes** [4163] *a performer, poet* **logos** [3056] *word, something said, communication, divine expression of Christ* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **me** [3361] *not, no, none, never* **monon** [3440] *merely: alone, but, only* **akroates** [0202] *a hearer* **paralogizomai** [3884] *misreckon, delude, beguile, deceive* **heautou** [1438] *my-, our-, your-...self or selves (pronoun)*

1.22.0 Introduction to James 1:22

This verse launches the next-to-last paragraph in the first chapter, but one could say it is the launching pad for the balance of the book. The book of James is generally considered the most practical book on Christian living in the New Testament and this verse is often cited as the reason why. It is interesting to note KJV and ESV use nearly identical language (KJV adds a “ye” that isn’t in the Greek) and NIV, though it structures the sentence a little differently, conveys a message which appears almost transparently the same. It says to do, not just hear. Hearing is good, but hearing without doing is empty and worse, it is self deception. Questions generated by this verse allow us to examine doers and hearers and finally, to look at why hearers only are deceiving themselves.

1.22.1 What does it mean to be a doer of the word?

Gal 5:18-21 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.* Like James, Paul also sometimes uses stark contrasts to make a point

clear. In this passage Paul leads in to the answer to our question by first describing a doer not of the word. Even before this Paul talks about the law and how those lead by the Spirit are not under the law. Old Testament thinking was you either were obedient to the law or you were not. Paul artfully explains in this passage, however, the real issue isn't obedience to law, but rather it is a matter of whether you are lead by the Spirit of God or your own mortal and sinful flesh and its desires.

Gal 5:22-24 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* This section of the passage, better known to many Christians, provides the positive side of Paul's contrast. It lists for us the spiritual fruit borne by the Spirit in the life of one lead by the Spirit. Anyone born again will not be able to prevent these fruit, nor will anyone living in the flesh be able to produce these fruit in true purity.

1.22.2 What do doers do?

Mt 28:19-20 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* The Great Commission is important and not to be forgotten. It does not, however, exist in a vacuum.

Mt 22:37-40 *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* Whereas the reference above is called "The Great Commission," I would call this passage "The Great Compassion." Doers love God and other people. It is important to note this kind of love is an action verb. It means paying attention to and caring for others – in other words: demonstrating compassion. It involves personal humility and kindness, particularly toward children and those who have greater needs in this world.

Ro 2:1-5 *Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* Doers repent from the heart without regard to others' outward acts and without passing judgment. Doers ensure their own house is in order before they take the position of correcting others.

Mt 12:37 *for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.* Doers do speak, but they speak as bid by the Spirit rather than their own unbridled tongue.

Jas 5:16 *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may*

be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. [Note: alternate translation – the effective prayer of a righteous person has great power] Further on in the study we will examine this passage more carefully. For now the simple point is this: doers pray.

1.22.3 How can we be doers?

Lk 9:23 *And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* Jesus commands us to lower ourselves and submit to His sovereign authority. The wonderful kingdom (1 Pe 2:9) is yet to come. For now, there is work to be done (Mt 9:37) and it isn’t glamorous. To be a doer, just listen to the prompting voice of the Spirit and obey (Jn 14:26).

1.22.4 What kind of people are doers?

Jn 3:21 *But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.* The people in the light are the doers. They cannot hide (Lk 8:16-17). They do many things and can be described in many ways. I know of no better way to identify them collectively.

1.22.5 Are you a doer?

This is a question we all must answer – sooner or later.

1.22.6 How can someone be a hearer only?

Rev 3:1-3 *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.* The word “reputation” is key here. Some people appear to be Godly, doing good deeds, but for the wrong reasons. Such people therefore are dead inside, as Paul explains to Timothy (2 Tim 3:5)

1.22.7 What prevents a hearer from being a doer?

Mt 21:21-22 *And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”* It all boils down to faith. Do you believe it, or not?

1.22.8 Is there anything wrong with being a hearer?

Mt 11:15 *He who has ears to hear, let him hear.* This is the first of 15 times this phrase (or a variation of this phrase) appears in the New Testament. In fact, it also appears in Eze 3:27. Clearly it is crucial we hear. By no means should one interpret from James it is wrong to listen. Hearing God is one of the most important things we can ever do and one of the greatest privileges of having the Spirit dwell within us. We fall short only when we fail to act obediently on what we hear.

1.22.9 Is it easier to be a hearer than a doer?

If it were easier to be a doer why are there so many instructions in scripture about what to

do? That said, you could argue this either way. I believe it is up to the individual. Ultimately, for a non-believer or one who is jaded it becomes easier to hear than do. I've often heard it is easier to do it right the first time. Taking the lazy route just means more work later. For those under conviction it can be much harder to be idle. Ultimately whether it is harder or easier is irrelevant.

1.22.10 Why does a hearer only deceive himself?

Ro 2:13 *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.* Being a hearer only just isn't enough.

Mt 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* One who fails to obey the Lord loses. Adam and Eve couldn't hide from God. Neither can we. To believe otherwise is self-deception and spiritually sickening. The one who does what they hear is the person Jesus blesses in this reference from the beatitudes.

James 1:23

²²But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. — KJV

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. — NIV

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:23 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

hoti [3754] *that, which... (conjunction)* **ei** [1487] *if, whether, that (conditional participle)* **tis** [5100] *anyone, anything, someone, something, somewhat* **akroates** [0202] *a hearer* **logos** [3056] *word, something said, communication, divine expression of Christ* **esti** [2076] *he/she/it is, them/they are* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **ou** [3756] *absolute negative (adverb)* **poietes** [4163] *a performer, poet* **houtos** [3778] *he, she, it, they, this, these, which, who* **eiko** [1503] *resemble, be like* **aner** [0435] *male individual* **katanoeo** [2657] *observe fully: behold, discover, consider, perceive* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **prosopon** [4383] *front view, countenance, appearance, face, person's presence* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **genesis** [1078] *nativity, natural, generation* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **esoptron** [2072] *a mirror, glass*

1.23.0 Introduction to James 1:23

In verse 23 James sets up a scenario. It is a parable of sorts, or what some might call a “word-picture.” The analogy (vv23-24) relates the almost silly idea a person would look in a mirror and moment later forget what they look like to a person who hears the word but doesn’t do it (v 22). In verse 25 James goes on to contrast this natural phenomena with someone who learns and acts on the word and is rewarded what James implies is simply common sense. Questions drawn from this verse alone seek to better understand some of its finer details.

1.23.1 Why does James specify “natural face”?

James is painting a word-picture in verses 23 and 24. He provides a simple allegory the reader can relate to for the overall passage. The man looks at his own reflection then goes away and

forgets what he looks like. It may sound foolish, but it describes a person who sits through a sermon, but forgets (neglects to absorb and act on) the message as soon as he walks out the church door.

1 Cor 2:14 *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* The hearer James speaks of is a person with perhaps some semblance of godliness, but they live only by what their physical senses perceive as reality. The spiritual word reaching their ears doesn't reach their heart. It is rejected because they aren't open to it.

1 Cor 2:12-13 *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.* In contrast to the natural face seen by the eyes yet rejected by the mind, Paul explains how those who are open to the Spirit do receive it. The good news is we can be born again, regenerated of spirit, and set upon a course of righteous action leading to salvation – not because of the righteous action itself, but because it wells up from the soul born of spirit and of flesh living out the faith in the Savior, obedient to His Lordship, in love. After all, we do as we believe.

1.23.2 Why look into a mirror?

1 Cor 13:11-12 *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* We can only see the flesh of our face in a reflective surface. A mirror is a reflective surface. A person is more than mere appearance. To see what we are truly like as individuals we must seek our reflection in others.

Mk 9:42 *Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [or to stumble], it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.* We must look at others to see ourselves because all we do is based on what we believe. What we do impacts others. The impact is either good or evil. There are consequences to all actions. Even the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle agrees. It essentially says anything you interact with, even if only to observe, will by that action effect what you observe. You impact those around you. In answer to the study question – given what we learn from Jesus here – what effect do you want to have?

James 1:24

²²But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. — KJV

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. — NIV

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:24 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:
katanoeo [2657] *observe fully: behold, discover, consider, perceive* **gar** [1063] *verily, therefore, yet, no doubt, as, because that* **heautou** [1438] *my-, our-, your-...self or selves (pronoun)* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **aperchomai** [0565] *come, go, depart, pass away* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **euthetos** [2112] *well placed, good fit* **epilanthomai** [1950] *lose out of mind, forget, neglect* **hopoios** [3697] *what kind, what manner of* **en** [2258] *I was/were, have, hold, use*

1.24.0 Introduction to James 1:24

In verse 22 James contrasted the hearer with the doer. In verse 23 James paints a mental picture of the hearer. Verse 24 explains the relationship between verse 22 and verse 23. Our questions are designed to help us learn more about the art of examination and the subject of forgetfulness.

1.24.1 How do you examine a physical object?

In science class you learn lots of observation methods. Visual appearance is an obvious method. Beyond that, one can examine an object for its physical dimensions, weight, density, chemical and electrical properties, melting or boiling points, flammability, hardness, color, smell, taste, texture and so forth. The list goes on and on.

Ben Franklin proved lightening was a form of electricity with a kite. Edison used electricity to produce light from a light bulb. It took Nikola Tesla to invent electric motors, radar, and high frequency radio transmission such as we use today in everything from remote control toy cars to cell phones. These people did a lot more than look at something, they utilized their skills and

talents, built upon their knowledge, experimented, and accomplished things. Any of us can look at a telephone and see the wires and plastic and tiny circuitry. It takes more than observation to build a telephone. You have to take what you've observed and do something with it.

In context with our study verse, James is talking about the fellow who looks, but doesn't do anything about what he sees. The observation is wasted and soon forgotten. James then goes on Verse 25 to contrast the casual observer with the one who acts on his observation. With the contrast James tells us the doer is the one blessed.

Mt 25:42-46 *For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'* And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Mt 24:45-51 and all of Mt 25 contain a series of examples (servants, virgins, talents, and shepherd) in Jesus' own words contrasting the doers with the non-doers. In each of the examples given by Jesus, information was given yet ignored and they did as they pleased. In each case the non-doers are promised an ill fate (Mt 24:51, 25:12, 25:30, and 25:46). The doers are credited with righteousness and promised eternal blessings.

1.24.2 How do you examine a person?

Leviticus 13 is a chapter devoted to leprosy and physical medical examination. One point of this passage is the observation of the physical. Another point is the observation is carried out by the priest (representing holiness) on another (representing the "unclean") and judgment results. The purpose of the judgment may appear to be condemnation, but actually it isn't at all. The purpose of judging the unclean is to determine the nature of the problem so proper corrective action can be taken. The "clean" are kept from contamination and at the same time the "unclean" is given an opportunity for treatment.

Ezra 10:2 *And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this.* The 10th chapter of Ezra provides a beautiful example of self-examination. Better still, the people deal honestly with themselves and realize their sins, repenting and making drastic life changes to correct their relationship with God.

In context with James 1:24, we need to examine ourselves, admit our sin, do what we can to correct ourselves, and move forward in obedience. If we fail to do these things we fail to be the doer and are like the person who forgets their own reflection. The judgment will come from the Holy One, so wouldn't it make more sense not only to see the reflection, but to look at the Truth and do what the Truth reveals we ought to do?

1.24.3 What can a face tell you?

Gen 4:5-6 *but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?"* A person's expression says a great deal about what is going on in their mind. God alone knows the heart,

but a man reveals his heart to other men (just as Cain does here) when his expression reacts from his heart.

Ro 16:18 *For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.* We have all heard the saying “appearances can be deceiving.” There are dozens of examples of deception in scripture. How could so many be deceived? For one thing, the expression on the face doesn’t always tell the truth any more than the words proceeding from the mouth. Secondly, many times the deceived don’t look closely enough at the deceptive information or the deceiver. In this particular passage Paul indicates the deceived person is naïve. Throughout scripture and particularly in New Testament letters we are warned about deceivers and given clear instructions about discernment. A face may betray a lie, but you have to be looking closely to have a chance of detecting it.

Ex 34:29 *When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.* Just as a face can betray deceit, it can also be a beacon to illuminate joy. People with a good heart tend to radiate a spiritual light. Some folks see this in what is described as auras, but even without that degree of sight we can see the fruit of the Spirit and the joy inside the doer of those fruit is nearly always visible on their face.

1.24.4 What should you be looking for in a mirror?

Mt 5:17-20 *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* A mirror is a tool for self-examination. James uses it to illustrate a superficial self-examination in Verse 24. In this passage Jesus tells the believers to be doers, following the commandments and laws of God. Teachers use words, but people learn from examples. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees as bad examples and lousy teachers, but those who obey and do what God instructs will teach others by good example and ultimately will be called great in heaven. In answer to the question, then, one should be reflecting in their heart about their life and setting themselves straight – not just superficially looking at a literal mirror with the vanity ascribed to religious leaders.

1.24.5 What is the impact of forgetfulness?

Eze 23:35 *Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring.* Forgetfulness has consequences.

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* Forgetfulness is life threatening.

1.24.6 How can you improve your memory (retention)?

Jer 31:33 *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* As a forgetful person I've learned the necessity for crutches. The advent of the PDA has substantially improved my life. I now have a repository for remembering events, contact information, and lists of all kinds. I'm not a list maker, so learning about lists has been revolutionary for me. I write these things down in the PDA and it remembers them. In the eternal scheme of things, most of what I put in the PDA has no real significance. God is eternal, as is His word. For it to be eternal to me personally it must be written in my mind and heart. To accomplish this I open my heart to Jesus, trusting Him and letting the Spirit enter. I also read my bible with regularity and intensity. I humbly attempt to live a life directed by the Spirit, obeying as best I can with the flesh and using the knowledge provided by His Word. People learn by several methods and it is invariable most effective when multiple methods are used in concert. The simplest way I can explain is that first we must receive the information (hear/read/observe). The next step is to confirm we heard correctly by repeating it back (writing or telling). Finally, apply the tactile technique (do it – practice makes perfect).

1.24.7 Why would someone forget what they look like?

Job 14:1-4 *Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not. And do you open your eyes on such a one and bring me into judgment with you? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one.* Sometimes you want to forget. Job asks who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. In answer to his question, no man can cleanse him but Christ. Job said in this passage he realized his impurity by the perfect standard of God. Job's friends sang from Satan's handbook, telling him he was unworthy and sinful, therefore God had retracted from Job. If you look closely, though, you'll see Job isn't blaming God or turning from Him. On the contrary, Job is acknowledging his own position relative to God. How much easier is it in our minds today to be as Job's friends and pick what appears on the surface to make more sense? Sometimes it certainly seems God has forgotten us when, especially when we feel unworthy. When we feel unclean before the Lord we often seek to hide ourselves as Adam tried to hide in the Garden (Gen 3:8). When we know we are sinful we want to forget the sin. If we appear sinful in our own eye, what better reason could there be to want to forget our appearance?

1.24.8 How does being a hearer only relate to forgetting your face?

Gen 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* In this passage Adam hears the instructions not to eat of the tree and the consequences if he does.

Gen 3:6-8 *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD*

God among the trees of the garden. Adam heard only. He wasn't a "doer" of what he heard. His consequence: Spiritual death and a start to physical decay leading eventually to a physical death.

2 Jn 6-9 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. John confirms the principle in this reminder to heed the commandments. He says be a doer and don't forget the message – the true Word. John reminds us of the consequence of forgetting the message: loss of reward (eternal life, presumably) and not having the Son or the Father.

James 1:25

²²But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. — KJV

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. — NIV

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:25 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

ho [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **de** [1161] *and, but, now... (conjunction)*
parakupto [3879] *bend beside, lean over, stoop down* **eis** [1519] *to, into... (prep. expressing motion)* **nomos** [3551] *law (esp. of Moses)* **telieos** [5046] *complete, full age, perfect* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)*
eleutheria [1657] *freedom, liberty* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **parameno** [3887] *stay near, remain, abide, continue* **ou** [3756] *absolute negative (adverb)* **akroates** [0202] *a hearer* **epilesmone** [1953] *negligence, forgetful* **ginomai** [1096] *to become...*
alla [0235] *indeed, nevertheless, not withstanding* **poietes** [4163] *a performer, poet* **ergon** [2041] *toil, work, labor, doing, deed, act* **houtos** [3778] *he, she, it, they, this, these, which, who* **makarios** [3107] *supremely blessed, fortunate, well off* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **poiesis** [4162] *action, performance, deed* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **esomai** [2071] *will be, come to pass, shall follow*

1.25.0 Introduction to James 1:25

James 1:22 was a simple enough statement. Yet, James felt it was important enough to warrant more than a casual proverb. In his typical style he goes on to illustrate his point by providing contrasting images. Verses 23-24 describe the nature of a hearer whereas verse 25 describes the doer. Verse 25 differs in at least two key ways. First, it describes the “word” in verse 22 as the perfect law of liberty. Second, it provides a promise of blessing to the doer. The moral of the story is simple: of everyone who hears, those who do what they hear get blessed while those who hear only get deceived. Questions about Verse 25 focus on the law, liberty, blessing, and other context.

1.25.1 What kinds of law are there?

Natural Law – This includes things like gravity, entropy, conservation of energy and so forth.

Civil Law – Judgments are established by a court to settle disagreements between two parties.

Criminal Law – These laws, when violated, can result in prosecution and judgment by the state (any level of government) where penalties may include fines, confinement (jail), loss of liberties, or even forfeiture of life.

Governmental Structure Law – The Constitution is an example of this type of law. It establishes and defines the structure of a governing body.

God's Law for Man – The 10 commandments (Ex 20) are what most people today consider to be “the law” from scripture. These were definitely laws prescribed by the hand of God, but the entire writings of Moses are also known as The Law. Sin always condemns. The law of Moses does not condemn, rather it defines and exposes sin (Ro 7:12-13). These laws did not get replaced or done away with when Christ died at Calvary. Jesus is the only man ever to fulfill the law. This is why his sacrifice atones for sin.

God's Law of Death – Gen 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* The first commandment was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The consequence of failing to carry out God's command is one we all must live with.

God's Law of Condemnation – Ro 2:25-27 *For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.* A soul is condemned by his or her own choices. It isn't the letter of the law written in a book that condemns. It is the choices we make.

God's Law of Life – Ro 8:1-8 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* The law of Moses points out what condemns us. The New Testament shares with us the fulfillment of the giving the New Covenant. Jesus Christ carried out every bit of God's law. He alone is worthy to overcome death. This is why his blood is sufficient. The gift, the greatest gift, is the

opportunity to believe in him and find eternal salvation. A beautiful picture of this is found in Nu 21 where Moses puts a serpent on a pole when the people are dying of snake bites. When they choose to look upon the pole and trust in God's healing power, their lives were spared. Now, we can look upon Jesus, trusting God's word that his blood sacrifice is sufficient, and we are healed of the curse in the garden. The greatest gift, eternal life, must be a gift because none are worthy except our Lord Jesus Christ.

1.25.2 What is the “perfect law”?

In the answer to the last question we saw that death is the result of condemnation through sin. The “law of Moses” defines the perfect law. To fulfill the law is to be righteous in God's eyes, to be found holy and just. To be without sin is to be free of the curse of death.

Is 61:1 *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; Who are the captives, the poor, and the broken hearted? Who are bound in prison? I tell you all have sinned and fall short of God's standards (Eccl 7:20). We are all captive to sin. We are all wretched, poor, and broken hearted. Blessed are those who realize it and do something about it. The Spirit of God, expressed here through Isaiah, comes to heal us and proclaim his own goodness for his own sake.*

Gal 6:1-2 *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* Paul expresses the law of Christ another way. As a practical matter, loving Christ means loving one another. We do this by caring for each other. Love is an action verb. When a brother falls, we ought not shoot him and kick him out of the way. When we see a brother or sister screw up we need to help them find healing and restoration. In so doing we demonstrate Jesus' love. Love, after all, covers a multitude of sins.

Jn 13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* Continuing the thought on the subject of love, Jesus gave us the model for love. He gives hope to all, exposes sin and offers an alternative. He cuts away the bad and in so doing heals the good. He always shows hospitality and humility, ever the consummate gentleman. Always he is generously extending gifts that cannot be repaid. Trusting him means trusting his instructions (commandments) so that we might have a better life and especially so we can assist others with improving their lives.

Jn 8:31-36 *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. No one likes the idea of facing a judge when he knows he is guilty. We are all imperfect and deserving of the worst judgment. This law that condemns, while technically it defines the absolute requirements to live by, makes us slaves to death by virtue of our guilt – and we are all guilty*

because we are all imperfect. Jesus came to set us free. By fulfilling the requirements of the law on our behalf, Christ is in the unique position to overlook our imperfections and present us as perfected before the Father. By living lives abiding in Jesus we are covered by the blood, which is to say the life, which was guilt free and found worthy of life. This law, this covenant of Christ consummated with the only blood worthy of atonement at Calvary, is perfect because it liberates rather than condemns.

Jer 31:31-34 *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* The new covenant perhaps best summarizes the perfect law. Men sin, but God forgives. Men die because of their sin, but Yeshua atoned for that sin, for those who would accept the sacrifice, believe it, and act on their faith. With the law written on the heart, the believer will live the law and be in harmony with YHWH, in His will, and under His grace. Salvation is by faith, but as James says, faith is demonstrated by action.

1.25.3 How do the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) liberate?

Ex 20:3 *You shall have no other gods before [note: or besides] me.* YHWH is all we need. We are free of the strictures of created things or beings. We are free of the dictates of men (all false gods are creations of men or are created beings).

Ex 20:4-6 *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands [Note: or to ‘the thousandth generation’] of those who love me and keep my commandments.* We do not have to bow to stone, wood, or any other man made thing. We do not have to satisfy some dead object. We have only one God to satisfy and He is alive and sovereign.

Ex 20:7 *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.* Note that the word translated vain literally means empty, false, worthless, or lie. By not disregarding God’s word we are able to take it all in, learn from it, grow, find His peace, be filled with His Spirit, enjoy not only salvation from sin and death, but life in abundance.

Ex 20:8-11 *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made*

heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. God rested on the 7th day of the creation week. This was to set up for us a system whereby we can find rest from our labor each week as we toil. Sabbath not only proves God's plan to deal with our fall was in place before the creation of the world, it provides us periodic relief from the curse we called upon ourselves through our sin. It gives us a bit of freedom from our toil and labor. It gives us a chance to be free from the urgent and mundane things in life that drain us, allowing us to assemble before the Lord to be refreshed in His word. Jesus proclaimed himself Lord of the Sabbath. He explained the Sabbath was created to benefit man, not God. It is a blessing which liberates. Some believe it symbolizes the coming time when we will be forever resting in the bosom of our Lord's new Kingdom.

Ex 20:12 *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.* This commandment is the first and only to come with a specific blessing connected to its obedience. Be a person who lives a life that reflects honor on your family and you comply with this commandment. When we behave rightly, we bring honor to our parents. We are free to do the right thing, always. And more than free, we are blessed.

Ex 20:13 *"You shall not murder [Note: the word translated murder also covers human death caused by negligence or carelessness].* We are free from an humanly imposed requirement to cause human death. Life is so precious, our Lord made it possible for us to have eternal life in His presence. To take a human life is tragic. The one who murders carries the blood of that person on their hands and with it guilt most of us can barely comprehend. Be free of that guilt by not taking human life. It should go without saying that by not killing people you avoid the penalties of imprisonment or death at the hands of a human judge.

Ex 20:14 *"You shall not commit adultery.* Like murder, adultery destroys the relationship between man and God, but it also destroys trust between man and wife. The real problem is the division it causes. God is One God. There is not division of character or purpose in our God, even if you see YHWH, Yeshua, and Holy Spirit as three separate persons. When a man commits adultery, he is faced with sharing his affections. Men, unlike God, are unable to spread themselves with equal and absolute equanimity through each of their relationships. Spiritually, adultery is also used many places in scripture to represent man's distraction from the first three commandments into idolatry. If you avoid adultery, you remain free to give all your love and devotion to your spouse and remain free to require the same from them.

Ex 20:15 *"You shall not steal.* If you do not take what is not yours, you will be free from owing what you are unable to pay back, not to mention the guilt you feel or the time you might do for the crime.

Ex 20:16 *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.* According to Deut 17:6-7 and 19:15-21 it takes two witnesses to convict someone of a crime. False witness is more than just lying, it means not saying something about someone that could get them convicted of a crime they may not have committed. Obedience to this commandment not only means you remain free of guilt for the consequences, but the neighbor does not lose his freedom as a consequence of your law. This commandment is designed to protect the liberty of others. Obedience means being free of payback from God (Lk 6:38)

Ex 20:17 *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”* If you are free from the lust of things, you are able to walk tall, justified by righteousness reckoned to you for the faith demonstrated to the Lord. Your heart will be free indeed to devote itself to what is good and noble.

1.25.4 What is liberty?

The Greek word *eleutheria* appears 10 times in scripture and is rendered liberty each time. Its application in scripture is consistent with the modern English word liberty. Liberty is defined as being free from restriction or control; the right or power to act, believe or express oneself in a manner of one’s own choosing; free from confinement, servitude, or forced labor; freedom from unjust or undue government control; immunity to engage in certain acts without control or limitation; not employed or occupied.

Ro 6:1-2 *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* In context with the study verse, liberty here would seem to most accurately mean freedom from confinement to the judgment of death. It certainly does not mean license to act without limitation as some would assume.

1.25.5 How does the perfect law liberate?

Deut 6:5 *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* Joshua quoted this (Josh 22:5) as the law to keep and Jesus said it was the greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-30). It is significant to note this line is not written on the tablets stored in the ark.

1 Jn 4:16-17 *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.* God is love. When we abide in our Lord and He in us, he perfects his love in us. We don’t do it, He does. This is not to say we don’t participate. Choosing not to participate is the same as choosing to deny God. Deny Him at the cost of your eternal soul (Jn 3:18).

Ro 13:8-10 *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* By loving our fellow man we do the very thing God wants us to do most of all. In so doing our love, which is to say the love of Jesus manifested and perfected in us, fulfills the law. Only in fulfillment of the law is freedom given as the perfect judgment. Therefore loving liberates us from death.

1 Pe 4:8 *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* Peter perhaps said it best and most succinctly. Love covers sin. Sin condemns, but the greatest commandment – to love one another – liberates.

1.25.6 In context with this passage, what is meant by perseverance?

The subject of perseverance was covered at length in the questions for James 1:4. That said, in context with James 1:22, James is instructing us to continue in being doers. Don't just sit and listen. If you do one good deed, don't then sit back and expect the glory to come rolling in. Love is a lifestyle, not a singular event and certainly not an emotion. Some might argue the cross was a singular event, but I would say that Jesus loved us during his entire ministry and indeed, throughout time. His crucifixion was a critical event, never the less it was one of an infinite list of past, present and future events demonstrating His perfect love.

1.25.7 What two kinds of people look into the law of liberty?

Jn 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

According to James, among those who look into the law of liberty are the doers and the hearers only. The only difference is the response. Jesus referred to them as those who believe and those who don't. When you see or hear something you either believe it or you don't. If you believe something, trusting it to be true, you will be compelled to act on your belief. If you see something but don't believe it, you will not act on the information. James' statement here is really no different than Jesus' statement to Nicodemus.

1.25.8 How do you tell hearers from doers?

Jn 3:19-21 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God. They say actions speak louder than words. That's because actions betray the heart. What you believe is what you will do. It is worth noting, however, that when Jesus spoke of coming into the light so that deeds are carried out, most importantly he was saying that the deeds would be seen by God. He isn't saying people will necessarily see your deeds. In fact, other references indicate those who see your deeds will likely persecute you, not laud you. It is infinitely more important to please God than other people (Ps 118:8).

Jn 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. This passage is perhaps one of the best at illustrating how people will have outward indication of who is a doer. Loving one another wonderfully sums up obedience to Christ, the perfecting work of the indwelling Holy Spirit and all the other fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

1.25.9 Why does the doer receive blessing and the hearer only does not?

Jn 14:15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Love is an action verb. Jesus said as much himself in this brief verse. The one who loves is one who actively responds obediently in submission to Jesus.

Heb 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. When you do a good turn for

someone, how does that make you feel inside? It should bring a sense of joy. When you are genuinely glad to help others your reward is close to the heart, whether it comes close to the skin or not.

Lev 25:10 And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. In the year of Jubilee everything was to be returned to its proper and original condition. This free the people of debts, bringing liberty.

Jer 34:15 You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, When you give without expecting a return you are liberating the other person. To grant liberty is one of the most profoundly great things a person can do. When Jesus grants us liberty, I believe he is truly glad. He set this up as a ritual for Israel so the people would understand the joy of liberty and so his people would be able to feel a similar gladness.

1.25.10 What kind of blessing does this passage promise?

1 Thess 5:24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. The passage says the doer will be blessed “in his doing” because when you do as you are called to do, God will make sure His Will is accomplished. In other words, when you do what God tells you to do, He will make sure you are successful. He does this for his own sake, but the doer still receives reward.

1.25.11 Summary of James 1:22-25

James 1:22-25 ²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. — ESV

This passage starts with a direct command. Do. Sitting on the sidelines doesn’t cut it. If you think you don’t have to participate, you deceive yourself. James goes on to illustrate just how foolish such a person is, likening them to one who looks in a mirror and forgets their own appearance. The presumption is that the reader has heard the gospel. Once faced with the Truth, you must decide whether you accept it or not. When you accept it, by your new regenerated nature you will be a doer. Doing the Lord’s will, which ultimately is to love one another, brings its own reward of gladness in your heart and success in whatever mission God gives you.

A word of caution here: I am not suggesting all you do will be a success in your eyes or even the eyes of other people. Often we accept missions that aren’t assigned by God. We feel pride when we complete those missions. If a mission we complete was assigned by God, we couldn’t have completed it on our own and therefore the right response on our part is humility rather than pride. The gladness comes from having a heart aligned with and abiding in the love of Jesus, not the sating of our smug pride.

James 1:26

²⁶If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. ²⁷Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. — KJV

²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. — NIV

²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. — ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:26 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

ei [1487] *if, whether, that (conditional participle)* **tis** [5100] *anyone, anything, someone, something, somewhat* **dokeo** [1380] *to think, suppose, seem good* **threskos** [2357] *ceremonious in worship, religious, pious* **einai** [1511] *to exist (am, is, was, be...)* **me** [3361] *not, no, none, never* **chalinagogeō** [5468] *curb, bridle, lead by bit* **glossa** [1100] *tongue* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **alla** [0235] *indeed, nevertheless, not withstanding* **apataō** [0538] *to cheat, delude, deceive* **kardia** [2588] *the heart: thoughts, feelings, mind, middle* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **toutou** [5127] *of this, hereby, such manner of, thereabout, thus* **mataios** [3152] *empty, profitless, vain, vanity, an idol* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **threskeia** [2356] *ceremonial observance, worshipping*

1.26.0 Introduction to James 1:26

The last major topic James tackles in Chapter 1 is religion. Verse 26 discusses bad religion. Once again talking about doing the wrong thing and falling into deception, James explains that an uncontrolled tongue results in false religion. This verse is a source of several questions about religion, one's tongue, and the relationship between them.

1.26.1 What is religion?

The Greek word threskeia, according to Strong's, means a ceremonial observance related to worship. It implies an external display. As we have long since established, God looks at what lies within a man. What a man does, apart from God, has no value. When a man is united with God spiritually there will necessarily be good fruit brought about by the inner working of the Spirit through the outward flesh. Understanding these simple relationships are critical, I believe, to understanding what James is saying in this passage.

In context with James 1:26-27 religion appears to be more than just a ceremonial observance. Perhaps I would rephrase to something more like: a behavior pattern designed to exhibit one's beliefs.

Another way of phrasing verse 26 then might be: *If anyone thinks his outward behavior demonstrates worship of God and does not bridle his tongue but deceived his [own] heart, this person's religion is worthless.*

1.26.2 Is religion good or bad?

Lk 6:45 *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.* You need only contrast James 1:26 and 1:27 to see religion can be good or bad. It depends on whether it is pure and undefiled in the eyes of God. To go outside obedience to God in your heart results naturally in running your mouth in defiance of God because the mouth follows the heart.

Ro 10:9-10 *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* Just as the mouth can condemn by carrying out the sinful desires of the heart, the mouth can also redeem by carrying out acts of obedience to the Lord.

1.26.3 What makes a person religious?

Ac 17:16, 22-23a *Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, The terms "religion" and "religious" actually appear only a hand full of times in all of scripture and then only in the New Testament (ESV). According to this passage what you worship defines your religion. The amount of your worship determines how religious you are. In this particular example Paul was remarking on the Greek idols in Athens.*

Jn 4:23-24 *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* Our God seeks for us to worship not with idols, but in our spirit, with The Spirit and Truth (emphasis added). This is internal, from the heart.

In the context of James' verses here we see James addressing those who claim to be worshiping Christ, but their worship is nullified by their actions of disobedience to His Will. The kind of worship accepted by God is to do His will through service and to avoid willing participation in sin.

1.26.4 What does bridle mean?

In this verse the term bridle is a verb. It means to control or restrain as with a bridle (n). The noun bridle refers to a device used on horses to restrain and guide the animal. James 1:26 uses the term to refer to controlling and restraining one's tongue (or lack thereof, as the case may be).

1.26.5 What does it mean to bridle your tongue?

2 Sam 23:2 *The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.* In this passage, if you read 2 Samuel 23 in full context, you will see David is speaking. David is saying that he is actually only a vessel of the Lord who speaks through him. David was obedient in controlling his tongue so that it did not do as his own flesh willed, but willingly submitted it to the authority of God. I believe this is the ideal toward which we all should strive.

1.26.6 What happens when you don't bridle your tongue?

Is 32:6-7 *For the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink. As for the scoundrel—his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.* If you do not control your tongue, then who does? The flesh, apart from God, is of the world and so it is the plaything of Satan. It destroys the very body it belongs to as well as all it encounters.

1.26.7 How can this verse be used in a practical way for spiritual warfare?

Eph 6:16-17 *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,* This is a brief portion of one of the most well known passages of scripture and certainly most quoted with regard to spiritual warfare. As it relates to James 1:26, submission of the tongue to God means allowing the Word to be used by God through you. Stand in boldness for greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4). The Word is not the book, but the Lord (Jn 1:1). When his Spirit dwells within (Jn 14:17), its purpose is to make you able to stand (Eph 6:10) so that in the end you will be justified before God because God was responsible for you (Gal 3:24) because you allowed Him to be (Jn 3:16).

1.26.8 How does an unbridled tongue make your religion worthless?

Mt 6:1-2 *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.* When you don't control your tongue you are lying. The flesh on its own is without Christ and thus without Truth, therefore it lies. It has no Truth within it. It speaks, pretending to know Truth for its own benefit, but it is at best an act. If you do a good thing and you boast about your goodness, you lie. An uncontrolled tongue will cost you eternal reward by seeking and finding carnal favor.

1 Jn 4:2-5 *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* The unbridled lying tongue is of the world and anti-Christ. Free yourself of condemnation by getting control of your tongue and giving that control to the Spirit of the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

James 1:27

²⁶If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. ²⁷Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. – KJV

²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. – NIV

²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. – ESV

Greek Transliteration of James 1:27 with [Strong #] and brief definitions:

threskeia [2356] *ceremonial observance, worshipping* **katharos** [2513] *clean, clear, pure* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* [0283] **para** [3844] *near* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **theos** [2316] *God* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **pater** [3962] *father, parent* **houtos** [3778] *he, she, it, they, this, these, which, who* **esti** [2076] *he/she/it is, them/they are* **episkeptomai** [1980] *inspect, select, go see, visit* **orphanos** [3737] *orphan* **kai** [2532] *and, also, even, so then, too* **chera** [5503] *widow* **en** [1722] *preposition denoting place: such as in, at, of, through...* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **thlipsis** [2347] *pressure, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation, trouble* **autos** [0846] *her, his, it, them (possessive 3rd person pronoun)* **aspilos** [0784] *unblemished, unspotted* **heautou** [1438] *my-, our-, your-...self or selves (pronoun)* **tereo** [5083] *guard, detain, withhold, watch* **apo** [0575] *off, away, separation* **ho** [3588] *the (article or indefinite pronoun)* **kosmos** [2889] *orderly arrangement, the world (any sense)*

1.27.0 Introduction to James 1:27

The last verse in Chapter 1 contrasts the worthless religion of verse 26 with an example of religion acceptable to God. Numerous key words and concepts are sources of questions as we explore the pieces of the picture of an acceptable religion.

1.27.1 What is pure and undefiled?

In context with James 1:27 the “what” is religion. Religion, as explained in question 1.26.1, is a behavior pattern designed to exhibit one's beliefs. Pure is an adjective that basically means free of defilement or pollution, unmixed, or faultless. The phrase “religion that is pure” would then seem to imply a consistent behavior pattern based on a clear, concise, and specific belief system.

Undefiled is another adjective that carries a meaning almost identical to pure, but it reinforces the concept of purity with the idea of being untouched by an external pollutant. When one thinks of undefiled religion before God the Father, one would immediately think of a religion devoid of idols and immorality. The balance of James 1:27 bears this out and then some.

1.27.2 What does “visit” mean?

The Greek episkeptomai literally means to look in on, look after, or otherwise examine; specifically to check on those who have needs to attend to them and see to their needs.

In context with James 1:27, it seems that the right behavior pattern in God’s eyes includes checking on and caring for the needs of others, especially those who have special needs such as widows and orphans. To me visiting represents a practical implementation of what Jesus meant when he said we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mt 19:19 – quoting Lev 19:18; Gal 5:14). Beyond this, people of any age or status can be spiritual orphans or widows, and so we should not limit our services only to the physically needy.

Now it is my opinion and my opinion only, but it seems to me that this passage does not imply that we must all seek a vocation that involves full-time care giving. It does, however, mean to me that all believers, regardless of their Spirit given gifts, talents, and callings, should have a desire in their heart to check in on those they know who have needs, to volunteer, and to give whatever they can whenever they see a specific need. We are to look for opportunities to do these things. We can only give a dim reflection of the gift Jesus gave us by giving basic necessities to those in need around us. It isn’t the responsibility of a nameless institution to take care of the masses, it’s the responsibility of individuals to love other individuals by showing care, consideration, respect, and compassion one on one.

I’m an orphan. My father died while in the Navy and my mother passed away a few years ago. I don’t make claim to orphan status, however, because I had the love and support of my parents during my youth and I was quite independent when they left me to be with the Lord. I have been cut off in other ways over the years. I think that’s the thread orphans and widows share. They are people cut off from their support. If we believe, we must trust the Lord’s Holy Spirit will help us fill that gap for the spiritually cut off. That means reaching out to those whose faith is weak, to those in distress, to those who suffer illusions in the carnal. In short, anyone cut off from God is an orphan or widow. Of course there are very real, tangible, and important work for us to do in the world for those who are orphans and widows in the human sense and we must not shirk those responsibilities. That said, let us not limit our minds or our hearts to carnal understandings.

1.27.3 What kinds of afflictions do orphans and widows have?

Eph 3:14 *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,* Orphans and widows share a particular affliction. They’ve both lost the support system of their family and especially their main providers. I will not attempt to catalog all the problems orphans and widows could face because they are largely the same problems we all face, but are multiplied because they lack the support of a father and husband in the house. Without help, a child or orphan may lose every physical support, get turned out, starve, face ridicule, and suffer any number of cruelties beyond what self-sustaining adults face. These issues are no different today than when Paul or Moses walked the earth.

Ex 22:22-24 *You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.* YHWH

speaks specifically about widows and orphans in the law given to Moses as recorded in this passage. God recognizes man's capacity for picking on those who cannot fend for themselves and provides a stern warning toward those who would. Looking beyond the carnal, it seems that when Jesus spoke of loving even our enemies, He was saying we must love even the enemies of Christ. After all, we were his enemies, once, and now we are remarried – to Him.

1.27.4 What do orphans and widows represent?

Lam 5:1-5 *Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace! Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners. We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows. We must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought. Our pursuers are at our necks; we are weary; we are given no rest.* Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations shortly after the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC). The Jews were defeated, uprooted, displaced, driven from their homes and property, and moved hundreds of miles away to Babylon. Any desperate soul is like a widow or orphan in the big scheme of things.

Luke 4:18 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed* God chooses the poor to exalt. Widows and orphans have no income. Without help they are destitute. The good news is that Jesus came to give them life, eternal and abundant.

Luke 7:6b *When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.* In this passage a hearty man, respected and high ranking in Caesar's guard, demonstrated the kind of humility we all should have. We are all miserable wretches, orphans of the world, widows of the current system of things, if only we will see our rags for what they are. If only we will see our lowly state and know we need a benefactor, we can humble ourselves and receive God's love, his mercy and forgiveness. Only when we reach our knees can we look up into that face have so much given to us we can't help but give it to others.

1.27.5 What makes visiting orphans and widows a religion pure and undefiled before God?

Gal 5:19-23 *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* This passage provides an excellent list of things which are corrupt and things which are good. Looking after and caring for those who need help fall into the latter. To bring them a kind word, a loaf of bread, a warm hug, and some good news is just what the Great Physician ordered.

1.27.6 What is the significance of being unstained (undefiled)?

1 Pe 1:14-16 *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is*

written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” We are commanded to be holy. Being holy means that we are not corrupt or in other words unstained. None are righteous (Ro 3:23), but we can be redeemed and deemed righteous (Heb 11:4) and therefore holy by our faith. Only that which is holy can come into the presence of God (Lev 22:3).

1.27.7 What stains us?

The study verse speaks for itself in answer to this question. The world stains. The world is fallen and will pass away. A stain is a sin of any kind for sin is what makes us unclean.

1.27.8 If we become stained after once being clean, can we become clean again?

Jn 13:10a *Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.* In Jn 13 we see the event where Jesus washes the disciples’ feet. Peter probably thought Jesus was just talking about humility at first. When Peter protests, Jesus explains an even deeper meaning. The clean body represents the cleansing of sin by Jesus’ atoning blood sacrifice. That cleansing was once and for all. Even so, we must live in the world and we are constantly exposed to sin. The dirt on the feet represents sins committed after we are cleansed. Our feet represent our walk in the world. Dirty feet represent sins we pick up along the walk, but which don’t completely cover or consume us. By coming to Christ and only by coming to Christ we can wash our feet and restore our completely clean status. We don’t get born again and again and again, so we don’t need to be washed all over more than once. We do need clean feet, it seems, to walk in the streets of heaven.

Personally, I find this passage of scripture a great comfort. I am but a man who lives in the world and I “step in it” daily. I could never clean myself. It is only with supernatural living water that I can ever be cleansed.

1.27.9 Summary of James 1:26-27

James 1:26-27 ²⁶*If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.* ²⁷*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.* — ESV

In the many questions asked about these two verses we first learned what religion is, then the effect of an uncontrolled tongue on religion. Religion is the practice of worship. It is a behavior based on belief. While there’s a danger the tongue can be used to tear down, the other side of the coin is that when you shut up and get to work building the Kingdom, then you’re doing what God approves. When you focus on God and bring up and deal with your sins, He is faithful to forgive and will continue to abide with you.

1.27.10 Summary of James Chapter 1

It is generally accepted that the author of the book was James, a son of Mary and Joseph, half brother of our Lord Jesus. The letter was written more than a decade after the resurrection of Jesus, before the destruction of the temple, to Jews spread out in other lands as a result of the dispersion (the result of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and subsequent political struggles). Ultimately it is an outreach to all believers scattered everywhere.

After the greetings, James begins with a word of encouragement about joy in the face of trials and the resulting benefits. He then compares faith and doubt, explaining how these impact our requests of God. Next James contrasts rich and lowly earthly and spiritual positions.

James pauses from conveying proverb like wisdom to talk about God's nature. God is a constant and the source of everything good. He created us physically and regenerates us spiritually making redeemed souls the firstfruits of creation.

Returning to a series of illustrations using word-pictures and clear contrasts, James compares hearing to speaking and anger, hearing only without doing against true service, and false against acceptable religion. These last several comparisons build like a crescendo, one principle on the next.

James does not leave out salvation in this chapter, rather he inspires us to participate in the salvation process and follow the instructions we will hear from the Holy Spirit. James in no way says salvation is something earned or accomplished by men. He merely explains the nature of works that will necessarily accompany salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when we become born again and our own spirits are renewed. Salvation is not a one-time event, not a prayer, not merely a gift. It is a complete renewal of our spiritual being and results in a new way of life that includes continual growth, service to others, and above all obedience to our Lord and Master Jesus and God the Father.

James 1 (ESV)

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

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change [some manuscripts read “variation due to shadow of turning”]. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires [Greek: the righteousness of God]. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

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- 1.1.6 a. Ro 1:16 b. Ro 2:9-11 c. Mt 28:19-20 d. Ps 24:1, Gen 1:1, Ps 67:1-2 e. Ro 2:11 1 Tim 5:21
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1.13.6	Eph 4:29-30, Lev 24:15-16, Mk 3:28-29, Mt 12:31-32	1.18.8	Gal 5:22-24	1.22.7	Mt 21:21-22
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1.15.6	Ro 6:23, 1 Jn 2:17	1.19.8	1 Th 5:21, 1 Cor 12:3, 2 Pe 2:1-4, Jas 1:17, Ac 28:28, Jn 14:26, Mt 17:5	1.24.8	Gen 2:16-17, Gen 3:6-8, 2 Jn 6-9
1.15.7	Ro 6:23, Jn 19:11, Lev 6:17, 1 Cor 5:6	1.19.9	Pr 12:14, 2 Pe 1:20	1.25.1	Ex 20, Ro 7:12-13, Gen 2:16- 17, Ro 2:25-27, Ro 8:1-8, Nu 21
1.15.8	Gen 2:7, Dt 32:4, Gn 2:17	1.19.10	Pr 18:2, Pr 23:9	1.25.2	Is 61:1, Gal 6:1-2, Jn 13:34, Jn 8:31-36, Jer 31:31-34
1.16.1	1 Cor 1:4, Heb 1:13-14, 2 Pe 1:2, 1 Jn 1:4, Jude 3	1.19.11	1 Jn 4:6, Eph 6:18, Jas 1:7, Mk 13:11, 1 Cor 12:8, 1 Pe 1:21	1.25.3	Ex 20:3-17, Dt 17:6-7, Dt 19:15-21, Lk 6:38
1.16.3	§, Jas 1:17-18	1.19.12	§	1.25.4	§, Ro 6:1-2
1.16.4	Jn 8:44	1.19.13	Dt 9:20, Mt 21:12-13, Mt 5:39, Eph 4:26	1.25.5	Dt 6:5, Josh 22:5, Mk 12:28- 30, 1 Jn 4:16-17, Jn 3:18, Ro 13:8-10, 1 Pe 4:8
1.16.5	Titus 1:2	1.20.1	Lk 11:9, Mt 16:19, Ps 4:4-5, Jn 19:11, Jonah 4:1-2	1.25.6	§, Jas 1:4,22
1.16.6	1 Ki 22:20-23, 2 Th 2:11, Rev 17:17, Eze 14:9	1.20.2	Rev 4:8, Ro 3:10, Mt 5:22, Jas 1:17, Jonah 4:1-2, Jn 7:23-24	1.25.7	Jn 3:18
1.16.7	1 Jn 3:7-8, 2 Th 2:3, 2 Tim 3:1-7, Jude 17-18, 2 Jn 7, Heb 13:9, 2 Pe 2:1	1.20.3	Gen 4:5-6, Hos 7:10, Gen 37:11,28, Jer 13:16	1.25.8	Jn 3:19-21, Ps 118:8, Jn 13:34-35, Gal 5:22-23
1.16.8	3 Jn 9-10, Jude, 2 Pe 2	1.20.4	Dt 9:13-14, Rev 14:10, 1 Ki 11:6-8, Ex 22:22-24, Mk 9:42	1.25.9	Jn 14:15, Heb 1:9, Lev 25:10, Jer 34:15
1.16.9	Mt 12:30, Rev 3:16-17	1.20.5	Gen 6:6-7, 1 Sam 15:28, Mal 4:1	1.25.10	1 Th 5:24
1.16.10	2 Pe 1:20-21, Jas 1:22	1.20.6	Gen 6:6-8, Jer 3:11-14	1.26.1	§
1.16.11	2 Tim 3:2-5, Mt 15:8-9, 1 Th 5:19-22, 1 Tim 1:3-4, Gal 6:3	1.20.7	2 Chr 12:6	1.26.2	Lk 6:45, Ro 10:9-10
1.16.12	Jas 3:1-3, Mt 10:16	1.20.8	Jn 3:7,13, Ro 8:9, Eph 4:26	1.26.3	Ac 17:16,22-23a, Jn 4:23-24
1.16.13	Jas 1:12-18	1.20.9	Ro 5:12	1.26.4	§
1.17.1	Jn 3:16	1.20.10	§	1.26.5	2 Sam 23:2
1.17.2	Jn 10:10, Jn 14:27, Mt 11:28- 30, Lk 11:10-13, 2 Tim 1:14	1.21.1	1 Pe 1:16, Is 33:15, Ro 8:6-8, 2 Cor 3:9	1.26.6	Is 32:6-7
1.17.3	§, Eph 2:8-9	1.21.2	2 Cor 5:17-18, 2 Cor 9:7-8, Mt 11:27-30, Gal 5:24	1.26.7	Eph 6:16-17, 1 Jn 4:4, Jn 1:1, Jn 14:7, Eph 6:10, Gal 3:24, Jn 3:16
1.17.4	2 Cor 8:9	1.21.3	§, Gen 30:28, 1 Pe 5:4	1.26.8	Mt 6:1-2, 1 Jn 4:2-5
1.17.5	Gen 1:3, Ps 27:1, Mt 14:6, Jn 8:12, Jn 10:30	1.21.4	Jn 1:1, Jn 3:16, Rev 21:3	1.27.1	§
1.17.6	Ps 119:105, Ro 13:12-14	1.21.5	§, Mt 5:5, 1 Pe 3:4	1.27.2	§, Mt 19:19, Lev 19:18, Gal 5:14
1.17.7	Heb 13:8	1.21.6	Jn 3:20	1.27.3	Eph 3:14, Ex 22:22-24
1.17.8	1 Jn 3:20, Jas 3:11	1.21.7	Titus 3:4-7, Jn 14:23, 1 Th 5:24	1.27.4	Lam 5:1-5, Lk 4:18, Lk 7:6b
1.18.1	Gen 1:24, 2 Cor 5:17, Gal 5:16, Jn 3:3	1.21.8	DX	1.27.5	Gal 5:19-23
1.18.2	Jn 3:3, Eze 36:26, Lk 13:5, 2 Cor 5:17, 1 Pe 1:3, Ro 3:24, Eph 2:8-9	1.22.1	Gal 5:18-24	1.27.6	1 Pe 1:14-16, Ro 3:23, Heb 11:4, Lev 22:3
1.18.4	Rev 21:3-4, 1 Cor 9:24, Phil 3:14, Ro 5:2	1.22.2	Mt 28:19-20, Mt 22:37-40, Ro 2:1-5, Mt 12:37, Jas 5:16	1.27.8	Jn 13:10a
1.18.5	Rev 20:13-15, Rev 19:20	1.22.3	Lk 9:23, 1 Pe 2:9, Mt 9:37, Jn 14:26		
1.18.6	1 Tim 4:10, Heb 5:9, Mt 1:21, 1				

§ = Dictionary, Lexicon,
Interlinear or other reference
resource

Study Sheet - James 1:1

1 Who was James?

2 How does James identify himself?

3 What are the qualities of a servant?

4 What about humility?

5 Why does James differentiate God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

6 Who is the Message For?

7 Who have you shared the Good News with lately?

Study Sheet - James 1:2

1 What is a brother?

2 Why did James appeal to fellow Christians by calling them brothers?

3 Do you feel close to fellow Christians, as like brothers? / Do you think of them as brothers?

4 Do you always get along with your brothers and sisters in Christ? What about when I have problems with a 'brother'? How does it affect you if you've got a problem with a brother?

5 Are we really supposed to find joy during trials and temptations?

6 What is meant by the term diverse temptation (trials of many kinds)?

7 Do you feel pulled in many directions? Lots of distractions? Is it difficult to focus on God?

8 How do you feel about having to face trials and/or temptations? HOW do YOU "count it joy" when things are tough?

9 What is temptation?

10 Who Tempts Us?

11 Why does Satan try to tempt us?

12 Are we alone when we face temptation?

13 What should we do about temptation?

14 What should we do about Satan?

15 Should we fear Satan?

Study Sheet - James 1:3

1 Why are we subjected to testing?

2 How can we determine if something is a temptation toward evil or test to develop Godliness?

3 What about when we flunk a test?

4 May we test God?

5 Is it fair that God tests us and we're not supposed to test him?

Study Sheet - James 1:4

1 What do the words patience and perseverance mean? 3-10-05

2 Why do we need patience/perseverance?

3 What can cause us to lose our perseverance (patience)?

4 How do we become equipped to persevere?

5 What are we persevering against?

5 How long must we persevere?

6 What is meant by 'mature and complete'?

7 What are some benefits of maturing?

8 How are maturity and completeness demonstrated?

9 Perfect or Mature?

Study Sheet - James 1:5

1 What is wisdom?

2 How valuable is wisdom?

3 How do we get wisdom?

4 How much wisdom can we get?

5 What do we do with wisdom?

6 What kind of responsibility does wisdom entail?

7 To whom is wisdom available?

8 How does wisdom differ from knowledge?

Study Sheet - James 1:6

1 Have you asked for wisdom or something else you thought God should honor and not received it? Why Not?

2 What is Faith?

3 Faith: Sell, Tell, or Do?

4 How do we ask?

5 Why might God answer NO?

6 How much faith is required in order to receive?

7 What is doubt?

8 Why is doubt such a poison to our prayers?

9 Why do people doubt Jesus? (Are you one of them?)

10 What command does Jesus give regarding doubt?

11 How do you suppose God feels about doubt?

12 How should you treat someone who has doubts?

13 What does doubt cause you to do?

14 Do you think doubt is the same as worry?

15 Why the sea analogy?

Study Sheet - James 1:7 & 1:8

1 Why should the doubter not expect anything from the Lord?

2 What does receive mean?

Verse 8

1 How are double-minded and unstable defined?

2 How does worry contribute to this instability?

3 What can we expect from God if we are distracted by the world?

4 What exactly does “ways” mean?

5 What is the remedy for the doubter?

Study Sheet - James 1:9

1 What does James mean by “lowly brother”?

2 What exaltation can a lowly brother boast about?

3 How is exaltation or high position defined?

4 What is an example of a lowly brother?

Study Sheet - James 1:10

1 How do you define wealth?

2 Does God care if you have material wealth?

3 What should you do with material wealth?

4 What if? (an ethics scenario)

5 Does God care how you obtain material wealth?

6 How does material wealth affect your faith?

7 Are you rich?

8 What advice is given to the rich?

9 Where is your treasure?

10 Why does James talk about riches in the overall context of a verse dealing largely with temptation and trials?

Study Sheet - James 1:11

1 What is the significance to the reference of the sun rising?

2 Why the flower and grass illustration?

3 What doesn't last?

4 What does last forever?

Study Sheet - James 1:12

- 1 Are there any definitions critical to unlocking this verse? (6-16-05)
- 2 What is blessed?
- 3 How do you survive a trial?
- 4 If standing the test for a crown is like running a race for a crown, then what is the race all about?
- 5 Who or what are we standing or racing against?
- 6 Can we win on our own?
- 7 What is the crown of life?
- 8 What are the conditions for receiving the crown of life?
- 9 To whom is the crown promised?
- 10 What is a promise?
- 11 Is a promise conditional?
- 12 What does it mean to break a promise?
- 13 Can God break a promise?
- 14 What is your favorite promise from God?

Study Sheet - James 1:13

1 Is the same word used for temptation in this verse as was used in James 1:2 or James 1:3?

2 Why does James 1:13 generate controversy?

3 What happens when you say God is tempting you?

4 What happens when you try to tempt God?

5 What is blaspheme?

6 What are you doing when you “trash talk” God?

7 Why doesn't God tempt man?

Study Sheet - James 1:14

1 Who tempts?

2 What is the route from Satan to death?

3 What is the route from God to life?

4 How does temptation work?

5 What is desire?

6 Where is the desire?

Study Sheet - James 1:15

1 How does desire become sin?

2 Why Conception?

3 What is the Godly opposite of sinful conception?

4 How does Satan's wedding differ from Christ's?

5 Is birth the start of life?

6 Is birth the start of death?

7 How does sin become fully grown?

8 Why does sin result in death?

Study Sheet - James 1:16

- 1 What is the mood of this statement?
- 2 Who is James Warning?
- 3 What is deception?
- 4 Who is the source of deception?
- 5 Does God deceive?
- 6 If God doesn't deceive, then what about these ... verses?
- 7 How important is it to avoid being deceived?
- 8 What kind of people deceive?
- 9 Why is deception such a threat?
- 10 How does deception begin?
- 11 How do you recognize one who deceives?
- 12 How can you avoid being deceived?
- 13 What specific threat is James warning us about?

Study Sheet - James 1:17

1 What is the best gift from God?

2 What does the Lord give us in this life?

3 What is a gift?

4 What is God's attitude toward giving?

5 Who is the Father of Lights?

6 What is light good for?

7 How consistent is God?

8 Why is God perfectly stable?

Study Sheet - James 1:18

- 1 What does James mean by “brought forth”?

- 2 What is “born again”?

- 3 How do we go about becoming born again?

- 4 Why would you want to be born again?

- 5 Why wouldn't you want to be born again?

- 6 Is it God's will for all to be born again?

- 7 How do you know if you are born again?

- 8 What are the responsibilities of being born again?

- 9 What must we do to become born again?

- 10 What is the Word of Truth?

- 11 What is firstfruit?

- 12 What is the Feast of Firstfruits about?

Study Sheet - James 1:19

1 Is James talking about every person or every believing person?

2 Hear what?

3 What does James mean by “hear”?

4 How do we listen to people?

5 How do we listen to the world and nature?

6 How do we hear God?

7 How can you tell the voice of God from that of an evil spirit?

8 Why should we be slow to speak?

9 Should we always be slow to speak?

10 How do we know what to say?

11 What is anger?

12 Is it okay to become angry?

13 How can we gain control over anger?

Study Sheet - James 1:20

1 How does the anger of man differ from the anger of God?

2 What makes us angry?

3 What makes God angry?

4 What happens when God gets angry?

5 What happens when God relents from anger?

6 Is God's anger righteous?

7 Can we have righteous anger (wrath)?

8 Why wouldn't we produce righteousness from our anger?

9 What is righteousness?

10 Why does God require righteousness?

Study Sheet - James 1:21

- 1 How do we put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness?

- 2 What does filthiness and rampant wickedness look like in today's society?

- 3 What does it mean to receive?

- 4 What are we to receive?

- 5 What is meekness?

- 6 Why are we to receive the implanted word with meekness?

- 7 How is the implanted word able to save your soul?

- 8 What is your soul?

Study Sheet - James 1:22

1 What does it mean to be a doer of the word?

2 What do doers do?

3 How can we be doers?

4 What kind of people are doers?

5 Are you a doer?

6 How can someone be a hearer only?

7 What prevents a hearer from being a doer?

8 Is there anything wrong with being a hearer?

9 Is it easier to be a hearer than a doer?

10 Why does a hearer only deceive himself?

Study Sheet - James 1:23 &24

1 Why does James specify “natural face”?

2 Why look into a mirror?

Verse 24

1 How do you examine a physical object?

2 How do you examine a person?

3 What can a face tell you?

4 What should you be looking for in a mirror?

5 What is the impact of forgetfulness?

6 How can you improve your memory (retention)?

7 Why should someone forget what they look like?

8 How does being a hearer only relate to forgetting your face?

Study Sheet - James 1:25

- 1 What kinds of law are there?

- 2 What is the perfect law?

- 3 How do the 10 commandments liberate?

- 4 What is liberty?

- 5 How does the perfect law liberate?

- 6 In context with this passage, what meant by is perseverance?

- 7 What two kinds of people look into the perfect law?

- 8 How do you tell hearers from doers?

- 9 Why does the doer receive blessing while the hearer only does not?

- 10 What kind of blessing does this passage promise?

Study Sheet - James 1:26

1 What is religion?

2 Is religion good or bad?

3 What makes a person religious?

4 What is a bridle?

5 What does it mean to bridle your tongue?

6 What happens when you don't bridle your tongue?

7 How can this verse be used in a practical way for spiritual warfare?

Study Sheet - James 1:27

1 What is pure and undefiled?

2 What does “visit” mean?

3 What kinds of afflictions do orphans and widows have?

4 What do orphans and widows represent?

5 What makes visiting widows and orphans a pure and undefiled religion before God?

6 What is the significance of unstained?

7 What stains us?

8 If we become stained after once being clean, can we become clean again?