

Strong and Wise

(James 1)

Introduction

Ask: Do you want your faith in God to grow? To become a strong and wise believer, we must trust God's plan and follow His leading in our life, even if it doesn't make sense to us.

Today we begin a 5-week study in the book of James who, if we listen with our hearts to what he says, we will learn how to behave and grow as Christ-followers by trusting God.

Opening Prayer

Father, help us become stronger and wiser as Christians so that we may better serve You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (James 1:5 NLT)

Lesson

Let's open our bibles to the book of James.

James 1:1

This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the "twelve tribes"—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!

There are five men by the name of James in the New Testament. So, we wonder which one wrote this book.

Ask: How does this writer describe himself? (A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.)

In fact, the James that wrote this book was none other than the half brother of Jesus. James was the son of Joseph and Mary and grew up in the same home with his older brother, Jesus, the Son of God.

Now James could have opened his letter by boasting that he was the brother of Jesus just to impress his readers, but he doesn't. Remarkably, he writes this letter later in his life and humbly calls himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ask: Can you imagine what it might have been like for James to grow up with an older brother that never sinned?

Jesus never disobeyed his parents. Jesus always came when His mother called Him the first time. He always washed His hands properly before supper. He always did His chores quickly and with joy. He always obeyed. Then there was James, born with a sinful nature just like the rest of us, living in the shadow of a big brother who was God in the flesh. Being far from perfect, James, the younger brother, had a problem right from the start, didn't he?!

Ask: How do you think James felt when Jesus claimed to be the long-awaited fulfillment of God's promise to send the Messiah, the Savior of the world (Luke 4:16-21)?

John 7:5

For even his brothers didn't believe in him.

It seems that his whole family thought Jesus was crazy!

Mark 3:21

When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his mind," they said.

But James did not stay in his unbelief. After Jesus raised Himself from the dead, He visited his brother, James.

1 Corinthians 15:7

Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.

Ask: What would you think if your brother was crucified (nailed to a cross), died and was buried, but then three days later, came back to life?

James was completely convinced at that point that Jesus really was Who He said he was—the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God.

After that James, became the leader of the Christian church and he wrote the very first book of the New Testament, the book we call, “James” which we are going to study together.

We will not be looking at each verse in the book of James. But we will look at each chapter to discover how we can become strong in our faith.

James 1:5-8

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (6) But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. (7) Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. (8) **Their loyalty is divided between God and the world**, and they are unstable in everything they do.*

Ask: What is the difference between *wisdom* and *knowledge*?

Knowledge is knowing about something, but *wisdom* is understanding how, why, when, and where to use that knowledge. You can be knowledgeable without being wise. For example, *knowledge* is knowing how to use a gun; *wisdom* is knowing when to use it and when to keep it in your holster.

Ask: How does James tell us to get wisdom? (By asking God for it!)

If we ask God for wisdom, then we need to believe He will give it to us! Part of becoming a strong and wise believer means trusting that we can rely on God to give us true wisdom.

Ask: How does James describe a person who doubts God? (See verse 8.)

Some bible translations read, “*he is a double-minded man*”. A “double-minded” person is confused! It’s like a dog with a head at either end of its body that is constantly trying to walk in two directions

at once. A double-minded person hasn’t made up their mind: “*Is God right or is the world right?*” A double-minded person is a doubter; he doesn’t have faith in God; he hears what God says, but doubts that it is true. For example, God says we are to forgive someone who is mean to us, but the world says, we are to get even; get back at them. If you can’t decide which is the right thing to do, then you are double minded! You are confused! You don’t truly trust God’s word.

God allows trials in our lives to draw us closer to Him and make us stronger and wiser as believers.

James 1:12

*God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the **crown of life** that God has promised to those who love him.*

Ask: How do you feel when someone is mean to you or calls you a bad name or is rude to you? Do you want to get back at them?

Trials and hard times come to everyone, so it’s important to know how God wants us to act during those difficult times. How you respond when someone is mean to you is super important because anyone else that’s watching you might be discouraged from trusting God. They might say to themselves, “*That kid says she’s a Christian, but look how out of control she is! What good would it do me to become a Christian?*”

It’s normal to get frustrated when you’re in a trial, but a strong and wise Christian remembers God promised to help us and give us peace even when we are in stressful situations.

Having patience shows others that we trust God. That’s why God allows us to go through trials!

Let’s back up and look at verse 2 through 4:

James 1:2-4

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. (3) For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. (4) So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Having trials and hard times is actually really good for us. They make us strong and wise.

The next thing we want to look at is an *analogy*. [Teacher, write that word on the board.]

An *analogy* compares two things—one that is familiar to you and one that is new to you--so that you can better understand the new idea. I like to call them “word pictures” because they help us “see” things in our minds. An analogy usually uses the word “like” when it makes the comparison; i.e., *something is like another thing*. For example, when I said that a double-minded person is like a dog with a head at both ends. You pictured that in your mind, didn't you, and the idea of a double-minded person became clear. That's an analogy.

Let's read verses 22-25 and see if we get the analogy James gives us there:

James 1:22-25

*But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. (23) For **if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror.** (24) You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. (25) But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*

Ask: What two things did James compare? (James compared 'Listening to the word and not obeying it' to 'glancing at yourself in a mirror and forgetting what you look like'.)

Ask: Can you imagine looking at yourself in the mirror and discovering that you have spaghetti sauce on your face. Then, without

cleaning it off, you turn away from the mirror and forget all about it? Just leaving the food on your face would be silly, wouldn't it?

James is trying to tell us that if we hear God's word and don't do what He says, we are being very silly. It's like speeding past a warning sign and driving off a cliff.

The strong and wise believer will do what the bible says.

Ask: What does James say we will receive if we endure testing and temptation with patience? (Vs 12. The crown of life.)

What James is saying is that we will be richly rewarded if we handle trials and hardships the way God expects us to. If you really do love God, then show it by listening to God and doing what He tells us to do. That proves that you have faith and that you are a strong and wise follower of Christ.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help us as we grow in faith. We trust that your word will make us stronger and wiser in our relationship with You. In Jesus' name. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Pop-The-Question —

Write the review questions on separate slips of paper and insert them into balloons. Blow them up. Let the children pop a balloon, one at a time, and answer the question. Small children may wish to have someone else pop their balloon for them.

Variations:

- Insert numbers that correspond to a list of questions instead of the questions.
- Put the game point values on slips of paper in the balloon. So, for every right answer they can pop a balloon and see what points their team gets.
- Each child gets a chance to throw a ball into a basketball hoop. For making a basket, the child gets to choose a balloon, pop it and try to answer the question. His team gets 50 points for every right answer.

Or, use the following questions in another game of discussion of your choice:

1. How does James describe himself in the opening of his letter? (A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.)
2. Why do you think James didn't believe in Jesus until after his resurrection? (Because they were siblings, it must have seemed strange to James that Jesus was the Son of God).
3. Can you imagine what it might have been like for James to grow up with an older brother that never sinned?
4. How do you think James felt when Jesus claimed to be the long-awaited fulfillment of God's promise to send the Messiah, the Savior of the world?
5. What would you think if your brother was crucified (nailed to a cross), died and was buried, but then three days later, came back to life?
6. What is the difference between *wisdom* and *knowledge*? (*Knowledge* is knowing about something, but *wisdom* is understanding how, why, when, and where to use that knowledge.)

7. How does James tell us to get wisdom? (By asking God for it!)
8. How does James describe a person who doubts God? (Verse 8 says he is a he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.)
9. Why is it important to respond to someone that is mean to you with patience and kindness? (You do not want to discourage anyone watching from trusting in God.)
10. What is an *analogy*? (An *analogy* compares two things—one that is familiar to you and one that is not--so that you can better understand the new idea.)
11. What analogy did James give us in verses 22-25 and what was he trying to tell us? (James compared '*Listening to the word and not obeying it*' to '*glancing at yourself in a mirror and forgetting what you look like*'. Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says.)
12. What does James say we will receive if we endure testing and temptation with patience? (Vs 12. The crown of life.)

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