



FAITH INTO ACTION

5 WEEKS IN THE
BOOK OF JAMES

‘Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbour?’

- James 4:11-12 -

JAMES: FAITH INTO ACTION

The letter of James is all about wisdom. It is written by Jesus' brother, James, who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. He is addressing many of the difficulties that the early believers in Jesus were facing. Life was hard for them, and the temptation was to rely on themselves to secure their future. But James argues that they need to ask God for wisdom and put all of their trust in Him.

What does he mean by wisdom? James relies heavily on Proverbs 1-9 and the Jewish understanding of wisdom which can be summed up fairly simply. Wisdom means to know God and to do His will (Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 1:22). Having wisdom is to know what is the godly thing in all circumstances, not just the obvious ones. But saying this is far easier than doing it! Fortunately, James is here to help us and his readers to live with wisdom as we go through life.

James begins by encouraging his readers through their trials and sufferings by considering them joy (because testing will produce endurance) and asking God for wisdom. The wise Christian trusts God in all circumstances. And for James this means putting their FAITH into ACTION at all times.

So are they in danger in trusting wealth and social connections with the wealthy to keep them secure? Don't! You should see those things as gifts (1:17) for use to use for the fruitfulness of his kingdom. Our worldly wealth will ultimately fade away (5:1-6) so instead of trusting in wealth (and therefore doubting God) we should wait patiently on God and turn to thanksgiving and prayer (5:13-16).

In chapter 2, James works out what this looks like in our relationships and outreach. He warns us not to go favouring those who can benefit us and by doing so ignoring the poor. Instead, if there is someone in need before you, help them. Because that is true FAITH in ACTION.

Finally, James spends some time talking about wisdom in the way we speak. With the tongue, we can at the same time praise God and unleash pain and death on our neighbours (3:1-12). In chapter 4, James confronts the way we judge and gossip. And in chapter 5 he urges us to be truthful in our promises. So we must be consistent and wise in our speech, kind to others and full of praise for God.

As we delve deeper into the letter of James in the next few weeks, my prayer is that we would all heed James' invitation to trust God with everything we have. And that with this trust, we would be given the wisdom of God to know him and to do his will; to put our FAITH into ACTION.

Every blessing,

Rev'd Matt Skelton

Stanthorpe Anglican



Warming up:

Have you ever been surprised when you've looked at yourself in the mirror? Why were you surprised?

Read: James 1:1-18

1. How does James describe himself? Why is this important? (v.1)
2. To whom is James writing? Why might he describe the audience in this way?
3. Why does James suggest that we should 'consider it joy' when we face trials? What is significant about this list?
4. What does James tell us about wisdom?
5. How would you summarise vv.9-11?
6. What do vv.12-18 tell us about what God gives to his people, and what do they tell us about what God doesn't give?

Read: James 1:19-27

1. What does James say about anger in vv.19-21?
2. Why must we listen to the word and also do it? (vv.22-25)
3. Why do you think James writes so strongly about the tongue?
4. What does James say about true religion?

Rubber hits the road:

What are some ways in which you have put your faith into action?
Do you feel God stirring your heart to put your faith into action in a new way?

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Lord God, we thank you that you came not to be served, but to serve; to seek and to save the lost. By your grace, please help us to grow up into maturity as the body of Christ. Please help us to diligently keep our eyes open, and grant us courage as we seek opportunities to put our faith into action. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Warming up:

How do you react to people who say one thing and do another?

Read: James 2:1-13

- 1.What situation is being described in this passage?
- 2.What are the main problems James finds with this situation?
- 3.Why is discriminating against people who are poor sinful?
- 4.How does James urge us to work against this behaviour?
- 5.How can we encourage one another to care sincerely for others?

Read: James 2:14-26

- 1.What does this passage tell us about faith and works/deeds?
- 2.What situation is described in vv.14-17?
3. Why does James bring up demons in v.19? What is his point?
- 4.What does James call someone who tries to separate faith from works? Why do you think such strong language is used here?
- 5.Which two Bible stories does James use to illustrate his point? Why does he use these examples? (See Gen. 22:1-18 and Josh. 2:1-24)
6. What does it mean that 'faith without works is dead'?

Rubber hits the road:

How can we encourage a faith that works in our church family? Write down five things you can do to put your faith into action day by day. Write down five ways you think your church can encourage a faith that works and (politely) share them with your church leaders.

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Loving and living God, you do not tolerate hypocrisy or selfishness. Please help us to live out our faith with reverence and love. Thank you that you give us your Holy Spirit to help us put our faith into action. Holy Spirit, please make us a people who live and work to your praise and glory. Amen!



Warming up:

Have you ever said something small that had effects far beyond what you imagined?

Read: James 3

1. What has James said about speech so far in the letter? (Check 1:19, 26; 2:12)
2. Why are teachers judged more strictly? Why does James mention that here in the context of speech?
3. How does v.2 communicate the critical importance of guarding our speech?
4. In vv.3-6, James gives three examples of the power of the tongue. What are they? Why is this important?
5. If no-one can tame the tongue, what are we to do? (Vv.7-8)
6. What is James' point in vv.9-12?
7. What is James' answer to this problem in vv.13-18? (Check out 1:5-6 too!)
8. Why is it important in this context that he brings up boasting and lying?
9. What is the fruit of wise speech?

Rubber hits the road:

How does this passage challenge us to change the way that we speak to and about each other? Why is it critically important for us to control our tongues? How can we put this into practice according to James' letter?

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Loving God, we thank and praise you that you have shown us the way to be wise and love and nurture each other. Help us to control our tongues. Give us wisdom that we may put our faith into action in our speech, so that with our tongues we would be continually praising you instead of hurting each other. Give us the wisdom that you so freely offer so we might have the strength and power to know you and obey your will.

Amen.



Warming up:

What has caused fights and quarrels in your life?

Read: James 4

1. What are the sources of quarrels and conflicts among believers according to vv.1-3?
2. Why do you think James describes friendship with the world as enmity against God in v.4?
3. In vv.6-7, James emphasises humility. How does humility play a role in resisting the devil and submitting to God?
4. What does it mean to 'come near to God' as stated in v.8? How can we practically do this in our daily lives?
5. Why does James encourage believers to grieve, mourn, and wail in v.9? For what kind of repentance is he advocating?
6. Why is it wrong to judge others according to vv.11-12? How can we guard against a judgmental attitude towards others?
7. How does understanding God's role as the ultimate judge change how you view others?
8. Vv.13-16 highlight the uncertainty of life and the need to trust God's will. How should this perspective influence our planning and decision-making?
9. In v.17, James says that knowing the right thing to do and failing to do it is sin. How does this challenge you in your daily walk?

Rubber hits the road:

Reflect on your current relationship with God. Are there areas in your life where you are more aligned with the world than with God? How can you realign your priorities to submit fully to God?

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Mighty God, we come before you in humility, recognising the areas in our lives where we have fallen short. Help us to resist the temptations of the world and draw near to you with sincere hearts. Grant us the wisdom to make decisions that honour you, and the courage to repent of our sins. Guide us to treat others with love and humility, leaving judgment to you alone. May your will guide our every step, and may we live in a way that reflects your love and grace to those around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Warming up:

How have you felt challenged by in the book of James so far?

Read: James 5:1-6

1. How does ch.5 follow on from the end of ch.4?
2. What does James say about the rich in vv.1-3?
3. In vv.3-6, how does James say that the rich have sinned?
4. Do you think James is against 'savings'? What do you think his attitude would be towards your money management?

Read: James 5:7-12

1. Why is James instructing the Christians to be patient?
2. What else is James instructing them to do?
3. How does the story of Job illustrate James' point?

Read: James 5:13-20

1. How would you summarise vv.13-14?
2. How have vv.15-16 been misused within the church? How can we understand these verses in light of the rest of Scripture?
3. Why is Elijah a good example from whom we can learn?
4. Why is it important for us to walk together as Christians?

Rubber hits the road:

James urges us to use our physical and spiritual resources with integrity, for the benefit of the community and for God's glory.

How can we continue to put our faith into action and live for God's glory?

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God of truth and love, give us wisdom and grace to use faithfully the time left to us. While we have opportunity, lead us to repent of our sins, and to do what we have left undone. Strengthen us to follow in the steps of Jesus, along the pilgrim way to your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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