

James for Everyman: Building a Faith That Works

Week One: James 1

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Many early church leaders saw the book of James as lacking in spiritual depth of insight, and yet it remains one of the most practical and studied books of scripture. Written to the believers “of the dispersion” it provides God’s Man with unique insights as to how we are to live when our culture opposes our faith. This series, *James for Everyman*, will challenge you to move beyond a faith that is merely ideological into a faith that works!

Whether you are encountering this series in a small triad of men, a life group gathering, or a large group men’s study our encouragement is this - immerse yourself in the book of James. Get lost in its wisdom. As Paul encouraged the church in Colossi “Allow the word of God to dwell richly in you” (Col. 3:16). Spend time alone in this book all week. Read it and reread it. Wrestle with the challenging passages, and seek the Holy Spirit’s wisdom in the areas you want to grow.

“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete. Needing nothing.” James 1:2-4

God’s Man considers challenging times _____.

Trials are an opportunity for God to purify us, as a metal worker heats silver to incredible temperatures in order to remove the impurities. Ultimately, the Good Shepherd, like the metal worker, will look down and see His own reflection in us.

But....we often avoid hard situations, duck out before things get hot enough to purify us. Why? Because I want _____ not _____.

The disciples saw Jesus sleeping in the boat, and wrongly concluded his heart for them. *“Teacher, don’t you CARE that we are perishing.” Mark 4:38*

Tough times can lead us to doubt God _____ me, or whether He _____ for me.

God’s Man must think rightly about temptation, and testing. Because temptation is an opportunity to _____, but testing is an opportunity to _____.

The testing of our faith will ensure that we are ready to go the distance. Like a surfer checking his board, like a rock climber testing the ropes or a formula 1 race car driver ensuring his ride is ready for the road ahead.....we test our equipment for the same reason God tests our faith:

When the time comes, I want _____.

Our great God wants to test us, in order to use us!

Our goal is not happiness, but holiness as we said above. The testing of our faith is the vehicle we jump in, in order to end up at the ultimate destination of a heart that reflects the heart of our King and we must realize that....

If I want the _____ of Jesus, I must adopt the _____ of Jesus.

“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.” James 1:12

The crown of life is promised to those who endure. Who fight the fight until the end. Those who keep on keeping on! That is the measure of real faith, because real faith is so much more than an emotion or a set of ideals.....

Real faith is _____. Real faith is a _____.

In a world where truth is under attack, where there are now multiple versions of what is real and “true” it can almost seem impossible to gain true wisdom. But....

For God’s Man, wisdom isn’t _____, it’s _____.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5

We’ve already seen that testing is an opportunity for growth. It’s a chance for the “dross” and impurity of our lives to be removed, temptation is something else entirely. James reminds us that: *“Temptation comes from our own desires....which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions.”*

God’s man is called to live above his sinful desires. Out of a posture of humility, God’s man sets aside his desires, plans and practices in exchange for those Christ demonstrated.

“Get rid of all filth and evil in our lives and to humble accept the word that God has planted in our hearts, for it has the power to save our souls.” James 1:21

As God’s Men, our battles with sin begins with our approach to God’s word. God’s Man _____ the Word of God.

God’s Man is quick to listen, and slow to speak recognizing that human anger accomplishes nothing. God’s man avoids this anger, by actively listening. Seeking to understand before being understood. God’s man _____, he doesn’t simply _____.

For Discussion:

1. How is the *testing* of our faith different from temptation? Or struggling under the effects of sin? What is God's intention in our *testing*?
2. We often struggle to avoid the processes and pains that lead to holiness, in an effort to preserve our happiness. Are there areas in your life where you can see your pursuit of happiness is overshadowing your pursuit of holiness?
3. The disciples struggle in every way we do, and there is great encouragement and instruction in that. In the middle of their (literally) storm, the disciples question God's love for them. Where have you doubted the Lord's care in your own life?
4. Unpack the differences between temptation and testing. (Review verse 14). Where in your life are you most prone to temptation? How can understanding this help you trust God to provide a way out?
5. Real faith is a decision, not a feeling or an emotion. Does this thinking challenge or encourage your view of faith? If faith is a decision, what should God's Man's posture towards suffering look like?
6. In our world, we are so quick to speak and we very rarely listen. Where has your speed of speech, and your inability to listen lead you away from God and people? What must be done to remedy this?