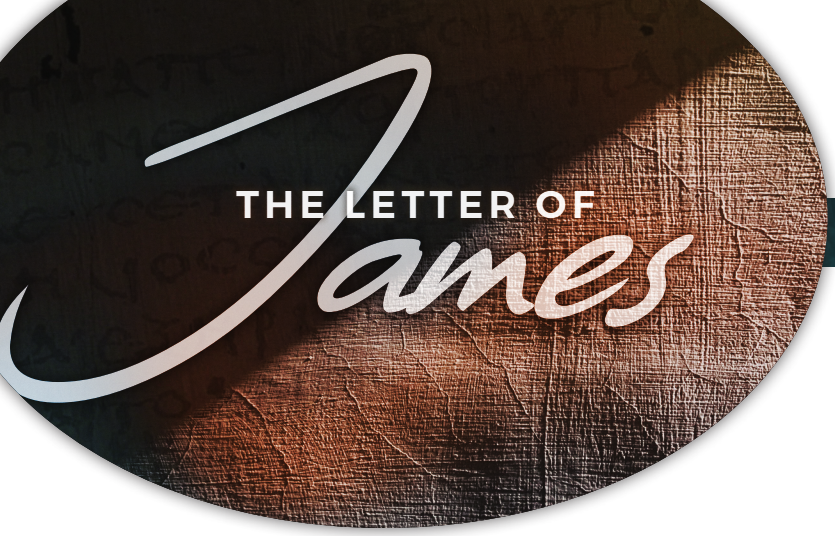


NOVEMBER 22, 2026

Character and Truth

JAMES 5:12

As James brings his letter toward its conclusion, verse 12 introduces the first of several commands. At first glance, this verse may appear to stand alone. However, the introductory phrase, "above all" suggests a connection to the preceding text. James has just instructed believers to be patient in suffering (5:7-11). He reminds them of the example of the prophets and the perseverance of Job. Now, he addresses an important characteristic of the believer: truthfulness. James stresses that truthfulness must remain evident even in difficult circumstances.

Suffering has a way of revealing and developing our character. When life becomes difficult, our words, attitudes, and actions reveal what is truly in our hearts. James reminds us that godly character must be evident in the way we speak.

Through his letter, James has repeatedly addressed the importance of our speech. He has warned about the destructive power of the tongue (3:1-12), the inconsistency of blessing God while cursing people (3:9-10), and the dangers of careless and presumptuous speech (4:11-17).

In 5:12, James emphasizes that Christians are to be distinctive in the matter of speaking truthfully. Our word should be dependable without requiring added promises, guarantees, or oaths.

Key thought: Our speech should consistently show truthfulness and trustworthiness; we represent our Lord Jesus Christ!

One of the purposes of suffering is the development of godly character.

This is an important contextual connection. It is easy to speak truthfully when circumstances are favorable. Suffering can tempt us to exaggerate, make promises we cannot keep, manipulate others, or say things simply to escape an uncomfortable situation.

Godly character should be evident in our truthfulness and trustworthiness.

- Our commitment to truth should distinguish us as followers of Christ. (12a)

- Our commitment to truth should prevent us from making deceptive promises. (12b)

- Our commitment to truth should make our words simple and dependable. (12c)
  It is a basic principle that true Christian character requires few words.

- Our commitment to truth should be motivated by accountability before God. (12d)
  We will be accountable for the consistency between our character, words, and actions.

Three Takeaways

1. Our words should reflect our character.
2. Our integrity should not require additional assurances.
3. Our speech is a matter of accountability before God.

Three questions for personal reflection:

- Can people take me at my word?
- Does my speech consistently reflect my Christian character?
- Am I as committed to telling the truth when it costs me something as I am when it benefits me?

May we become the kind of people whose character gives credibility to our words!

"A godly character makes a person's word trustworthy."