



BE  
GOD'S

*Family*

**VOLUME 6**  
**READINGS, DEVOTIONS, POEMS**

*Fishers United Methodist Church*



# Introduction

Over the previous three years, we have taken a sweeping overview of the entire Bible with studies on the four Gospels (“Be with Jesus”), the rest of the New Testament (“Be on Mission”), and the Old Testament (“Be God’s Light”).

Now we slow down and go deeper. Our focus in 2025 will be on the New Testament books that focus on Jewish people who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Throughout the Bible, the Hebrew people are considered children of God, that is, His family. Through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, believers in Him are grafted in. Hence, this year’s study: “Be God’s Family.”

First, we look at the Gospel of Matthew, written for a Jewish audience who had become Christian. It draws on many Old Testament and Jewish traditions, texts, concepts, customs, and more. Matthew clearly points to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah for the Jews and the entire world.

Second, we will spend several weeks exploring the book of Hebrews, which by its title alone is very Hebrew. This New Testament book examines the person and work of Jesus through the lens of numerous Old Testament people, practices, sacrifices, holy days, and more.

Finally, we will close out the ten-month study by examining two shorter New Testament books: Galatians and James. In Galatians, Paul addresses whether Jewish circumcision and the law of Moses are prerequisites to faith in Jesus Christ. In James, the brother of Jesus discusses whether works or faith are most essential to Christian living.

One of the great bonuses this year is that a number of people from our church are joining me in writing the devotionals for this study. They will bring fresh insights and perspectives to our devotion time. Each of them is engaged in training by me, a small cohort with one another, and personal prayer as they produce what you will read and reflect on. Make sure to thank them throughout the year as you are impacted by their words.

## There are several components to this year-long exploration:

1. **Daily Scripture Readings** – Actually, they are five days a week. Consider reading each weekday to anchor your day in Scripture.
2. **Daily Devotions** – These are written by others and me, and correlate with the daily Scripture to help you think more deeply about what you are reading.
3. **Daily Poems** – These are written by my sister-in-law, Rev. Dr. Martha FrizLanger. They will help you imagine the Scripture through poetry. This year, the poems will be based on a portion of a Psalm or other literature from the Old Testament that connects with the theme of that day’s New Testament reading.
4. **Weekly Studies** – These studies, written by my colleague Rev. Dr. Ben Greenbaum, are great tools for small groups and classes.
5. **Weekly Sermons** – If you cannot attend worship with us in person, you can always watch them online, visit [fishersumc.org/begodsfamily](https://fishersumc.org/begodsfamily) for easy access, or view them in the Fishers UMC app.
6. **Weekly Podcasts** – Ben and I and some special guests will spend some time each week dialoguing about that week’s readings, visit [fishersumc.org/begodsfamily](https://fishersumc.org/begodsfamily) for easy access or your favorite podcast platform.

The hope is that we are all drawn to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this study as One who is Holy, yet approachable through His kindness and salvation. All Scripture references are NIV unless otherwise noted.

It is my prayer that you will be motivated to embrace the fact that you are a child of God, called by Him to “Be God’s Family” in the world.

Enjoy the journey!

Rev. Mark A. Ellcessor

*Senior Pastor, Fishers United Methodist Church*



**9/29/2025 - WEEK 39 DAY 1**

**Persevere with Faith**

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:1-8**

## Devotional By: Dan Henke

Welcome to the book of James! This is one of my favorite books of the Bible. It contains considerable advice and admonishment on practical Christian living. I like to refer to James as "New Testament Proverbs."

James doesn't waste time getting to his task. The first message seems like a rather harsh slap to the face. "Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials of many kinds...." It sounds a lot like my mom serving up my least favorite dinner: "That's what you get and you're going to like it!" But James has a valid point. While it might be a stretch to look with joy at the trials in our lives, we should have appreciation how those trials develop our faith.

You can't really appreciate the view from the mountaintop unless you first climb out of the valley.

In late 2016, my life seemed pretty good. My sons had launched their own lives, financial security and a good retirement seemed to be on the horizon for my wife and me. And then in a moment of silent prayer during church service, God spoke to me, and said "You are going to go through a trial." A week later my wife was in the ER, beginning the journey of gastric cancer that would eventually claim her life. I knew it was up to me to walk with her on that journey, until it was time to part ways. I would not consider this time of my life to be "pure joy," but it was possible with God being with me on the way. And it was possible because of the trials I had endured in life up to that point.

In my life, each challenge is eventually followed by a bigger one. I wondered why I had the trials I went through, until I had the next one and realized I couldn't have gone through the later trial without having endured the former. I didn't really realize how God was perfecting my faith through trials until after I started my spiritual journey as a Christian. That realization brought the "pure joy" to which James refers.

So, if you are still climbing out of the valley in your faith, don't give up. Keep the faith, persevere, and keep climbing. The mountaintop is within reach.

## Poem

### I Do Not Need A Genie James 1:1-8, Proverbs 4

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will give you a garland of grace to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown."  
Proverbs 4:5-9

*I do not need a genie,  
three wishes to supply  
For my God gives me all I need  
while I in Him abide  
So here is what I'm given;  
a triad symphony  
It all is given gen'rously,  
as I on Christ rely*

*The first gift I've been given:  
SALVATION, free and clear  
From Christ who died upon the cross  
and holds me ever dear  
The second, WISDOM's promise:  
fear-faith in God alone  
A constant guiding Spirit;  
Christ's righteous path I'm shown*

*The third gift, all encompassing---  
God, neighbor, friend or foe  
Outpouring of God's grace in me,  
Christ's image to bestow  
What is this gift? Why LOVE, of course!  
Unconditional and free  
I have the pow'r to share with all,  
since first given to me*

*So genie, stay inside your lamp,  
No fairytale for me  
I need not gamble with my life  
nor play a lottery  
For all I need has been supplied,  
I in contentment rest  
My "all for good" I trust to God,  
for He knows what is the best*





**9/30/2025 - WEEK 39 DAY 2**

**On Fame and Fortune**

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:9-11**

## Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

We, in Fishers, are among the wealthiest in the world. I'm not thinking of billionaires, but compared to other countries, we are the wealthy people of this earth. During our trip to Kenya last year, we learned some families live on \$150 per month. They are, however, content with God's blessings. God is good!

When I read James 1:9-11, I think of Mark 4:18-19, "Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful." This one asset, wealth, no matter how vast or minimal that we have it, can cause us to trust in money vs trusting in God for our future. This passage that we can be seed among the thorns. We can fade away while the world passes us by. I don't want to be the person that takes my faith for granted.

Pastor Mark recently compared the Easter story to a movie trailer. Are we showing up to only to hear the Word, or are we so excited about our life with God that we want to share it with the world. Is our treasure money or is our treasure the Way? What do we really get excited about?

I suggest we ask God to guide us along our way. I pray for God's discernment that we can seek His way and be better disciples of Jesus Christ during the time we have on this earth.

Prayer: We love you Lord and we pray for your guidance, that we might make a difference for you. Amen

## Poem

**Counter-Intuitive Gospel**  
James 1:9-11, Proverbs 11

When pride comes, then comes disgrace,  
but with humility comes wisdom.  
The integrity of the upright guides them,  
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their  
duplicity.  
Proverbs 11: 2-3

*It goes against my thinking  
It goes against the grain  
To seek the best for others  
While I myself refrain*

*To love a foe who's hurt me  
A constant prayer to raise  
To turn my goal from platform's gold  
Allowing others' praise*

*No vengeance, I'm commanded  
Leave in the hand of God  
The easy, broad way to avoid  
The narrow one to plod*

*And when I'm in the limelight  
To share it with the least--  
Applauding contributions  
Best seat at honor's feast*

*And when it comes to promises  
I'm called to faithfulness  
E'en when the way is rocky  
E'en when a life's a mess*

*It goes against my thinking  
Sounds crazy in my brain  
But gradually this discipline  
When practiced, I will gain*



10/1/2025 - WEEK 39 DAY 3

## Every Good and Perfect Gift SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:12-18

### Devotional By: Kim Arnott

Why do bad things happen to good people? That's a question we all wrestle with. I must admit I have not found an answer that satisfies. The truth is bad things happen to everyone, regardless of their character. I firmly believe that God doesn't cause bad things to happen. God doesn't sit wherever God sits and randomly cause hardships and struggles for us. That isn't part of the character of God as I perceive God. Causing bad things to arbitrarily happen seems inconsistent with God's character. Things happen because we are human (humanity is not perfect) and we live in the world (our world is not perfect). James encourages us in verse 12 to respond to "bad things" with perseverance and to look toward the promises of God.

In 1999, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and after successful treatment, I thought I was cured. But life had other ideas. The cancer returned in 2007, and the treatment was much more difficult. I questioned God. Why me? Why at the age of 40 with 3 children? Why when I had been perfectly healthy? There had to be a reason. I had to blame something. But I **DID NOT** blame God. Does God allow things to happen to us? Certainly – because we and others have free will and we live in an imperfect world. But I don't think God deliberately causes those things to happen. God did not give me cancer as a test.

I think James is talking about a different kind of hardship in verses 14 and 15 – hardships that we bring on ourselves. What causes us to be **"dragged away"**? We could call it Satan, our own fallen nature or temptation by others. We could name dozens of sources. But we should not blame God. God is not the reason for our bad behavior, poor choices or succumbing to Satan's persuasion. King David was not tempted by God to lust after Bathsheba. It was David's flawed character and his lack of self-control. Eve was not enticed to eat from the tree by God but by Satan and her lack of willpower to resist. Just as God doesn't cause bad things to happen to us, in my opinion, God doesn't tempt us to sin. God doesn't want to see us fail. God isn't **"trying to trip (us) up"** as The Message translation says. God doesn't trap us into sinful behavior, but only wants the best for us.

Those of us of a certain age can remember Flip Wilson and the tag line from his character, Geraldine – **"The Devil Made Me Do It!"** Well maybe, but Christians should accept responsibility for their actions. God is not the cause of our misfortunes, but the source of **"every good and perfect gift."**

### Poem

**Temptation, I Hate You!**  
James 1:12-18, Proverbs 5

*For your ways are in full view of  
the Lord, and he examines all your  
paths. The evil deeds of the wicked  
ensnare them; the cords of their sins  
hold them fast. For lack of discipline  
they will die, led astray by their own  
great folly.  
Proverbs 5:21-23*

*Temptation, I hate you!  
Keep away from my door!  
Quit knocking! Be quiet!  
I want to ignore  
Your luring, false promises  
Pleasure and gain  
Temptation, I hate you!  
You are such a pain!  
I'll rise up and flee you  
Though naked I be  
'Tis better to run fast  
Then I will be free  
From you slick invitations  
Your call to the dark  
I know the expense of a  
Dalliance, a lark  
So, Spirit, un-blind me  
Allow me to see  
Then dress me for battle  
When Sin's come for me*





**10/2/2025 - WEEK 39 DAY 4**

**Do What It Says**

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:19-25**

## Devotional By: Judith Gibson

When I was a little girl, my family lived on my grandfather's farm in southern Illinois. During the summer we attended Vacation Bible School at the little country church down the road from our house. Each day we sang "Be Ye Doers of the Word" (B.B.McKinney). The singing sessions were my favorite part. Afterwards, we would have cookies and Kool-Aid outside by the big oak trees in the church's yard. I often think of those lyrics to that song when I read the book of James:

Out of James one twenty-two  
Comes a call for Juniors true.  
Who will live for Christ the risen Lord:  
Listen to this trumpet call  
Ringing out to one and all,  
Be ye doers of the Word...

Even though the book of James was written many years ago, its message still reminds us of our need to read the Bible intently, listen to God speaking to us through His Word, and willingly obey His teachings.

In verse 22, James teaches us to "not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves," but also "do what it says." God tells us that "anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do" (25-26).

If we willingly want to be like Jesus, in addition to reading and studying the Bible, we need to obey the Word of God. Without this obedience, James says we are just deceiving ourselves. "When we say we believe one thing but don't act upon it, it's really like we don't believe it at all. Plain and simple, it is not enough just to hear God's Word...we are in fact blessed when we do the Word" (fbcbartow.org).

As the song asks: do we strive to live for Christ? Give our time and talents to serve others? Follow Jesus all the way? Work, pray, and sing for the Master every day? Be kind to others? Be like Jesus? The final stanza summarizes our call to be doers of the Word:

Let us serve with all our might;  
Let us stand for truth and right,  
Always living for the risen Lord...  
Be ye doers of the Word.

So, how can we be doers of the Word today?

## Poem

**Instruction To A Child**  
James 1:19-25, Proverbs 16

*Whoever gives heed to instruction  
prosper, and blessed is the one  
who trusts in the Lord.  
Proverbs 16:20*

*Child—*

*A Goofus forgets  
All instruction  
A Goofus trades  
Virtue for sin  
A Goofus yields to  
Great temptation  
A Goofus has  
No reins within*

*A Gallant one  
Listens intently  
Then follows the  
Wisdom of God  
A Gallant one  
Yields to the chastening  
A Gallant one  
Fears not the rod*



10/3/2025 - WEEK 39 DAY 5

Pure Religion

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:26-27

## Devotional By: Nancy Foust

James defines true religion as this, from James 1:27, "to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world". Further, true religion should be defined as being pure and undefiled before God, not just outward appearance, but also in internal character and actions, thus being a servant of God. (as defined by AI)

Being a servant of God covers so many areas and characteristics, where do you fit in? We are all told over and over serving our neighbors, friends and family is part of serving. We are also told to serve everyone, no matter their background or beliefs. As Christians, God loves us all and He expects us to treat everyone as he would. Often that is a difficult thought to process.

For instance, if someone has wronged society in some form and they need some real help, how hard is it to be the one who steps up to help. I know it is difficult for me, but I have learned to find ways to support them. Possibly sending a card, calling them just to listen, and always praying for their improvement in society. These are actions I have learned in my spiritual journey. James tells us that we must accept and learn to support others in time of need, no matter the situation.

As I was writing this devotion, I was thinking about James being Jesus' brother. At times in James' life, he was probably called on to support many people that others would shun or neglect, just by the nature of his family structure. He didn't know how Jesus' life would end but he saw his brother continually preaching the word of God and doing the works that were pleasing to Him. It makes a difference in your life who you look up to and believe in. It can make you a true Christian.

## Poem

What True Looks Like  
James 1:26-27, Proverbs 31

*She opens her arms to the poor and extends  
her hands to the needy. She speaks with  
wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her  
tongue.*

*Proverbs 31: 20, 26*

*Bring peace and good news to the poor  
Do not despise their low station  
Instead, may your pantry extend to them  
May you be blessed to share your table  
May you listen to their stories  
May compassion in you rise  
This is true religion*

*Guard words which want to come from your mouth  
Check them before they are aired  
Then take the next step  
If evil attitude is present  
Pray for a clean heart  
Pray for a new and right spirit  
This is true religion*

*Your practices are what the world sees  
The depth of your sanctification  
The working out of God's great grace  
In you abiding  
In you residing  
O'er you presiding  
This shows true redemption*





**10/6/2025 - WEEK 40 DAY 1**

## Forbidden Favoritism

### **SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:1-7**

### Devotional By: Lynette Hart

So often we make snap judgements of other people. We judge their clothes, the way they dress, the way they talk, the food they eat. We judge people by their profession.

God does not see us in this way. People are people. We are all children of God. Jesus loves each of us.

I spend a lot of time working with superintendents and foremen on construction sites. These are often men who have worked their way up through the trades. Sometimes they don't speak with correct grammar. They are in grubby clothes from working on site or in the mud. Others may not give them much thought when looking at them. But by golly, most of these men know their stuff. They are incredibly smart. I often wonder what people think when they see them based on their appearance or their trade. I often like to talk to them about their family.

Each of these people has a story. Each of these people has a family. Each of these people has people who care about them. Each of these people provides a role in society.

God does not show favoritism or preferential treatment. Galatians 3:28 reminds us that "are one in Christ Jesus". We are all God's children "for God does not show favoritism" (Romans 2:11).

This passage reminds us that God has chosen those who are poor. In Biblical times, the poor were the ones who were most often the Jesus followers. He is not saying that the rich cannot follow Jesus or are not chosen by God, but that the rich must have the faith of the poor to be rich in spirit.

How do we not show favoritism with others? How can we treat all as God's children? How can we use godly discernment when giving to the poor?

### Poem

**I Wonder What Would Happen**  
James 2:1-7, Proverbs 28

*Playing favorites is always a bad thing;  
you can do great harm in seemingly harmless ways.  
Proverbs 28:21*

*I wonder what would happen with even playing field  
No first-choice picks, no last choice shame  
But sheer delight in teamwork, not winning every game*

*I wonder what would happen when all are seen with worth  
Not just the bright and beautiful, admired for great looks  
But each as image bearer of our God who's kind and good*

*I wonder what would happen if all life was respected  
The weak, the brave, the strong, the shy  
Those blessed with Rachel's beauty, those with Leah's weak eye*

*I wonder what would happen if we saw through God's lens  
The rich man and the beggar, the enemy, the friend  
The tax-collector, Pharisee, the maniac, the fiend*

*I wonder what would happen if the lowest was our quest  
To raise another's stature, stop vying for best  
To be content where we're assigned and welcome every guest*





**10/7/2025 - WEEK 40 DAY 2**

## Mercy Triumphs

### **SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:8-11**

### Devotional By: Doug Bromm

Have you ever had one of those, "where have I heard that before," moments? In chapter 2, verse 8 James tells us, "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right."

The last time I heard this quoted, Jesus was finishing up His Sermon on the Mount with a notable quotable, "so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

It turns out that Jesus was improving upon a well-known saying from a well-known story. The story is about a prospective convert to Judaism who asked if the Torah could be explained to him while he stood on one foot. The man challenged the two greatest rabbis of the time to summarize the Torah in just a few sentences. The first rabbi, Shammai, dismissed the man as unserious. But the other rabbi, named Hillel, took the man up on his challenge and replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow: this is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."

On the surface, both sayings sound like the same "golden rule" that we grew up with, but there's a subtle difference in direction. Rather than the law just preventing us from doing something hateful to our neighbor as Hillel counseled, Jesus tells us to use our freedom in Him to go forth and actively do what will help our neighbors.

James is saying that the law isn't all about what not to do. Like, do not show favoritism, do not commit murder and do not commit adultery. Rather, the heart of the law (and the Lawgiver) is about what you do and why. Timothy said, "the goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (1 Timothy 1:5)

We are free to speak and act as one who will be judged by a law that seeks to extend love, kindness and mercy. That is so much better than a law that seeks to restrict us by condemning us for stumbling "at just one point" of sin. We get to experience a life-giving mercy that "triumphs over judgement."

### Poem

**Relating To God's Whole Law**  
James 2:8-11, Proverbs 3

*Good friend, don't forget all I've  
taught you; take to heart my  
commands. They'll help you live a  
long, long time, a long life lived full  
and well. Don't lose your grip on  
Love and Loyalty. Tie them around  
your neck; carve their initials on your  
heart. Earn a reputation for living  
well n God's eyes and the eyes of the  
people.  
Proverbs 3:1-4*

*I have fav'rite commandments  
The ones easy for me  
The ones which by God's grace alone  
Have guards strong as can be*

*I have some laws I do not like  
The ones I'd opt ignore  
The ones I view with nonchalance  
Consider quite a bore*

*Yet, all God's ways are best for me  
Abundant life to bring  
I pray for friends who'd come along  
With warning bell to ring*

*Lord, may each rule and precept  
Be seen as life, as gift  
To keep me steady on Christ's  
course  
My Rudder, lest I drift*





**10/8/2025 - WEEK 40 DAY 3**

## Living a Mercy-Filled Life

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:12-13**

### Devotional By: Nancy Foust

Do you find it hard not to be judgmental about a person's actions in a situation you don't agree with? All too often it is! It seems automatic to start criticizing them for their actions and then discussing it with others, from your point of view. We are going to discuss having mercy on that person and how to approach that aspect of life with positivity and mercy.

Mercy is defined as God's compassionate treatment and forgiveness towards those who are in need or have sinned, even though they deserve punishment. James 2:12-13 tells us how to live a mercy filled life by his works as written, "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgement without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgement."

Mercy is a difficult thought to take over your judgmental self. We must try to be more positive and begin to look at the reasons an individual or group does what they do, that we don't agree with, thus judging them, possibly incorrectly. Think of a group of protestors standing up against a belief that is incorrect for your spiritual self. Jesus says to forgive them for the disruption and have compassion for their strong beliefs in whatever the topic happens to be, but to pray for them. That is giving them mercy. I will try to be better at being merciful, can you?

### Poem

#### The Balance

James 2:12-13, Proverbs 31

*Speak up for those who cannot  
speak for themselves, for the rights  
of all who are destitute. Speak up  
and judge fairly; defend the rights  
of the poor and needy.  
Proverbs 31:8-9*

*I long to honor God above  
To speak the Truth, to act in Love  
To stand for Justice, Mercy show  
To live this balance, in it grow*

*For Truth alone is sharp judgment  
A clanging gong, a harsh attempt  
And Love alone without the Truth  
Is mushy Mercy, rotten fruit*

*To fairly judge—Truth's sentence  
mete—  
With Mercy's Love—a divine feat  
So Lord, instruct me in Your way  
That I might live Your will always*





10/9/2025 - WEEK 40 DAY 4

## Faith Without Deeds is Dead

### SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-17

## Devotional

By: Kim Arnott

Didn't we just go over this a few weeks ago? I thought we were told faith is all we need? So, which is it? Faith or works?

We're not the only ones to wonder about this. Theologian Martin Luther struggled with how to reconcile these ideas. John Wesley pondered the contradictions. But he concluded these two seemingly opposite ideas are truly complementary. He argued that there are two kinds of faith - "dead" (passive faith that lacks good works) and "alive" (active faith expressed in love and service to others). We are saved by faith alone (*"sole fide"*), but true faith will reflect God's love in action - this was essential for Wesley.

Works are not required for salvation but are an outgrowth of our active and alive faith. Wesley said this, *"The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."* I love what the Tony Evans Study Bible said about this: *"Paul is talking about how a sinner becomes a saint, whereas James is talking about how a saint brings heaven to earth."* Someone can have faith, but we are expected to have **FAITH!**

James gives us an example of someone with "dead" faith. If we see a brother or sister in need and don't do anything to help them, our faith is dead. It's not alive and active. If we encounter someone homeless or hungry, telling them "I'll pray for you but go get a job" isn't following the example of Christ. ***"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."*** (1 John 3:17-18) Our congregation's support of our food pantry and involvement in Family Promise are examples of faith that is alive. Action springs forth from our faith. *"If a brother is hungry, he doesn't need a sermon. He needs a ham sandwich!"* (Tony Evans Study Bible)

One day, Satan held a council of his closest advisors and wanted their ideas for ways Christians could be tempted. After rejecting several proposals, Satan's most intelligent demon suggested that they tell people three things: 1) Believe in God, 2) Believe Jesus is God's Son, and 3) Only belief is necessary, and they can continue to live as they always have. This is the tactic that Satan chose and continues to use today. (Paraphrased, Thru the Bible Commentary)

Those with true, alive, active faith recognize Satan's lies. True, alive, active faith results in a transformed, changed life. Ask yourself - is your faith alive or dead?

## Poem

### Faith

James 2:14-17

*Faith is the foundation but action  
builds the house.  
~A proverb*

*Faith in Christ—the Cornerstone—a  
justified beginning  
Yet not enough to build a life—at  
least a life worth living  
Belief is pow'r to fuel  
God's work  
The action demonstrates  
new birth  
For faith without its partner, work,  
Is but a great deceiving*





**10/10/2025 - WEEK 40 DAY 5**

## Faith and Works Go Together

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:18-26**

### Devotional By: Peggy Cooke

In the small town I grew up in, our family ended up owning half of the block. There was a portion of it that we called the orchard. Dad had planted 7-8 apple trees in that area. Most years those trees produced good fruit. My mother would make yummy desserts with them. My favorite was apple tarts. Dad always sprayed for bugs and disease. Some years those trees did not produce very good apples even after Dad sprayed them. Strange worms or bugs would eat away at them and there would be no apple tarts. They simply produced rotten fruit or fruit that was not good for human consumption. There were times when the tree would die.

In our scripture today James's message is your faith and your works go together. If your faith is not expressed in your works, then it is dead. In those 9 verses my Jesus Centered Bible, uses the word "faith" 10 times, and the words "works/deed/action" is used 8 times. Living out an active faith is not just a Sunday thing; it is a 24/7 thing. James is calling us to action. How we live should reflect what we believe. A body without the Spirit is spiritually dead. Just like a body without breath is physically dead. If you stop breathing, you are dead. Similarly, faith without good deeds or works is dead. Faith that doesn't produce action is like a lifeless body. It may exist but it has no purpose, no power and makes no impact.

Are you living a life that is rotting or killing your faith like the tree in our orchard? Or are you producing good fruit that is working for the good of God's kingdom? Use what God has blessed you with to grow your faith with good deeds. Faith in Jesus is alive. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. Will you accept James's invitation to action?

### Poem

#### Faith And Actions

James 2:18-26, Proverbs 10

*The wages of the righteous is life,  
but the earnings of the wicked are sin  
and death.  
Proverbs 10:16*

*God gives a choice 'tween life and death  
'Tween blessing and full cursing  
It's Faith, 'tis true, begins new life  
Yet needs Actions rehearsing  
For without Deeds of righteousness  
Your budding fruit stops growing  
And falls to earth--hard, dead, no use--  
Without true joy bestowing  
So, point your blooming Faith toward Son  
Drink in the pow'r He gives you  
To be a fruitful harvest blest  
Of Works, Faith's bounty view*





10/13/2025 - WEEK 41 DAY 1

## Those Who Teach

### SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:1-2

## Devotional

By: Lynette Hart

In my family, teachers are regarded as belonging to a very noble profession. They are revered. My mother was a teacher. My sister is a teacher. My husband was a teacher for several years. Teaching is very noble, but it is also a very important profession. It is not to be taken lightly.

It is important that those who teach know the subject for what they teach. This is especially important for teachers in the church.

James' warning is that not everyone should be teachers. Because they are judged so strictly, they need to practice what they preach. Before anyone can become a teacher, they should learn the law, learn the scripture so that they can truly teach God's word.

James warns us that teachers will be judged more harshly than others. Yikes. I am nervous just writing this devotional. What if I am teaching the wrong thing!

James reminds us that we all stumble. If we didn't stumble, we would be perfect. And no one is perfect. We are all sinners. But we must not stumble in the word. We all stumble but we all must carry on.

How do we carry on our fundamental duties as Christians which is to make disciples of all nations if we cannot teach. We must teach by sharing the Word. But we must be careful that we truly know the Word and that we truly understand what we are teaching. We must strive to be led by God so that it is God's Word we are teaching.

## Poem

### Wisdom For Teachers

James 3:1-2, Proverbs 9

*Whoever corrects a mocker invites  
insults; whoever rebukes the wicked  
incurs abuse. Do not rebuke  
mockers or they will hate you; rebuke  
the wise and they will love you.  
Instruct the wise and they will be  
wiser still;  
teach the righteous and they will add  
to their learning.  
Proverbs 9:7-9*

*A teacher needs great knowledge  
On subject being taught  
But facts and skill are not enough  
When learning deep is sought  
Discerning eye is needed  
Perusing student log  
Where is the one who's humble  
Which one their mockings fog  
For teaching needs great wisdom  
When meting out life's aim  
Responsible the teacher--  
The student's not to blame  
So teacher, heed this warning  
When leading, please beware  
Check every word and attitude  
Be careful truth to share*



10/14/2025 - WEEK 41 DAY 2

## The Tongue-Tied Bridled Pride Guide

### SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:3-6

## Devotional

By: Lisa Ellcessor

I was the youngest of 6 children living in a church parsonage. The church owned 9 acres and as the pastor's family, we had a menagerie of animals (sheep, homing pigeons, dogs, cats, snakes, fish, horses and a duck). Besides pets, we had land plentiful with gardens, fruit trees, a baseball diamond, volleyball/basketball/tennis courts, green pastures and woods.

On my 10th birthday, Dad bought a Bay horse named Cinnamon. She had a red coat and black mane. She was spunky with a will of her own. Sometimes unbridled, Cinnamon would bite me if she didn't like something. Sometimes on the last stretch of our ride, she would wildly run home taking us through trees or bucking to throw us off. Ouch! She wanted to be in charge, go rest and eat her sugar cubes, carrots or apple reward. Cinnamon was strong-willed when unbridled, but easier to handle when bridled. But the bridling of the tongue is a genius invention. Obedience comes so much easier when bridled. Directional harmony forges freedom.

In James 3, Jesus' half-brother, compares our tongue (words) to bridling a horse. I understand today's scripture well. ***We put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us. With these bits we can control their whole body. (Easy to Read Bible)***

Sometimes my tongue is a spunky spoiled horse. Sometimes my disobedient biting words hurt others. Sometimes I allow my words to pridefully run home with desire to indulge in sugar coated temptations of gossip or cruel words. I forget I am led by God. Sometimes I refuse the bridle. Can you relate? Today's scripture alerts us to untamed word habits. It reminds us of tongue-tied pride. If we don't let the Lord bridle our prideful words, we wildly hurt ourselves and others. We become unbridled Christians which causes turmoil and unholy living. No one wants this.

The converse of being unbridled, is to allow ourselves to be led by the Master. God helps us exercise restraint and in turn we experience adventurous freedom in our Christian ride. For me, my daily bridling starts with prayer, Scripture reading and reflection. These practices help bridle my tongue and I am reigned into Jesus's path, not my own. I benefit from the Holy Spirit's guiding control of my life. It's about trusting the Lord.

### Guide to the Bridle

1. Allow the Lord to bridle you each morning with reins of scripture.
2. Saddle up for the twists and turns of the day by letting God lead.
3. Restrain yourself. Stop biting back with untamed tongue habits.
4. Pray! Follow! Enjoy the blessed freedom of being led by the LORD.

## Poem

Bits, Rudders, Sparks  
James 3:3-6, Proverbs 19

*The lips of fools bring them strife,  
and their mouths invite a beating.  
The mouths of fools are their  
undoing, and their lips are a snare to  
their very lives.  
Proverbs 18: 6, 7*

*A horse with bit and rein  
Can skillfully be trained  
Its owner then can reign  
And cover vast terrain*

*A ship with rudder small  
With great cargo to haul  
Can through grave waters crawl  
With pilot at the hull*

*A thin match, fire spark  
Can brighten up the dark  
Its holder thus embark  
E'en trail just barely marked*

*But bit, rudders and sparks  
When guiding truth depart  
Can truly miss the mark  
And pull peace's calm apart*

*And thus, the tongue can be  
A pleasing symphony  
But when unrul'd and free  
Birth vast catastrophe*





**10/15/2025 - WEEK 41 DAY 3**

## Full of Deadly Poison

### **SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:7-12**

## Devotional By: Dan Henke

One of my favorite bits of dialog in the movie "Cleopatra" was spoken by Richard Burton, who played the role of Marc Antony:

"Your tongue is old, but sharp, Cicero. Be careful how you waggle it. One day it will cut off your head."

How many careers end with one ill-advised comment? Jimmy "the Greek" Snyder, a Las Vegas oddsmaker who appeared on NFL pregame shows, sports broadcaster Howard Cosell, Los Angeles Dodgers General Manager Al Campanis, all had long and illustrious careers suddenly end for making a racially insensitive comment. The irony for Cosell and Campanis is that they had always been in the forefront of promoting African American players. Today, with the rise of social media and ubiquitous cell phones recording everything, we know it as "cancel culture."

Say the wrong thing, and you're gone. That's why I am cautious about anything I post on social media or send in an email. Before hitting that "send" button, I ask "Would I want my mom to read this? Would I want a jury to read this? Would I want to read this in the news media?"

Scripture is full of warnings about the tongue:

Proverbs 14:3 "A fool's mouth lashes out with pride, but the lips of the wise protect them."

Proverbs 15:1-4: A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.  
The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge,  
but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.  
The eyes of the Lord are everywhere,  
keeping watch on the wicked and the good.  
The soothing tongue is a tree of life,  
but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.

1 Peter 3:10, quoting Psalm 34 12-14: "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech."

Luke 6:45: "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

As Luke points out, the poison is not really in the tongue; the tongue reveals the poison that is in the heart. However much someone will try to mask their feelings, sooner or later they will be betrayed by the proverbial "slip of the tongue."

The best way to tame the tongue is to surrender your heart to Jesus and let the Spirit cleanse it.

## Poem

### Each Moment

James 3:7-12, Proverbs 18

*Words kill, words give life; they're  
either poison or fruit—you choose.  
Proverbs 18:21*

*Each moment, there's a choosing  
Between the worst or best  
To use our words for cursing  
Or use our words to bless*

*The one will cause destruction  
It has the pow'r to kill  
The other, great encouragement--  
The anxious soul to still*

*So be alert, dear Pilgrim  
Each moment, everyday  
Will words from you bring dark  
chaos  
Or bless one on their way*



10/16/2025 - WEEK 41 DAY 4

## Earthly Wisdom

### SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:13-16

## Devotional

By: Elyce Meador

Have you met that person who seems to know everything? That person who is always right and never wrong? They know the right thing, the best thing to buy, the latest news, the right way to do something, how things need to be done. I have, and it brings out the worst in me. I want to show them that they are wrong. I want to win, to be right.

This scripture about wisdom speaks to both of these reactions by discussing the wrong kind of wisdom. William Barclay, in his Daily Bible Study series, notes that James points out that this type of wisdom is earthly—that is, it measures success in earthly terms. It is of natural man.

Barclay goes on to explain that in the ancient world man was divided into 3 parts: 1) the physical body (skin, blood etc.); 2) the soul—the physical life we share with the animals, just being here; and 3) the spirit—what makes humans different than animals and connects us to God. We, in our modern age, tend to think of the soul and the spirit as the same, but ancient man made a differentiation. James is pointing out that arrogant wisdom belongs to the body and soul. It is not of the spirit, not of God. It only thinks of self; how can I look the best? What will I get out of this?

James is warning Christians against this kind of thinking. He is encouraging them to be humble in thought and deed. By seeking spiritual wisdom through God, we will encourage others to work together, to look at what God's answer might be in any given circumstance, rather than relying on our own imperfect wisdom.

When I come up against this type of "wisdom", I try to remind myself that I am not important in this moment. God's truth is what is important. I don't always succeed, but I am trying. How about you? Is this earthly type of wisdom hard for you? Do you find yourself in these words? Humility can be difficult, especially when we think we are right. Keeping ourselves centered in God can help.

Paul says it well in Romans 12:9-10: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

## Poem

### Earthly Wisdom

James 3:13-16, Proverbs 20

*Don't ever say, "I'll get you for that!" Wait for God; he'll settle the score. God hates cheating in the marketplace; rigged scales are an outrage. The very steps we take come from God; otherwise how would we know where we're going? An impulsive vow is a trap; later you'll wish you could get out of it.*

*Proverbs 20:22-27*

*We learn it early, don't we?  
To cheat to get ahead  
To lie if in our interest  
To silence truth instead  
Of being forthright, honest  
Bearing right judgment wrought  
This earthly kind of wisdom  
Is how a soul is lost*





**10/17/2025 - WEEK 41 DAY 5**

Heavenly Wisdom

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:17-18**

## Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

First of all, I do not consider myself wise. I do, however, rely on heavenly wisdom. James 3:17-18 talks of heavenly wisdom being pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. The passage calls for peacemakers to sow peace and reap a harvest of righteousness. That's the person I would like to be!

I have learned that the Holy Spirit lives within us. I've had that proved to me on many occasions when I've been called to minister to someone and the words that came from my mouth were not words that I would have known to say. I believe the Holy Spirit can speak through us if we allow it.

I've been with two people on their death beds. God spoke to them, through me, with words of comfort and hope. I am not versed enough to do that. God is. God imparts His Heavenly Wisdom through us if we will allow it. Sometimes he speaks through us by his Word in the Scriptures. Possibly something we've read the day before is something the person we are talking to needs to hear. Sometimes it's something WE need to hear. I love how God imparts his Heavenly Wisdom into our hearts. It just simply amazes me. I pray for that for you. If you haven't had that experience yet, I pray that you receive it.

Prayer: Loving God, we pray for your heavenly wisdom. We know you are the master creator. We know that all wisdom comes from you and through you. We ask for your discernment in our lives that you can help us grow in understanding your Word to us and through us. Help us to understand the wisdom you impart to us when we study your Scriptures. Thank you, Lord God, for loving us and helping us grow in our spirit. Amen

## Poem

**Counter Intuitive**  
James 3:17-18, Proverbs 1

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning  
of knowledge, but fools despise  
wisdom and instruction.  
Proverbs 1:7*

*Counter intuitive  
Wisdom's full school-ative  
Pure, humble fruit-ative  
Heaven can bring*

*Peace loving mercy gain  
Impartial judgment reign  
Harvest sincere obtain  
Righteousness store*



10/20/2025 - WEEK 42 DAY 1

## The Root of Sin and the Will of God

### SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:1-3

### Devotional By: Kim Arnott

We've all heard that often misquoted verse *"the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."* (1 Tim. 6:10) I don't disagree with that scripture, but I think that our bent to sin, or *"the root of all evil"*, goes much deeper. I think the root of many sins could actually be found in jealousy. Wanting what we don't or can't have. Resenting those that do have what we want. Jealousy is what causes our *"desires that battle within"* us. Wars are fought by countries jealous over other's land and possessions. Someone takes the life of another over jealousy. We gossip because we're jealous of another person and want to do them harm. Jealousy can result in the sins of envy, bitterness, anger, hatred, violence, and murder among others.

We have Biblical examples of jealousy leading to sinful behavior. Cain's jealousy of Abel resulted in Abel's murder. Joseph's brothers' jealousy caused them to sell Joseph into slavery. Leah's jealousy of her sister Rachel led her to trick Jacob into marriage. Sarah's jealousy of Hagar brought about Hagar's banishment. The Jewish leaders' jealousy of Jesus brought about their plot to kill him.

What can we do if jealousy creeps into our life? James suggests that we go to God in prayer. But we need to go to God in the right spirit – with the right motives. I don't think praying for God to give us everything we desire is praying with the right motive. We might want a winning lottery ticket so we can buy that big house, but is this something we should pray for? I really want the Colts to win the Super Bowl, but should this be my motive when I go to God in prayer? We should be praying in a manner that aligns with God's character and God's will for our lives. We need to believe that God has the power to answer prayer – or why else would we pray? Remember that God is *"able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think"* (Ephesians 3:20). What do you talk to God about? Do you ask God to satisfy your desires or for God to show you his will for your life?

In the end, we need to look within ourselves to determine why we do things that don't conform to God's plan for us. The X Files television show had a tag line that said, *"the truth is out there"*. I would argue that the truth is not "out there", but it dwells within each one of us. We would like to be able to blame jealousy or something else for our behavior, but we should take a good look inside our souls and ask God to show us God's will for us.

### Poem

#### At Home

James 4:1-3, Proverbs 17

*Better a dry crust with peace and  
quiet than a house full of feasting,  
with strife. Starting a quarrel is like  
breaching a dam; so drop the  
matter before a dispute breaks  
out.*

*Proverbs 17: 1, 14*

*An old hymn coins a lovely thought:  
"There is beauty all around  
When there's love at home"  
Peace and calm, harmony sought  
"When there's love at home"*

*What will it take to pause for break  
'Fore thoughtless barbs we utter  
A jab, sarcasm  
Critiquing for our pride's sake  
Kills the peace at home*

*Envy, revenge and quarreling cost  
They foul e'en the finest feast;  
They breach dam's strong wall  
Which keeps venom's poison slosh  
From flooding joy at home*

*And so, refrain, your temper soothe  
Instead, seek wisdom in prayer  
With motives sincere  
Tender emotions then smooth  
To keep pure love at home*





10/21/2025 - WEEK 42 DAY 2

## Friendship with the World

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:4-6**

### Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

William Shakespeare once wrote, "The world is mine oyster, which I with sword will open."

A century later, Shakespeare's fellow Englishman John Wesley said, "The world is my parish... I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."

The world is my oyster. You can be anyone, do anything, go anywhere you want. The world is yours for the taking.

The world is my parish. You can be anyone, do anything, go anywhere God wants. The world is yours for the blessing.

One requires unbridled pride.

One requires unbounded humility.

Be careful which you choose. "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Here is the larger quote from the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. Think about your own life as you reflect on this and today's Scripture. Here it is:

"I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it."

### Poem

#### Avoiding Poison

James 4:4-6, Proverbs 15

*The Lord detests the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue righteousness.  
Proverbs 15:9*

*Today I am grateful for all who went before me  
Sampling herb and fruit, mushroom and meat  
Only to discover its poison source  
Dying, leaving wisdom to warn me*

*Beware! The crossbones sign, a warning  
Danger! Do not swallow or consume  
Spit out, regurgitate if ingested  
Live! God's precepts declaring*

*And so, how foolish to kick against the goads of wisdom  
Instead, deny friendship with the world  
Its wickedness avoid, spit out  
'Lest death consumes and God detests*



**10/22/2025 - WEEK 42 DAY 3**

**Submit to God & Resist the Devil**

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:7-10**

## Devotional By: Elyce Meador

What stands out to you in the scripture? It begins in a place we all understand: Submit to God, resist the devil. Draw near to God, cleanse your hands, purify your hearts. All of these we are familiar with. Here is our faith! God, cleanliness, purity! Whew, I'm good!

Wait—James goes on—lament, mourn, and weep. What? Isn't my faith supposed to bring me unending joy and peace? Why would I stop laughing? Why would I want to be dejected? Isn't faith about feeling good? About me? About God?

James is not talking about how faith will make us feel; he is talking about how we should feel when we look around: when we see those less fortunate than ourselves, when we see others who have no God, when we see selfishness in ourselves and others. We should mourn for others and our part in their place, weep when we see their needs, and lament for the world and our part in it.

In doing so, we will bring ourselves humbly before God and ask for forgiveness from a place of humility, understanding that only through God can we change the world. When we have mourned, wept, and lamented, when we have stopped laughing at others and see their pain, when we are dejected over the world's circumstances—THEN we will turn to God, THEN we will open our hearts, THERE we will find the joy!

In our humble obedience to God, in relinquishing our need to be in control, in opening our hearts to His love, we will find the joy in the giving of ourselves! We circle round to the beginning of the passage: Submit to God and you can resist the Devil. It is well said in Ephesians 6:13-17:

<sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

## Poem

### The Crush

James 4:7-10, Proverbs 2

*Good friend, take to heart what I'm  
telling you; collect my counsels  
and guard them with your life.  
Tune your ears to the world of  
Wisdom; set your heart on a life of  
Understanding. That's right—if you  
make Insight your priority, and  
won't take no for an answer,  
Searching for it like a prospector  
panning for gold, like an  
adventurer on a treasure hunt,  
Believe me, before you know it  
Fear-of-God will be yours; you'll  
have come upon the Knowledge  
of God.*

*Proverbs 2:1-5*

*Eighth grade, I had a longing crush  
A boy with form most handsome  
I'd stand by lockers, waiting thus  
For him to pass me by  
I longed for him to walk by close  
His presence was my goal  
O, what I'd do, if he just spoke  
And looked me in the eye*

*O, that I had a crush on God  
His presence my desire  
O, that I'd wait on paths He trod  
O, that He would draw close  
With baited breath, Lord, let me  
seek  
A moment spent with You  
To humbly sit down at Your feet  
May I desire the most*





**10/23/2025 - WEEK 42 DAY 4**

## Keeping Someone Safe in Your Mouth

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:11-12**

### Devotional By: Bill Ringenberg

Is it wrong to speak negatively about what another person is doing or saying? The answer is that it depends.

At times it may be appropriate or even necessary to speak critically. One example is to instruct or warn a child or others of a wrongful pattern of behavior or thinking that they observe. A second example is to speak directly to an obvious wrongdoer about the problem (see Matthew 18:15-17).

It is a different matter, however, when one takes delight in putting down another person, or when one is quick to spread rumors which may not even be true.

So what is the difference between the constructive criticism and the destructive type of criticism that verses 11 and 12 address? The difference lies in the motivation of the speaker. The constructive critique wants the best for the person in question, loving his neighbor as himself, and hoping for redemption and reconciliation as needed. By contrast the negative critique is indifferent at best and happy to try to play the role of judge at worst.

### Poem

**Do Not Bear False Witness**  
James 4:11-12, Proverbs 26

*Listening to gossip is like eating  
cheap candy; do you want junk like  
that in your belly? Smooth talk from  
an evil heart is like glaze on cracked  
pottery. Your enemy shakes hands  
and greets you like an old friend, all  
the while plotting against you.  
When he speaks warmly to you,  
don't believe him for a minute; he's  
just waiting for the chance to rip you  
off. No matter how shrewdly he  
conceals his malice, eventually his  
evil will be exposed in public.  
Malice backfires; spite boomerangs.  
Liars hate their victims; flatterers  
sabotage trust.  
Proverbs 26: 22-28*

*The ninth commandment speaks  
quite plain  
Do not e'er bear false witness  
To speak forth lies, slander, liable  
Is crucifying business  
For with one lie, like wrecking ball,  
Integrity will crumble  
A lifelong quest to gain deep trust  
Will fall and lay in rubble  
So hold your tongue, do not destroy  
Another's place and station  
Do not keep company with those  
Who ruin reputations*



**10/24/2025 - WEEK 42 DAY 5**

## The Best Laid Plans

### **SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:13-17**

### Devotional By: Dan Henke

There are few things worse to see on vacation than watching the condo staff throw the pool furniture into the pool. That means a hurricane is coming, and it's going to wreck your vacation. I've seen that show three times. It's most cruel because a vacation is usually something planned well in advance, from the time taken off work, to selecting the perfect place to stay, to all the fun things you plan on doing when you are there. There maybe even some "boasting" to friends and coworkers about the wonderful vacation you are going to take.

Like the weather guy on TV, we don't know what will happen tomorrow. James says that we should be cautious about how we approach our plans. Not that it is bad to have them. We all have our hopes and dreams. Some positive ambition is a good thing; I am reminded of the parable of the three servants entrusted with ten Minas in Luke 19. The one who did the most work to increase the money entrusted to him was praised, the one who did nothing with it was condemned. James recognized this in James 1:1-8 with his opening comments about perseverance in the face of adversity.

Instead of boasting about our plans, God wants us to plan with humility, and to always acknowledge that He is the source of whatever good comes from them. Much of what James says sounds harsh, but it is true. We should not think so highly of ourselves where we come to believe the illusion that through our plans, we can control our lives and our future. Our plans for power, achievement and personal glory substitute a worship of ourselves in place of where God should be in our lives. We are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. At the same time, we need not worry about whether our plans will provide for our future. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."

What will our plans of today matter a year, a decade or a century from now? Should we worry about that? Instead, we should trust that God has a better plan for us, and we should focus on how our plans will further the Kingdom of God and serve Him.

### Poem

#### Mist And Vapor

James 4:13-17, Ecclesiastes 1

*"Nothing but vapor," Ecclesiastes said. "Totally vapor. Everything is just vapor that vanishes."  
Ecclesiastes 1:2*

*Mist and vapor, chaff and dust  
Carried by the wind  
Here one moment, gone the next  
By each second dimmed*

*Such are our lives, yours and mine  
Each second we don't own  
The length and circumstance of life  
IS only by God known*

*So do not brag about your plans  
Accomplishments in store  
Instead entrust your life to God  
Who closes, opens doors*





10/27/2025 - WEEK 43 DAY 1

## The Self-Indulgence Trap

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 5:1-6**

### Devotional By: Dave Rizk

Last weekend, we received a call from our 14-year-old niece, who is in middle school. She was crying because a few mean girls had made fun of her. She felt hurt that none of her friends stood up for her. This phone call made me reflect on times when I witnessed the oppression of innocent people but remained silent due to my lack of courage to defend those who were defenseless.

James proclaims the worthlessness of riches, not the worthlessness of the rich. Today's money will be worthless when Christ returns, so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will be worthwhile in God's eternal kingdom. Money is not the problem; Christian leaders need money to live and support their families; missionaries need money to help them spread the gospel; churches need money to do their work effectively. But the love of money leads to sin and causes people to oppress others in order to get more. This is a warning to all Christians who are tempted to adopt worldly standards rather than God's standards, as well as encouragement to all those who are oppressed by the rich.

If we are not the wealthy oppressors, are we to stand idly by? If we are members of a society where oppression is widely practiced, we may also fall under God's judgment, even if we are not personally treating others unjustly. James makes it clear that believers need to be a force that combats oppression and treats people who are poor with respect, no matter how much money they have. Allegiance to Christ ought to make a difference in the way we help anyone who is powerless to help and protect themselves, whether the poor and unemployed in our communities or refugees and immigrants arriving from foreign countries.

The "innocent" were defenseless people, probably poor laborers who suffered at the hands of wealthy landowners. Poor people who could not pay their debts were often imprisoned and forced to sell all their possessions. At times, they were even forced to sell their family members into slavery. With no opportunity to work off their debts, poor people often died of starvation. God called this murder. Hoarding money, exploiting employees, and living self-indulgently will not escape God's notice. Fair treatment and generosity towards those dependent on us, matters to God.

**A Call to action:** Find ways to advocate for poor and defenseless individuals, even when it is challenging or costly.

### Poem

#### Your Course

James 5:1-6, Proverbs 22

*A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*

*Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all.*

*One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.*

*Proverbs 22: 1, 2, 16*

*What good is it to train and sweat  
If running the wrong course?  
Be sure that you're on the right  
path*

*Which leads not to remorse  
If wealth is your primary goal  
For which you sweat and toil  
Moth, rust and thieves destruction  
bring*

*Your riches soon will spoil  
Instead, your character and faith--  
These goals your eyes upon--  
Your race for Life, the Truth,  
the Way*

*Be this the course you run*



**10/28/2025 - WEEK 43 DAY 2**

## Waiting for Crops

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 5:7-9**

### Devotional By: Charlie Hart

When I was a kid, I grew and sold sweet corn as my first summer job. My dad would help me plow our back field and plant the seeds. I would fertilize and weed the two-acre patch one row at a time. I eagerly awaited the first evidence of ears and silks developing on the tall, lean stalks. The initial appearance of ears was highly dependent on rain. Though exciting, the real thrill came when the ears filled out to their full maturity. The process of moving from emerging ear to fully grown was also highly dependent on rain. Overly dry Indiana summer weeks and months could delay by many days the time it took for ears to be ready for sale.

Experienced farmers and gardeners understand this relationship, but to a preteen boy, the wait could be agonizing because every day that passed with no corn meant no Farmers' Market money to purchase the trinkets of interest to a child with no financial obligations. Though summer rain showers meant no outdoors, out-of-school fun, I was always excited by the prospect of maturing ears of corn. The one comfort I always took was that even though I didn't know exactly the date that my corn crop would be ready for sale (or to eat), at some point every year, it was time.

This short passage from James uses the farmer's patience while watching for rain as an analogy of our wait for Jesus' return. We will experience good times and bad, sickness and health, and wealth and poverty, but none of these periods will excuse the fact that His return is imminent. Patient waiting is important, but just like the farmer waiting for and expecting rain, other chores pertinent to our life's calling remain. James implores us to be expectant, ready, persistent, and patient. Even though we don't know the date, at some point it will be time.

Are you eagerly awaiting Jesus' return? Does the prospect of His return bring you comfort or angst? Are you living into your life's call while you wait?

### Poem

#### Planting Wisdom

James 5:7-9, Proverbs 19

*Many are the plans in a person's heart,  
but it is the Lord's purpose  
that prevails.  
Proverbs 19:21*

*There's much to learn 'bout  
planting  
Within our scripture's core  
A seed must fall onto the ground  
And die, to bring fruit's store*

*Good ground, it is essential  
Good tending, water, too  
But only God supplies the growth  
Good fruit to then ensue*

*There's pruning, thinning, discipline  
To strengthen and mature  
Abiding in the grounded vine  
Full life God does insure*

*And patience, standing, waiting still  
Like farmer in the field  
For only in God's timing does  
The seed bring forth its yield*





**10/29/2025 - WEEK 43 DAY 3**

Let Your Yes be Yes

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 5:10-12**

## Devotional By: Judith Gibson

When I was a little girl and living on my grandfather's farm, I often accompanied him to the bank or grocery store. It was always fun going with him knowing that at the end of his business dealings, he would buy me an ice cream cone to eat on the way home. One thing that I remember was his shaking hands with men when completing their business deals. I believed they all knew he was a "man of his word." They acknowledged when he said he would do something, he would. He never made or gave empty promises to anyone. I always admired his honesty and integrity in his dealings with neighbors or family.

Jesus teaches His followers to be honest in their speech and to keep their promises and warns them that dishonesty will always be found out. He teaches us not to swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let our "yes" be yes, our "no" be no, and "anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matt. 5:37).

I remember when I was young, I would "cross my heart and hope to die," indicating I was telling the truth. Maybe you did, too. Also, some might swear they are truthful by saying, "I swear on my mother's grave." But James reminds us that our word should mean something. When we say something, people should know that we speak the truth. Since God's Word calls us to be "people of integrity, then we should strive to do so. If we do not strive to do so, that raises the questions about our relationship with God" (fbcbartow.org).

In Ephesians, Paul teaches Christians to live a life worthy of the calling we have received (4:1). And speaking the truth in love, he admonishes us to put off our "old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body" (Eph. 4:22-25). James simply tells us when we say "yes," it should mean "yes." When we say "no," it should mean "no." That's it!

So, the questions for each of us to consider today:  
"Am I a person of integrity?"  
"Do others perceive me as being a person of my word?"

## Poem

**Humble Intentions**  
James 5:10-12, Proverbs 12

*Many are the plans in a person's heart,  
but it is the Lord's purpose  
that prevails.*  
*Proverbs 12:21*

*"Yes, yes, yes"  
And "No, no, no"  
Spoken vows  
And "Maybe so"  
What a crop  
Of weeds we sow  
When unchecked vows  
We scatter*

*"If the Lord wills  
I'll be there"  
"If the Lord wills..."  
Do we dare  
Make great plans  
Though unaware  
Of our future  
Station*

*In your heart  
Intentions be;  
But life's future?  
God's to see  
Humble then be  
'Bout your plans  
Realize they're  
In God's hands*



**10/30/2025 - WEEK 43 DAY 4**

## Blessing One Another in Faith

**SCRIPTURE: JAMES 5:13-16**

### Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

Reading James 5:13-16 suggests that God will answer every prayer, if we have enough faith. I firmly believe every prayer is important, but I also believe God answers every prayer in his own way.

When I was in grade school I earned a prize by selling greeting cards. The prize was a special "magic" knife that only the person knowing the secret could open. The first day I had it I went to a Cub Scout meeting and lost it. I searched as hard as I could and couldn't find it. I decided to pray for God to help me. I knew he could help me find it. I thought that if I threw something into the air God could guide it down to my knife. I did that until our Den Mother called us in from playing and thought I'd try one more time. That last time, it slipped out of my hand and went under a bush. I didn't play there. When I bent down to pick it up, there was my special knife. I thanked God for helping me find it.

I don't think God always answers in the way we ask him. He's not a genie that grants us wishes. I do believe he wants the best for us. When I prayed for my daughter to be healed, from cancer, I knew God would answer. I just didn't know how. God gave her a brand-new body, in heaven. She was free from pain. She was surrounded by love. My prayer could not have been answered more beautifully. I constantly see God's answers.

What I've learned, in my lifetime, is that God hears us. When we are thankful, God hears. When we are in pain, he hears. When we are lost, he hears. When we pray for a lost soul, he hears. God answers in his own time and in his own way. It's up to us to discern his answer, but with God's help we will see it.

Prayer: Dear Loving Father, we thank you for all the blessings we pour out into our lives. We love you Lord and pray for blessings for each other. Please show us answered prayers, Lord. We have faith and we know your love. Amen

### Poem

#### The Healthy Life

James 5:13-16, Proverbs 17

*A happy heart is good  
medicine and a joyful mind causes  
healing, But a broken spirit dries  
up the bones.*

*Proverbs 17:21*

*Pray and sing,  
Receive the oil of healing  
Supplicate, praise,  
Receive the oil of joy  
Lift and voice,  
Share whatever's grieving  
This is the healthy life  
Satan can't destroy*

*Centered mind, joyful heart,  
Fellowship with others  
Burdens shared, rejoicing dealt,  
All carried mutual love  
Leaning, lifting,  
Easy yoke well fitted  
Sin confessed, forgiveness grace,  
All gifts from Christ above*





**10/31/2025 - WEEK 43 DAY 5**

## Bringing Back the Backslider

### **SCRIPTURE: JAMES 5:17-20**

### Devotional By: Mark Ellcessor

This devotion ends our nearly year-long study called “Be God’s Family.” We have learned that God sees us as His sons and daughters. Hebrews 2:11 put it like this, “Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.”

Elsewhere Peter reminds us to “show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers... (1 Peter 2:17). Paul agrees, saying, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10).

Being part of Christ’s Church is being part of a worldwide family. And being part of a local church is being part of a smaller, close-knit family.

What do we do, then, when someone turns tail and runs away from the faith, Prodigal Son style? We have a few choices. We can be the older brother, staying at home on the farm (in the church) and tending the crops (serving on committees). Or we can be like the father, straining his eyes to the horizon just waiting for his younger son’s silhouette to appear, then running full speed to embrace him (Luke 15:11-32).

Earlier in that same chapter, Jesus told a story about a shepherd who had one wayward sheep. He abandoned the ninety-nine in the dangerous open country until he found his little lamb (Luke 15:3-7).

Jesus told another story about a woman who lost a silver coin, a tenth of her wealth. She turned her house upside-down until she found it. She then threw a neighborhood block party (Luke 15:8-10).

The stories of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son were a response to the accusation against Jesus that, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Jesus declares the moral of his parables in this memorable one-liner: “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” (Luke 15:7).

Our theme for this year: “Be God’s Family.”

What should we do when someone wanders away?

### Poem

**Who Loves Me Enough?**  
James 5:17-20, Proverbs 27

*Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet. Proverbs 27: 5-7*

*Who loves me enough  
To challenge my blindness  
To correct my missteps  
To confront my deep sin  
Who loves me enough  
To risk my own anger  
To stand, spite my raging  
To wait—my chagrin*

*Who loves me enough  
To wound me with hard ruth  
To chase me when running  
To never give up  
Who loves me enough  
To name my betrayal  
To forgive my denial  
To share e’en His cup*

*Who loves me enough  
To yell “Satan, behind me!”  
To seek to forgive me  
A seventy-seven fold  
Who loves me enough  
To bear my proud silence  
To intercede faithful  
To wait at home’s door*





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