



FAITH THAT WORKS

THE BOOK OF JAMES

APRIL 24 – MAY 29, 2022

SERIES OVERVIEW

Why did Jesus influence the world more than anyone else in history? Because his message was not a theory or a philosophy, the faith he taught was perfectly demonstrated by the life he lived. In other words, Jesus taught a faith that actually works in real life. And to a world jaded by religious hypocrisy, this was incredibly refreshing. What does it mean to follow in his steps? James, the brother of Jesus, wrote a short letter that answers that question—and provides a gut-check for the reality of our faith.

APRIL 24

“IF IT DOESN’T WORK, IT’S NOT FAITH”

JAMES 2:14-26

The great news of the gospel is that we are made right with God through faith! But wait...how do I know my faith is real? Does it mean acknowledging the existence of God? Saying the right words about Jesus? Affirming the correct doctrines? James masterfully exposes our false assurance and hypocritical spirituality by insisting that when our faith in Christ is real, our imitation of Christ will be evident. Our actions don’t save us...but they provide beautiful evidence of the faith that does.

MAY 1

“FAITH WORKS IN OUR SUFFERING”

JAMES 1:1-18

It’s natural to be happy when life goes well. But when things fall apart—and especially when there doesn’t seem to be any relief in sight—it’s easy to spiral downward. We tend to doubt, envy others, and blame God. James talks about a kind of faith that rises above this circumstantially-based happiness. Through our connection with the Man who was well-acquainted with sorrows and suffering, we’ll begin to taste a joy that not only endures bad times; it’s actually strengthened and deepened through them.

MAY 8

“FAITH WORKS IN OUR SOCIAL LIVES”

JAMES 2:1-13

Whether intentionally or not, we are deeply prejudiced people—showing favoritism to the rich, the beautiful, and anyone else who we think can benefit us. But in the new community that Jesus is building through his church, we are called to something different. Just as Jesus gave his time, attention, and love to people regardless of their social status, we are invited and empowered to live the same way. When we find our value in Him, we don’t need to look for it in powerful people. our relationships.



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MAY 15

“FAITH WORKS IN OUR SPEECH”

JAMES 3:1-12

The words we speak have a massive influence on our own lives and the lives of others—for good or for evil. Unfortunately, our speech is one of the most difficult things to control, often leading to discouragement, anger, lost trust, and broken relationships. When we recognize the tongue’s power and our inability to control it, we can humbly seek the power of Christ to transform the way we talk—which in turn will transform the direction of our lives.

MAY 22

“FAITH WORKS IN OUR FIGHTS”

JAMES 3:13-18

Why do our relationships so often go sour? Because our default setting is self-centeredness—and we’re usually blind to it. So we act out of selfish ambition and envy...leading to relational chaos. But our connection with Christ gives us an entirely new kind of wisdom: the ability to clearly see our own self-promoting bias and subordinate our own will and desires for the good of others. When we’re driven by this kind of godly wisdom, we’ll begin to experience peace, healing, and progress in our relationships.

MAY 29

“FAITH WORKS IN OUR WAITING”

JAMES 5:7-20

This world is broken, and we feel the pain of this every day. But when we’re trusting in the One who promised to return and restore our broken world, it changes our perspective. We don’t get quickly discouraged. We don’t let life’s disappointments make us bitter against others. Instead, we develop two beautiful attributes: patience and prayerfulness. Life is a marathon; not a sprint...and Jesus empowers us to stay in the race for the long haul. Because of him, it will be well worth the wait.



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SMALL GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

All the materials are available online. Encourage your group members to print and keep in a handy place (in a binder or folder). You can suggest they bring their folders to church on Sundays, so that they can record sermon takeaways in the provided spaces. Encourage everyone to **READ AND REFLECT** on the Scripture passage during the week (before group meeting). They can mark up the printed passage: highlight any verses or words that stand out, circle repeated words or phrases, and write notes in the margins. Each person should write out a key verse or verses that the Holy Spirit has shown them, and use the provided reflection sheets to record their observations. Encourage everyone to use the provided prompts on the reflection sheets, to **PRAY AND PRACTICE** each week. During your group meeting, encourage everyone to share what he or she wrote down. Groups will pray together, and consider specific ways they can practice their faith (as individuals, and as a group).

GROUP FORMAT

- “LET’S GET STARTED” – Choose **ONE** question to begin your group’s discussion. Remind everyone to be brief, so that everyone has a chance to share.
- **READ & REFLECT** – Read the Scripture passage together, then invite group members to share the Scripture verse(s) that they recorded on their reflection sheet, as well as their observations. They can also share their sermon highlight.
- **PRAY** – Each week there will be a specific focus on prayer, in relation to the weekly topic. You can pray together as a group, or consider sub-grouping into smaller groups (such as men and women) for this time, especially for prayers of confession.
- **PRACTICE** – This part will focus on being obedient to what the Holy Spirit has shown you through His Word and prayer. Consider ways you can practice these things, both as an individual and together as a Small Group.

INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTIONS

If you are going through this series on your own, print out the materials (available online) and keep them in a handy place (in a binder or folder). Each week, you will read through the Scripture passage. Feel free to mark up the passage: highlight any verses or words that stand out, circle repeated words or phrases, and write notes in the margins. Using the provided reflection sheet, write out a key verse or verses that the Holy Spirit has shown you, and record any observations. You will also spend time in prayer and practice, using the provided weekly prompts to guide you. We encourage you to share what you are learning, and how your faith is growing increasingly evident in your life with someone else.



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LET'S GET STARTED:

Choose any one of the following questions to begin your discussion.

WEEK 1:

1. Share how you hear and read God's Word, AND put it into action in your day-to-day life.
2. What is the biggest area you struggle with when it comes to living out God's Word?
3. Who is someone you know who clearly has a "living faith?" What stands out about that person?

WEEK 2:

1. Share a trial that you have gone through recently. How have you found joy in the midst?
2. What prevents us from seeing trials as "good and perfect gifts?"
3. How does it encourage you to know that Jesus was well-acquainted with sorrows and suffering?

WEEK 3:

1. What kind of things make you favor one person more than another?
2. In what ways do you struggle with showing favoritism and loving everyone, as God calls us to do?
3. How is God helping you to love others, especially those you have been prejudiced against?

WEEK 4:

1. In what ways do you find it difficult to keep control of the words you say?
2. Do you regularly ask God to help you tame your tongue? Why or why not?
3. What would you want people to remember or say about the words that you speak?

WEEK 5:

1. Who is someone in your life that you consider wise? Why would you call them wise?
2. What kind of bitter envy or selfish ambition do you tend to hold in your heart? What things do you find difficult to let go?
3. Share a time when you reacted unwisely, leading to a relational problem. What valuable lessons did you learn from that situation?

WEEK 6:

1. In what ways does impatience cause you to grumble? What are you doing to remedy this?
2. Powerful praying comes from a deep knowledge of and trust in the promises of God. Which promises of God do you need to take hold of in your life?
3. Is there an area in your life where you have stopped praying because you saw no change or answer; where you need to start praying once again?



FAITH THAT WORKS THE BOOK OF JAMES

WEEK 1: “IF IT DOESN’T WORK, IT’S NOT FAITH”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: JAMES 2:14-26

Faith and Deeds

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless[a]? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”[b] and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

SERMON TAKEAWAYS: Record key takeaways from the sermon message here.

READ: Read the Scripture passage and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight a key verse or verses. Write it out below (or in a journal).

REFLECT: Meditate on the verse(s) you just wrote down. What do you see? Is there an action involved? A command to obey? What is happening in the passage? Also, pay attention to what is going on in you as you read His Word. Is it making you uncomfortable? Challenging you? Ask God to show you why.

PRAY: Express your faith in Jesus through prayer. If you have never confessed your sin and put your faith in the forgiveness that Jesus made available to you by his death on the cross, you can do that now. If this is new to you, ask someone to help you understand the gift of salvation. If you have professed faith in Jesus and his work on the cross, pray that your actions would demonstrate evidence of your faith. Confess any areas where you may have fallen short and ask the Holy Spirit to help you repent. Be specific.

PRACTICE: What step(s) will you take toward imitating Christ more fully? Is he leading you to share the gospel with someone specific? Have you publicly declared your faith through baptism? If not, consider inquiring about the next opportunity. What are areas of your faith that need to be strengthened? What opportunities do you have before you to let your faith show through good deeds? As a group, share and discuss how you can encourage and pray for one another to live out your faith.



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WEEK 2: “FAITH WORKS IN OUR SUFFERING”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: JAMES 1:1-18

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

Trials and Temptations

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. **6** But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7** That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **8** Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. **10** But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. **11** For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **16** Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

SERMON TAKEAWAYS: Record key takeaways from the sermon message here.

READ: Read the Scripture passage and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight a key verse or verses. Write it out.

REFLECT: Meditate on what you just wrote down. What do you see? Is there an action involved? A command to obey? What is happening in the passage? Also, pay attention to what is going on in you as you read His Word. Is it making you uncomfortable? Challenging you? Ask God to show you why.

PRAY: Use the Psalms to connect with the Man who was well acquainted with sorrows and suffering. Try Psalm 16, 30, 143, or any that express your feelings. Tell God that you believe him and trust him in the midst of your pain. Pray for others you know who are suffering.

PRACTICE: Consider how your faith is/can be evident during suffering. What commitments can you resolve to keep, even though you feel like staying away? What is one faith-stretching opportunity where you can say “yes” even though it would be easy to say “no?” If you have experienced joy in suffering, share your story with someone who is struggling this week.



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WEEK 3: "FAITH WORKS IN OUR SOCIAL LIVES"

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: JAMES 2:1-13

Favoritism Forbidden

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. **2** Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. **3** If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," **4** have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? **7** Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"^[a] you are doing right. **9** But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. **11** For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery,"^[b] also said, "You shall not murder."^[c] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, **13** because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

SERMON TAKEAWAYS: Record key takeaways from the sermon message here.

READ: Read the Scripture passage and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight a key verse or verses. Write it out.

REFLECT: Meditate on what you just wrote down, what do you see? Is there an action involved? A command to obey? What is happening in the passage? Also, pay attention to what is going on in you as you read His Word. Is it making you uncomfortable? Challenging you? Ask God to show you why.

PRAY: Ask the Lord to show you where you have been selfish, showing self-serving partiality in the way you treat and think about people. Ask for the Holy Spirit’s help to love and show mercy to all people,, and especially towards the least and poorest in society. As a group, pray for our 12-Mile Bridge ministries:

- Great Falls Center/Servant’s Heart: Pray for the Workmanship Program, that each student will have the perseverance to finish the program, and for great job opportunities after graduation.
- Street Hope Alive: Pray for an indoor space that the kids can walk to as an extension to our street ministry.
- New City Kids: Pray for guidance & wisdom as leadership makes big decisions about how to structure our organization in a way that sets us up for growth.
- Good Shepherd Mission: Pray that the men in recovery will remain clean, accept Christ as their Savior, and with God’s strength defeat their addiction.
- Star of Hope: Pray that the people and resources offered by Star of Hope would be used by God to reach those who have tangible and spiritual needs.
- New Destiny: Pray for their upcoming Juneteenth/Father’s Day event on 6/18 – for good weather and enough volunteers to make it extra special.
- Lighthouse: Pray for bi-lingual volunteers for our Hackensack & Paterson locations.

PRACTICE: Take a closer look at how Jesus treated the poor and the working class in Luke 5:27-31, 14:12-14, 15:1-7. What can you do to follow that model? Ask God to reveal any people (or group of people) you may be guilty of ignoring, and for the Holy Spirit to help you see and love them more clearly as He does. Write down how you can reach out to those people with God’s love. Consider joining the 7-week “Welcoming Justice” group to learn and grow in this area. As a group, consider serving together at the Paterson outreach or attend the next Afghan family dinner.



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WEEK 4: “FAITH WORKS IN OUR SPEECH”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: JAMES 3:1-12

Taming the Tongue

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. **2** We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. **4** Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. **5** Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. **6** The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, **8** but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. **10** Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. **11** Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? **12** My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

SERMON TAKEAWAYS: Record key takeaways from the sermon message here.

READ: Read the Scripture passage and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight a key verse or verses. Write it out.

REFLECT: Meditate on what you just wrote down. What do you see? Is there an action involved? A command to obey? What is happening in the passage? Also, pay attention to what is going on in you as you read His Word. Is it making you uncomfortable? Challenging you? Ask God to show you why.

PRAY: Spend time in prayer, admitting the tongue’s power and our inability to control it. Confess any harsh words you have spoken recently or any gossip that may have caused lost trust or broken relationships. Humbly seek the power of Christ to transform the way you speak.

PRACTICE: What are some situations where you have used your tongue to tear down others? Ask God to reveal someone in your life to whom you might need to apologize. What are some situations where you have used your tongue to build up and encourage others? Ask God to reveal someone in your life who could use some encouragement. Send them a note, email, text, or reach out with a phone call.



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WEEK 5: “FAITH WORKS IN OUR FIGHTS”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: JAMES 3:13-18

Two Kinds of Wisdom

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

SERMON TAKEAWAYS: Record key takeaways from the sermon message here.

READ: Read the Scripture passage and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight a key verse or verses. Write it out.

REFLECT: Meditate on what you just wrote down. What do you see? Is there an action involved? A command to obey? What is happening in the passage? Also, pay attention to what is going on in you as you read His Word. Is it making you uncomfortable? Challenging you? Ask God to show you why.

PRAY: Spend time in silent prayer and confession. Confess any bitter envy or selfish ambition. Pray to be pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

PRACTICE: Once you have confessed your envy, ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with gratitude and contentment in Christ. Keep a list of things you are grateful for this week. Is there someone in your life who has recently experienced success, how will you celebrate and rejoice with them? How can you nurture the people and relationships around you, instead of focusing on your own selfish ambitions?



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WEEK 6: “FAITH WORKS IN OUR WAITING”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: JAMES 5:7-20

Patience in Suffering

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. 9 Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

The Prayer of Faith

13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

SERMON TAKEAWAYS: Record key takeaways from the sermon message here.

READ: Read the Scripture passage and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight a key verse or verses. Write it out.

REFLECT: Meditate on what you just wrote down. What do you see? Is there an action involved? A command to obey? What is happening in the passage? Also, pay attention to what is going on in you as you read His Word. Is it making you uncomfortable? Challenging you? Ask God to show you why.

PRAY: Pray for perseverance; to not grow weary. Pray to be patient with God and with one another. Pray to encourage others, so that they also won't get discouraged. Spend time in silent confession, confessing any sins the Lord reveals. Is there someone you trust and feel comfortable with? If so, consider confessing to them.

PRACTICE: Who is suffering that you could offer compassion and mercy to (both as a group and as individuals)? Is there anyone you know that is wandering from the truth? If so, pray for them and ask that God would use you to help bring them back.
