

A STUDY OF JAMES—PRACTICAL LIVING

LESSON 1

A How-To Book

A. TRIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

1. Danger within the Trials
2. Lack of Endurance

B. PRESENT CHALLENGES

1. Prejudice
2. Improper Speech
3. Leaving God out of Plans
4. Bitterness

C. WHO IS JAMES?

1. Half-brother of Jesus; Jewish
2. Initially lacked faith in Jesus (along with brothers)
3. In the Upper Room praying with the other disciples
4. 1 Corinthians 15:7—Jesus appears to James after His resurrection
5. Became leader of the church at Jerusalem
6. Moderated the church conference in Acts 15:13-21
7. Man of prayer—prayer is one emphasis of his letter
8. Believed to be martyred in 62AD

D. THEME: SPIRITUAL MATURITY

1. There is much allusion to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount throughout James' letter.

D. L. Moody, the great evangelist of the nineteenth century, said that "the hardest thing for God to do was to make a man kind." Jim Cymbala said, "I think he (Moody) was right. Many of us memorize scripture and understand Christian doctrine, but we ruin our witness because we are unkind in our conversations and dealings with other folks. We have an edge, for whatever reason, that makes us and our faith unattractive to the very people who need to be drawn to the Lord."

2. James wrote for the following reasons:

- Personal problems in the lives of the believers
- Problems within the church
- Divisions caused by callous words

HIS CHIEF REASON—SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY!

E. PRESCRIPTION

1. Spiritual Examination—can be both **PAINFUL AND DANGEROUS**
NOT EVERYONE WHO GROWS OLD, GROWS UP!!!

2. Definitions:

- Trials—outward circumstances; conflicts, sufferings, troubles—
encountered by all

- Testing of Your Faith—tested or approved! Used of coins that were genuine and not debased
- Patience—transcends the idea of bearing affliction; it includes the idea of standing fast under pressure, with a staying power that turns adversities into opportunities.
- Perfect—when a believer endures a trial, he or she will be perfect; meaning “having reached the end” (completed the process); complete, meaning whole.
- Wisdom—not necessarily into or how to get out of trouble but rather insight on how to learn from one’s difficulties

“The rod and rebuke give wisdom. But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” (Proverbs 29:15, NKJV)

Not merely info about how to avoid times of testing but instead is a new perspective on trials. This begins with a reverence for Almighty God.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.” (Psalms 111:10, NKJV)

This is a steadfast confidence that God controls all things; guiding them to His good purpose.

- Doubt—to be divided in one’s mind or to debate! This is not a momentary doubt, but a divided allegiance, an uncertainty.

- Double-Minded—literally two souls

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

(Matthew 6:24, NKJV)

One part of a person is set on God and the other is set on the world. The result is constant conflict within.

- Low Man—context here is probably a poor man.
- To Glory—God has exalted persons by allowing them to experience difficulties, for these alone will perfect their character and faith. The rich can also glory when a trial brings them low, because it teaches them that life is short, and that one’s pursuits, their business pursuits, will fade away.