

W@WJames1

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GLAD TO SERVE

James 1:1 *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: greetings. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

This letter from James is a feast of practical wisdom. As we follow his God-given advice, it will help us to transform our life at work each day.

James was the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had shared the family home with our Saviour, seen His behaviour and noted His reactions when things did not go according to plan in the carpentry business. James would have seen no different 'sales character' when Jesus talked with customers: He was always the same at home, in the synagogue and at work (cf [Heb 13:8](#)). So James could draw his instructions from many examples he remembered, as well as Jesus' teaching. It was not just 'what would Jesus do' but 'what did Jesus do'!

Having such a close relationship to the Saviour of the world, you might think that James might show off his family connection. He might have wanted to boast a little, and possibly share some of the inside family stories, so that he would be seen as a 'big man'. But, no! James describes himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite his close relationship with Jesus, he knew that his brother was God in a human body; and was happy to describe himself as a bond-slave. He knew he was owned by his Master (bought by His blood), and so he had no personal rights as he did whatever Jesus commanded.

How many Christians have never learned this. In business and in the church, we like to attract powerful people as patrons, or use family relationships to benefit ourselves. James will speak out strongly against such favouritism ([James 2:1-13](#) and [5:1-6](#)). Wherever it happens in business or the church, proper growth cannot happen - that is, growth that benefits everybody. Yet it is seen so often! It seems that people use their influential friends and family so that they can do well for themselves, without caring what God thinks ... or how He wants to bless everybody. So today is a good day to take stock of our relationships. Are we really content to be bond slaves of our Master - so that His will can be worked out through our lives?

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You that You do not favour anybody because of their background or influential contacts. Help me to see everybody as you do and work with You for the blessing of others, rather than for what I may be able to get from them for myself. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WJames2

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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

James 1:2-3 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

James is very blunt as he writes to Christians who are in trouble, just because they love Jesus. He says that trials/temptations (the same Greek word) will come to us. We don't know when the problems will come, how long they will last, how many or what they will be like; but we can be certain, that every Christian's faith will be tested. Although we may not like it, we must face up to the reality that was also true for Jesus - at some point, the world will hate us like it hated Him (cf [John 15:18-21](#)).

These trials may range from direct Satanic oppression, to persecution by others and fleshly temptations. They may include issues of health, relationships, finance or power; and can either affect us directly or through our community, family or church. In each case, the devil wants us to react in fear, despair, anger or anxiety; listening to his useless solutions to fix the problems. But the Lord is allowing them, so that we may learn to trust Him and to overcome the schemes of the Evil One, including our own inclination to give in to temptation. The Lord permits these things so that we can call on His wisdom, and strength to endure, and ultimately, to overcome as He did.

So, every time such a trial comes, it acts as a test to prove that we are trusting Jesus. Each test that we pass to God's glory, will make us more confident to trust Him when the next test comes. However, like at school, the further we go on in the school of faith, the examinations get harder! Ultimately we look for the Lord's prize when we see Him face to face (cf [James 1:12](#)). In the same way that the eager student is glad of an opportunity of little tests (to check progress) before the big examination, Christians should consider their trials as an opportunity to excel in applying the grace of God, and to prove His faithfulness. Often those challenges will come in the workplace. So watch out for them today, because the Lord is watching to see how well you do.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for trusting me enough to allow trials to come into my life. Please help me to rise to the challenge with your wisdom and strength, and not my own. As I face today's trials, wearing the armour You have provided, please will You fight for me; and enable me to keep standing true to You through the test. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WJames3

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I'VE STARTED, SO I'LL FINISH

James 1:4 *Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Perseverance may sound dull but without it, nothing gets finished. There are enough bright sparks who can have a thousand ideas to start a hundred projects, but without the long term view, nothing is achieved. That is part of the purpose of management, to see the end from the beginning and ensure that there is enough resource and effort applied at each stage. It is a basic military fact - if you go faster than your supply lines, you will not have enough ammunition or food to sustain the army: defeat or retreat are inevitable. In business, those most at risk of failure are those that grow too rapidly, and outstrip their resources. The finance community knows that 'boom' can be as stressful as 'bust', if you are not prepared.

But James is not an MBA tutor in business projections. He is Jesus' brother who does not want to see Christians start well and then give up. He wants them to keep growing in Christ, all the way until they meet him! Opposition (ch [James 1:2-3](#)) may tempt us to give up on Jesus; but on the other hand it may spur us to trust Him for more - and that is what Jesus wants. As in every sport, the tougher the training, the better the level of fitness to handle both the expected and unexpected challenges. The gym work-out will test muscles against the force of weights and resistance. But it cannot be done instantly (or the muscles would tear), however over a period of time, the whole body grows stronger. Neither can Christian maturity happen overnight, it takes time and lots of opposition.

Although we would probably prefer to have an easy life, the Lord allows the trials and tests so that our faith in Jesus can grow stronger. The Andre Crouch song agrees, "If I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know that He could solve them!" Those who have experienced Christ's power to deal with the impossible, will more gladly face an uncertain future and not panic when the next problem comes. Insolvency and redundancy have an answer in Christ: so do restructuring and relocating ... all common in the business cycle. Professionals who face ethical dilemmas, workers accused unfairly and middle management scapegoats are all under immense pressure to give up, panic or (worse still) think up a clever short term solution. But God's hand is in it all. Keep on trusting Him and see how your faith grows; and also stimulates those around you, to seek your Jesus.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Please help me to persist when under pressure and to keep going when I feel like giving up - so that I may keep on referring to You as my wisdom and depending on You as my strength. As I win through in today's tests, please encourage me to risk more for You and Your Gospel, until I see you face to face. In Your Name. Amen.*

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WORKING WISE

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

In our information-rich age, wisdom is in short supply. Information gives us knowledge, but wisdom gives us the ability to choose the right information, and when and how to use it. Some people think that they will become wise with much study, but that only gives them more information. Others try to copy a wise hero or much loved grandparent: they formulate ways of doing things (a set of rules) which sometime work - but cannot make the person wise (just an impersonator or mimic).

Wisdom is about how things and people link together. True wisdom can only come from God. He is the only one who understands how everyone and everything should relate together; and how to make the right thing happen ... every time! So it should be obvious, that if we do not have that understanding, we should ask God to tell us. Almost everybody will pray at some time, but only those who know they belong to Jesus, can have the confidence that He will hear and act on His answer. When God responds to our cry for wisdom, he does so generously: and He doesn't call us 'stupid' for not knowing what to do, nor criticise us for forgetting the answer we received last time. God knows that we cannot manage without Him. As a true Father He is very pleased with His children who admit their limitations and ask for help.

Hard times intensify our need for wisdom, but our pride often insists on creating our own solution ... which will inevitably fail. Instead, when troubles come, we should humbly admit that we do not know what is the best thing to do, and simply ask the Lord. Of course, it is not only about us finding solutions, but, about us being equipped to represent Jesus in a troubled world: everybody needs Him and His wisdom! Indeed every crisis get worse when we fail to ask Him. You may be highly trained with academic and professional qualifications, or experienced by many years in the business, but when you need wisdom today, just ask the Lord: He will make His answer clear. And the more we ask, the more wisdom we get, until that becomes the normal habit of our working (and domestic) life.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I admit that I do not know the best solution, or timing, or way to do things, or how to relate to people so that You are always glorified and others are always blessed. I need Your wisdom so that I can work with you through the troubles to Your praise and Glory. Help me today at work, to refer everything to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WJames5

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TRUSTING AND STABLE

James1:6-8 *But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

When a country, or indeed the world, is rocked by financial instability, the cause is always the same. People have stopped trusting each other. Banks cannot be confident that they will be paid back what has been borrowed, and are nervous about new loan requests. It is just as well that God does not think like that when we pray. But some people think that if they speak to God, asking for His help, they have got to promise to pay Him back; and if they do not match His expectations, then He will never help them again. On that basis, God would help nobody!

When we pray, it is essential that we have confidence in God's desire and ability to answer us. A tight rope walker has to concentrate by looking ahead to the end of the wire. If he looks around or behind him, he will certainly fall off. We can be unstable; by partly believing that the Lord has the answer, but at the same time, looking for other answers, because we do not trust Him fully. When that happens, we can be blown off track very easily.

God answers people who trust Him alone. But He will not give us the wisdom we need unless we believe that He will answer us well, and in time. Doubts may be there, but we exercise faith and refuse to allow them to win. At work today, remember that God knows your staff relationships, market fluctuations, profit margins, and performance targets much better than you do. Whatever the problem (health, relationships, persecution, career prospects or professional standards), God knows the answer. So just stop for a moment, tell Him and fully believe that he will answer you.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Help me to realise that You are Sovereign over everything; and that You want to give me the wisdom to know what to do and when to do it - in a way that will honour You. Help me to trust you and not let my doubts win, so that Your will is achieved in my life today. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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W@WJames6

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WORTHLESS RICHES

James 1:9-11 *The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 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 man will fade away even while he goes about his business. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

Most cultures assume that richer people are wiser, and therefore better; but that was not what Jesus taught. He ranked the poor widow's offering as greater than the larger amount from a rich person (cf [Luke 21:4](#)), and was disappointed with the rich young ruler (cf [Matt 19:16-26](#)). But the early church tended to revert to worldly standards: they would give special honour to important people and fail to respect the poor. James knew that this was wrong, for a number of reasons. All Christians are equal before God, women were not inferior to men, and slaves were not inferior to their masters - in God's eyes (cf [Gal 3:28](#)). That was because every Christian is a sinner saved by the grace of Christ. We are equals as children of God, and God has no favourites.

This passage reminds the poor that they have wonderful riches in heaven because of Jesus, and meanwhile they are seen by Him as His brothers (cf [Heb. 2:11](#)) as well as His servants. Those who are rich are reminded that they are mortal and can take none of their riches with them (cf [Luke 12:20](#)). The wealthy are described as set up to wither under the heat of the sun, like a flower with transient beauty. We have seen it; apply pressure to the financial markets or business sectors, and even the most successful person can be humbled; or ill health can rob him or her of the ability to enjoy what has been gained. Ultimately we come into the world with nothing; and however rich we become, we go out with no material possessions at all ([1 Tim 6:7](#)).

Rather than honour some people more than others, James will recommend (cf [James 2:1-13](#)) that we should give everybody the same great honour - irrespective of their position in society. It should be easy to practice this at work, by taking time to treat cleaners and messengers as you would your boss. If you are in a senior role, then do not despise those who are beneath you; because Your Father does not do so. Indeed, those with a high salary are in the best position to give to those who have need; which is what Jesus did for you. True Christian faith is better seen in generous respect of the poor than arrogantly assuming they are somehow inferior. And the humble Christian should be confident of God's loving provision. If we live today in the light of meeting Jesus soon, it will help us to get these proud attitudes of rank, wealth and status into perspective.

Prayer: *Father God. Please forgive my arrogance, assuming that my position and possessions are my right and due to my wisdom; when they are Your gift and due to Your grace. Help me to practice the same gracious kindness that Jesus had to children, the weak, the poor and the despised - so that I may show that I am a true servant of my Saviour, who gave everything to redeem me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WJames7

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MOTIVATIONAL PROMISES

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Giving-up is easy, but perseverance is difficult. James has already told us that God allows our faith to be tested so that we can develop perseverance ([James 1:3](#)); and that without it, no Christian can grow to maturity ([James 1:4](#)). Now he says that God will bless the person who keeps holding onto Jesus by faith, despite all the trials. Indeed, without enduring the tests, this special blessing cannot be given! A blessing is not just a nice thought, but God's powerful word which promises to do the person good in the future. That future starts when Jesus returns, and He rewards those who have stood firm through the trials because they were trusting in His promises.

The 'crown of life' is best pictured as the laurel garland given to Olympic champions. Its value is not in itself, but in what it represents. Olympic heroes are made by years of exhausting, muscle-aching, mind-focussing self-denial - in order to become the best that they can be. And they do it for the honour and pleasure of their country. Heaven's laurels are awarded after a lifetime of self-sacrifice in honour of the King of heaven - and it is Jesus who personally expresses His pleasure in welcoming home those who have run the race well (cf [2 Tim 4:7-8](#)).

God's training programme for us will include the many difficulties we face at work and in the community, at home and with our finances, and also with our health and even persecution. Yet each trial is designed to enable us to trust Jesus and refuse to retreat. But what motivates the embattled believer to keep holding firm to Christ? There are two great incentives: the inner conviction that we really do love Jesus and we must not let Him down; and the promise of blessing spoken over us, that He will personally reward every faithful Christian with expressions of His pleasure that will last for ever (cf [Ps 16:11](#)). Think about it, and it will shape the way you deal with troubles today!

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. I do not like the trials which you allow to come my way, but I do love You. I want to trust You that each of these testings are for my good, so that I can be to the praise of Your glory. Help me to understand enough of Your purpose in training my faith to be strong, that I will look forward eagerly to the day when you are ready to reward me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WJames8

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TEMPTATION AT WORK

James 1:13-15 *When tempted, no-one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

We love to take the credit when things go well; but we hate to take the blame. Transferring blame onto others is common in every culture. Alas, people often accuse God when they fall into sin. But James says it is quite wrong to say that God makes us sin. God is holy and, by definition, cannot be corrupted by sin nor can He corrupt others. He knows that the world is polluted by evil; but He wants everybody to have the opportunity to be saved (cf [1 Tim 2:3-4](#)), and so He does not wipe us all off the planet. Instead, He sent Jesus into this sinful world to pay for our sin and to enable us to live holy lives, resisting temptation (cf [Titus 2:11-14](#)), to His glory.

This passage helps us to understand the 'mechanics' of sin. Firstly, we have evil desires - even Christians have still got part of their old 'sinful nature' which lusts for what is wrong (cf [Rom 8:5-8](#)). When we allow those strong desires to control us, they will look for an opportunity to be fulfilled - these circumstances allow 'temptation' to call us. When we give in to temptation, we forget Jesus, and allow ourselves to have what we want - that is sin. And if we allow that desire/temptation/sin cycle to become a habit, it kills off our love for Jesus, and leads to a trail of destruction.

Most small children will not misbehave when they are being watched. As we grow up, we learn that we can sin most easily when others are not watching. So we practice bad habits at school and college where parents cannot see; and at work where the church cannot see. The workplace provides many opportunities to sin: when away from home in hotels, travelling alone, in company with non-Christian colleagues. Even our career can feed the greed for greater rewards. Indeed, work can become a god if we let it take top priority over family, worship and appropriate personal leisure. That is one of the reasons that hundreds round the world are reading this today - to ensure that they remember that God has first place, and that the rest of life, including work, must be brought under His authority. So review your ungodly desires and the opportunities to satisfy them. Then open up to God, and another believer for accountability, and prayerfully change your dairy so that you will not become sin's slave.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I am sorry if I ever blame you for the mess I get myself into. Please help me to be realistic about the ease with which my evil desires can be to be tempted in the relative freedom I have at work. Help me to develop healthy accountability relationships, and a more active prayer life to help me to control my ungodly desires. To Your praise and glory. Amen.*

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W@WJames9

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TRICKED OR TRUSTING

James 1:16-18 *Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Every temptation is a confidence trick. Satan shows us opportunities to satisfy our ungodly desires, and tricks us into feeling that it must be ok. Because we want it so much, we brush aside our conscience, refuse to pray about it; and buy the lie. This is as sensible as investing in a bankrupt company. But that was what Adam and Eve did in Genesis ch [3:1-7](#). Satan lured them into doubting that God meant what He said, ([Gen 3:1](#)), then to believe that God was wrong ([Gen 3:4](#)), because He would refuse to give them what was best ([Gen 3:5](#)) ... and so they fell into temptation.

James says that we should make sure that we are not deceived into believing that God won't give us what is good. If that is what we believe, then we will do whatever we can to get it for ourselves! But the truth is: God is an amazingly kind and generous Father. His gifts always perfectly match our need and His desire to be glorified through our lives. God does not respond in a fickle way, as if depending on a mood. God, who is the Creator of light, can never cast a shadow or leave His people in the dark. Indeed, it was through trusting in God's grace and the sacrifice of Jesus that we have been brought out of darkness into His wonderful light (cf [2 Cor 4:6](#), [1 Peter 2:9](#)). God's Word is truth; and when we believe what it says about Jesus - the light is switched on in our hearts and we are reborn ... to become like Him.

So if God is so kind, why do we panic when things go wrong, and take matters into our own hands? There is, of course, a responsibility to act - but that must be at the Lord's command and not ours. How different our working life would be if we were 100% confident that the Lord will work out everything for our good (cf [Rom 8:28](#))? Our response to temptation or any testing would be prayer instead of panic, and quiet confidence instead of confusion (cf [Is 30:15](#)). Yet much of our background and education screams at us that if we don't do something, there will be disaster. Handling things differently takes time and experience, but starts when we believe that God is in control and will give us the best. Praying to accept and rejoice in God's sovereignty is the first step.

Prayer: *Dear Father God. Please forgive me when I think and act as if You are not in control. Help me to believe the truth about Your character and to accept that You will give me what I need so that my life can glorify you. Help me to trust You in this, even when my working life becomes so complicated. Help me to take a step back and see my circumstances in the light of your power and grace. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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W@WJames10

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QUICK TO LISTEN

James 1:19-20 *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

We tend to think that temptation is an inner urge to do the wrong thing. That is a part of the tempter's work, but not all of it. The impulse to lash out in anger is an issue for many Christians. It can even become so much a part of their lifestyle that they no longer need tempting. It becomes a habitual response to things going wrong. It becomes an unthought part of their character (cf [Matt 15:10-20](#)) - but demonstrates what is in their heart. They may start by copying someone who gets their own way by such bullying, or they may have learned that they can win by making others lose an argument. They do not use logic and truth in the context of respect and love - they are verbal bullies who want to grab pole position as others are intimidated by their bad temper.

Someone said that we have two ears and one mouth, so we should be twice as quick to listen as to speak. James would agree. It is difficult to be verbally abusive if you are listening properly! Sensitive listening is a good antidote to angry speaking; because anger has no interest in the other person, it is just a way of justifying self. But more importantly, anger cannot build righteousness into our life: and we are fooling ourselves if we think that we are doing God's will through our anger.

It can be difficult to work with angry people, especially if they are forcing wrong objectives or corrupt business methods onto you. But think, these people are going to be lonely and feel isolated (all angry people lose friends). More than their idea of success, they need somebody to care about them. The first step is to be interested in them and listen to them. Not only are you defusing tension (cf [Prov 15:1](#)), you are starting to act like Jesus - who showed His interest in the socially isolated tax collectors and prostitutes. When you think about it, the angry response is a cover for the empty heart, frustrated ambitions and lonely, friendless life. So rather than be intimidated by them, seek to win them for Jesus. And at the same time, make sure you stop becoming like them!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for Your gentleness towards me, even when I was angry, lonely and lost. Help me to show Your gracious character towards others so that they too may know that You care for them. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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W@WJames11

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RUBBISH DISPOSAL

James 1:21 *Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Recycling is fashionable. Rather than burning rubbish (increasing our greenhouse gasses), or burying it in landfill sites (where it may not degrade for hundreds of years), we are encouraged to recycle it. Many people do that with their moral rubbish too - they think that it will be better next time around. But it never is. Moral filth needs to be recognised for what it is (horribly offensive to God and polluting to us). We need a 'sin-disposal service', and in Christ Jesus that is what we can have. When Jesus died on the cross, he chose to take all our filth onto Himself, and to deal with its power as He was punished for our sin. So when we confess our sin, we can be completely forgiven (cf [1 John 1:9](#)).

Confession is simply admitting our sin to Jesus, who has paid to take it away - never to be seen again (cf [Micah 7:19](#), [Psalm 103:12](#)). The opposite is to accept that our sin is normal and natural. But that would disagree with God who does not want us to swallow Satan's poisonous lies - which leads to separation from God. Instead, God wants us to accept His truth (in the Bible). As we read it, seeds of truth are planted in our hearts. However, these do not grow up automatically to change our lives, we need to agree with them and make room for them to grow, by weeding out the moral filth. If we do not, the rubbish will choke the truth, engulfing us and those around us.

Humility is not often seen in the workplace. The pressure to reach targets encourages arrogance and pride, which become part of our moral filth. So it is counter-cultural to accept what God says, humbly. Others may ridicule you for 'blind faith', or call your trust in Jesus a 'crutch' for weaklings. Endure that kind of talk kindly, because they are wrong. Accepting that God always speaks the truth is wise as well as brave. Wise because salvation only comes through God's Word, which also gives us bravery to live wisely. So get rid of the rubbish, including pride (don't recycle filth); and accept God's Word with the humility of someone who is determined to do what he says!

Prayer: *Father God. Sinfulness is everywhere around me, and so easily clings to me too. Help me to reject its claim over my life by taking it to Jesus, who died so that I can be fully forgiven. And help me to be humble enough to accept that I should do what You say, today at work. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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W@WJames12

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ACTION BRIEFING

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Information is cheap today. The internet is loaded with so much that we cannot even start to digest. There is no shortage of experts or advisors; and plenty of authorities claim to know and teach the truth. So we are trained to be sceptical. We do not believe everything that we hear or read. We certainly do not do everything we are told. It all goes through a selective filter that basically allows us to know more about what we like, while rejecting what we don't like ... and only taking action if it will benefit us or those we want to please. But we think that we are more clever if we know many things, even though we may do none of them.

James says that if we do that with God's Word, the Bible, we are deceiving ourselves. It is one thing to be fooled by a skilled trickster or mesmerised by an conjurer; but to fool yourself is really stupid (cf [Eph 5:15-17](#)). This is how it happens: when we hear the Bible read (or we read it for ourselves) we make a decision whether or not we are going to accept it as a message from God to us. If we decide that it is, then we really ought to do what He says. But some people treat God's Word like other information, and think they are entitled to choose what they will agree to do. James says that is just fooling yourself. The Bible does not offer suggestions but commands; they must be accepted and done.

Work colleagues may accuse us of being hypocrites. A hypocrite is another word for 'actor', and alas some Christians do put on an act at church or with Christian friends. But true character comes through when under pressure. If our faith is an act, the troubles will cause us to fall apart; but if we are reading and doing what God says, the pressure will show the reality of our faith. That will be the true witness that will glorify Christ and make the gospel attractive to others. So choose to be humble so that you can accept that God is right, and that He will help you to do what He has said. The alternative is self-deception that will disappoint everybody.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Please forgive me when I have acted the part of being a believer, without believing that it is my responsibility to do what You say. Help me to change my attitude to Your word and to start to do what You command. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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MIRROR IMAGE

James 1:23-25 *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

God's Word has been likened to many things: seed ([Luke 8:11](#)), a cleansing agent ([John 15:3](#)), gold and honey ([Ps 19:10](#)) and a sword ([Eph 6:17](#)). Now James says that it is also like a mirror. The Bible enables us to see a true reflection of ourselves, not our physical appearance, but the desires of our heart and the habits that form our character; it also enables us to see the blessings that God wants to give us.

The Roman mirrors were a bronze disc with one surface silvered or tinned to produce a reflective surface. They may not have been as good as today's glass-silvered vanity accessories ... and may have needed more careful attention to ensure that the viewer's face was presentable ... but they did their job, if people wanted to know if they were presentable. The purpose of looking in the mirror is to correct what might not be quite right. Black smudges caused by soot or out-of-control hair can be put right. So to look in the mirror without any intention of making any changes is silly. Or to see what needs to be done, and then to be distracted away so that nothing changes, makes mirror-looking a pointless exercise.

Yet even Christians can treat the Bible like that. Their reading may be so cursory that they do not notice anything; or if they do, they have little intention of doing what God says. Some think that God has got a 'good point', but they never get around to taking any action. On the other hand, other Christians are so eager to know how they can improve their relationship with God, that they will study the Word intently; and having found out what God wants then to do, they make the change process a priority.

Self-delusion is so easy (cf [James 1:22](#)) - just stop reading the Bible and you will never know what is wrong until it is too late. But exploring God's Word demands priority time, concentration and the deliberate exclusion of other activities (however good they may appear to be). However, the rewards of a restored relationship with God are freedom from guilt, freedom to live as God intended, and freedom to anticipate the future without fear. The person who lives in freedom is blessed indeed. So today, reflect on this passage of God's Word and decide what you need to change in order to live as a Jesus-person at work - without guilt or purposelessness or fear.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for giving me an objective way of assessing my relationship with you, and seeing if I am 'fit-for-purpose' as a Christian. Help me to give Your Word the priority it deserves, so that I can be the person You have made me to be. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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SIGNS OF SINCERITY

James 1:26-27 *If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

How do you know that a Christian is sincere about their faith and not play-acting? Behaviour at church will not tell you everything. It is possible to say the right jargon words, adopt the body language of sincerity, and yet be a hypocrite. The best places to tell if someone's belief is faithful or fake are at work, in the home and when we are on our own. What comes out of our mouths reflects what is in our hearts (cf [Matthew 15:18-19](#)). The discipline we apply to our tongue reflects what we believe is important. The workplace exposes most hypocrites simply by giving them non-Christian space to open their mouths. But those who are growing in their relationship with Jesus will want to speak so that he will be pleased.

At home, hidden away from the spotlight of fellowship, the way people treat their family members will show how much they value the kindness, compassion and love that the Lord has lavished on them (cf [1 John 3:1](#)). If we cannot care for the disabled, sick, infirm or disadvantaged in our family - how can we say that we value God's love? It may cost us time, energy and money to care for others, but it cost God the life of His own Son to care for us. And how do we honour the Lord when we are on our own? Does the anonymity of the big city give us licence to dishonour God by our behaviour - even if nobody else knows? The regular spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer, of waiting for God's time, service, and giving financially - are largely done secretly. But they help us to keep unpolluted by the world, because our attention is on the Lord and His purposes, rather than on ourselves and our cravings.

This shows us that the workplace is far more than an environment in which we occupy our time, (hopefully) enjoy our work and then get our money. It is the proving ground for our faith. Here, we demonstrate what we believe, by what we say and how we live. And it is important, because in the workplace many will make up their minds about whether they should search for Jesus, by listening to us. As our mouths open, they can see right into our hearts. If they wonder whether God would care for them, they look to see if we care for those close to us. So our out-of-church-life is both worship and witness. When the Christian lives consistently for Christ, He is worshipped and others are drawn to worship Him too.

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. Please help me to see myself as I really am, because others can see it anyway. Help me to exercise the right disciplines over my mouth and private life so that my worship of You will be sincere and infectious to others. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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FAVOURITISM

James 2:1-4 *My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 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," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

Surely, those who believe in the Lord (who submit to Him as their Master) Jesus (who are grateful to Him as their Saviour) Christ (and who accept that He is God's anointed one to bring righteousness) - will want to be like Him. But some Christians don't. They discriminate between those who are like them and those who are not, those who are poor and those who are rich ... and so the list could go on to include race, language, class, ability, culture and many other elements that make up a person's background. But Jesus is not so much interested in where we have come from, but where we are going.

One day, all believers in the Lord Jesus will share in His heaven; we will be completely equal as children of God (cf [Gal 3:28](#)). Nobody will be able to claim their own righteousness - because all have sinned: however we will all share His righteousness, won for us on the cross. There will be no room for nationalistic pride either, because every people-group (marked by language and customs) will be there and nobody will be superior (cf [Rev 5:9](#)). That is how Jesus treated people: the leper, poor widow, paralysed man and prostitute were as welcome as the synagogue elder - as long as they wanted to receive from Him and do what he said. The fact remains: neither wealth nor poverty win Jesus' favour - it is faith, and not funds, that make the difference with Him.

Secular-minded business practice, whether in the markets, trades or professions often depends on winning favour. This may be gained through 'contacts' of the family, school or college relationships - or even through the church. Making rich people feel important is a cultured art with some Christians; as it may 'open the door' for help or money or other favours. In the same way, those despised by the world can be shunned by the church. Why? Jesus did not behave in either way! So, if in any way we may be inclined to favour people who might benefit us, and reject those who are unlikely to help us ... we must repent and then deliberately choose to start treating people like Jesus did. Today is a good day to start, and our workplace is the ideal environment to behave as Jesus did and taught.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank you for the clear examples of how Jesus treated people, although He was criticised for not following the way of the world (or of hypocritical religion). Please help me to see everybody as a person for whom Jesus died - someone who is precious to Him. And help me to turn my back on winning special support from the rich while I ignore the poor. I need Your help to practice the Jesus-lifestyle today at work. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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IT MATTERS WHO YOU TRUST

James 2:5-7 *Listen, my dear brothers: 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? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?* (NIV)

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and Spanish

It is a worldly habit to make friends with rich people in the hope that they will meet your needs. Jesus did not do that, because He was trusting in Father God to provide for Him. Poor people have a special place in God's heart - not because it is evil to be rich (unless wealth is gained by wrong means), or because poverty is good in itself. But the poor know that they cannot help themselves, whereas the rich think that by brains or bullying they can make more money. Such self-confidence has little space for faith to grow, and makes it hard to enter God's kingdom (cf [Mark 10:23-25](#)).

If trusting God is so much more sensible, why do many poor folk want to trust rich people? Have they forgotten that the 'poor in spirit' are best placed to receive the riches of God's kingdom (cf [Matt 5:3](#))? Have they forgotten all the abuse that they have received from the exploitation of rich landowners or factory workers? Have they forgotten that poor people can rarely afford to have their case represented fairly in court? Have they forgotten that some rich people think that they can abuse Christians and get away with it (and so, implicitly, slander God)? These are the four questions that James asks the church, where many were poor, to help them to realise that they are foolish to place their future anywhere else than the hands of God Himself.

The early church needed to wake up. And so do we! Perhaps the global economic downturn will help our faith, as we find that the promises of banks and big businesses are hollow; investments and pensions lose their value and security is shattered. When we can no longer trust what we can see, it is wise to start to trust the promises of God. His supply of love and grace and mercy never runs dry. This revolution in thinking will also affect the way you do business and treat people: it is great training for His kingdom, and your colleagues and customers will also notice the difference. When they do, you can tell them how Jesus has changed your life.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Help me to see the folly of trusting the promises which others can never be sure of keeping, while ignoring Your promises which You always keep. Even though I may have less money or security than others, help me to trust in You to supply my needs this week, and to delight in being welcomed into Your kingdom. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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EQUALITY IS IN THE HEART

James 2:8-9 *If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and Spanish*

What is the difference between right and wrong? Clearly, they are opposites but how are they defined? Who has the right to say what is right and wrong? These have become big questions in our multicultural world. The answer is Jesus, because all power and authority has been given to Him (cf [Matt 28:18](#)). He is the King and Judge. He sets the rules and we are accountable to Him for how we obey them. James knew that Jesus had affirmed God's Word through Moses (cf [Lev 19:18](#)), and saw 'Love your neighbour' as a Kings' command. It is second only to the command to love God wholeheartedly (cf [Matt 22:37-40](#)).

On the other hand, favouritism demands that we love those who can bring advantage to us, while ignoring those who need our help. In the context of this passage, the rich were favoured because of what they might give, and the poor were shunned because they could be a burden on society. But this is a very long way from the royal law. Those who discriminated in favour of the rich had violated the law given through Moses, and the instruction of King Jesus, who is also the Judge!

James knew that Jesus did not just talk about this radical lifestyle, He lived it! However most Christians have not been brought up to think like that. A change is needed: but before our behaviour changes, our hearts must be transformed (cf [Rom 12:1-2](#)). We need God to help us with that, and often the first step is to admit our sin/weakness/failing in this area and tell the Lord that we do not know how to live differently; and then ask Him to show us. If you have other Christians at work, why not discuss this with them and agree to pray for each other to change. It could also be a good topic (based on [James 2:1-13](#)) for a Christian Fellowship meeting at work. So why not make a decision to do something about it?

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. I need to be like You in my attitude to the poor and underprivileged, but I do not know how to change or what to do. I am willing for you to teach me, please show me what I need to do and change my heart so that I may want to do it. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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W@WJames18

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ONE HUNDRED PERCENT

James 2:10-11 *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a law-breaker. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Religion, of whatever flavour, often thinks of varying degrees of right and wrong. Sins may be categorised as either significant or trivial, and even lies can be called 'white' or 'black' depending on their supposed effect on others. But the Bible does not teach that kind of religious thinking. Quite the opposite. Either we love the Lord our God wholeheartedly or we do not: our thoughts, words and deeds are either right or wrong ... there are no shades of grey. This is profoundly disappointing for those religionists who like to aim for a 75-85% 'pass mark' - because only 100%, all the time, is good enough for God (cf [Hab 1:13a](#)). That is why we need to receive the grace of God by trusting in Jesus who died on the cross for all of our sins. You can see the full story at www.crosscheck.org.uk.

James is trying to convince his readers that favouritism is not trivial - it is sin; it is as offensive to God as adultery or murder. To treat other people as inferior, simply because they do not have money (or the class or culture which comes with privilege), is wickedness in God's eyes (cf [James 2:3-4](#)). It is not a little problem to Him, because it shows that we do not understand or appreciate the largeness of His grace or mercy. It reeks of ingratitude, and the arrogance that comes with the self-made person.

Some think that Christianity should be kept for private devotions or for church. But the workplace needs this teaching; especially in a recession when businesses often win or lose because of quality of service. Those who care about all their workforce and customers equally, will do better than those who think that the 'small fry' don't matter. Those who treat people in the Jesus way, will find that they acquire employee and customer loyalty. However, true Christians do not modify their behaviour simply for short term gain; their lifestyle is an integral part of their faith, and looks to an eternal reward. Even if there is no immediate benefit, we should abandon favouritism as a business practice, because God says it is wrong.

Prayer: *Father God. Thank you for not ignoring me when You sent Jesus to earth to die on the cross for my sins. I am grateful to You, and do not want to offend You by choosing favourites and rejecting others. Please help me to treat people like Jesus did, for their blessing, out of obedience and thankfulness to You, for all You have done for me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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THE APPRAISAL

James 2:12-13 *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

James has been telling us that favouritism is not a godly way to behave, and so he now concludes by looking ahead to the time when we have our lifetime's 'appraisal' with Jesus. The message is quite direct. We must remember that we will have to give an account of all our words and actions (cf [Rom 14:12](#)). We should not forget that Jesus came to bring us freedom from sin. Once we have come to Christ, we then ought to obey Him freely out of love and gratitude. If we don't, then we are ungrateful and disobedient; and that leads to bondage - an inability to enjoy the freedom Christ has won for us.

If we fail to be merciful to those who need our care, our judgement of them rebounds on ourselves. This may seem harsh, but it certainly makes the point in such a way that we cannot escape the seriousness of the message. We are expected to treat others as Jesus did, and to speak to them as He did too. Anything less is offensive to God and will bring His judgement on those who dishonour Him.

Most workplaces have a wide variety of people, as workers, customers and clients - and all the people who support the infrastructure such as cleaners, canteen workers, couriers and drivers: and from different culture backgrounds too. Having this teaching from James, let's put it into practice by finding ways to honour those who others might ignore or despise. That should be especially true with other Christians (cf [Gal 6:10](#)) but it must not stop there. Each person is loved by God and Jesus gave His life for every one. So if we honour Him, we should also honour them. Such kindness to a non-Christian may result in their desire to find Jesus too.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I do not like to think about my final 'appraisal' with you one day; but it is important that I do. I know that it will help me to live the kind of life that pleases You. Please help me to seek out people who others despise or ignore; and may my kindness to them be a sign of my gratitude for all you have done for me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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FAITH AT WORK

James 2:14-17 *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Many people claim to have faith, but how do we know if it is real? True faith in Jesus Christ brings salvation (cf [Acts 16:31](#)) from sin's domination and from hell itself. But simply claiming to have faith can be a social convenience or a self delusion, if there is no relationship with Jesus Christ. The difference between the two is not easy to spot at a glance, but eventually the lifestyle reveals the heart. Of course, no Christian is perfect and we are all learning how to trust Jesus so that our life will conform to His, but the 'Jesus lifestyle test' will help us to check our progress.

Looking after the family should be a human instinct. Caring for the needs of others in the Christian family is a mark of godliness. Although some people exploit their relationships for self gain (even demanding money or goods as if it is their right to do so), those who are looking to the Lord simply pray and wait, and trust Him to provide. He uses His children to supply the needs of their brothers and sisters: but first they have to notice the need. Seeing and sympathising should be the start of a practical partnership, not the end. Praying God's blessing is good, but if we are not willing to be part of the answer to our own prayers - what sort of a relationship do we have with the Lord?

In church we can look and sound spiritual, but it is not until we notice our fellow believers outside of the church context, that our faith is seen for what it is (cf [Gal 6:10](#)). God often provides these opportunities for faith-validation in the world of work. There we may find new Christians who struggle to know how to please Jesus, and mature believers who are struggling under many burdens. They may be from a different town, church or ethnic background; but we are all one in Christ Jesus ([Gal 3:28](#)). Although it is wise not to be gullible about those who might exploit circumstances to their own advantage, we must not be indifferent to genuine needs that we see every day, at work. So today, look out for a brother or sister in need.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank you for having brought me into Your family, and for the other Christians who have helped me to grow in Christ and who have helped me practically. As I see other believers, help me to feel compassion for their needs, to pray for them and to be willing to serve them for Your sake. Amen.*

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