

**W@WJames21**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **DYNAMIC FAITH**

**James 2:18-19** *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. (NIV)*

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

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Faith is not just an intellectual concept or an emotional experience. It is a conviction that we can trust God's word about things we cannot see, and therefore live our physical lives in obedience to Him: it is a decision of the will that results in confident action. Although some may suggest that there are two sorts of Christian - the holy thinkers and the practical helpers - it should not be the case. Those who are truly dedicated to holiness of mind, cannot ignore the practical demands to serve the living God. And those who serve with endless patience and self sacrifice need the motivation that they find in the life and teaching of Jesus; so that they desire to do the things that please Him.

It is common for people to say that they believe in God. James says, very provocatively, that even the demons believe in God! Satan knows that he is already doomed, and that the remaining days of his reign of terror are numbered by God (cf [Rev 12:12](#)). If the evil spirits are in awe of God's power, there surely cannot be any sort of tepid belief system for human beings. True faith must result in a conviction of heart, and a determination of will, to obey God's word in a practical way.

A Christian life that just revolves around sung worship, teaching and prayers is defective without living a Jesus-lifestyle of compassionate, sacrificial action towards others. So, where better than the workplace to demonstrate your faith? It may not start with preaching, scripture posters or apologetic debates over coffee; but it should be 'going the extra mile' with those who insult you, comforting the despised, encouraging the disabled and praying for your enemies. A willingness to stoop below your 'rights', is good evidence that you really do follow Jesus; and it will also open people's ears to hear the explanation of why you live that kind of life.

**Prayer:** *Father God. I do believe in You and I am grateful for all that Jesus has done to save me. Please help me to act in such a way that all those around me at work may understand what a good God you are, through observing my compassionate obedience, as well as my stand for truth. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames22**

**Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**TRUST GOD EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS RIDICULOUS**

**James 2:20-22** *You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. (NIV)*

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

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Would you obey God, even if that would ruin everything that you have lived for? Abraham did (cf [Gen 22:1-19](#))! To hold a miracle baby at age 100, and then to agree to sacrifice his life as a young teenager, made no sense at all. Of course, God did not want Abraham to kill his own son. But Isaac represented God's blessing to Abraham after a century of pain and grief; and all his hopes, and the future blessings of God to the world were embedded in that boy. Previously, Abraham had a mixed history of faith in God, and he got some things almost catastrophically wrong - so the command to make an offering of his son to God was a real test.

In the event, just at the last minute, God stopped Abraham, and a ram became the substitute sacrifice: just as 2000 years later, Jesus the Lamb of God became the substitute sacrifice for our sins. But Abraham was not to know that, as father and son walked up the hill to the place of sacrifice (interestingly on the same mount where Jesus was later to die instead of us). Abraham's faith was seen because he accepted what God said, and set out to obey (just as Jesus obeyed Father God). But if he had not climbed the hill with the boy, and prepared the altar, his faith would have been a delusion and not real at all.

The Lord allows our faith in him to be challenged, so that it might be tested and found genuine. Our response to injustice in the workplace and to persecution, will either validate or deny our faith. So too is the Lord's habit of loosening our grip on some things that have become part of our identity: our home, our relationships, our money or our job. The response of faith is to say, "Yes" to God, even though we cannot make any sense of it. Faith always trusts that God is right in what he allows, and faith allows other people and things to be secondary to whatever God may choose.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Even though I do not understand or even see any logic of what You allow, I will accept it and obey because You are God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames23**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **TRUST AND OBEY**

**James 2:23-24** *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. (NIV)*

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

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God tested Abraham, right down to the wire, to see if he was willing to sacrifice his most treasured son. As [Genesis Ch. 22](#) reveals, God never wanted the boy Isaac to be harmed, but wanted to see if Abraham would be obedient and put God first. He wanted to see if Abraham's faith was in what he could see and was precious to him, or in the word of the invisible God. In the end, God provided a substitute sacrifice (a picture of how Jesus would be the substitute sacrifice for us).

We can never get everything right, but the most important thing is to trust that God is right - about everything (especially about our sinfulness and our need of Jesus as our Saviour; cf [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk)) - and do what He tells us in the Bible. Some people are not interested in being in the right with God: others would like to be at peace with Him, but are unwilling to do what He says. But God comes close to those who have the sort of faith in Jesus that is also willing to be obedient (cf [Titus 2:11-14](#)). God makes them right with Himself and calls them His friends.

Perhaps it is time to review your faith. Is it your way of looking good in church, or is it a part of your spiritual DNA, controlling every day at work and home as well. Do you behave differently at church and at work - if so, that indicates that you may agree with God but are not willing to take the necessary action. Or is your Christian faith so authentic that others want to trust the Jesus who has captivated your heart and lifestyle? That is how it should be, so why not ask for God's help to be like that?

**Prayer:** *Lord God. I need to live a lifestyle that is consistent with my faith. That is what I want. Please forgive me for living as a hypocrite, and help me by Your Holy Spirit to repent and welcome You Word, so that I may obey. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WJames24**

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**REAL FAITH GETS ACTIVE**

**James 2:25-26** *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? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (NIV)*

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

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The Bible can make 'good people' feel uncomfortable. Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho, but, despite her immoral lifestyle, she believed what God was going to do. Because she believed, she also acted to protect the spies who had been sent by Joshua, and did not hand them over to the local officials. She risked her life to do that, but her actions demonstrated that she really did believe what God had said to her (you can read the whole story in [Joshua 2:1-20](#), [6:15](#), [6:22-23](#)).

You do not need a good track record of pure living and religious observance to find faith in God - otherwise many would have no hope. Jesus invited despised tax collectors, unclean lepers, foreign women and prostitutes to put their faith in Him. Because faith is a whole-person encounter with Jesus, their actions showed that they believed. Anybody, however immoral or criminal can trust Jesus, and find that they are not only welcomed but also forgiven and cleansed. Their real faith will show itself to have arms and legs as well as a heart and a mouth: people will be amazed what they can do with Jesus.

Although we may not like to be conspicuous as a Christian at work, there will be times when we will either stand up for Jesus, or deny the faith we hold. Sometimes you cannot stay anonymous; the circumstances may demand that you must speak or act so that you are clearly identified with Jesus and Biblical truth. By doing so, you may have to risk your reputation, promotion or even your job. But the Bible says, "*Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained*" ([1 Sam 2:30](#)). So, whenever the Lord allows the test to come - be ready to stand up for Jesus, whatever the cost ... because He will honour you in due time!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Please make me ready to be willing and able to show that I do believe in You, even I risk the disapproval of others. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WJames25**

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**TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE**

**James 3:1-2** *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. (NIV)*

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

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It is reasonable for us to expect a higher standard of motoring skills from a driving instructor, than from somebody who has just started to drive. It is not just a matter of personal integrity, but also the influence the instructor has over the driving habits of many others. Every teacher is accountable for 'doing' as well as 'teaching': if he or she cannot do it themselves, then they will spread danger to others. In this verse, James is pointing to the self-appointed teachers who have a lot to say in the church (cf [Titus 1:10-11](#)). Opening your mouth brings a huge responsibility, if you cannot do it right, don't presume to teach it!

But, as James goes on to say, everybody stumbles. Perfection means perfect control over every part of the body ... and only Jesus has achieved that. So where does that leave those of us who teach God's Word in church or small group, or who have responsibility to teach children or grandchildren? The answer is that if we are given the responsibility, we are accountable for getting it right. That is why parents need as much inspiration from God's Holy Spirit as any preacher on Sunday: also, why those who hear the preacher should be twice as eager to listen, than to presume to know better.

Many readers will teach others in the workplace, either in formal lectures or seminars or as mentors/overseers. Most are not theological tutors but, in addition to their subject (retail, engineering, book-keeping or healthcare) they will also implicitly teach the values that have shaped their character. If you are a Christian, you are responsible and accountable to show the life of Christ in speech, body language and actions. The next 10 verses are going to focus on the things that we say: so today is a good day to remember that Jesus said, "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken" ([Matthew 12:36](#)). James had remembered; so it is important that we do not forget!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. I realise that You know everything, and know what I am going to say before I speak; but please help me to remember the responsibility you have given to me to say what is true and gracious. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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### MIGHTY MIDGETS

**James 3:3-5** *When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 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. 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. (NIV)*

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

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Horse riders can use a variety of bits in the animal's mouth, but the effect of all of them is to provide a means of applying a little pressure on the bare 'bars' or gums of the lower jaw, between the incisors and cheek teeth. That pressure, controlled by reigns, is enough to encourage the horse to turn. The effect is huge compared to the small and sensitive movements of the reigns on the bridle. Likewise, the large turning effect caused by a small rudder is a well known and essential part of ship building and seamanship. In the same way, one small spark is enough to kindle a forest fire and devastate vast areas of countryside.

James uses these three examples of disproportionate effects as metaphors for the action of the tongue. Compared to the size of the human body, the tongue is very small. Like the bit and rudder, it is hidden for most of the time. Like the spark it can start something that is almost impossible to stop. Although it is small, it can make out that it's owner is bigger and better than the truth will allow. At the same time as elevating its master, the tongue can crush other people, making them unable to function. Like the forest fire, one spark of untrue rumour can sweep through whole communities to ruin reputations and leave a legacy of mistrust.

Words, however communicated, are very powerful indeed. They can demonstrate truth or fabricate lies. All businesses, whether trade or profession, service industry or manufacturing, depend on words for everything from advertising to customer relations. Manipulating words, to produce a desired management or sales effect, has become a conjurer's skill, deceiving people into trusting motives that are false and phoney relationships that use people like pawns on a chess board. James would have remembered that Jesus said, "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes', and your 'No', 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" ([Matthew 5:37](#)). If James remembered, let us not forget that our words at work can wreck everything many people's actions can build. That is why we need God's Word to work in us today so that we can turn people to His light.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank you for this reminder that Christians should speak with truth, Christ-like purpose and self-control. To fail in this discipline is to disappoint You and devastate others. Please be my Helper today, so that I may use my words to build truth and expose lies, just as Jesus did. For His great Name's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames27**

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### **TONGUES FROM HELL**

**James 3:5b-6** Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. (NIV)

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

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Hell is the English translation of Gehenna, a place in the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where child sacrifices were offered in the time of Jeremiah (cf [Jer 7:31](#)). In Jesus' day, it was the city rubbish tip which was perpetually alight with a fire ready to engulf the next load of garbage. Jesus Christ used it to illustrate the fate of those who reject Him, a vivid Bible picture of destruction and undying agony. James likens the tongue to a spark that starts in hell.

Corrupted human nature easily uses words to vent malice. They are like demonically inspired sparks which ignite fires to destroy relationships, pervert justice and break down trust: these fires of envy and hate have an appetite to consume whatever is standing in their way. And that is just what Satan intends. His objective is to wreck God's world and His people - preventing them from enjoying what is good and seducing them to invest in evil. But, most of the time, the inflamed and virulent human tongue does his work for him!

Each day at work will have a variety of outcomes. Hopefully, you will be paid! You will be able to meet the needs of others through the goods or services you sell. Your work should also increase the profitability of the company and the country. New products and mutual networks can be developed, and you should be able to enjoy your work too. But there is another set of outcomes that may be more critical - relationships. The way that you talk will affect all who hear. Their course of life, and eternity may be shaped by what they hear you say at work.

**Prayer:** Lord God. Please help me to realise how far my words may go and what a huge effect they may have on the lives of others, as well as myself. Teach me to treat words as precious as gold, never to waste any nor to use them to vent my anger or to destroy others. May my words be known for being pure, kind and honest - so that those who are seeking truth may hear them as a signal that I love You. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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**W@WJames28**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **BEWARE DANGEROUS ANIMALS**

**James 3:7-8** *All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (NIV)*

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

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James has previously likened the tongue to a horse's bit and bridle, a ship's rudder and a fire. Now he says that our mouth can harbour a wild animal that cannot be tamed, with a poisonous bite. That does not flatter any of us, but it is the truth. Although, like wild beasts, our tongues are not always dangerous; they have the potential, to strike unpredictably with deadly venom. The effect of the words may be delayed - like some snake and insect bites - but they can be lethal to relationships. Whole families, churches businesses or civil stability can be ruined by lies, malice and gossip. Be aware and be warned.

The reason that humanity cannot tame the tongue, is that the human nature is as corrupted by sin as its physical body. It is incompetent to regulate itself. Every lion tamer relies on bribing the animal with rewards, but there is a restlessness about the tongue that refuses to be satisfied until it has done its worst. Of course most people are not like that most of the time, but you cannot tell when poisonous words will be injected into somebody. This makes each of us potentially lethal, as we have the ability to kill truth with lies, and relationships with malice and slander.

No business would knowingly employ somebody who could shatter its credibility, cause customers to stay away or produce faulty products or services. Yet everybody in your company/industry/profession is capable of doing just that! And a good track record to date is no guarantee that they might not bring shame and disgrace in the future. But Christians have an advantage, at least they know their terrible potential, and they can appeal to God for His supernatural help in dealing with the menace within. Indeed, the tongue of the Christian ought to be noticeably different from the arguing and complaining of others. It is one way of saying, 'Jesus has saved me, and He can save you too'.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank you that Your Word gives me insight into my own foul mouth; and to understand that Your Holy Spirit longs to motivate me to be different. May I not fall into my old habits of speech, by agreeing to lie, gossip and slander. Please tame me and my tongue, because You are the only One with the moral authority to do so. And may what I say be a good witness to my life in Jesus. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames29**

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**DOUBLE STANDARDS AND QUALITY CONTROL**

**James 3:9-12** *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. (NIV)*

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The mess that our world is in, all started with the forked-tongue of Satan. In pretending to be wise and logical (cf [Gen 3:1-5](#)), he seduced mankind into foolishness that contradicted the Word of God, and corrupted human nature. Alas, the human tongue continues to be capable of double standards. To our shame (well, we ought to be ashamed), we find that our mouths contradict what we, half-heartedly, believe to be true (cf [James 1:5-7](#)). Like wild dogs, curses against our fellows can chase out of our mouths, even after we have sung our praises to God. No wonder that both we, and the watching world, become confused.

The forked tongue belongs to the snake, but such duplicity should never characterise the children of God. It is as unreliable as a rock-spring producing either fresh and salt water according to its mood; fig trees growing olives; or grapevines bearing figs. No farmer could stay in business with such unreliability. Nor should the church. So, a decision to change is essential, along with the perseverance to see it through; because we should not be like that.

Some people think that this is just a matter of will-power. Such determination is necessary, but as the problem is really one of spiritual motivation, we also need to go back to the Lord and ask Him for a clean heart and a right spirit; like David prayed after his moral collapse (cf [Ps 51:7-12](#)). We cannot have clean mouths if our hearts are full of impurity (cf [Matt 15:16-19](#)), any more than pure water can come from a salt-polluted spring - so we need a deep-clean of our hearts, which the Lord will gladly do if we are willing to let Him. Then others will see the difference at work and at home, making us productive (cf [Gal 5:22-26](#)) with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. I am ashamed that my mouth displays the double standards of my heart. I know that I need to be fit-for-purpose, as a child of God and so I ask you to deep-clean my heart and give me the desire and perseverance to be single-minded for You. Help me to pray and practice these disciplines at work today. To Your praise and glory. Amen.*

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**ALL MOUTH**

**James 3:13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (NIV)*

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Some people are known for being 'all mouth'. They talk big but cannot deliver. There may be nothing wrong with their ideas, but they are unable to complete what they start or to produce what they promise. It is one thing to make a good impression at the interview but it is essential to be able to do the job. Some Christians are a bit like that: lots of noise in church or on councils, but when it comes to their lifestyle, you would have difficulty to know that they are believers in Jesus.

James sets a self-test for those who think that they are wise: can you do it?! When the Christians' life does not match their talk, something is wrong - either they are pretending to have a relationship with Jesus when they do not, or they have never learned how to discipline themselves to learn how to live the life of Christ. Wisdom does not come with age, intelligence or being 'street-wise'; it comes with understanding the importance of God being right, and learning how to apply that truth practically each day.

The first mark of wisdom, is the humility to accept that we cannot be right without God; to tell us what is right, and help us to do it. Pride will inevitably lead to foolish choices but wise people are humble. Humble people do not boast about what they can do or think, they are content to quietly get on with each day's work as it comes and rely on the Lord's help to make the right decisions at the right time. People like that are also real assets to any industry or profession. However lowly their job, they will be willing to do it well for Jesus' sake (cf [Eph 6:5-8](#)), and however high their job they will look to the Lord always (cf [1 Chron 16:11](#)). Would your colleagues at work say that you are like that? If not, this prayer may be the first step to get back into line with God's wisdom.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. However much I know, I cannot match your knowledge or your ability to use it rightly in every situation. Please forgive me when I think that I can manage my life without Your wisdom. Help me to reject my pride and to accept your wisdom in all things. Please show me what is right from Your Word and enable me to weigh up each situation rightly by Your Holy Spirit. Help me live this way every day at work so that I may be reliable in my job, and glorifying to You. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames31**

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**INFECTED WITH EVIL**

**James 3:14-15** *But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. (NIV)*

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

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If we do not prepare to live a good life (cf [James 3:13](#)) then we will prepare to do evil; because there is no morally neutral place for our thoughts and ambitions. Every day, not only brings its own rewards, but sets us up for future success or failure. In the same way that germs may incubate before producing the disease, so our covetous discontent fuelled by envy of a colleague or friend becomes a breeding ground for tomorrow's evil. Of course, 'sharp business practice' and greed cannot be sustained indefinitely; it will eventually produce a collapse of business, along with national and global economies.

This lust for more might have worldly commendation through over ambitious sales targets, but Christians should think differently. Whether that consuming desire for more is an individual or corporate obsession, it is important to see where it comes from. The devil has always been trying to stir up discontent. Wherever you see it happening, Satan's fingerprints are all over it. Of course, he hides behind those he has manipulated into doing his dirty work for him, as he did in the Garden of Eden (cf [Gen 3:1-19](#)).

Detecting the source of an outbreak of infection is the first step in any public health investigation. Alas, too often we find that our own hearts have become the primary or secondary hosts for spiritual germs, from which we and many others may be infected. So we must not delude ourselves. Apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, the strongest part of us is our desires. If we keep them away from the Lord, they will try to overcome His control over our lives; and then we will become toxic with an infection of greedy lust, until it overcomes our better reason. So stop and think. Take a check on potentially infected parts of your desire-base, and deny the devil by submitting them to the Lord.

**Prayer:** *Merciful Lord. How I need a spiritual health check, to see where evil infections may be lurking ... waiting until they find opportunity to ruin my life and others' too. Forgive my smug justification for harbouring the bitterness that resents the blessing I see in others; and the calculated thought-steps to securing my own desires. Please work with me to unmask the spiritual infections that I have already contracted, and deal with them as I willingly offer them to you. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**HEART TROUBLE**

**James 3:16** *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (NIV)*

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

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It used to be said in London, that you could wait a long time for a bus, and then three would come together. Likewise, one evil rarely comes without the company of others. The previous verses tell us that all evil has its origin in the Devil, who seeds the world with it ([James 3:14-15](#)). The most dangerous seeds may look innocuous, but are small enough to penetrate the human heart and ferment a desire for evil. The discontent that comes from envying others and the greed to get more, fuelled by selfish ambition - these are a dangerously heady cocktail. Today's verse says that every social disruption and personal wicked action have their source in the inflamed human heart.

So James agrees with Jesus (cf [Matt 15:19](#)) and St Paul (cf [Gal 5:19-21](#)) - the heart that is not satisfied in the love of God will seek its own satisfaction at the expense of personal dignity, self control, shared immorality and public disorder. The world manages to call such things 'adult' and 'mature', useful for business or essential for relaxation: such descriptions are untrue, but they fool most people. Indeed some can hardly imagine a working life without intrigue, backstabbing, half truths and the relentless pursuit of career advantage. But mercifully, God's way is so different. It leads to peace and productivity, instead of sin and spin.

We must not be surprised if we work alongside people whose values are so different from the pattern set by Jesus. We are all conditioned by our appetites and ambitions, but without Christ we have only a limited ability to resist the tidal wave of inner desires. That is why the Christian must not be naive, somehow assuming that everything in the world will make way for righteousness ... it will not. We are in a battle against external spiritual forces of wickedness (cf [Eph 6:10-13](#)); but perhaps the biggest battle is to master our inner desires that are in opposition to the Spirit of God (cf [Gal 5:17](#)). So, before we contribute further to the instability of our working environment and slip into wicked ways, let us review our inner desires and deal with those that are in competition with God's Spirit for the right to have first place. If we do so, everybody will benefit - and God will be glorified.

**Prayer:** *Holy God. I know that You have called me to be holy, like you. Yet I often find that I am unable to control my inner desires. So I need Your help in establishing the necessary disciplines into my life, and for Your sovereignty to reign in my life. I ask it so that I may enjoy Your presence more and that others may see the life of Christ operating in me during the working day For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames33**

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**THE DYNAMICS OF GODLY WISDOM**

**James 3:17-18** *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. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (NIV)*

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

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Worldly wisdom seems to be a cross between common sense and past experience of success, but impregnated by self interest. God's wisdom is very different. Because it comes from His heart it will share His characteristics, the first of which is purity. Although human nature is full of mixed motives, Jesus was consistently set on doing His Father's will. Although He spent time with the immoral social outcasts, there was no hint of pollution that stained His character. God wants Christians to desire to be like Jesus - and work it out in practice.

James gives us a catalogue of qualities to be found in Godly wisdom. It is both a check-list so that we can monitor our spiritual progress, and also a schedule for further spiritual development. You will note that the aggression and the 'couldn't care less' attitude of pride with revenge have no place in the godly man or woman. Some may feign a desire of peace after having bullied others to get their own way: that is not peace-loving, it is manipulation with devilish paw prints (cf [James 3:14-16](#)). But true peacemakers show their desire for peace in their sacrificial submission of their rights to God's will; and God uses that to raise a harvest of right things.

Today's workplace desperately needs men and woman of integrity, from the boardroom to the shop floor. So do the professions and the self employed. At a time when so many business models have been proved to be flawed, and many managers are unable to predict the effects of their actions, there is a new expectation that Christians will know how to do the right thing. If we look to the Lord for His wisdom and strength, we will shine through in a way that may surprise us; but we will provide the relieving lead which our confused colleagues may be longing for.

**Prayer:** *God of purity and love. Please help me to be like you in this confused world. I need Your wisdom and the grace to submit to what You say. Then I will need the courage to do what is right, even if it means sacrificial change for me. May my actions at work demonstrate that I really do want to be holy. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**INTERNAL DISTURBANCE BREAKS OUT**

**James 4:1** *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? (NIV)*

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

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Violence may roam around the world, but it has no part in the kingdom of heaven. Fights are personal struggles between people and will inflict pain and damage. Quarrels start with a complaint and, unless resolved, they can easily erupt into verbal and physical fury. Some people say that it is just human nature; well, it is from corrupted human nature. Jesus, the 'Prince of Peace', who never advised his disciples to fight, was fully human as well as being fully God. However, He never tried to overthrow the oppressive Romans or eliminate the irreligious Gentiles ... quite the opposite. The Romans whipped and crucified Him, and on the cross He asked Father God to forgive his Gentile tormentors.

The problem with aggression is not so much its outcome as its origin. According to James, verbal and physical violence are symptoms of a much bigger problem. They are a reflection of the internal turmoil and conflict inside the heart. Without God to guide and help us, we have to solve problems ourselves: but with neither the wisdom nor the love of God, we find ourselves in conflict with ourselves. The restless and discontented heart is a boiling cauldron of evil. All it needs is a trigger to set it off; exploding over whoever is nearby.

Doctors can only give the right treatment when they have the right diagnosis. While the symptoms may be uncomfortable, it is the root of the problem which needs to be addressed. James tells us that fights and quarrels are just symptoms of a dissatisfied heart at war with itself. However well behavioural therapists try to modify aggression, unless the heart is satisfied, the problem will break out in another way. As we go through this chapter, James will teach us how to change from the inside with the help of God. But for now, at least we can be clear about the source of the problem - a heart that is not yet fully under the mastery of Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:** *Great God of love. Thank You that Jesus came to announce peace, and died to secure peace with God for all who trust in Him. Help me to see myself as I am and to choose to lay aside my own desires when they conflict with Your will for my life. Alert me to the root problem of my frustration at not being able to have life as I choose; give me insight into my great need of Your intervention in my life. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames35**

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**THE ROUTE TO RUIN**

**James 4:2-3** *You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (NIV)*

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

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Disagreements and arguments leading to physical action are all too common. James now explains what is going on from - God's viewpoint. Before there is any hint of anger, a calculated process starts in the 'heart': which is the 'place' where we decide what we want and develop a passion for getting it. Our minds work out a strategy for achieving our goal, but if that does not work out as we expect, then the 'heart' goes into top gear. The wrong instinct of covetousness is so powerful that, when the brakes are off and inhibition is suppressed, human beings are capable of the most dreadful actions: quarrelling, fighting and even killing.

Much of this evil trail can be prevented by asking God's opinion. The best question to ask God is, "Do You want me to have this?" If the answer is "No" then drop it - end of story! But many will not ask God that key question: instead they say, "Please get me what I want." But if the motives are wrong (even if the object of desire is not wrong in itself), God will not open His hand to give it. So the angry and frustrated covetous heart finds a way to grab what God does not give. It is a sad route to wrong acts which have no divine approval and can never bring satisfaction.

How does this trail of motives and events play out at work? Of course, there is nothing wrong in making a fair profit, developing a business, increasing market share or extending the range/quality of professional services. In the same way it may be right to extend a house and decorate it to your taste. But James wants us to hear the danger alarms when getting 'more' becomes an end in itself, and when that is achieved in ways that displease God. Although it is relatively easy to criticise our colleagues, these verses turn the spotlight onto our own responsibility for desiring, deciding and doing. So, why not put your key personal and business goals to God and ask Him if they are right goals for you. If they are not, ask him to help you deal with your internal fire of desire, repent of the wrong desire and ask His wisdom about what you should be doing. If they are right, then ask Him to help you see them as serving Him and others, and not just as personal toys or ego boosters.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. I am glad that You know my thoughts and desires as well as my actions. Help me to see myself as You see me, and to allow You the right to say 'no' to my wrong motives and passions; and help me to deal with those things in my life that can never glorify You, nor satisfy me. Give me wisdom to see how this plays out in my working life, so that I may be a real pleasure to you. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames36**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **EITHER ONE OR THE OTHER**

**James 4:4** *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. (NIV)*

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

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There is an old English saying, "A man is known by the company he keeps". It originated from a 16thC book for marriage preparation, translated from the Swiss author and pastor Bullinger, which was avidly read as a way to understand how to put the Bible's teaching into everyday application. Those we choose as our friends not only influence our thinking, but also show up the values we admire. Either we love what God loves, or love what He hates. There is no middle ground: like in marriage, you are either faithful or unfaithful ... 'half faithful' is actually 'unfaithful'.

The Old Testament often uses adultery as a picture of spiritual unfaithfulness to God. So people who choose to reject a relationship with God in favour of temporary, worldly pleasures, are rejecting the One who loves them - which is a truly hateful thing. No wonder God calls them enemies. Yet James is speaking to Christians (or at least people in the churches who call themselves Christians). It is designed to be a reality check!

Contentment at work is a rare, but blessed thing. Discontent leads to all the arguments and struggles described in [James 4:1-3](#). In order to grab what God has not given, people make friendships with those who can help them, because they share the same greed. Instead of putting God in the centre, human pride rejects His wisdom, rushing with others, to secure its selfish goals. But there is more at stake. Jesus asked the question, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" [Matthew 16:26](#). If that is you, a mark of repentance is a new set of friends.

**Prayer:** *Holy God. Thank you for this reality check. As I see my friends, I see a mirror of myself. Where I am wrong help me to change my goals and surround myself with those people who want to honour You. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames37**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **THE GRACIOUS JEALOUSY OF GOD**

**James 4:5-6** *Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit He caused to live in us longs jealously? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (NIV margin reference)*

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

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Is jealousy good or bad? To be jealous over something or someone that does not belong to you is bad: but it is right for a husband and wife to be jealous over each other. They belong together. It would be quite wrong for anyone to come between them and distract their love. In the same way, God is described in the ten commandments as a 'jealous God' ([Ex 20:5](#)). [Deut 4:24](#) describes him as a 'consuming fire' - burning with jealous desire in love for His own people.

Although this passage has had various translations over time, the thrust of the context is: passion to have what God has not given is foolishly self-destructive (cf [James 4:1-3](#)); and rejecting the love He wants to give, is like adultery (cf [James 4:4](#)). However, Bible history and our own experience show how easily we get trapped by our own sinful nature, which is encouraged by friendship with the world, and giving in to the devil's temptations. So we really do need help.

God promises help to the humble (although He obstructs the way of the proud person). God's grace is amazing, we do not deserve it and we can never earn it or repay it. It is like all the good things that come to the much loved wife. On the other hand, pride struts independently and despises grace, like an adulterer.

Pride is very dangerous in the workplace. It resists God's loving grace, sneers at integrity, and spins a web from which it cannot escape - as the global finance crisis has proved. The humble are rarely seen in pole position, but by God's good grace they will complete all that God has set for them. So, today is a good day to call out to God in humble repentance and receive the grace He is longing to give you.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. I repent of my proud self-assertion that has struggled against Your hand. Help me humbly to accept Your love and authority over my life, that I may benefit from the grace You are longing to pour into me. May my renewed relationship with You also encourage my colleagues and family to seek Your grace. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WJames38**

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**THE POWER OF SUBMISSION**

**James 4:7** *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (NIV)*

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

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Submission is a difficult idea for many, because they think it means defeat. Certainly, when submission is forced, it is most humiliating: but when submission is a voluntary act of service, it is beautiful and strong. 'Submit' is derived from two Latin words that mean to 'put yourself under' somebody else: you choose to agree that a higher authority has the right to tell you what to do. This happens in every employment, agreeing to surgery and making marriage vows (where the submission should be a two-way matter - [Eph 5:21](#)).

Submitting to God is a choice. But it is not demeaning, because verse 6 says that 'God gives grace to the humble'. So, placing ourselves humbly under God's authority also enables us to receive mercy and grace. Because of His burning love towards us (cf [James 4:5](#)), He freely gives so much that we do not deserve and can never earn. Also, He gives us the authority and strength to resist the devil - because in submitting to God, you belong to Him and not to Satan. The Evil One has no right to order you about and at the Name of Jesus, he has to go.

No professional practice or business corporation can function if people do not choose to submit to their superiors (the problems usually come when people act independently). Those who submit to God should also choose to submit to their boss; it is the right thing to do, and a good witness to your Christian faith. And submit even if the boss is unfair (cf [1 Peter 2:18-19](#)) ... the battles we face are not against horrible people but against spiritual wickedness (cf [Eph 6:12](#)). So we can resist Satan's temptations because we have submitted to God's authority: and Satan knows his authority is broken.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Help me to be humble before Your great power and authority, so that I may submit myself to you afresh. Thank you that Your authority is far greater than Satan's, and as I come under Your command, I can resist the devil in Jesus' Name. For His glory's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames39**

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**COMING BACK HOME**

**James 4:8** *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (NIV)*

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

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The sign on a church notice board read, "If you feel far from God, guess who moved?" The answer is not complicated. God does not change at all; if the relationship is to be restored, we need to come back to Him. Jesus' parable of the prodigal son explains it well (cf [Luke 15:11-32](#)). The wild youth wastes his father's assets and ends up with nothing. Reduced to being a labourer on a pig farm, he comes to his senses when he realises that his father's servants are cared for while he is destitute. So he decided to admit his sin and ask for mercy; he will beg just to be a servant in his father's house. The next part of the story is remarkable: the father who loved him had been looking out, waiting for just such a change of mind (the Bible calls it 'repentance'). At the first sign of the son's return, the father ran to meet him and welcomed him home - not as a servant but as a forgiven son.

James states the crux of the story: if you turn to come back to God, He will shorten the distance and speedily come close to you. Of course, if there is no repentance, there can be no reconciliation. The prodigal son had to admit his sin and choose to turn from it. He needed to accept that his lifestyle was offensive (dirty hands) and have a single-minded (pure) heart to seek his father's mercy. There was no place for double-mindedness; either he stayed with the pigs or he came home to father.

You will know if you have a close relationship with God. If you do not, then today's verse is more than an encouragement: it is a command to come back to God. The journey starts with genuine repentance, and practical decisions to turn your back on a wrong lifestyle. God is waiting for that moment. He will come to assure you of His love and forgiveness and help you to make the journey home as a child of God. Only God loves you enough to pay for all the wasted years (it cost the blood of Jesus Christ). And only God can help you make the changes, however difficult that may be. So, are you close to God? If not, then turn around and accept His merciful and gracious help, because He longs for you to be close to Him.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. Thank you for being loving and compassionate towards sinners like me. Convict my heart of the awfulness of my sin, and the wideness of Your mercy though the sacrifice of Jesus. Help me to hear Your command to 'come' and choose to turn my back on old ways that displease You. As I come to You, please keep Your promise and come close to me. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WJames40**

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**POSITIVELY NEGATIVE**

**James 4:9-10** *Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (NIV)*

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

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Until credit runs out, positive thinking sounds very good. But imagining that everything is going well, when it is really a disaster, is very foolish. Many people try to play the same game with God. They think that if they make-believe that they are good people, surely God will be nice to them and let them into His heaven. Wrong. God knows exactly who He will welcome, and it is not the spiritual comen.

The only way to receive God's favour is to admit the truth. Jesus said that when we have done our best we are unprofitable (cf [Luke 17:10](#)), and Isaiah likened our finest efforts to dirty washing (cf [Is 64:6](#)). God does not want us to give a slick boardroom presentation of our successes, but He cherishes every tear we shed over our failure. King David put it like this in [Psalm 51:17](#): *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* And more than that; *God heals the broken hearted, and binds up their wounds* ([Ps 147:3](#)).

The astonishing thing about God is: when your heart is broken because of the realisation of your sin; God mends your heart. When you throw away your pride, He lifts you up. Indeed, it is not until you confess your sin, that Jesus can be your Saviour. But the working world despises weakness, and workers will often despise Jesus Christ crucified, using His Name and His blood as swear words. But there is mercy and grace waiting for all who will humble themselves under God's mighty hand: He will lift them up (cf [1 Pet 5:6](#)). If you have experienced the relief and joy of His mercy for a sinner, you are the best person to tell about Jesus to those who are in despair because of their sin. You can tell them today!

**Prayer:** *Merciful God. It is a relief to know that you do not want me to pretend that I am good, but rather to be sorry for my sin. I confess that I am a sinner, and I need your mercy today. And help me to speak plainly about Jesus to my colleagues who are at their wit's end, and do not know where to turn for help. It is wonderful that you never turn away from those who humble themselves. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

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