

Bible Study



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PO BOX 1207 ■ CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE 37364-1207

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“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 1”

LESSON 1 ■ For week ending July 1, 2023

The 20th book of the New Testament is written by James. It is a great book—a very practical book. It’s an honest account of the struggles between our spirit man and our fleshly man. Let’s see what the book of James can speak into our lives today.

KEY TEXT: *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience,”* (James 1:2,3).

JAMES 1:1-11,

1. **“James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.**
2. **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,”**
 - » James introduces a new concept in this verse.
 - » He instructs us to renew our thinking and to transform our minds (Romans 12:1,2).
 - » Notice that James does not say that our trial would be *joyous*—he simply instructs us to “count it” as joy.
 - » Discuss the process of focusing on the good—when everything seems to be bad (Philippians 4:8).
3. **“knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**
4. **But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”**
 - » The Greek word for *patience* actually means: *cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy: enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting)*.
 - » Again, James is instructing us to renew our minds. Instead of complaining about our trials and tests, James is telling us to patiently endure our hardships and learn to grow from them.
 - » What does God’s Word say is the purpose for our tests and trials? Read Jeremiah 17:10; I Peter 4:12,13.
 - » Our tests and trials reveal what we believe in our heart (Deuteronomy 8:2).
 - » Our hardships help us to grow and mature in our walk with God (Ephesians 4:13).
5. **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”**
 - » Here we find James teaching us to depend on God—rather than our own way of thinking—by asking for God’s wisdom in every decision that we make.
 - » While we may feel weak and inept, James makes it clear that we can *ask of God* without reproach. In other words, we should not hesitate to seek God’s will for every aspect of our lives.
 - » Discuss how taking the time to *ask of God* is a deliberate surrender of our fleshly will and an act of submission to God’s perfect will (Matthew 7:7,8; John 14:21-24).
6. **“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.**
7. **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**
8. **he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”**
 - » The word *doubt* means *to call into question the truth of, to be uncertain or to lack confidence in, distrust*. When we *doubt* God, we are questioning whether what He says is true or not.
 - » One thing is sure: What God says is true! Read Psalm 119:160 and John 14:6. There is no darkness (or gray areas) in God (I John 1:5; Psalm 19:9).
 - » Choosing to believe ourselves rather than God’s Word is a form of *pride*. What does God say about our pride? Read Proverbs 29:23; Galatians 6:3; Proverbs 16:18.
9. **“Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,**
10. **but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.**
11. **For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.”**
 - » It is certain that our flesh will fail us and that one day we will all die (I Corinthians 15:22; II Chronicles 32:7,8). The wise man builds his house upon the Rock (Matthew 7:24-27) , and lays up treasures for himself in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 2”

LESSON 2 ■ For week ending July 8, 2023

Last week James instructed us on how to renew our minds. He told us to *count it all joy* when we find ourselves involved in tests and trials. This week James continues to teach us about how trials evolve in our lives and what we can do to be overcomers. It's time to testify about that great trial you endured—who wants go to first? ☺

KEY TEXT: *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12).

JAMES 1:12-27,

12. ***“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”***
- » The word *blessed* means *supremely blest; by extension fortunate, well off: blessed, happy*.
 - » Most of us would not associate the words *enduring* or *temptation* with the words *fortunate* or *happy*; however, James is again teaching us how to transform our thinking.
 - » The fact is this: temptations are a part of life (I Corinthians 10:13). We must learn how to *endure* and *overcome* temptations—just like Jesus did (Hebrews 4:14-16).
 - » James goes on to tell us how exactly to do that.
13. ***“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”***
- » In other words, God doesn't send you a girlfriend—when you already have a wife.
 - » We must recognize that our temptations originate from our flesh (Romans 12:21). Once we have established that fact, we can learn how to *faithfully endure* our temptations and *become overcomers*.
15. ***“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.”***
- » Be careful what you allow into your mind and heart (Psalm 101:2-4).
 - » While our world is becoming more perverse and wicked, we are not of this world ((John 15:18,19).
 - » Our job is to be a light in the gross darkness that surrounds us (Isaiah 60:1,2).
17. ***“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”***
- » We live in a world where everyone is encouraged to share their thoughts—whether good, bad or ugly—without restraint. This is not what God's Word tell us to do (Proverbs 13:3; ;18:21).
 - » We are to focus on the good things of life (Philippians 4:8). We are instructed not to love the things of this world (I John 2:15).
21. ***“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”***
- » James tells us we have a job to do. WE ARE THE ONES who have to *lay aside* any form of wickedness.
 - » We do this by *putting on* the Lord Jesus every single day (Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 6:10-18).
26. ***“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”***
- » The world is encouraging everyone to *speak their own truth*. James is telling us *to bridle our tongues*.
 - » Read Matthew 25:31-46. Discuss the importance of taking care of the less fortunate amongst us.

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 3”

LESSON 3 ■ For week ending July 15, 2023

We hear a lot about discrimination in our world today. James addressed this same issue some 2,000 years ago. The truth of the matter is that we are instructed to love everyone—including our enemies—the same way that we love ourselves. Can we admit that we are still working on loving EVERYONE—the way that Jesus does?

KEY TEXT: *“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well” (James 2:8).*

JAMES 2:1-13,

1. ***“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”***
 - » Here we find James addressing a form of discrimination in the Early Church. They were showing favor to the wealthy—and disdain for the poor.
 - » What does the word *partiality* mean? The KJV uses the phrase *respect of persons*. *Partiality* literally means *favoritism*.
 - » James clarifies what is happening in verse 4 when he writes, *“and become judges with evil thoughts...”*
 - » Is it our place (as individuals) to judge one another? Read the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-5.
 - » God is the Judge because He can look at an individual’s heart (Hebrews 4:12).
5. ***“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?”***
 - » God’s Word and salvation are open to all. Our job is to share salvation with everyone we come in contact with (Matthew 28:19,20).
 - » It’s not God’s desire that any should perish (II Peter 3:9; John 3:16,17).
8. ***“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; 9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”***
 - » It is not our job to decide who has access to salvation and who does not. James tells us that when we show partiality—or favoritism—we are actually committing a sin.
 - » CONSIDER THIS CHALLENGE: The next time you see someone who is being neglected by society make an effort to acknowledge that person. Ask them if you can pray with them about anything.
 - » God’s Word instructs us to reach out to the hurting and needy. Consider the words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:43-48. Are we permitted to ignore those in need?
 - » Our job is to love one another the same way that Jesus loves us (Matthew 22:37-40).
10. ***“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”***
 - » *Mercy triumphs over judgment*. Aren’t we all glad of that fact? Without mercy, we would all be lost.
 - » The truth is this: We are the beggars, the poor, the unclean. If it wasn’t for the mercy of God—where would we be today?
 - » *Mercy* is forgiving an offender and bestowing compassion upon them. Thank God for mercy!
 - » The Bible tells us emphatically that we will *reap* what we have *sown* (Galatians 6:7,8).
 - » If you want to receive grace and mercy then show grace and mercy to others!

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 4”

LESSON 4 ■ For week ending July 22, 2023

In this lesson James addresses a debate that still rages in God’s Kingdom. Today we will discuss the topic of WORKS. While salvation is a gift, the truth of the matter is this: FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD. We don’t work to get into heaven. We work because we love Jesus and obey His commandments.

KEY TEXT: *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).*

JAMES 2:14-26,

14. ***“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”***
- » James does not waste any time attacking the issue head on. What was the debate? The Early Church was having trouble separating *salvation* from the Old Testament *works of the Law*.
 - » In the Old Testament, if you did not observe and keep the Law, you were disqualified from being part of God’s chosen people (Israel).
 - » God’s Word makes it clear that being born a Jew does not save you anymore (Galatians 6:15,16).
 - » You have to be *born again* in order to be part of God’s Israel today (Romans 9:6-8; Galatians 3:29).
15. ***“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”***
- » The truth of the matter is this: You cannot accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and ask Him to be the Lord of your life without it changing *who you are* and *what you do*.
 - » Jesus tells us emphatically that we will know a tree by its fruits (Matthew 7:17-20).
 - » Notice the association that James makes here with the example of helping those that are naked and hungry. How can we love our fellow man/woman without helping them in their time of need?
18. ***“But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”***
- » Have you ever noticed that the only people that Jesus got angry with were the Pharisees and the Sadducees—the ruling religious faction of the Jewish people?
 - » Why did Jesus get angry? Read Matthew 23:1-6. Because the Jewish Rulers had made the Word of God of no effect with all of their rules and regulations (required works of the flesh). Read Matthew 23:12-25.
 - » When we depend on the works of our flesh, we automatically invite pride and prejudice to abound.
 - » What does God say about our fleshly righteousness (Isaiah 64:6)?
20. ***“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?”***
- » Our flesh would prefer to have a set number of rules to follow (works) rather than choosing to live by faith and trusting in God for salvation and provision. When we believe that our works are saving us, then we are trusting in ourselves and not in God.
 - » Read Ephesians 2:1-9. According to this passage, salvation is a gift from God.
 - » Read Ephesians 2:9 again. When we depend on our works—it’s a proven fact that we WILL BOAST.
26. ***“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”***
- » The biggest “work” that should flow from your relationship with Jesus Christ is love towards your neighbor.
 - » John 13:35, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
 - » The love of God inside of you compels you to help others!

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 5”

LESSON 5 ■ For week ending July 29, 2023

Today's the day. We all knew it would come. You can't discuss the Book of James without talking about our tongues. Have you ever been accused—perhaps wrongfully (LOL)—of having a smart mouth or a sharp tongue? James addresses the issue head on and shows us how to tame our unruly tongues.

KEY TEXT: *“Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires” (James 3:4).*

JAMES 3:1-12,

1. ***“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”***
 - » What is James saying here? He's talking about accountability. While our world is promoting self-promotion, self-absorption, and self-centeredness, the truth is that we are accountable to God for everything we do and say.
 - » The Bible says we will give an account for every idle word (does that include texts???)—read Matthew 12:36. Now, let's be clear: If you confess your sins (including idle words/thoughts/judgments) they are forgiven (Matthew 12:37). It's the unrepentant words and actions that we will be held accountable for.
2. ***“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.”***
 - » James is getting ready to address the issue of the tongue. Notice the examples he gives. Consider the huge freighter ships that are controlled by small rudders.
 - » We do have the power to control our tongues. That power comes from God!
5. ***“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.***
 - » Most of can admit that we have started many a *forest fire* with our words. We've already read the words of Jesus telling us that by our words we are justified or condemned (Matthew 12:37).
 - » It's also important to note that while our words may come from our mouth, the truth is that they originate in our hearts according to Jesus (Luke 6:43-45).
 - » If bitterness, judgment, and negativity are coming out of your mouth consistently, then it's time to check your heart (Hebrews 12:15).
 - » The only way to do away with bitterness and judgments is to forgive those that have trespassed against you (Matthew 6:14,15).
7. ***“For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.”***
 - » Have you ever lost your temper? Have you ever been amazed at what comes out of your mouth sometimes?
 - » The truth is that there is a war taking place inside of us. We have a spiritual man fighting against a fleshly man (Romans 6:12-14). We can read about this conflict in Romans 6,7,8. We have all faced the frustration of reverting to fleshly behaviors—even after we have been saved (Romans 7:15-25; James 3:2)
10. ***“Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”***
 - » Ever wonder why the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism is *speaking in tongues*? It's because we are required to give up control of our tongue (speech, talking, words) and surrender our fleshly will to God's control. Jesus—and the baptism of the Holy Spirit—are the key to controlling your unruly tongue.

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 6”

LESSON 6 ■ For week ending August 5, 2023

In today's lesson, James will address our conduct. The word *conduct* means *the manner in which a person behaves, especially on a particular occasion or in a particular context*. It's time to get personal: What do people say about you? How do you conduct yourself? James will give us much-needed instruction on this important subject.

KEY TEXT: “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:18).

JAMES 3:13-18,

- 13. “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.”**
- » Our world has just emerged from a Covid-19 Pandemic. The pandemic changed everything. It affected all of our lives. It brought sickness, death, loss of jobs, and loss of freedoms to many people.
 - » It also ushered in a season of being unsettled, discontent, and defiant in our world.
 - » We have witnessed the *conduct* of many become increasingly violent, disobedient, and intolerant (II Timothy 3:1-7).
 - » We watch mass shootings, political discord, world wars, and unrelenting violence every night on the news.
 - » James tells us to let our *good conduct* be done in the meekness of wisdom (II Timothy 3:14-17). *Meekness* does not imply *weakness*. *Meekness* implies quiet strength and resolve in the midst of the storm.
- 14. “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.”**
- » As believers, we are not to become part of the darkness that is engrossing our world.
 - » We are not to participate in the lawlessness that prophecy said would abound.
 - » We are not to engage in debates with foolish people (Proverbs 26:4).
 - » Our job is to let our lights shine for Jesus (II Timothy 4:3-5).
- 15. “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.**
- 16. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”**
- » We are hearing the word *inclusion* used a lot today. We are being told that we have to accept people—including their disobedience—and celebrate it as well.
 - » First, let's be clear, we are instructed to love everyone. If Jesus can love us while we were yet sinners, then we can love sinners as well.
 - » You can love someone without condoning their behavior or lifestyle choices. God loves them—so can we!
- 17. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”**
- » Our job is to be peacemakers. With so many discontented people in our society, we are called to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).
 - » When we realize that our job is to love unconditionally, we can accept that we will not be able to change some people. However, we can plant seeds of love and positivity into their lives (Luke 8:11-15).
 - » People are clamoring for love and acceptance. That is at the heart of their cries for inclusion.
 - » The Bible says that they will know we are Christians because of our love.
 - » If Jesus can love and defend the prostitute caught in the very act of adultery then we can love those that are adulterers, drug users, homosexuals, and/or gender-confused.
 - » While they experience rejection and hatred from others, they should experience unconditional love with us (John 3:16,17).
- 18. “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”**
- » Are you known as a *peacemaker* or a *troublemaker* (LOL)? Read Galatians 5:22-25.
 - » With so much conflict and discontent happening all around us, we should be known as the *peacemakers*.
 - » Do you want righteousness to abound in your life? Then become a peacemaker.
 - » Read the words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:9.

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 7”

LESSON 7 ■ For week ending August 12, 2023

In today's lesson, James will address our conduct. The word *conduct* means *the manner in which a person behaves, especially on a particular occasion or in a particular context*. It's time to get personal: What do people say about you? How do you conduct yourself? James will give us much-needed instruction on this important subject.

KEY TEXT: “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:18).

JAMES 4:1-12,

1. **“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”**
 - » Men have been fighting and warring with each other since the very first family ever created (Genesis 4:4-11). Why did Cain kill Abel? James tells us that same desire still abounds some 4,000 years later.
 - » James also addresses the issue of *asking*. God's Word is clear that God wants us to ask Him for help and direction (Matthew 7:7; James 1:5; John 14:13,14).
 - » James also addresses the issue of *how not to ask!*
4. **“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?”**
 - » God does not want us to be like the world. In fact, He tells us to come out of this world (II Cor. 6:17).
 - » God does not call us to seek the world. We are called to seek Him and His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33).
6. **“But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”**
 - » In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He gives us great instructions on how to serve Him and how to live for Him in this sinful world (Matthew 5:1-12).
7. **“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**
 - » This is one of the most famous “half-quoted scriptures” in the Bible. People often say: “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” They completely ignore the first part of the scripture—arguably the most important part of the scripture—thus rendering the *resist the devil* part ineffective.
 - » If you haven't submitted yourself to God, guess what, the devil won't listen to you. You are powerless if you don't submit first (Acts 8:14-24). The only reason the devil will listen to you is because of God being inside of you!
8. **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”**
 - » James is again instructing us to transform our thinking. So often we are waiting for God to *draw near* to us. The fact is: we are the ones who have moved away from God! He promises to never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5,6).
 - » James tells us to clean ourselves up! How? By washing ourselves with God's Word (Ephesians 6:25-27)./ Let God's Word be the authority in your life.
 - » God calls us to be humble. *Humble* means to *bring low our flesh*. John 3:30 puts it this way: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”
11. **“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”**
 - » Again, we find James teaching us to transform our thinking. It is not our place to judge one another (Matthew 7:1-5).

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 8”

LESSON 8 ■ For week ending August 19, 2023

Can we admit that none of us likes to be told what to do (did I just say that out loud?). We convince ourselves that we are in control. We secretly think we know everything. Our lesson today will talk about the fact that we live at the mercy of Yahweh God—the Master and Maker of the Universe. James talks to us about God’s sovereignty and our need for Him in our lives every single day!

KEY TEXT: *“Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” (James 4:15).*

James 4:13-17,

13. “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

- » James makes a very important point that all of us should take heed to: God is the One who knows all and is in control.
- » With this understanding, how should we conduct ourselves (Philippians 1:27)?
- » James also gives us instructions regarding *boasting* and being *arrogant*. James says it is evil.
- » What is the base for all *boasting* and *arrogance*? What does God say about the subject in I Peter 5:5,6?

17. “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

- » Here’s another one of those famous scriptures. The sin of omission.
- » A sin of omission is a sin that is the result of not doing something God’s Word teaches that we should do.
- » In the New Testament, the classic example given by Jesus is the account of the Good Samaritan. After a man had been beaten and left in need of help, the first two men to pass by—a priest and a Levite, both of whom knew better—failed to act. The third man, a Samaritan, stopped to show compassion to the man in need (Luke 10:30-37).
- » Jesus used this example to teach that we are to likewise help those in need. By doing so, He clearly communicated that it is sinful to avoid doing good, just as it is sinful to pursue what is evil.

James 5:1-8,

1. “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.”

- » Most of us would agree that we would like to be rich with the goods of this world. We promise the Lord that we would pay tithes if He lets us win the lottery (you know who you are—LOL!).
- » However, the truth of the matter is this: The riches of this world will not save you, protect you, nor prepare you for the world to come. And, we know that we came into this world with nothing and we will certainly not take anything with us when we leave (I Timothy 6:7-10).

7. “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

- » The word *patient* means *the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset*. We must fully believe that God’s Word is true and His promises are sure!
- » In James 4:15 we are instructed to say, *“If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”* We must adopt that policy in everything that we do. Former Presiding Bishop Samuel Kramer used to always say, “I’ll see you tomorrow—the Lord willing!”

“THE BOOK OF JAMES – Part 9”

LESSON 9 ■ For week ending August 26, 2023

In our last lesson in the Book of James, the author will share some sound, foundational principles that allow the believer to be healed both physically and spiritually. As believers in Christ, we must realize that we need one another. We are part of a body and we cannot function properly without each other. Let's examine what James has to say on the subject.

KEY TEXT: *“And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:15).*

James 5:9-20,

9. ***“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”***
- » Murmuring and grumbling gets on God's nerves (someone had to say it!). Read Numbers 17:10 and then say a prayer of thanksgiving for the Dispensation of Grace that we live in.
12. ***“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.”***
- » As believers, we should be people of honor. We should *do* what we say we *will do*. People should not have to question whether we will honor our word (Matthew 5:37).
13. ***“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”***
- » This is one of the foundational scriptures of the faith/church. If you are sick, come and let the elders of the church pray a prayer of faith over you while anointing you with oil so that you can be healed.
 - » Jesus is our healer! Isaiah 53:5 prophesied that concerning the coming Messiah.
 - » The 3 ½ year ministry of Jesus on this earth established the fact that He is our healer! The Gospels contain many accounts of His healing power (Luke 4:40).
 - » Jesus transferred this same power to us as believers in Mark 16:15-18. The last part of verse 18 says, *“...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*
16. ***“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”***
- » James tells us to counsel with one another. He gives us specific instructions to *confess your trespasses to one another*. What is the purpose of this process? *So that you may be healed*.
 - » The Bible tells us emphatically that there is safety in the multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:4).
 - » God's Word also tells us that He gives gifts to His church (Ephesians 4:7,8) so that His church could be equipped and ready for the work of ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ until we all are complete/mature (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - » If you have a stronghold in your life, talk with your pastor or a counselor. They can help you achieve forgiveness and healing in that area.
17. ***“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”***
- » Never underestimate the power of prayer! Read Philippians 4:13.
19. ***“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”***
- » We can't save people; however, we can plant seeds of hope in their lives. Love people back to God!

"JESUS IS WAITING TO HEAR YOUR TESTIMONY - Part 1"

LESSON 10 ■ For week ending September 2, 2023

I have a favorite scripture in the Bible. It was given to me by Bishop Lavell Craig about 11 years ago. I have it highlighted and circled in my Bible. It's a scripture that has changed my life. I'm gonna share that scripture with you in this series. I believe it will change your life as well. –Bishop David W. Kramer

KEY TEXT: *"But He [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men " (Matthew 16:23).*

1. We live in a world that is changing rapidly.

- » People are discontented with their lives. People are confused. People are angry. Prophecy said this would happen (II Timothy 3:1-9; Isaiah 60:1,2).
- » Covid-19 has turned our world upside down. It has shattered society norms. It has left us all feeling bruised, attacked, and vulnerable. Jesus talked about this as well (Matthew 24:7,8).
- » It's no secret that you and I have an enemy. He is the enemy of our soul.
- » The Bible describes Satan as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He never stops. He never gives up (I Peter 5:8).

2. Can we admit that we as believers have good days and bad days as well?

- » There are days that we wake up and we are victorious. We get up and we pray (Matthew 6:9-13). We eat our bran muffin, do some exercises, and have a good hair day as well (for those of us that still have hair–LOL!).
- » On the good days, we remember to give our burdens to the Lord. We remember to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).
- » We remember that we are in a battle, we're prepared, fired-up, and watching for the enemy (Philippians 4:13). As believers, we recognize that there is a battle going on inside of us (Romans 6:12-14).
- » Our spirit-man/woman is fighting against our fleshly-man/woman (Romans 8:5-11).
- » Our flesh wants it's way—it wants to control us (I Timothy 6:12). Our spirit is always encouraging us to do the right thing, think the right thoughts, and to behave in a Godly manner (Philippians 4:8).

3. But sometimes, we have a bad day. Sometimes we are ambushed.

- » We wake up late. We are running out the door and forget to pray. We replace the bran muffin with a donut. We have "bed hair" and we really don't care—because we're in a hurry.
- » HUMOR: "Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don't!" (Song of Solomon 6:11).
- » One of Satan's best tactics is the ambush. *Ambush* literally means *a surprise attack by people lying in wait in a concealed position*. Satan sneaks up on us in a way that we weren't expecting.
- » Can we admit that people get on our nerves? I heard a saying once that said, "I have one nerve left today and your stepping all over it!" Read James 1:19.

4. Let me encourage you today: God is still God even on your bad days.

- » God is still in control—even when you are weak or being attacked. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us that when we find ourselves being weak, God becomes our strength! Read II Corinthians 11:7-10.
- » One of the people I love the most in the Gospels is the Apostle Peter. To me, he is greatest example of the struggles that you and I face in our lives.
- » The Apostle Peter exemplifies what it means to serve God through the good days and bad days.
- » During the 3 ½ years that he walked with Jesus he had days of great revelation. He was the one who answered Jesus' question in Matthew 16:15b, *"But who do you say that I am?"* Peter answered by saying, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16-20).
- » Peter had bad days as well. One was so bad that Jesus referred to him as Satan (Matthew 16:21-23).
- » FYI: The key text is not my favorite scripture!

“JESUS IS WAITING TO HEAR YOUR TESTIMONY - Part 2”

LESSON 11 ■ For week ending September 9, 2023

Last week I told you I have a favorite scripture in the Bible. I haven't revealed that scripture just yet. This week we are going to continue talking about the Apostle Peter. He is one of the most vivid portrayals of the struggles each of us face in our lives as we fight the battle between our spirit man/woman and our fleshly man/woman. Let's see what Peter is up to today!
—Bishop David W. Kramer

KEY TEXT: *“But He [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men ” (Matthew 16:23).*

Matthew 14:22-33,

22. ***“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary”***
- » The apostles had just spent time with Jesus. They had witnessed Jesus take 5 loaves and 2 fishes and feed the 5,000-plus people. In other words, they had just witnessed a miracle right before their eyes (Matthew 14:13-21). The apostles were having a good day. They were fed and found themselves adrift at sea and a storm was brewing.
25. ***“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear.”***
- » Let's cut the apostles a break. If we saw a figure walking across the water we would be afraid as well!
27. ***“But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”***
28. ***And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”***
- » We see the battle in Peter rearing up again. Jesus identified Himself, but Peter wanted additional proof that it was indeed Him. Sounds like some of us, right? We know what God's Word says, yet we start with our fleeces, questions, and demands for proof. Thank you God for being *longgggggggggsuffering* and patient with us! Read John 14:1.
29. ***“So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.”***
- » All of a sudden Peter was having a good day—or middle of the night—and he stepped out of that boat and began to walk on water. Let's give Peter his props—he believed enough to step out into the choppy sea and walk towards Jesus. However, in the middle of his journey, something changed. Something made him lose his focus (Mark 9:24).
30. ***“But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”***
- » What had changed? Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and started looking around at his circumstances.
 - » Can we admit we have done the same thing? We are walking towards Jesus and we get distracted—an ambush takes place. We stop looking at Jesus and focus on our troubles. That's when we begin to sink.
31. ***“And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”***
- » Notice the word *immediately*. While Peter had taken his eyes off of Jesus, Jesus had never once—not for a second—taken his eyes off of Peter (II Chronicles 16:9).
 - » That's what we need to remember in our time of trials: Jesus is right there! Jesus is our *immediately!*
 - » He's always watching, always ready, never sleeping, never distracted—He's there IMMEDIATELY when we need help (Psalm 46:1).
32. ***“And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”***
- » Next week we will look at the fact that we often find Jesus in the midst of our test and trials.
 - » PS: I still haven't shared my all-time favorite scripture just yet. Stay tuned!

“JESUS IS WAITING TO HEAR YOUR TESTIMONY - Part 3”

LESSON 12 ■ For week ending September 16, 2023

Last week we ended the lesson with Jesus calling Peter’s bluff in the middle of the night. Oftentimes we work very hard to avoid tests and trials. The truth is that it is during our times of testing and trials that we meet Jesus because He IMMEDIATELY comes to our assistance. Let’s talk about tests and trials today.

–Bishop David W. Kramer

KEY TEXT: “...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.” (Daniel 3:17b).

1. It’s not enough to just *know* about Jesus.

- » Have you ever tried to introduce Jesus to someone and they respond, “I already know about Jesus”?
- » What they are actually saying is that they have *heard* about Jesus. They know that He was a man who lived and died some 2,000 years ago in Israel (Matthew 16:13-19).
- » THE TRUTH IS THIS: It’s not enough to just *know* about Jesus. *Knowing* about Jesus won’t save you.
- » The Bible tells us that even the demons *know* about Jesus (James 2:19). Jesus even had to threaten the demons not to tell who He was because they obviously new about Him (Mark 21-27)!

2. I think of the story of the 3 Hebrew Boys (Young Men) in the Old Testament.

- » King Nebuchadnezzar was on a power trip. He was demanding that everyone bow down and worship His image (Daniel 3:4-6). Sort of sounds like what is happening today. Christians are being commanded to bow down and accept things that aren’t Godly. I believe we will face this same scenario in our lifetime (Revelation 13:14,15).
- » Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow down. Sometimes when we make a stand for what is right, we expect things to improve right away. That wasn’t the case in this scenario. When they refused to bow down, the king ordered that the fiery furnace be turned up (Daniel 3:19).
- » Still, the 3 men did not bow down. They were subsequently bound up and thrown into the furnace (Daniel 3:20-23). I love their response to Nebuchadnezzar when he asked them who would deliver them from his hand (Daniel 3:16-18), “...But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

3. The 3 Hebrew Men were having a good day—in the midst of a bad day!

- » Read Daniel 3:24-30. The 3 Hebrew Men met Jesus in the midst of their trial. They walked out of that fiery furnace victorious and received a promotion—of all things! Their example begs the question: Can God trust you in your trial? What will you do in the midst of your test?
- » I will admit that I, like Peter, have asked God for signs and wonders throughout my walk with Him. I have wanted Him to do marvelous things, miracles, and/or financial blessings to prove Who He is. I have wanted Him to supernaturally do things to prove to myself (and others) that He is Who He says He is.
- » I can testify that it was through the greatest trials of my life that I really began to know and fully believe that Jesus has all power and all knowledge. He has proven to me that He will IMMEDIATELY come to my rescue (Psalm 56:13).

4. So, what’s my favorite all-time scripture in the Bible?

- » We’ve talked a lot about the Apostle Peter’s good days and bad days.
- » He was a born-again, Spirit-filled disciple of Jesus—yet he still had days when he didn’t fully believe, or relied on his flesh, or was just plain rebellious (John 18:10,11).
- » Our next lesson will focus on one particularly bad day that Peter had.
- » It was so bad that you and I are still talking about it 2,000 years later.
- » The Apostle Peter found himself discouraged, disappointed, perhaps even confused because everything in his life was falling apart. That’s where my favorite scripture comes in.....»»»»»»»»next week, y’all!!!!

“JESUS IS WAITING TO HEAR YOUR TESTIMONY - Part 4”

LESSON 13 ■ For week ending September 23, 2023

We concluded last week’s lesson by saying that the Apostle Paul was about to have a really bad day. He was a born-again believer/follower/disciple of Jesus Christ who had walked and talked with Him for 3 ½ years; however, he was still human. Peter was still fighting the daily battle between the spirit man and the flesh man. Let’s see what happens.

–Bishop David W. Kramer

KEY TEXT: “*But He [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men ” (Matthew 16:23).*”

1. Throughout this series I have been stressing the importance of realizing that Jesus is always with us and He is there to help you at all times.

- » One of the great things about serving God is that He knows the future. He knows when things will happen. He already knows the end of the thing before it starts. And, He knows everything about us (Psalm 139:1-6).
- » You and I have never done anything that has surprised God. We have never baffled Him, stunned Him, nor caught Him unaware.
- » As we prepare to talk about the Apostle Peter’s infamous bad day, we have to acknowledge that God already knew everything about it—before it ever happened! I know this blows our mind, but it is true (I Corinthians 2:10,11).

2. What was happening to the Apostle Peter?

- » Jesus had observed the Passover with His apostles. He told them that this would be the last time He would do so until the Kingdom of God would come upon the earth in the future (Luke 22:7,8,14-18).
- » The apostles were confused and distraught. Peter had already argued with Jesus about footwashing (John 13:5-10) and their positions in the world to come (Luke 22:24-30).
- » Before they headed to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus has a talk with Peter. Jesus proceeds to tell Peter, “...Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31b).

3. What? You have to be kidding me!

- » Now remember, Simon Peter had just finished celebrating the Passover with Jesus. Jesus had just washed his feet. They had just discussed what would happen in the world to come and how that Peter would sit on a throne as a judge over the 12 Tribes of Israel. I would say that Peter was having a good day!
- » How rapidly things can change! **WE HAVE NOW ARRIVED AT MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE.**
- » It’s found in Luke 22:32. Let’s read it together. I’ll start with verse 31 again, [31] “*And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. [32] But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”*”
- » Before Peter ever denied Jesus, Jesus was already praying for him!

4. Let’s be clear: God can handle your bad day. He knew about it before it ever happened.

- » What I love about this verse is this: Jesus already saw Peter’s infamous bad day and already saw Peter coming out the other side of his trial being victorious and bold (Acts 2:14-16; 3:1,6-8; 19; 4:29-31).
- » Before Peter ever cursed and denied even knowing Jesus—3 times mind you—Jesus already saw him overcoming and sharing his testimony with his brethren.
- » Did you catch that? Jesus was waiting to hear Peter’s testimony!
- » While you may be shocked, discouraged, and disappointed in yourself because of your trial, Jesus already sees you being victorious and He wants you to use your story/testimony to “*strengthen your brethren.*”
- » We can all admit that we draw strength from hearing how God intercedes in the lives of His people—it helps build our strength because of their struggle and how they overcame (even if it looks like a complete disaster at the time).
- » At one of the lowest points in my life I remember thinking: There’s no where to go but up! God’s got you!

“THE POWER OF YOUR STORY”

LESSON 14 ■ For week ending September 30, 2023

We hear this phrase a lot in our society today: “Your Story” (or “My Story”). People are encouraged to tell “their story” to help explain why they are the way they are or do the things they do. There’s nothing new about this concept. God has been telling His followers to *tell their story* for thousands of years. There’s power in your story!

KEY TEXT: “*Then your children will ask, ‘What does this ceremony mean?’ And you will reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord...’*” (Exodus 12:26,27a, NLT).

1. From the beginning of time God has encouraged His followers to tell their story to their children.

- » In fact, this was one of the that reasons God chose Abraham to be one of the fathers of the faith.
- » Read Genesis 18:17-19. It is our job as parents to share with our children about the greatness of God.
- » While our society today is instructing us to let our children decide everything for themselves, that is in direct violation of what God’s Word tells us to do (Deuteronomy 4:9,10).
- » Consider Psalm 78:4, NLT, “*We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders.*”
- » The most effective way of sharing your story (or testimony) is by living your life in such a manner that it brings glory to God (Deuteronomy 11:19-21).
- » As parents, everything that we do is teaching our children by example. More things are caught–then taught!

2. We can also learn from the example of Jesus.

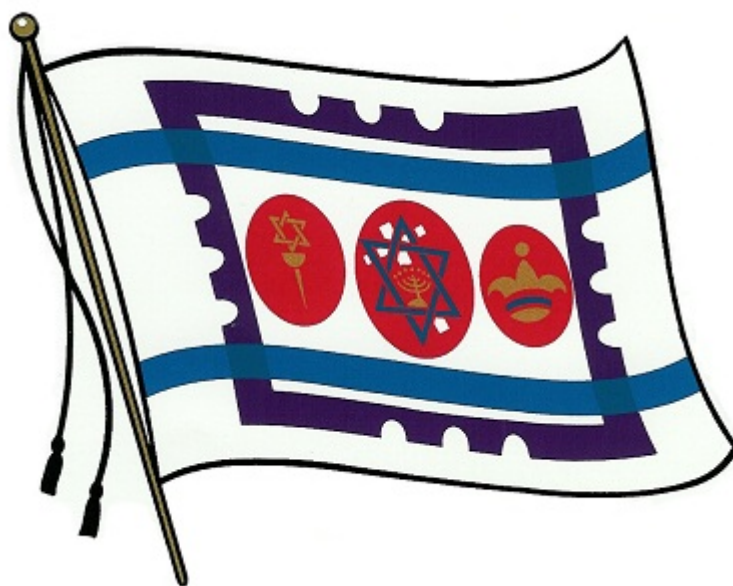
- » We know that Bible prophecy dictated that John the Baptist would be a forerunner of Christ (Malachi 4:5,6).
- » John the Baptist’s ministry began before Jesus’ ministry officially started. In Luke 7, we find the disciples of John the Baptist being sent to observe what was happening with Jesus (Luke 7:18,19).
- » Jesus’ response should speak to us all. Jesus simply told John’s disciples, “*Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard...*” (Luke 7:20-23).
- » This is the power of our story. Consider this famous quote: “*Preach the gospel at all times. And if necessary, use words.*”
- » The way we live our lives, the things we do, the way we interact with others is speaking volumes about what we believe and stand for.
- » Bishop Samuel Kramer used to often say, “I can tell what a man believes by what he does.” This is very accurate. What is your life saying about your beliefs, priorities, and/or interests?

3. I don’t like to speak in public–I’m shy.

- » We live in an amazing time. Technology has advanced to the point that most of us are carrying around smart phones that are actually handheld phones and computers that are accessible 24 hours a day.
- » What does that mean? It means we can all share the Gospel, our Testimony, or Our Story without leaving the couch. As a Christian, we can influence the views of others. We can bring encouragement and spiritual guidance to other people.
- » Also, we can pray for friends and their needs. Hebrews 10:24 25 says “*Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*”
- » We can use social media to post articles about Christian magazines, scriptures, and create engaging content that tells people about God’s love toward humanity. We can share the testimony of people who got saved. If possible, we can use our personal life story as an example of God’s divine love and grace.

4. Did you know that Jesus has a testimony?

- » Revelation 19:10b makes an interesting statement. It says, “*...Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*”
- » This scripture simply means that everything Jesus did was orchestrated by Bible prophecy. We can identify who Jesus is by looking at what He did. What does your testimony say about you?



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**– Jerusalem Acres –
Post Office Box 1207
1826 Dalton Pike, SE
Cleveland, Tennessee 37364-1207, USA
Phone: 423/813-0299**

**Website: thechurchofgodntj.org
Email: thechurchofgodntj.com**