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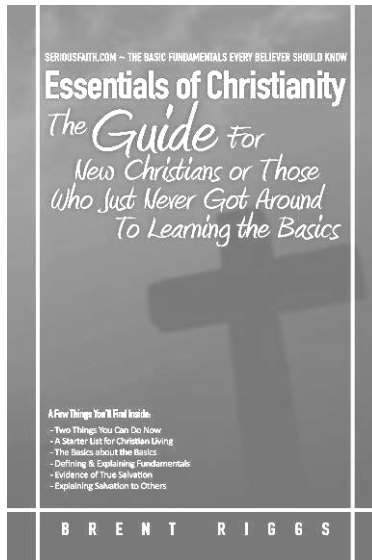
# Essentials of Christianity

*The Guide for  
New Christians or Those  
Who Just Never Got Around  
To Learning the Basics*

## A Few Things You'll Find Inside:

- Two Things You Can Do Now
- A Starter List for Christian Living
- The Basics about the Basics
- Defining & Explaining Fundamentals
- Evidence of True Salvation
- Explaining Salvation to Others

B R E N T R I G G S



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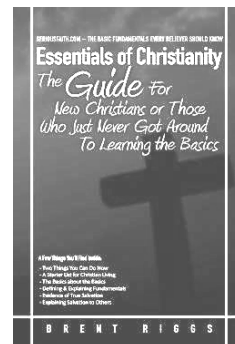
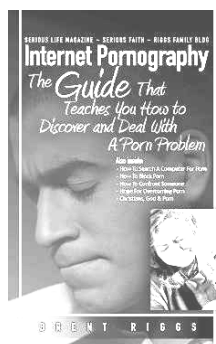
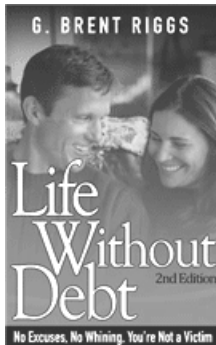
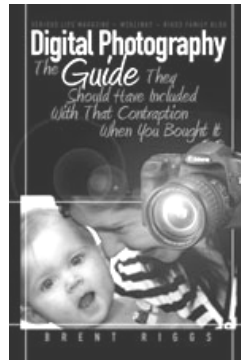
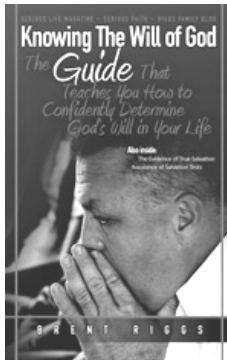
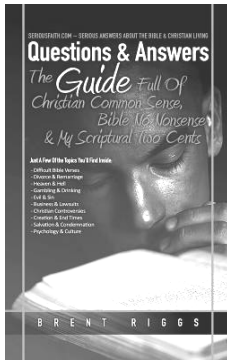
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## Essential Guide for Christians - Volume One

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# What's the point of this book?

A friend called me and told me that a friend of his had just been saved. He asked: "Have you written a book for new Christians, or Christians who have not yet learned some basics?"

I had not.

I had often thought about writing something like this and I grabbed on to his request for some motivation. I decided long ago that I did not want to come up with a bunch of "question and answers," or a list of things a Christian should do or where they should go, or use some of the more fashionable (and marketable) approaches such as your "purpose" or "gifts."

For a couple of decades, I have noticed to my dismay that most Christians, new or not, cannot define the basics of Christianity. They know their job, their sports, their hobbies, and pop culture, but these Christians shrivel when confronted with explaining or defining the most basic of concepts and principles of the very faith they believe saved them from eternal condemnation.

I am not questioning anyone's salvation. The Bible makes no demand that we be able to explain or describe Christian fundamentals beyond the essentials of salvation in order to be saved. We should not require any more knowledge than God has required, though many Christian groups do exactly that.

Once we are saved, we are commanded to study, learn, and defend our faith. The vast majority of Christians never surpass the superficial stage of their personal experience: what has happened to me? how do I feel? There is a desire to focus on pragmatism: what works or does not work to my benefit? Or to cling to a "therapeutic faith": what's in it for me? How can God fix my life? How can Jesus bless me?

I decided that the best way to teach the essentials of Christianity to new, spiritually immature, or Biblically uneducated Christians would be to:

- Provide some basic education about the basics;
- Explain, define, and illustrate a list of the foundational Christian concepts; and...
- Give a "starter list" of some behavior, attitudes, and practices you should be developing as part of the basic Christian life.

This book is intended to be a STARTING POINT for new Christians, or Christians who have never learned the basics. However incomplete this little guide may be, it certainly can provide a good foundation to begin with; and, regrettably, it contains more than the average professing Christian knows today.





Please feel free to contact me if you have other questions or would like something else explained. I will put it in future volumes.

## A Note to Seasoned Mature Christians

It is not my intent nor is it even possible to fully illustrate, define, or explain the topics and questions I touch on in this small guide. It is even more impossible (if that's possible) to touch on all the points of liberty, differences in doctrine, or denominational nuances of such broad and deep concepts.

**This is a STARTER GUIDE.**

If you want to go deeper with a new Christian, then by all means, disciple them. This is not meant to be a 100,000-page exhaustive explanation of Christianity, so I trust you'll not expect it to be.

I realize that no Christian writer will ever write anything that all Christian groups agree with. It is my intention with this book to stick to basics and essentials we all pretty much agree on in the realm of basic Christianity.

If you find one of my sections lacking in your opinion (or perhaps you actually disagree), I trust you will mentor new Christians and explain your differences, rather than tossing this book in the trash because you are not in 100% agreement with every word on these pages.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Riggs". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of "Brent" and "Riggs" being large and prominent. There is a slight shadow effect behind the text.

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# First Things First

Getting started as a new Christian begins with two very basic adjustments to your life. Given today's world of self-improvement and "success" teaching, you may have hoped for a dynamic list of guaranteed secrets that would instantly transform you into the world's best Christian but there is no such list (and if someone tells you there is, run!).

Read your Bible and pray. That's the first thing you need to add to your life. Read your Bible and pray.

## Read Your Bible

The Bible is called "God's Word." Why? Because God Himself wrote it by inspiring men to pen the exact message He has for us. Think about that. The Creator of the Universe, the One True Eternal Father in Heaven, wrote a book and you have it sitting in front of you. Can you think of anything more valuable to read? Anything more perfect? Anything more worthy of your time and dedication? Consider what God Himself says about His Word:

He has given us ALL things we need to know in order to live a happy, healthy, fulfilled and Godly life:

2 Peter 1:3 ~as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,(NKJV; emphasis mine)

The Bible contains everything we need to be instructed, corrected, directed, and mature in our Christian life:

2 Timothy 3:16 ~All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,(NKJV; emphasis mine)

## Pray

Simply defined, Prayer is communication with God. You might talk out loud to God in prayer, or talk silently to Him - He is always listening. To have a relationship with someone, you have to talk to them and listen to them. God does not speak audibly to us but He does communicate to us through His Spirit and through His Written Word. You will learn more about this as you grow in your Christian life.

Talk to God. Tell Him your needs and troubles. Express your love to Him. Praise Him by declaring His majesty, power, and awesomeness. As a new Christian, these are the first two things you can begin to do TODAY. Without these two, the rest of what you do as a Christian is greatly diminished if not altogether futile.

# A Starting Point

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This section gives you a list of characteristics that identify the Christian life. It is a lifelong process to grow each of these in your life.

This section is meant to help you get started learning the kind of character, attitudes, motives, and behaviors that glorify God and show Him your love in return for the gift of salvation He freely gave you.

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# A Starter List of Christian Living

Some of the most common questions new Christians ask are:

- How should I act?
- What does the Christian life look like?
- How do I live like a Christian?

First, Christianity is not a checklist. It's a relationship with God. When we are saved we become new people, interested in living GOD'S WAY instead of OUR WAY.

To get you started, let's look at some characteristics that God wants to see in our lives... characteristics that not only glorify God but allow us to live the most God-pleasing life possible.

I will not go in depth on these characteristics. Each of them could easily fill a series of books. I am trying to point you in the right direction as you embark on the exciting and extraordinary Christian life. Please take the time to read the noted Bible passages to hear directly from God about these characteristics.

*Research for verses in this section were done with New Nave's, Swanson, J., & Nave, O. New Nave's. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1994.*

## Love

If there is a single hallmark of the Christian, it is love. We love people. We love those who love us; but unlike the world, we love those who hate us too. Why? Because we understand they are lost sinners bound for hell. We love them because we were once sinners and God reached down and saved us.

Our lives are marked by love. Love for others, love for life, love for God. We think in terms of love. We act in the ways of love. We filter our thoughts, attitudes, and motives through love.

The identifying trait of your Christian life should be love regardless of circumstances.

Prov. 10:12; Prov. 17:9; Matt. 5:23, 24; Matt. 6:14, 15; Matt. 7:1–5 Luke 6:37–42. Matt. 18:21–35; Luke 6:36, 37; Luke 17:3, 4; John 7:24; Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 10:28–33; 1 Cor. 13:1–13; 1 Cor. 16:14; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13, 14; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Jas. 2:13; Jas. 4:11, 12; 1 Pet. 3:9; 1 Pet. 4:8.

## Discipline

Before you were saved, you sought only to please yourself. Even in doing things for others, there was always an aspect of how it benefitted us. Think about it... you will see it's true if you look hard enough.

As a Christian, your life is now about pleasing God, not yourself. This is the essence of discipline. Do what God wants, not what you want, even if you do not feel like it.

1Ti 4:7; Ro 13:14; 1Co 9:24-27; Eph 4:23-24; Php 3:12-14; Col 3:12; 2Ti 1:7; Heb 5:14; 12:1; Ps 119:9-11; 2Ti 3:16-17; Titus 2:12; Ro 5:3-5; 2Co 10:5; Ro 12:3; Eph 4:23.

## Service

The Christian life is highlighted by serving others. We look for opportunities to serve. We use service to show our love for others. We think of others before ourselves. After being saved, our focus shifts from how we can serve our own selfish desires to how we can bless others by serving them (and thereby glorifying God).

Ga 5:13; 1Pe 5:2; Matt 20:24-28.

## Integrity

You can identify the world by their dishonesty, deceit, and lack of integrity (the ends justify the means . . . get yours by whatever means).

As a Christian, you cannot ask people to believe what you say about Jesus if they cannot believe what you say about everything else.

Integrity, honesty, and fairness are a MUST for Christians to have an effective influence on the world around them.

Mark 10:19; Luke 3:12, 13; Luke 6:31 Matt. 7:12. Acts 24:16; 2 Cor. 4:1, 2; 2 Cor. 7:2; 2 Cor. 8:21; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:22; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 2:12.

## Seriousness

The world is full of silliness and nonsense. Sadly, much of Christianity today is too as we abandon serious Bible teaching and commitment.

Christians are to be serious about their faith and dedication to God. We should avoid fads, sensationalism, and seeking the latest experience that is sweeping through Christianity.

Being serious does not mean we cannot have fun, smile, be positive, and enjoy life. Being serious means we reject the trivial, the shallow, and the un-Biblical experiences that immature Christians think will make them "more spiritual." They are easy to spot: just look for the latest or most popular Christian fads.

Rom. 12:3, 17; 2 Cor. 8:21; Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:2; Tit. 2:6, 12; 1 Pet. 4:7.

## Kindness

Have you ever thought about being known as "kind person"? I am sure you did nice things for others before being saved, but was kindness a hallmark of your life? Probably not. Do not feel bad... it is hard to be kind when you are a slave to sin.

As a Christian, kindness becomes a way of life. You look for ways to be kind. You HOPE for opportunities to be kind. Kindness becomes such a satisfying reward that you would rather give kindness than get it.

If you are not used to being kind, do not worry, just start doing it. God will present you with all the opportunities for kindness that you can handle. You will love it.

Matt. 25:34–36; Luke 6:34, 35; Acts 20:35; Rom. 12:15; Rom. 15:1, 2, 5; 1 Cor. 13:4–7; Gal. 6:1, 2, 10; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12, 14; 1 Tim. 5:9, 10; Heb. 5:2; 1 Pet. 3:8 v. 9.; 1 Pet. 4:8; 2 Pet. 1:7; 1 John 3:17, 18.

## Humility

Humility is the ability to have the right perspective about yourself. Now that you are saved, you realize the hopeless situation that you were in. A lost sinner, prideful, self-focused... and God still loved you and saved you. That is humbling.

With your new understanding of human nature, an attitude of humility is appropriate. You are no better than anyone else who needs God just as much as you did.

Humility puts others before us. Humility makes us gracious and patient. Humility makes us compassionate towards others.

Rom. 11:18, 20, 25; Rom. 12:3, 10, 16; 1 Cor. 1:28, 29; 1 Cor. 2:1–3; 1 Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 10:12; 1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Cor. 11:30; 2 Cor. 12:5–12; Gal. 5:26; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 4:2; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3–11; Col. 3:12; Jas. 1:9, 10, 19; Jas. 3:1; Jas. 4:6, 10; 1 Pet. 5:3, 5, 6.

## Generosity

If you were like most people, before being saved, you were not exactly sacrificially giving what you had to others. Generosity in giving is a BLESSING as a Christian because you get to sit back and watch God pour out His blessings on your gifts.



Learn to be very generous to others. A common Christian saying is "you can't out-give God." This 100% true. You will never go wrong by being generous with your time and money. God will always bless it. Trust me. Give it a try.

Matt. 5:42; 19:21; Luke 12:33; 2 Cor. 9:5–7; Gal. 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:18; Heb. 13:16; Matt. 6:1–4; Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7. 1 John 3:17.

## Study

As I mentioned earlier in this guide, a Christian should know about Christianity just like any person knows about their job or profession. Think of how ludicrous it is to claim to be something and know little to nothing about it.

Study the Bible. God has written down everything you need to know to live a happy, healthy, and fulfilled life. He has written everything you need to know about pleasing Him.

The more you study the Bible, the more you will discover just how endless God's wisdom is. Learn about God. Know your faith. Study God's Word.

2 Timothy 2:15: Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.(NKJV; emphasis mine)

Acts 17:11: These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.(NKJV; emphasis mine)

## Prayer

Can you imagine marrying your spouse then rarely if ever talking or listening to them? How about ignoring your boss even though they are requesting a meeting with you every day?

As a Christian, we talk to God. We call that prayer.

God is your Father. He wants to hear from you. He wants you to listen to Him.

Mt 7:7; Php 4:6; Ps 73:28; Heb 10:22; Joh 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23,24; Mt 21:22; Jas 1:6; 1Th 5:17; Php 4:6; Heb 4:16; Php 4:6; Col 4:2.

## Worship

Americans (and the West) have kind of lost the concept of worship because it involves subordinating yourself and elevating another. We are far too dignified and prideful to bow down to someone else.

Christians realize how far beyond us God is in power, majesty, and holiness. For this reason, we worship Him. We elevate Him and lower ourselves in submission.

Your Christian life should now involve both private worship, and public worship with other Believers.

Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8; Acts 10:26; 14:15; Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:8.

## Discernment

Finally, the art of discernment is extremely important. Simply put, discernment is the ability to recognize what is right and what is wrong... what is truth and what is not. This ability is grounded in your knowledge of God's Word, coupled with asking God for wisdom which He promises to freely give.

Discernment is in severely short supply today. That is why there is so much shallowness and silliness making the rounds in Christianity. Become a discerning Christian and you will be able to lead many people to truth and seriousness in their faith.

Philippians 1:9: And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, (NKJV; emphasis mine).

# Knowing the Basics

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There are fundamental Biblical truths about Christianity that all Believers should be knowledgeable of.

You know your job, your hobbies, your interests... how much more should you know the faith that has given you eternal life?

In this section, I will present a handful of the most basic Truths of Christianity.

---

# Some Basics

## About the Basics

If you pursued a career in football, you would be expected to know the basics: the football, the field, the rules, the flow of the game, the positions, and the definitions of football terms.



If you wanted to be a doctor, you would have to understand the basics about physiology, medicine, pharmacy, treatment, as well as learn a long (long!) list of terms.

Imagine a practicing doctor who knows next to nothing about medicine. Image a football player who can't even tell you the rules. Hard to imagine, isn't it? We would doubt their commitment or dedication to either. And yet, we find this very thing to be true for most Christians. Vast majorities of Christians cannot define the most foundational terms, cannot explain the most basic of concepts, and as such are not able live out their Christianity with any more effectiveness than a doctor who knows nothing about physiology.

Does that mean as a new Christian you have to become a theologian? Absolutely not. Do we require a cashier to get an MBA? Do we expect a car mechanic to be a mechanical engineer? Do we demand a landscaper have a doctorate in horticulture before they can be good at their job? Of course not. But it is a reasonable and logical expectation that they put in the effort to educate themselves about their professions to the degree necessary to be effective, committed, and serious. Why should it be any different with the most important profession in the universe: professing that Jesus Christ saved me from my sins and has given me eternal life.

Shouldn't you be able to answer "why did God have Jesus die on the cross?" just like a mechanic should be able to answer "why do I need good tires?" Shouldn't a Christian be able to define "what is redemption?" just like a doctor should be able to define "what is arthritis?"

You get the point... so as you continue through this book, keep in mind that you need to learn what Christianity is, and be able to converse about it, just as much as you need to be able to communicate effectively about your job or hobby.

Christian is WHO you are... be able to explain it. Christianity is what you profess THE TRUTH... be able to define it. Christ is the person who saved you... be ready to communicate that truth to others.

# God

There is ONE true and living God. No others. God created man (and all that we know as this universe) and has revealed Himself to us. He is not the God of other religions such as Islam or Mormonism. He is Love and Judgment. He is Father and Judge. God is beyond man's ability to comprehend, while also being totally personal to each of us.

All that God declares is perfect by default even if we do not understand it. His ways are perfect, His plans are perfect, His timing is perfect.

God will ultimately have HIS WAY in all things regardless of human cooperation or agreement. His WILL cannot be foiled. God the Father is the architect of all things pertaining to human existence.

1. God is self-existent (*was not created; God is eternal*). Exod. 3:13-14
2. God is self-sufficient (He needs nothing outside of Himself). Ps. 50:10-12
3. God is eternal. Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:2
4. God is infinite. 1 Kings 8:22-27; Jer. 23:24
5. God is omnipresent (present in all places and time always). Ps. 139:7-12
6. God is omnipotent (all powerful, limitless). Gen. 18:14; Rev. 19:6
7. God is omniscient (knows all about all). Ps. 139:2-6; Isa. 40:13-14
8. God is wise. Prov. 3:19; 1 Tim. 1:17
9. God is immutable (unchanging and unchangeable). Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8
10. God is sovereign (first, overall, in total control). Isa. 46:9-11
11. God is incomprehensible (beyond man's understanding). Job 11:7-19; Rom. 11:33
12. God is holy. Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:15
13. God is righteous and just. Ps. 119:137
14. God is true. John 17:3; Titus 1:1-2
15. God is faithful. Deut. 7:9; Ps. 89:1-2
16. God is light. James 1:17; 1 John 1:5
17. God is good. Ps. 107:8
18. God is merciful. Ps. 103:8-17
19. God is gracious. Ps. 111:4; 1 Pet. 5:10
20. God is love. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8
21. God is spirit. John 4:24
22. God is one. Deut. 6:4-5; Isa. 44:6-8
23. God is a Trinity (*three distinct persons yet one person*). Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14

*This list is from Willmington, H. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, (1987). The explanations in parentheses are mine - Brent.*

# Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Son of God. The entire plan of salvation centers on Him. Jesus was fully God and fully man, though we cannot comprehend this. He experienced all the temptations of life including a brutal and unfair death, yet He never sinned.

God's holy justice demands that sin be punished and Jesus gave Himself willingly to be put to death and punished in our place so God could wipe our sin record clean.

Every book of the Bible reveals Christ. All things about God's plan for man's salvation revolve around the person of Jesus Christ. There is NO other way to be saved other than faith in Jesus Christ and all that entails. Some facts about Jesus:

1. King of the Jews. Matt. 2:2; 27:37
2. Servant. Mark 9:35; 10:43-44
3. Perfect man. Luke 2:40, 52; 9:22, 56, 58; 22:48
4. Eternal God. John 1:1-5; 20:28, 31
5. Ascended Lord. Acts 1:9
6. The Lord our righteousness. Rom. 10:4
7. Our resurrection. 1 Cor. 15
8. Redeemer from the law. Gal. 4:4-5
9. Head of the Church; giver of gifts. Eph. 1:22, 2:20; 3:13-4:8
10. Supplier of every need; obedient servant. Phil. 1:19; 4:19; 2:5-8
11. Fullness of the Godhead. Col. 1:19; 2:9
12. Savior of sinners. 1 Tim. 2:15; 3:16; 1:15
13. Righteous and rewarding Judge; author of Scripture. 2 Tim. 4:8; 3:16-17
14. Our great God and savior. Titus 1:3; 2:10, 13; 3:4
15. Payer of our debt. Philem.
16. Appointed heir of all things; one greater than the prophets or angels. Heb. 1:2, 4; 3:3
17. Ever-present God; great physician; the coming one. James 4:6-8; 5:15; 5:7-8
18. Unblemished lamb; great example; chief shepherd; Lord of glory. 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:21-24; 5:4; 3:22
19. The beloved Son. 2 Pet. 1:17
20. Word of life; advocate; propitiation; Son of God. 1 John 1:1; 2:1; 3:8; 4:15; 5:5
21. Son of the Father. 2 John 1:3
22. The truth. 3 John 1:4, 8
23. Preserver and only wise God. Jude 1-25
24. The Alpha and Omega; the lion of Judah; king of kings. Revelation 1:8; 5:5, 19:16

*This list is from Willmington, H. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, (1987).*



# Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the 3rd person of the Trinity, fully God but distinctly a separate person. The Holy Spirit executes the will of the Father, being present at all times in God's plan for humanity. The Holy Spirit regenerates us upon salvation and seals (guarantees) our eternal life in Heaven. The Holy Spirit administers the spiritual gifts God gives to Believers so that they can fulfill God's plans and live the most fully blessed life.

1. He is omnipresent (*everywhere at all times*). Ps. 139:7
2. He is omniscient (*all knowing*). 1 Cor. 2:10-11
3. He is omnipotent (*all powerful*). Gen. 1:2
4. He is eternal. Heb. 9:14
5. He is called God. Acts 5:3-4
6. He is equal with the Father and with the Son. Matt. 28:19-20
7. He has a mind. Rom. 8:27
8. He searches out the human mind. 1 Cor. 2:10
9. He has a will. 1 Cor. 12:11
10. He forbids. Acts 16:6-7
11. He leads. Acts 16:10
12. He speaks. Acts 8:29
13. He loves. Rom. 15:30
14. He grieves. Eph. 4:30
15. He prays. Rom. 8:26

*This list is from Willmington, H. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, (1987). The explanations in parentheses are mine - Brent.*

## The Bible

The Bible was written by over 40 different men, inspired by God, from all walks of life, from different areas of the known world, over a span of 1500+ years... and yet it presents a single, harmonious, life-changing message.

In fact, the message of the Bible is in such great harmony, that men have tried ferociously for 2000 years to point out it's "errors" and the best that can be produced is a few textual discrepancies and some difficult circumstantial situations that are adequately reconciled with various alternative and VERY reasonable explanations.

Yes, there are some tough questions, and some difficulties to consider... but NONE of these difficulties represent a contradiction of any doctrine or spiritual principle essential to salvation, the Church, Jesus, or God.

What other religious "holy" book can claim anything even remotely as extraordinary as that? The Bible ALONE is unique among all, ALL, "holy" books.

It is a historical fact that the Bible has transformed nations, cities, communities, and individuals all over the world for good. Wherever the Bible is prevalent and obeyed, wickedness decreases, lives are changed for the better, and societies become more loving, helpful, and caring.

There are lots of religions today that claim to have a "holy" book from God. What other "holy" book has had a positive transforming effect on the world to the same degree, with the same longevity, and the same breadth as the Holy Bible?

One "holy" book has produced terrorism all over the world. Other "holy" books create cults and superstitious pagan societies while others keep entire nations in abject poverty and misery because of senseless belief and practice. ONLY GOD'S HOLY BOOK- THE BIBLE - consistently and effectively changes lives for permanent, widespread and eternal good.

The Bible is unique. U-N-I-Q-U-E. One of a kind - with no equal and no competition.

The Bible is the sole book in the world that has predicted future events with incredible accuracy (in fact, with 100% accuracy!). If I could produce a sports book that was written over a thousand years ago, that accurately predicted every score and game in the NFL for the 2008 season, do you think people would trust what it had to say about the 2012 season? Of course they would. But, to trust the Bible means to answer to God. So mankind conveniently ignores the fact that the Bible has HUNDREDS of prophecies that were fulfilled to the letter - hundreds of years after they were written.

That fact alone should convince any rational, honest, seeker of Truth, that that Bible is the GENUINE inspired Written Word from the God who created us. No other book in the world even attempts to make the same claim. NONE.

Why then do people still ignore/deny this fact? Well, the Apostle Paul tells us (emphasis mine):

Romans 1:18-23: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, **who suppress the truth** in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so **that they are without excuse**, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **Professing to be wise, they became fools**, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (NKJV)

The Bible is the only holy book that has a 100% accuracy rate with regards to predicting the future, which it has done hundreds of times.

The Bible is unique in that the Bible ALONE is prophetically accurate. This is irrefutable evidence that the Bible originates from a supernatural source outside

of time and man's existence. Whoever wrote it (God), is obviously outside of time and space as we know it.

It is abundantly clear by virtue of uniqueness that the Bible is the TRUTH. Here is a sample list of fulfilled prophecies about Jesus:

| <b>Concerning his birth</b>       | <b>Prophesied</b>    | <b>Fulfilled</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Born of the seed of woman      | Gen 3:15             | Gal 4:4          |
| 2. Born of a virgin               | Isa 7:14             | Mt 1:18-25       |
| 3. Seed of Abraham                | Gen 22:18            | Mt 1:1           |
| 4. Seed of Isaac                  | Gen 21:12            | Lk 3:23+34       |
| 5. Seed of Jacob                  | Num 24:17            | Lk 3:34          |
| 6. Seed of David                  | Jer 23:5             | Lk 3:31          |
| 7. Tribe of Judah                 | Gen 49:10            | Rev 5:5          |
| 8. Family line of Jesse           | Isa 11:1             | Lk 3:32          |
| 9. Born in Bethlehem              | Mic 5:2              | Mt 2:1-6         |
| 10. Herod kills the children      | Jer 31:15            | Mt 2:16-18       |
|                                   |                      |                  |
| <b>Concerning his nature</b>      | <b>Prophesied</b>    | <b>Fulfilled</b> |
| 11. He pre-existed creation       | Mic 5:2              | 1 Pet 1:20       |
| 12. He shall be called Lord       | Ps 110:1             | Acts 2:36        |
| 13. Called Immanuel (God with us) | Isa 7:14             | Mt 1:22-23       |
| 14. Prophet                       | Deut 18:18-19        | Acts 3:18-25     |
| 15. Priest                        | Ps 110:4             | Heb 5:5-6        |
| 16. Judge                         | Isa 33:22            | Jn 5:22-23       |
| 17. King                          | Ps 2:6               | Jn 18:33-37      |
| 18. Anointed by the Spirit        | Isa 11:2             | Mt 3:16-17       |
| 19. His zeal for God              | Ps 69:9              | Jn 2:15-17       |
|                                   |                      |                  |
| <b>Concerning his ministry</b>    | <b>Prophesied</b>    | <b>Fulfilled</b> |
| 20. Preceded by a messenger       | Isa 40:3             | Mt 3:1-3         |
| 21. To begin in Galilee           | Isa 9:1-2            | Mt 4:12-17       |
| 22. Ministry of Miracles          | Isa 35:5-6           | Mt 9:35; 11:4    |
| 23. Teacher of parables           | Ps 78:1-4            | Mt 13:34-35      |
| 24. He was to enter the temple    | Mal 3:1              | Mt 21:10-12      |
| 25. Enter Jerusalem on donkey     | Zech 9:9             | Mt 21:1-7        |
| 26. Stone of stumbling to Jews    | Isa 28:16; Ps 118:22 | 1 Pet 2:6-8      |
| 27. Light to Gentiles             | Isa 49:6             | Acts 13:46-48    |

| <b>The day Jesus was crucified</b>      | <b>Prophesied</b> | <b>Fulfilled</b>  |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| 28. Betrayed by a friend                | Ps 41:9           | Jn 13:18-27       |
| 29. Sold for 30 pieces of silver        | Zech 11:12        | Mt 26:14-15       |
| 30. 30 pieces thrown in Temple          | Zech 11:13        | Mt 27:3-5         |
| 31. 30 pieces buys potters field        | Zech 11:13        | Mt 27:6-10        |
| 32. Forsaken by His disciples           | Zech 13:7         | Mk 14:27+50       |
| 33. Accused by false witnesses          | Ps 35:11+20-21    | Mt 26:59-61       |
| 34. Silent before accusers              | Isa 53:7          | Mt 27:12-14       |
| 35. Wounded and bruised                 | Isa 53:4-6        | 1 Pet 2:21-25     |
| 36. Beaten and spit upon                | Isa 50:6          | Mt 26:67-68       |
| 37. Mocked                              | Ps 22:6-8         | Mt 27:27-31       |
| 38. Fell under the cross                | Ps 109:24-25      | Jn 19:17; Lk23:26 |
| 39. Hands and feet pierced              | Ps 22:16          | Jn 20:24-28       |
| 40. Crucified with thieves              | Isa 53:12         | Mt 27:38          |
| 41. Prayed for enemies                  | Isa 53:12         | Lk 23:34          |
| 42. Rejected by His own people          | Isa 53:3          | Jn 19:14-15       |
| 43. Hated without cause                 | Ps 69:4           | Jn 15:25          |
| 44. Friends stood aloof                 | Ps 38:11          | Lk22:54;23:49     |
| 45. People wag their heads              | Ps 22:7;109:25    | Mt 27:39          |
| 46. People stared at Him                | Ps 22:17          | Lk 23:35          |
| 47. Cloths divided and gambled for      | Ps 22:18          | Jn 19:23-24       |
| 48. Became very thirsty                 | Ps 22:15          | Jn 19:28          |
| 49. Gall and vinegar offered Him        | Ps 69:21          | Mt 27:34          |
| 50. His forsaken cry                    | Ps 22:1           | Mt 27:46          |
| 51. Committed Himself to God            | Ps 31:5           | Lk 23:46          |
| 52. Bones not broken                    | Ps 34:20          | Jn 19:32-36       |
| 53. Heart broken                        | Ps 69:20;22:14    | Jn 19:34          |
| 54. His side pierced                    | Zech 12:10        | Jn 19:34+37       |
| 55. Darkness over the land              | Amos 8:9          | Lk 23:44-45       |
| 56. Buried in rich man's tomb           | Isa 53:9          | Mt 27:57-60       |
| <b>His Resurrection &amp; Ascension</b> | <b>Prophesied</b> | <b>Fulfilled</b>  |
| 57. Raised from the dead                | Ps 16:8-11        | Acts 2:24-31      |
| 58. Begotten as Son of God              | Ps 2:7            | Acts 13:32-35     |
| 59. Ascended to God                     | Ps 68:18          | Eph 2:8-10        |
| 60. Seated beside God                   | Ps 110:1          | Heb 1:3+13        |

*Prophecy List Source: <http://www.bible.ca/b-prophecy-60.htm>*

# Man

Humans were specifically and directly created by God, for His pleasure, to have a relationship with Him. God created man to be perfect. It was the willing choice of Adam and Eve to act in defiance against God, thus introducing sin into humanity.

God's plan has been to restore man to that original perfection so that He can be glorified and enjoy an eternal relationship with us. Here are some facts about man as revealed in the Bible:

1. Made for God. Pr 16:4; Re 4:11.
2. God's purpose in creation completed by making. Ge 2:5,7.
3. Cannot profit God. Job 22:2; Ps 16:2.
4. Unworthy of God's favor. Job 7:17; Ps 8:4.
5. Created by God. Ge 1:27; Isa 45:12
6. Approved of by God. Ge 1:31
7. Blessed by God. Ge 1:28; 5:2
8. Possesses:
  - a. A Body. Mt 6:25.
  - b. A soul. Lu 12:20; Ac 14:22; 1Pe 4:19.
  - c. A spirit. Pr 18:14; 20:17; 1Co 2:11.
  - d. Understanding. Eph 1:18; 4:18.
  - e. Will. 1Co 9:17; 2Pe 1:21.
  - f. Affections. 1Ch 29:3; Col 3:2.
  - g. Conscience. Ro 2:15; 1Ti 4:2.
  - h. Memory. Ge 41:9; 1Co 15:2.
9. Fearfully and wonderfully made. Ps 139:14.
10. Inferior to angels. Ps 8:5; Heb 2:7.
11. More valuable than other creatures. Mt 6:26; 10:31; 12:12.
12. Wiser than other creatures. Job 35:11.
13. Received dominion over other creatures. Ge 1:28; Ps 8:6-8.
14. Originally naked and not ashamed. Ge 2:25.
15. Disobeyed God by eating part of the forbidden fruit. Ge 3:1-12.
16. Filled with shame after the fall. Ge 3:10.
17. Born in sin. Ps 51:5.
18. Has an appointed time on the earth. Job 7:1.
19. Ignorant of what is good for him. Ec 10:2.
20. Cannot be just with God. Job 9:2; 25:4; Ps 143:2; Ro 3:20.
21. Cannot cleanse himself. Job 15:14; Jer 2:22.
22. The whole duty of. Ec 12:13.

*A partial list from Torrey, R. The new topical text book : A scriptural text book for the use of ministers, teachers, and all Christian workers. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos research Systems, Inc., 1995.*

# Heaven

Heaven is the very real and eternal domain of God. For humans, heaven will end up being the final recreation of a perfect earth and universe where God will also dwell with us for all eternity.

Heaven is our home, our destiny. God is preparing our home for us even now and the Bible tells us we cannot even begin to imagine the joys and wonder that await us!

1. Heaven is being prepared by Christ himself. John 14:3
2. It is only for those who have been born again. John 3:3
3. It is described as a glorious city, likened to pure gold and clear glass. Rev. 21:11, 18
4. The name of this city is the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:2
5. An angel stands guard at each gate. Rev. 21:12
6. The gates will never be shut. Rev. 21:25
7. The palaces may possibly be made of ivory. Ps. 45:8
8. The River of Life is there, to ensure everlasting life. Rev. 22:1
9. The Tree of Life is there to ensure abundant life. Rev. 2:7; 22:19
10. The throne of God will occupy the central palace. Rev. 4:2; 22:1
11. The main street of the city is composed of transparent gold. Rev. 21:21
12. The city will shine with and be enlightened by God's glory. John 17:24; Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:11, 23; 22:5
13. It is a place of holiness. Rev. 21:27
14. It is a place of beauty. Ps. 50:2
15. It is a place of unity. Eph. 1:10
16. It is a place of perfection. 1 Cor. 13:10
17. It is a place of joy. Ps. 16:11
18. It is a place for all eternity. John 3:15; Ps. 23:6
19. There will be no tears. Rev. 7:17; 21:4
20. There will be no sickness. Rev. 22:2
21. There will be no pain. Rev. 21:4
22. There will be no death. Isa. 25:8; 1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4
23. There will be no more thirst or hunger. Rev. 7:16
24. There will be no more sin. Rev. 21:27
25. There will be no more judgment upon sin. Rev. 22:3
26. There will be no need for the sun or moon. Rev. 21:23
27. There will be no night. Rev. 21:25; 22:5
28. It will be shared by the holy angels. Dan. 7:10; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11
29. The Father will be there. Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2-3
30. The Son will be there. Rev. 5:6; 7:17
31. The Holy Spirit will be there. Rev. 14:13; 22:17

*This list is from Willmington, H. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987. The explanations in parentheses are mine - Brent.*



# Hell

Just as real and eternal as Heaven, Hell is the place of eternal punishment for every person who rejects God. It is popular today to deny the existence of Hell, or characterize it as simply the state of being apart from God.

Jesus spoke more about Hell than Heaven in a merciful attempt to warn us about this very real place. Here is some of what the Bible reveals about Hell:

1. Hell will be a place of unquenchable fire. Matt. 3:12; 13:41-42; Mark 9:43
2. It will be a place of memory and remorse. Luke 16:19-31
3. It will be a place of thirst. Luke 16:24
4. It will be a place of misery and pain. Rev. 14:10, 11
5. It will be a place of frustration and anger. Matt. 13:42; 24:51
6. It will be a place of separation. Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 15
7. It will be a place of undiluted divine wrath. Hab. 3:2; Rev. 14:10
8. It was originally prepared for Satan and his hosts. Matt. 25:41
9. It will be a place created for all eternity. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Jude 7

Willmington, H. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists (133-134). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987.

# The Church

Upon the moment of genuine salvation, every Believer becomes part of God's universal Church which is made up of every Christian from all times and places.

The local Church is a community of Believers in Christ who meet together to worship God, serve others, and spread the Gospel of Christ to a lost world.

Jesus is the Head of the Church, and everything about the Church completely centers on Him. The assembly of Christians together provides the opportunity to praise God, teach God's Word, give for the needs of benevolence, and share the Gospel to the whole world; as well as for the spiritual growth and edification of Believers. Each Christian is encouraged by Scripture to use the special gifts God has given them individually to benefit the Church.

It is the responsibility of the Church:

1. To love God. Rev. 2:4
2. To glorify God. Eph. 1:5-6, 11-12, 14; 3:21; 2 Thess. 1:12
3. To display God's grace. Eph. 2:7; 3:6, 10; 1 Pet. 2:9
4. To evangelize the world. Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8
5. To baptize believers. Matt. 28:19
6. To instruct believers. Matt. 28:19; Phil. 4:8-9; 1 Tim. 4:6; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:2, 24-25

7. To edify believers. 1 Cor. 14:16; Eph. 4:11-12, 16; 1 Thess. 5:11; 2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 20
8. To provide fellowship for believers. Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 8:4; 13:14; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5; 2:12; 1 John 1:3, 6-7
9. To care for its own in time of need. 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Tim. 5:1-16; James 1:27
10. To act as a restraining and enlightening force in this present world. Matt. 5:13-16; 2 Thess. 2:6-7
11. To promote all that is good. Gal. 6:10

*This list is from Willmington, H. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987.*

## Angels, Demons, & Satan

Angels were created by God. They are not eternal. They are powerful and exist to do God's will. We do NOT worship angels. Here are some of the things that the Bible teaches us about angels:

1. They were all created by God. Gen. 2:1; Neh. 9:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16
2. They report directly to God. Job 1:6; 2:1
3. They were present at the Creation of the world. Job 38:1, 4, 7
4. They do not marry. Matt. 22:30
5. They were created to live forever. Rev. 4:8
6. Their purpose is to glorify God. Rev. 4:8
7. Some angels help human beings. Heb. 1:14
8. Some angels harm human beings. Mark 5:1-5
9. They are spirit beings. Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7, 14
10. They are invisible beings. Rom. 1:18-32; Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:9
11. They are innumerable. Deut. 33:2; Ps 68:17; Dan. 7:9-10; Matt. 26:53; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11
12. They possess intelligence. Dan. 9:21-22; 10:14; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9
13. They possess will. Isa. 14:12-15; Jude 6
14. They are stronger than men. Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2 Pet. 2:11
15. They are more intelligent than men. Dan. 9:21-22; 10:14
16. They are not omnipresent. Dan. 10:12
17. They are not omnipotent. Dan. 10:13; Jude 9
18. They are not omniscient. Matt. 24:36
19. They will join all believers in the heavenly Jerusalem. Heb. 12:22-23

Satan was an angel who rebelled against God. He sought to be equal with God and God banished him to the earth. Satan is NOT equal to God but is very powerful. He is limited and subject to God. In the Bible, we learn about Satan:

1. He was named Lucifer before his fall. Isa. 14:12
2. He was in Eden. Ezek. 28:13
3. He was the anointed cherub of God. Ezek. 28:14

4. He was the perfection of wisdom and beauty. Ezek. 28:12
5. He fell through pride. Ezek. 28:17
6. He attempted to steal God's throne. Isa. 14:13
7. He wanted to be like God. Isa. 14:14
8. He possesses intelligence. 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3
9. He possesses memory. Matt. 4:6
10. He possesses a will. 2 Tim. 2:26
11. He possesses pride. 1 Tim. 3:6
12. He possesses wrath. Rev. 12:12
13. He possesses great organizational ability. 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:9, 24

The fallen angels or demons followed Satan in his rebellion and were also cast from Heaven. The Bible tells us:

1. Fallen angels have names. Luke 8:30; Rev. 9:11
2. They speak. Luke 4:34, 41; 8:28; Matt. 8:29; Mark 5:12; Acts 19:15; Mark 3:11
3. They know who Jesus is. Luke 4:34
4. They know of future damnation. Matt. 8:29
5. They know the saved from the unsaved. Rev. 9:4
6. They are able to formulate a Satan-centered systematic theology. 1 Tim. 4:1
7. They possess great strength. Exod. 8:7; 7:11-12; Dan. 10:13; Mark 5:2-4; 9:17-26; Acts 19:16; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rev. 9:15-19
8. They experience fear. Luke 8:28; James 2:19
9. They display disdain. Acts 16:15
10. There are unchained angels, having a certain amount of freedom at the present time. Ps. 78:49; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7-9
11. There are chained angels, having no freedom at the present time. 2 Pet. 2:4
12. There are evil angels who rule over the nations of this world. Dan. 10:13
13. The bottomless pit is under the control of an angel called Abaddon (in the Hebrew) and Apollyon (in the Greek). Rev. 9:11
14. Some angels are in a place called Tartarus. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6
15. Evil angels will be judged by Christ and His Church. 1 Cor. 6:3
16. They will eventually be cast into the lake of fire forever. Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6

*All three lists: Willmington, H.. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987.*

# Fundamental Truths

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You will hear some words in Christianity that can sound pretty complicated, like "propitiation" or "redemption."

These terms are not so scary when you have them explained in simple terms and you can see how they fit into God's overall plan to save mankind.

In this section, I teach you in plain language what the fundamental terms of Christianity mean. Refer back to the chart on the next page to see how each fit into the grand plan of God.

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2 Parts to Salvation:

**Regeneration**  
Spirit is re-created

**Glorification**  
Flesh is re-created

God's plan to save a people for Himself

Securing of my salvation

Manifestation of my salvation from a human perspective



Belief ~ Repentance ~ Obedience ~ Mortification

**Santification**

Calling ~ Faith ~ Regeneration ~ Imputation ~ Justification

Manifestation of my salvation from God's perspective

Creation  
Sin Curse



**Eternity Past**

New Creation  
Sin ceases to exist



**Eternity Future**

# Defining the Fundamental Concepts of Christianity

I created the illustration on the previous page to give you a visual of how all these concepts fit together. I have often found that Christians may be able to define these terms but cannot put the pieces of the puzzle together.

Before we begin defining these fundamental terms, let me encourage you. The terms themselves may seem like a college course in theological vocabulary; however, these are as basic to Christianity as terms such as liability, income, asset, and profit are to an accountant.

While discussion of any single term could fill a thousand-page volume, you will also find that these concepts are the basic building blocks of your faith and quite understandable for any Christian.

I am giving you a basic definition and understanding in this section. Look back at the previous illustration and see how these topics fit into the overall view of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

Knowing these fundamentals will give you a solid foundation for your faith and belief, and will no doubt launch you into a lifelong discovery of God's Word.

"Why?" is the greatest question you can answer to solidify your Christian conviction. Learning the following list of fundamentals answers a very long list of "why?" for the Believer in Christ.

## Repentance

To repent is to not only be sorry for your sin but to make a purposeful decision to turn away from it and not sin anymore.

Repentance is the planned effort to do whatever it takes to NOT sin.

Repentance is true sorrow for offending God and violating His holiness, as evidenced by our contrition and actionable desire to stop sinning.

Matt. 9:13; Acts 17:30; 26:20



## Faith

Faith is focusing your trust on God and Jesus. Faith in God is not faith in our abilities or efforts - it is taking our eyes off ourselves and fixing them firmly on the

Father and Son. Faith is the hope and trust that what God says in the Bible is true. Faith is obedience and commitment to God even when we cannot see, know, or understand. In essence, Faith is TRUSTING and FOCUSING on Jesus for our salvation.

Acts 20:21; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:6

## Substitution

Substitution is Jesus Christ dying on the cross instead of us. God the Righteous Judge cannot ignore sin - and the penalty is death. Jesus, being perfect, took our place and was punished for our sin. He was our substitute and because He died for us, God's justice is satisfied and God can now accept you and I (sinners).

1 Pet. 3:18; John 10:11



## Reconciliation

God opposes us because He is perfect and holy, and we are sinful. God is AGAINST us because He is the Righteous Judge. Reconciliation is the process of bringing together two opposing parties. We are reconciled to God because Jesus was punished in our place, satisfying God's justice. God no longer opposes those who put their faith in Christ because Jesus did what was necessary to end God's opposition towards us (He took our penalty on Himself).

2 Cor. 5:18-20

## Propitiation

Propitiation is a legal term that means to appease or gain divine favor. Jesus Christ satisfied the holiness of God on the cross by allowing His blood to be shed to appease God's righteous desire to punish sin. Propitiation is the fact that we are once again in God's favor because of the death and sacrifice of Jesus.

Rom. 3:25; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

## Remission

Remission is the "state of absence" of something. With regards to Christianity, it is the absence of sin because of God's forgiveness. Just as a human Judge cannot simply excuse the breaking of the law, God cannot overlook sin. Sin must be punished. Remission of sins means the forgiveness of sins by God; not just that those sins are not present, but that they do not exist. It is not God saying "that's okay." Remission is the literal absence of those sins because God has pronounced them forgiven.

Lev. 16:21-22; Heb. 9:26; 13:12-13; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13

## Regeneration

Humans have a sinful nature. We inherited it from Adam and Eve when they brought sin into the world. A supernatural event occurs when you are saved: you are "regenerated."

This invisible, miraculous transformation occurs when God changes your sin-cursed spirit into a brand new spirit, minus the sin nature. You are in a very real way "born again."

That new spirit still lives in a sin-cursed body of flesh (temporarily), but your spirit has been regenerated by God.

John 1:12-13; 3:3; 1 John 5:1

## Redemption

To redeem something is literally to buy it back. For Christians, this is the act of God buying us back from our slavery to sin. Jesus paid the price owed to obtain our freedom, and God "redeems" us and we now belong to Him.

It is just like paying a ransom to get back someone who was kidnapped. We were kidnapped by sin, and God ransomed us, bought us back, redeemed us.

Luke 1:68; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:12



## Imputation

You understand "amputation," right? To cut something off. Imputation is just the opposite. It means to ADD SOMETHING that was not previously there. In Christianity, this is the act of God imputing the perfection and righteousness of Jesus Christ to us.

Our sin was imputed to Christ and God punished Him instead of us. Because God's just penalty was satisfied, God took the perfect life and perfect holiness of Jesus Christ and added it to you and me.

God sees us as perfect and sinless because our Savior's perfection has been imputed to us by a merciful and loving God. Are you starting to grasp the enormity and depth of what Jesus did for us?

Isa. 53:5, 11; Rom. 4:3-8; Phil. 3:7-8

## Adoption

Just like we can adopt children and they become full family members and heirs, God has adopted us into His family. As adoptees, we are now entitled by God to all the privileges and responsibilities of being part of His family.

Before salvation, we are outsiders... after salvation we are adopted heirs in God's family, eternally His children.

Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:15-23; Eph. 1:5

## Supplication

Supplication is prayer - talking to God, listening to God.

As Christians, because of Christ's imputed righteousness, we are now able to come directly into God's presence. Since sin cannot exist in God's presence, we could not be in the direct presence of God before being saved. That is why it was not possible for us to simply be excused for our sin and allowed into Heaven. Sin cannot exist in God's presence.

Luke 18:13; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; Jude 20



## Justification

Justification means to be just or right, to have a legal sufficiency. In Christianity, this means that God declares the repentant sinner to be righteous.

Being declared righteous by God now gives us a sufficient legal claim to be accepted by God. It is not because of anything we have done, or could do, but only because God declares us justified on the sole basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ for our sins.

Rom. 5:1; 8:33

## Sanctification

To sanctify something means to set it apart. Now that you are redeemed, God has set you apart to live a Godly life of serving others and growing spiritually.

Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ as we live our set-apart life.

Set apart from what? From sin. From your former fleshly and selfish life. From the wicked world.

John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; 5:23

## Glorification

When a person is saved, they are regenerated - their invisible, eternal spirit is "born again." However, we still live in the same sin-cursed flesh (our body).

Glorification is the final transformation when we will receive a new sinless body to go with our regenerated spirit.

Glorification is the ultimate, eternal, and absolute physical, mental, and spiritual perfection of all believers.

Rom. 8:18, 23, 30; 5:2; 1 Cor. 15:43; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:1

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Here are a few other definitions that you will want to study. These are the most basic and simple definitions I can give to get you started but in reality, are just a nibble on these topics:

## Election

Being chosen by God for salvation. Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:9

## **Foreknowledge**

An attribute of God which means He knows in advance with the facts concerning all things. Acts 15:18; Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2

## **Predestination**

God's eternal plan whereby all believing sinners are conformed to the image of Christ. Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:9-12

# Sharing Your Faith

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As a Christian, you will be excited to share the Good News of Salvation to others. In fact, God expects this of you.

It is hard sometimes to know how to explain your faith to others. Start by sharing how God saved you. Then you can continue by explaining the need for salvation and answering any questions.

In this section, I present the basics of how you can communicate the Gospel to others.

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# How You Can Explain Salvation to Any Person Who Is Not a Christian

As a new Christian, it's important that you be able to explain salvation to others who do not believe or understand it. You don't have to communicate it exactly as I do here, but the truths you need to understand are presented here.

**To explain salvation to another person:**

Every person needs to have a right relationship with the God who created us. (Do not believe the lie that you came from a monkey or goo. God made you, loves you, and is now trying to get your attention.)

Perhaps in your own heart you have tried to explain away spiritual things, convincing yourself it is all superstition or fairy tales, but the questions just will not go away. Do you know why they will not go away? Because God created in every person the need and desire to know the answers... this need is evidence that God exists, and is reaching out to you.

**You need to be "saved."** Perhaps you do not understand that religious phrase. Let's take a look. To be saved means to be rescued from some impending harm. You cannot really desire to be saved unless you are convinced there is something that you need to be saved from. What do we need to be saved from?

The nutshell is this: **you are a sinner.** The God who created you does not tolerate sin. Like a righteous human judge doing his duty, pronouncing punishment and penalty on wrongdoing, the Judge of the Universe - God - must pronounce eternal judgment on all those who have violated His perfect Law. That is the bad news. The good news is that God also has provided a way for us to be forgiven for those violations (sin).

But I'm a good person, you might say.

Are you really? Is it fair to call you a "sinner"? Most people would answer: "no, I'm a good person." Hmmm... let's put that to the test.

Have you ever lied? Ever, even once? How many lies does it take to be a liar? One. You are a liar. So am I.

Have you ever stolen, cheated on your taxes, been lazy at work? You are a thief.

Ever lusted? Ever take God's name in vain ("g\*d\*m\*\*t) or used His name casually ("oh my god")? Ever hated someone? Even once? That makes you an adulterer (Jesus said lust is equal to adultery in your heart), a blasphemer (using God's holy name without proper reverence), and murderer (Jesus said to hate your brother is the same as wanting to kill him).

See what I mean. You are not "good." You are a lying, stealing, blaspheming, murdering, adulterer (and that is just a start. We are not even halfway through the 10 Commandments). **You are a sinner.** I am a sinner. We ALL are sinners. We all have a very real need for forgiveness by God. That's what "being saved" means.

We need to be saved from God's righteous pronouncement of "GUILTY!" and His just sentence of "DEATH" for our sin. Just like a good human judge will pronounce "guilty!" and a penalty on someone who has broken the law, God (The Perfect Judge) will do the same. Makes sense, right?

God mercifully provided a way for us to be saved. You cannot earn it, you cannot be good enough to merit it. You cannot demand it or obligate God to give it. It is a free gift manifested in God's love and sovereignty. Our salvation is unattainable except that God chose in eternity past to provide it.

Here are seven truths to help you find true Christian faith for yourself, based upon what God says in His Word - the Bible:

- **God Loves You:** ...God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).
- **You Are in Trouble:** All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." -- "You [God] are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with You the wicked cannot dwell.
- **Sin Brings Disaster:** The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **God Has Provided the Answer - a Savior:** God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- **Repent\* of Your Sin and Turn To the Savior, Jesus Christ:** Turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus -- To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.  
*\*To repent means to "turn away from." It means to be sorry for your sin and truly not want to do it anymore.*
- **Believing in Jesus and Receiving the Savior by Faith:** This is what the Bible says - God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, Jesus. He who has the Son has eternal life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have eternal life -- If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- **Now Is the Time to Receive Him and Respond in Obedience:** Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. -- Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Obedience is the evidence of true repentance, faith, and belief. We must respond to God's gift of salvation ON HIS TERMS by obeying what He commands.

Confess that you are a sinner publicly. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the ONLY way to salvation. Be baptized - which symbolizes

your old life of sin and defiance being put to death in a grave of water, and a new Godly person being born to a new life of righteousness and good.

Find a group of Believers with whom you can serve, pray, and worship the God of the Universe. Read your Bible. Love others. Obey God. Obedience is the EVIDENCE of GENUINE salvation.

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Do you know what "praying" is? It just means to talk to God. If you have finally realized you are a sinner and need to be saved, talk to God and ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him you believe Jesus died to pay for your sins, and you want to stop sinning. Thank God for this.

Now go and find some other Christians who are serious about their faith in God and who believe the Bible. Ask them to show you what God would have you do next. The Bible says we authenticate our salvation **by our obedience** - doing what God says. Other mature Christians can show you what God would have you do now, such as being baptized and meeting with other Christians regularly.

Your decision of what relationship you want with God is the most important decision you will ever make in your life. If you have questions, or need help finding Christians in your area who can talk to you further, do not hesitate to email me: [brent@brenttriggs.com](mailto:brent@brenttriggs.com).

Look up these Bible verses where God says many of the things I've written above: John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Psalm 5:4, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Acts 20:21, John 1:12, I John 5:11-12, Hebrews 3:7-8, Romans 10:9; Acts 2.38. I have adopted my salvation explanation from things I've read over time. Any similarity is not meant as plagiarism but rather just a choice to communicate this important truth in the best way possible. I have lost track of what part of this came from where, or what is my own.

# **Practical Lessons About the Christian Life**

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To help you continue to grow with purpose, I have included this section of additional teaching. It comes primarily from the practical book of James.

James covers many topics concerning behavior, attitudes, and Christian living. Very practical, very relevant. Simple and straight to the point.

In this section, we will walk through the book of James and highlight many things he teaches us about how to live the Christian life.

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# A Few Basics About Christian Behavior

James 1:1 – James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. (NKJV)

I am often asked why Christianity seems so complex and hard to understand. The answer is: It is not.

We have made Christianity difficult to understand because of all of our divisions, favorite doctrines, and traditions. This results in endless disputes and arguments over beliefs, church practices, and what the true Christian life looks like. It is unfortunate because God never meant for Christianity to turn into a “religion” to be disputed and argued about amongst us. The basic Christian life, viewed from a day-to-day practical living standpoint, is not difficult or complex at all.

Christianity involves finding out what God has written in His Word, changing our life to fit what we have learned, communicating with God, and displaying love and sacrifice in all things. We get so caught up in trying to “find God’s perfect will” when arguing about our favorite doctrinal issues that we lose sight of the fact that Christianity is a day-to-day relationship and a heart attitude, which is neither complex nor a secret.

## God’s View of Wealth And Status

James 1:9-11 – Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 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. (NKJV)

In this day and age when “image is everything” and status is the name of the game, there is hardly a more relevant topic than God’s view of wealth and status.

It is the common lifestyle today to live well beyond our means, not only to satisfy impulsive leisure, but also to give the appearance of being more financially successful than we really are. It is an accepted fact of Western life to live in debt to maintain the appearance of growing wealth.

It is especially important for Christians to understand God’s view about money and status. I am not a “let’s all be poor” advocate or a money basher. The amount of money we have is irrelevant. It is our attitude toward money and how we use it to fulfill God’s will that is important. You can be an extremely wealthy and faithful Christian. You can be dirt poor and be a faithful Christian. On the flip side, a billionaire and a bum can be equally heathen. This is not a discussion on what the Bible teaches about money, although it is one of the most talked about topics in Scripture for obvious reasons. Money is an everyday part of our life. If you would

like to know more about this topic, read my book “Life without Debt.” Next, we are going to consider our attitudes toward the rich and the poor.

James 1:9-11 – Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 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. (NKJV)

## Let the Lowly Glory

What in the world does James mean when he says to let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation? The phrasing and vocabulary are completely foreign to our current way of thinking. We would never hear of a seminar or workshop on the glory of being lowly, in this case meaning to be poor. So what is James teaching us?

The lesson actually begins in verses 2 to 7, which I will cover at the end of this section. In those verses, James speaks of how trials come to us all. It does not matter whether you are rich or whether you are poor, your life is going to be filled with repeated trials. Keeping that in mind, we come to verse 11, where we find “let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation.”

Suffering and trials are the great equalizers of mankind. While money may help you alleviate some suffering, it can never keep you from suffering. It simply means that it may take a greater trial for you to receive the same distress that a poor person might receive from a lesser trial.

Of course suffering is relative, and it really does not matter the cause. If suffering could be measured on a scale of one to ten, and I am suffering at scale level five because someone at work is persecuting me for my faith, that is not greater suffering than someone who feels the same intensity (a five on the suffering scale) over a trial I would consider insignificant. It is all a matter of life experience.

Suffering affects both the rich and the poor, and so we find James telling us that the lowly brother glories in his exaltation. This has three meanings. First, it means that the lowly or poor person takes comfort in the knowledge that he is just like everyone else. (He “glories” in this knowledge.) He sees that the rich suffer also, and that we are all equal in that regard. Thus he is exalted and realizes that his poverty does not make him less than other people. Secondly, the poor person sees that suffering is used by God to keep the rich and the poor from being too enamored with this world. Trials keep us from being preoccupied with the cares of this life and the pursuit of material treasure. In this way, the lowly person is elevated to the same status as the wealthy person.

Finally, the lowly person sees that God is no respecter of persons. God is not being hard on the poor while the rich get a pass. Rich or poor, we all suffer the trials of this sin-cursed life; and the lowly person glories, and takes comfort, in seeing that his poverty does not make him less in the eyes of God.

Understanding that, it is easy to grasp the next portion of the verse, “but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.” Through

trials, the rich realize that wealth does not make them immune to the curse of sin, nor does it make them any better than the poor. Our suffering reminds us that our money does not elevate us in the eyes of God. Hard times bring a concrete reminder that our happiness and contentment are not found in the riches of this world, but only in God's rich grace.

## **Wealth Is Fleeting**

At the end of verse 10 and continuing on through verse 11, we see the truth about our material possessions and achievements. James vividly points this out to us so that we will not depend on or have pride in our earthly success. We are reminded of how fleeting and temporary all of this is. Like a flower that blooms in the morning and is wilted and burned up by the blistering midday sun, the beautiful appearance of our accumulated wealth quickly fades. In the same manner, our pursuit of achievement, status, and worldly success will wither and disappear - like the brown and burned grass on a scorching summer day in Oklahoma.

One of the basic principles of the Christian life is to realize that neither wealth nor poverty give us special status in God's eyes. Neither the millionaire nor the homeless person can escape the curse of sin. Therefore, it is a foundational principle for Christians to have the same view as God about wealth and poverty. Do not let either determine how you view other people or how you treat them.

Unfortunately, it is a common human tendency to treat people differently according to their material status. Even worse, we actually view people as having more or less human value based on their success. A Christian should never be guilty of this. So the first lesson I want you to learn about the basic Christian life is that wealth and status have no bearing on our value to each other or to God. We are to avoid any personal pride in either wealth or poverty. We are also to avoid assigning any greater or lesser value to other people based on their bank account.

## **How to Love God When Life Stinks**

James 1:12 – 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.

Despite all the enthusiastic positive thinking, and "The Secret" type of metaphysical nonsense that is so popular today (even in church, sadly), the truth is: life is hard and you will face many trials. Difficulties and suffering of various degrees come to all of us on a routine basis, even if we want to pretend through "positive thinking" that they do not. The Bible is very clear on this issue, despite the fact that we have entire flavors of Christianity teaching that this is not true. Yes, hallelujah, there will come a day when the physical curse will disappear as completely and eternally as the spiritual curse has disappeared for those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. But for now, suffering and trials are a fact. Sometimes life stinks.

Part of the basic Christian life is knowing how God would have us respond and behave when trials come our way. James, in his very practical manner, comes to the rescue and tells us plainly:

James 1:12-18 – 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. 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. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 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. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. (NKJV)

First of all, in verse 12, in stark contrast to what many teach today, the Bible says that BLESSED is the one who endures temptation. Most translations today use the word “temptation” in this verse; the most accurate translation of the original Greek word is “suffering” or “trial.” Blessed is the one who endures suffering. Blessed is the one who endures trials. That is quite the opposite of the worldview which expresses “any suffering is unnecessary.” It is also in direct contrast with much of what we hear in many churches; these churches teach that suffering and hardship come from a lack of faith, and the Christian who exercises proper faith has been freed from anything negative in this life. Perhaps James did not get the memo.

So how are we blessed when we endure suffering and trials? The simple answer is this: when we see suffering as God sees it, and we respond to suffering in the way God would have us respond, we are blessed because we know that we are in God’s will and God will reward us for our faithfulness.

We are blessed when we endure suffering because of the joy that comes with knowing that we did not waver in our faith despite hardship. We are blessed when we endure trials because we look back and are able to see that God never left our side, and He cared for us every step of the way (even though this is sometimes impossible to see in the midst of the trial). We are blessed when life stinks because it shines the light on God’s goodness and his providential care. We are blessed when we endure tough times because it reminds us that this life is temporary, and our eternal reward is just around the corner.

So, you see, there is great blessing in suffering. I will never fill stadiums with ecstatic fans based on that message, but nonetheless, it is a priceless truth of the basic Christian life.

We learn to love God when we endure suffering, not only because of these blessings, but because God is not the source of our suffering. James teaches us that God does not cause suffering, and the source of our suffering is sin. All trials and suffering are harvested from the seed of this sin curse. Each hardship can be traced back to this curse. Of course, it all began with Adam’s first sin.

Sin begins as a desire of the flesh. If pursued, that desire is birthed into a growing sin in our life. That sin grows and brings forth death and suffering. God is never the source of temptation or sin. When we suffer, it is important for us to understand that God is not the source of that suffering; He is our rescue from it. A basic principle of Christian life is that we are never to blame God for any hardship which befalls us.

So building on what we have learned, we find: suffering is a blessing because it reminds us that all bad things are temporary and originate in sin -which will be eternally removed in Heaven. Suffering is also a blessing because it illuminates the fact that all good things come from God. When we endure the hardship and come through victorious, we realize that every good and perfect gift comes from God. That never varies or changes, and it is never overshadowed by the troubles of this life. God created us to have a relationship with Him and be unimaginably blessed for all eternity. Suffering reminds us of this fact.

One of the basic principles of living the Christian life is knowing how to respond to suffering and how to endure it. Through that response and endurance, we are blessed. We are reminded of the heavenly life to come, and God is glorified because we are the living testimony that God is never the source of evil, only the answer to it.

## The Question of Divorce

Malachi 2:16 – “For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce...”

I did not originally plan to have divorce as part of my teaching on basic Christian living. However, questions about divorce are among the most frequent I receive and given the fact that the divorce rate is not much less in Christianity than in the world, I think it is appropriate to include. Given that marriage is so fundamental to daily life, divorce certainly qualifies as one of the basic things Christians should have a Biblical understanding about.

I am frustrated, but not surprised, over the confusion and lack of understanding concerning Biblical teaching on divorce. Scripture is pretty straightforward about the topic but sound teaching is beaten down by a culture that has not only accepted divorce for just about any reason, but also wants to treat divorce as not really all that big of a deal. Predictably, this is exactly opposite of God’s instruction on divorce. In this section, I want to present a straightforward and simple explanation of what God says about divorce and remarriage.

Like any sensitive cultural or religious hot topic, you can go out and find any number of churches and Bible teachers who will tell you what you want to hear. Do you want permission or approval for divorce? There are plenty of Christian preachers, authorities, and writers who can explain away the clear Word of God and leave the door wide open for divorce on whatever grounds suit your need. You will find all sorts of definitions for “adultery” and all manners of Biblical interpretation that give just about anyone permission to divorce (or remarry). You will find teaching that is the equivalent of “God does not want you to be unhappy, go ahead and get divorced and if it’s wrong, God will forgive you.” You will find

religious authorities who will tell you there are a long list of behaviors and circumstances that are tantamount to breaking the marriage covenant, and therefore qualify for divorce.

On the other end of the spectrum, you will find those who are cold and hard about divorce for any reason and apply an extreme legalistic (often hypocritical) standard to marriage and remarriage. Of course the most common response to divorce in Christianity is simply that it is ignored either because “it’s none of my business” or “the problem is so big we cannot do anything about it anyway.” Divorce is seen as culturally acceptable and something the church should simply not be all that concerned about. You could extend this towards the complacent and casual attitude towards sin in general.

Let’s look at a straightforward and clear presentation of what the Bible says about divorce and remarriage. Your choice is either to take the Bible at face value, or entertain endless interpretations and personal opinion that fit cultural norms and personal preferences.

## **God Hates Divorce**

It is paramount to establish up front God’s opinion of divorce. Unlike humans who throw the word “hate” around casually, we must understand that when God says he hates something it means the Creator of the universe despises it so much that he wishes it did not exist (and it will not exist in eternity).

Malachi 2:16 – “For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.” (NKJV)

God hates divorce because it does violence to the relationships in the sacred institution of marriage - which is the foundation of humanity. Marriage brings stability, security, structure, and health, and is the means by which mankind continues and increases its existence. Divorce destroys the very bedrock of what the Creator has designed. Besides the question of sexual sin, this is also the greatest argument against the proponents of homosexual unions. God hates divorce and God hates anything that destroys or corrupts the most basic and primary relationship He established for His creation.

It is clear from Jesus’ own words that God only allows divorce because of man’s sinfulness and the hardness of our hearts:

Matthew 19:8 – He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (NKJV)

It is only because there are certain situations and consequences that arise from sinful choices that God allows divorce - even though He hates it. The clear and simple teaching of Scripture is there are only two reasons for which God allows us to divorce: adultery and abandonment.

## **Divorce on the Grounds of Adultery**

We hear great debate and long discussions concerning the definition of “adultery.” However, I think this is much like hearing former Pres. Bill Clinton ask “what is the definition of ‘is’”? Unless we are looking to complicate the issue or to explain it away, we are compelled to accept the definition in its simplicity. Adultery is a married person having sex with someone other than their own spouse. That always brings up a bunch of “yeah, but’s...”; however, I am only going to cover one of them since it is commonly presented as grounds for divorce: “Yeah, but didn’t Jesus say that even lusting after another woman is adultery?” Yes He did, but this is within the context of speaking about purity and His standard of morality. If divorce was allowed by God each time a married person is guilty of lust, at some point every marriage would be eligible for dissolution. I would venture to say that there is probably no one who has ever gone their entire married life and never lusted once, even if just slightly and for a single moment. So, obviously, Jesus is not saying that lust (which in terms of sin is equivalent to adultery) is grounds for divorce. The physical act of adultery is. Great discernment is needed, and wise counsel should be sought, in cases where a spouse’s unfaithfulness involves pornography or an intimate emotional/romantic relationship with someone else. Consider the simple clarity of these verses:

Matthew 19:9 – And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” (NKJV)

Matthew 5:32 – But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. (NKJV)

## **Divorce on the Grounds of Abandonment**

The second biblical allowance for divorce is when a non-Christian spouse abandons the marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16 – But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (NKJV)

When a married Christian has been abandoned by an unbelieving spouse and reconciliation is refused, God releases the Christian from the responsibility of that marriage. The unbelieving spouse that has abandoned the marriage is a covenant

breaker. However, as long as there is a reasonable chance for reconciliation, the Christian's responsibility is to pray for the repentance and salvation of their spouse and reconciliation of the relationship. Once it becomes obvious that reconciliation is never going to occur (this may happen quickly or may take a while depending on the circumstances), the Christian has grounds for Biblical divorce. The prudent Christian will seek the advice and counsel of mature Believers to help them know when reconciliation is no longer possible.

## **The Christian and Remarriage**

In all cases of Biblical divorce, a Christian is only permitted to remarry another Christian. This hardly even needs explanation. The reality of divorce and its subsequent heartache should be enough to teach any Christian they should only consider remarriage to someone who shares their Godly convictions about it. Just in case we need further direction, the Bible is clear:

Mark 10:11 – So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. (NKJV)

1 Corinthians 7:39 – A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. (NKJV)

A Christian who has been divorced on biblical grounds is free to remarry only another Christian. If the person you are going to marry has been divorced, they must have been divorced on biblical grounds as well. If either party was not Biblically divorced and the marriage occurs anyway, both are guilty of adultery because in God's eyes one or both of them is not free to remarry.

Christians who ignore God's clear Word on divorce and remarriage are subject to church discipline as clearly outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The reality is that very few churches today will ever enact church discipline or even seek to know the details of a divorce or remarriage... but that does not excuse us from being responsible. It is up to the spiritual leaders of each church to guard the sanctity of marriage by proclaiming the clear Word of God on the matter of divorce and remarriage. It is the responsibility of each individual Christian to take God seriously concerning divorce and when contemplating remarriage. The consequences of violating God's Word are not removed when leaders or individuals ignore what God says simply because our culture proclaims divorce to be a casual right with minimal consequences. . Do not be deceived, God is not mocked... whatever we reap we will sow and that includes violating God's Word when it comes to divorce and remarriage.

## **Divorce and Remarriage Before Becoming a Christian**

A foundational principle of Christianity is that we are to live our Christian lives starting at the point we are saved. Whatever circumstance or situation we find ourselves in, we are to live out our Christianity as God's Word becomes known to us.



If you become a Christian and you are married to an unbeliever, you are not to seek a divorce because your spouse is not saved. As a Christian, you are called to live a Christian life and to stay in your marriage as long as your unbelieving spouse does not abandon the marriage. By your example and prayer, perhaps your spouse may come to know Christ.

If you become a Christian and you have already been un-Biblically divorced and remarried, you are not to seek a divorce and try to return to the first marriage as a way to correct your mistake. A second un-Biblical divorce is not the answer to fixing the first. As a Christian, God expects you to obey Him. That would apply to whatever marital situation you are in at that time.

If you become a Christian while divorced and are not remarried, then it would seem a reasonable attempt to reconcile the first marriage is in order. If your previous (still unmarried) spouse refuses an honest effort to reconcile, this would seem to be equivalent to them abandoning the marriage - in which case the Christian would be free to remarry another Christian. If you were un-Biblically divorced and your spouse has already remarried, as difficult as it is, it does not appear the Bible allows for your remarriage.

## **A Word about Biblical Divorce**

Remember that God hates divorce. Even if you have Biblical grounds for divorce, you must keep in mind how much God despises it. Even when adultery or abandonment has occurred, our automatic response should NOT be to seek a divorce. There should always be an open door for repentance and reconciliation of the marriage before divorce is sought. The Christian who is secretly hoping for adultery, or is glad it has occurred because it gives them an "out" from the marriage, is not being faithful to God's viewpoint on divorce. God hates divorce and so should we. If we truly hate divorce, then we will seek it as an honest last resort.

While adultery and abandonment are among the most painful of emotional experiences, we must not forget the power of repentance and reconciliation. God can and often does restore marriages that have been torn apart by adultery or abandonment if both parties truly seek forgiveness and God's healing.

## **About Un-Biblical Divorce**

The forgiveness available through the shed blood of Jesus Christ covers any sin. While we applaud the repentant drug addict, murderer, or thief, uncompassionate and legalistic Christianity often looks down their nose towards divorce. This is an understandable, yet regrettable, backlash to the casual attitude our culture has about divorce.

However, we must never make the mistake of constraining God's forgiveness for any sin that is truly repented of, even if we fear grace may be abused. When a person has been un-Biblically divorced, if they repent and genuinely seek forgiveness from God, God will grant it. A true sign of genuine repentance is that reconciliation will be sought if remarriage has not occurred. If remarriage has occurred, then repentance over both the un-Biblical divorce and the un-Biblical

remarriage should be present... and the Christian should apply God's standards to the current marriage. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest or imply that a person should seek to leave a current marriage because the remarriage occurred un-Biblically.

It is a very difficult situation to be an un-Biblically divorced Christian and realize that remarriage is not an option. There is no denying how hard this can be, yet we know that God will honor our faithfulness to His Word. There are those that teach that once a Christian in this situation has either: 1) sought reconciliation and been denied; or, 2) the other spouse has remarried, they now are divorced on the biblical grounds of abandonment. While this may indeed be true in some cases, great caution should be exercised in this situation and spiritual counsel sought from mature and faithful believers. There are many questions to consider, and the divorced Christian is in a fragile dilemma where their own heart can easily deceive them. A Christian should never take remarriage lightly and should wisely seek the godly advice and opinion of multiple mature believers and their Christian leadership before considering remarriage to make sure they are not violating God's Word.

## **In a Nutshell**

In summary, the Bible's teaching on divorce and remarriage is this:

- There are two allowances for biblical divorce and those are: 1) adultery; and, 2) abandonment by an unbelieving spouse.
- Divorce should be a last resort after reconciliation and repentance is sought.
- If a Biblical divorce occurs, the Christian is free to remarry another Christian only.
- If salvation and/or genuine repentance occur after a divorce, reconciliation should be sought if neither are remarried. If remarriage has already occurred, the Christian should not seek to leave their new marriage. If the former spouse is remarried and the Christian is not, then the new Christian is free to remarry if the divorce was on Biblical grounds.
- In all instances of approved remarriage, it can only be with another Christian.

That is the plain and clear teaching of Scripture. The typical response I hear at this point is "it's plain and clear to YOU, that's your interpretation." In reality, this can be the response to ANY interpretation of Scripture, so each Christian must read God's Word for themselves and decide whether or not what the Bible simply says is what the Bible simply says. The Scriptures we find concerning divorce and remarriage are straightforward and not complex. A few simple verses tell us plainly what God thinks about divorce, the reasons He allows divorce, and who a Christian may remarry if Biblically divorced.

Sadly, if you want to find a Christian authority who will tell you it is okay to get divorced or remarried (regardless of your situation), you will easily be able to find one. As well, you can simply get divorced and/or remarried and most likely no

other Christian or church will show any concern or question it at all. Even if they do, you can simply move to the church down the street and no one will care. That is a sad commentary on the state of church leadership, Biblical teaching, and discipline.

The point is not to run around interrogating everyone about their marriage, or even their divorce; but, if we have absolutely no concern for God's standards, especially if God has called us to Christian leadership, then why have standards at all? If God gave us clear teaching about divorce and remarriage, then it is our responsibility as Christians to hold each other accountable to those teachings. We do not do it to be legalistic or to stick our nose in other people's business, we do it because we want God's best not only for our own marriage but for our community and the Church as a whole.

God's instructions on divorce and remarriage are not ambiguous, confusing, or complex. It is a simple matter of whether or not we want to accept God's standards... or simply do as we please. One the most common and saddest things I hear today is: "well, God doesn't want me to be unhappy and you don't understand my situation. I know the Bible says it's wrong to get divorced in my case but God will forgive me." This mindset is encouraged by the fact that a person can proceed and simply change churches, or never even be questioned at all by the church they are in (or by any Christians who know them personally). In our era of "personal rights" and "it's none of your business what I do," it is very hard for most people to grasp the idea of any sort of accountability or church discipline. But... that does not change our responsibility to God's Word.

God can and will forgive anyone truly repentant of sin concerning divorce and remarriage. No question about that. But it does not remove the awful consequences divorce is inflicting on our homes, communities, and churches.

## Ears and Hands

James 1:22 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (NKJV)

A basic part of the Christian life involves ears and hands. Ears hear, hands do. Hear nothing, or the wrong thing, then your hands will probably not know what to do, or know the right thing to do.

Hearing without doing is pretty useless. Doing without hearing is dangerous or futile. The point is, our hands are bossed around by our brains. Our brains are molded by the holes in the side of our head. Not only should you be careful what goes in, you have to then do something with it, or you are wasting your time. Let's examine verses 19-27 of James 1:

James 1:19 – So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; (NKJV)

"So then..." means something came before that. If you look, you will see that James was talking about loving God even while suffering. SO THEN... having been

told that God is not the source of suffering and we are His first fruits, we find our marching orders. Plain, simple, to the point.

## **Mouth Shut, Ears Open**

Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Listen, shut up, and do not get mad easily. Do I really have to write a whole bunch to explain that?

James 1:21 – Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (NKJV)

Listen, keep your mouth shut, do not be angered easily, AND get rid of wickedness and worldly filthiness in your life. It does not do a whole lot of good to hear God's Word, zip your lips, be patient... then turn around and engage yourself in all the world's filthy lusts and pleasures. The next part of the verse also reminds us if your mind and eyes are polluted with evil, your heart is not properly prepared to receive the "implanted word" with "meekness."

The implanted word speaks of Biblical knowledge that STICKS in your heart and GROWS. It does not just pass in one ear and out the other. The "implanted word" is alluding to the good seed planted in the good ground, ready to grow and create a bountiful harvest (Mark 4:8).

Meekness is power under control, discipline. It is a picture of routine diligence, effort, and hard work. In other words, receiving God's Word is neither haphazard nor casual but a planned EFFORT. What good is that? It "is able to save your souls." Can you think of anything more good than that?

James 1:22-24 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 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; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. (NKJV)

Now we get to the hands and ears part. We find the supremely practical advice of "don't just hear, do." Unlike Nike, it is not: "just do it." It is: "hear and then do what you heard". . . put to action the "implanted word."

We have a lot of deception today. No, not Satanic cults, I'm talking about inside the church walls. The Bible says we are deceiving ourselves when we "hear" but not "do." We have endless teaching, books, resources, preaching, radio, TV, and an internet full of Christian information. There is no lack anywhere, anytime, of Godly things to "hear," and yet we see an all-time LOW of "doing." I am not talking about religious acts, traditions, or functions at church. I mean DOING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in accordance to what we hear preached from the Word of God.

In fairness, a lot of what we hear today labeled "Christian teaching" is watered down, sugar coated, rah-rah, abundant life, success, positive-thinking, metaphysical humanism (did I cover all the bases?)... worldly motivational talks sprinkled with some out-of-context Bible verses. When you hear the wrong thing, you cannot help but DO the wrong thing. There will be a LOT to be answered for

on Judgment Day from the “Christian leaders and teachers” line. That is exactly why the Bible says “not many” should teach (James 3:1). If you look around, you would think the Bible says “everyone have a go at it” especially if you can make money, feel good, or be popular.

## **Ignoring Your Pimples**

Point being, despite all the poor teaching, we still have an all-time high availability of good teaching; but it does not seem, generally speaking, this good teaching is getting from the ears to the hands. Hearing much and changing little is self-deception, like a man who looks at himself in the mirror, sees all the scars, pimples, and messy hair, then walks away, forgetting what he just saw thinking instead that he is beautiful and perfect.

In summary, hearing God’s Word and not doing do it is like immediately forgetting the big nasty pimple you just saw on your nose. Hmm... not sure that would fly in seminary or the pulpit, but you get the point.

James 1:26 – 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. (NKJV)

## **Rein In That Tongue**

Do you think you are “religious”? That’s kind of a dirty word today and invokes images of a hypocrite going through the motions to appear “holy.” That is not what it means in the above verse. James is saying “if you really think you are Godly, but you do not control your tongue, you are fooling yourself... you are NOT Godly.”

He goes on to say that all your efforts to be Godly (“religious”) are a waste of time if you do not tame that mouth. That is a pretty powerful statement. Any time you read in the Bible something like “don’t bother, you are wasting your time,” you should perk up and take a good look. Nobody wants to waste their time, and we sure do not want to be wasting it when it comes to eternity.

**Rein in that tongue or quit  
wasting your time on Christianity.**

Burn this into your brain: anyone who does not put the reins on their evil little tongue is wasting their time trying to be Godly. That is how important it is to have tongue-control. If you are not putting a cork in that gossiping, complaining, lying mouth of yours, you are just fooling yourself if think you are living a Christian life. It is useless, a waste of time. You are lying to yourself. Wow... can there be a more powerful Biblical warning about an aspect of our behavior?

James 1:27 – 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. (NKJV)

## What Is Godliness?

James does not leave anyone wondering what true Godliness looks like. I am often asked “what is the Christian life? What can I do to please God? How can I know I’m doing God’s will?” There are a lot of answers to that, but there is one FOR SURE right here.

If you made James 1:27 the focal point of your entire life, you would not have to go any further to please God. He calls caring for orphans and widows PURE and UNDEFILED. That means there is NOTHING wrong with it. It is ONLY good.

To “visit them in their trouble” means to care for their needs. They are two of the truly helpless groups in this world. No parents, no family, no spouse, no one “responsible” for them. They cannot repay you. You will not get famous by caring for their needs. . . . There will not be awards and recognition for your actions. But God tells us it is pure and undefiled Christianity to care for orphans and widows – what other approval should we need?

And...

To keep yourself unspotted from the world. What is unspotted? Without spots (thought that one up all by myself).

It means that drops, drips, splatters, and residue from evil and wickedness are not on you. Does that mean that worldliness will never touch you or stain you? No... the verse says “to keep oneself...” That is a picture of continual de-spotting, de-greasing, de-staining. It is using the “Christian bar of soap” to continually wash yourself of the world’s spots (sin).

1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NKJV)

## In a Nutshell

Okay, let’s sum up Biblical ideals for the Christian life into one of those neat little lists:

- Lay aside filthy wickedness.
- Open your ears.
- Control that renegade that lives between your chin and nose.
- Just hear it... Just do it.
- Care for orphans and widows.
- Wash the sinful spots from your soul continually, and do not play in the filth.

That is about as plain and simple a description of “the Christian life” as I can come up with. Easy to understand, but requiring daily diligence and effort.

# Evil Favoritism

James 1:22 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (NKJV)

A basic principle of Christian living is to never play favorites. Never show partiality. Never.

What does that mean? Here is what it does not mean:

- It does not mean that you cannot have some friends that are closer than others.
- It does not mean that you cannot “like” someone more than someone else.
- It does not mean that you should not do something nice for someone that you cannot do for everyone.

It means that you do not count one person AS MORE VALUABLE IN GOD’S EYES than another. And more specifically, James tells us that we do not show favorable treatment to someone JUST BECAUSE they have money or because it may result in personal gain or advantage for us.

Favoritism in general is elevating the status of another person based on superficiality: looks, family, money, position, or race. Favoritism is based in selfish ambition when we do it for personal advantage, and pride when we think we can judge someone on external appearances.

Let’s take a look at James 2:1-13 (NKJV; emphasis mine):

James 2:1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

Plain and simple... do not practice your “faith” (refers to the Christian life as a whole) with partiality. Do not let favoritism be part of your life. Ever.

James 2:2-4 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, 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,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Gold rings and fine clothes in that culture clearly announced someone of material success and social status. Unlike today, it was more uncommon and if a man walked in with those things, their fine clothing would be instantly noticed.

Christians should never show favored treatment to the wealthy or powerful and ignore the poor or those you might deem unimportant. Favoritism demonstrates the weakness of man’s perspective as God uses the outcasts of the world just as surely as He uses the talented and popular.

Favoritism can be blatant: giving a seat of honor or showing all your attention to the favored. It can also be VERY subtle where the favoritism is in your mind and heart but you are careful to not show it blatantly by your actions.

Favoritism starts with the attitude of your heart and thoughts, regardless of how it is manifested. God is not fooled by mortals who harbor favoritism but disguise it outwardly through manipulation and schemes that our fellow humans do not pick up on. There is "in your face" favoritism... then there is secret favoritism that may fool other Christians, but not God.

When we show favoritism we become "judges of the heart." Only God can see into the human heart and know the REAL person. For us to show favoritism is to claim to have the power of God to know the secret nature of another person. We can judge external actions but never internal realities. The state of the human heart is God's domain alone. To show partiality is to "play God." That is why favoritism is forbidden.

James 2:5 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?

James is not teaching that God has chosen ONLY the poor, but ALSO the poor. It is human nature to think that poverty and low social status equate to uselessness and personal failure. We are reminded that externals are not trustworthy indicators. God sees past that. The Kingdom of God is promised to those WHO LOVE GOD... it is has nothing to do with the social standards of this world.

James 2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

We are reminded that most often it is the rich and powerful who oppress and cheat us, not the poor. So why do we show partiality to the rich anyway? One word: greed. We hope that by doing so, we might end up with some of that money, power, and privilege. C'mon, you know this is true. That is why we get a big smile on our face and become ultra-friendly with the beautiful, success people... but (often) impatient and matter-of-fact with the "losers." Let's just tell it like it is.

On top of that, who in this world are the ones routinely denying and blaspheming God? The ones who are rich, popular, and powerful. The poor can blaspheme and deny God too but we most often see the powerful and wealthy doing it because their success has caused them to elevate their opinion of themselves. Why would we honor someone who denies our Savior? For a chance at some personal attention from them? Please.

James 2:8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 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. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Huh? What does all that law stuff have to do with anything? James is saying this: you cannot be a “good Christian” in every other part of your life while showing favoritism... and pretend it does not taint your entire walk of faith.

Like I tell my kids, you cannot be a “liar” in certain situations without being a liar in all situations. You are either a “liar” or not. If you tell lies at work or to your parents, YOU ARE A LIAR. You do not get to pick and choose, or compartmentalize. In the same manner, you cannot show favoritism and claim the rest of your Christian life is just fine and dandy. If you openly engage in any sin, that sin permeates and stains your entire Christian life. We try to fool ourselves by thinking “well I’m a really good Christian except for this one little thing....”

James 2:13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Another aspect of favoritism is that it often involves showing less mercy towards the unfavored, even if it is just a by-product of our attitude and not a malicious choice. We are more patient, forgiving, and understanding with those we favor.

We are more likely to be blunt and “tell it like it is” with the less favored while pretending it is just showing “tough love” and being realistic. Oh, the games we play in our minds.

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We should NEVER show favoritism, EVER. To accomplish this, you must continually evaluate both your attitudes and choices towards others. It is very easy to slip over into favoritism while justifying it with some holy motive.

Remember, we cannot see into the heart. We should not act like we can. We must disregard material success, status, privilege, and power as the means by which we regard others.

Favoritism is a proclamation that we are like God, which is of course the first and most primary lie Satan would have us believe and is the foundation of all human pride and sin (Gen 3:4).

## Dead Faith

James 1:22 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (NKJV)

I want to teach you about dead faith... stated in various ways as:

- faith without works
- faith without action

- faith without good deeds
- faith without service
- faith without ministry
- faith without a physical manifestation of it” (faith in words only)

Many people say “I have faith” and they give evidence of it by stating their trust in God, belief in Christ, and joy in salvation. All those are good things but there is more to faith... James tells us very plainly that living faith is active faith:

James 2:26 – For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (NKJV)

There is no wiggle room in that statement. Faith without works is dead, a very negative statement conveying a positive concept. Given such finality, it is to our best interest to find out what James means. Let’s back up a few verses and see:

James 2:14 – What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? (NKJV)

Huh? Does that contradict plain Scripture that says faith IS what saves you (Eph 2:8-9; Gal 3:24; Rom 11:26; Phil 3:9 among others)? This verse has been used to create “religions” (as opposed to Christianity which is a relationship with God) and confuse many people.

Remember, the Bible does not contradict itself and always plainly interprets itself. So we know that faith alone saves us, since the Bible declares this beyond question. We know we do NOT earn our salvation by the merit of good works as every other religion teaches. In fact, this is the great chasm that divides Biblical Christianity from all other religions that teach “faith plus [something] = salvation.”

**Christianity = Faith + Nothing Else**  
**All Other Religions = Faith + [Something]**

Again, we know from Scripture that faith alone saves. We know from Scripture that we cannot earn our salvation through good works. So what does it mean: “faith without works is dead”?

The key is the context (the rest of the Scripture that surrounds the verse in question). The Book of James contains practical instruction about living the daily Christian life. Leading up to the passage about faith and works, we see James 2:1-7 instructing us to not show favoritism (as previously discussed in this book). The next five verses are about the Law, then verses 14-26 talk about faith and works. I will give you the answer first, and then I will show you the explanation. Here is the answer:

**“Faith without works” is a way to recognize faith that is FALSE**  
**because all true faith will be accompanied by good works.**

It does not mean that good works EARN salvation but that good works are demonstrable, authentic evidence that genuine faith (and thus genuine salvation) is present. More simply, James is saying that while the presence of good works is not proof positive of genuine faith (you can perform outward “good works” without faith), they are certainly a good indicator of genuine faith. On the flip side, the absence of good works IS proof positive of a dead or false faith. Let’s look:

James 2:15-17 – If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 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? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (NKJV)

It is not rocket science. Which response reveals true faith in Christ: to physically help those in need? Or to say “God bless you” and send them on their way cold and hungry? Faith without works is dead faith.

To make sure there is no confusion, James himself clarifies:

James 2:18 – 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. (NKJV; emphasis)

Good works are a tangible evidence (“show me”) of genuine faith. If a person declares their faith but manifests a life without good works, they have a false faith. It is impossible to live the genuine Christian life without good works because loving, serving, helping, ministering, and giving are woven into the fabric of the faith-filled life.

To declare faith is possible without good works would be akin to declaring human life possible without breathing. Therefore, just as breathing is evidence of life, good works are evidence of genuine faith.

In verse 20, James goes on to call someone “foolish” who even questions the obvious point he is making. To prove the assertion in real life, James lists a couple of well-known and accepted “faith” figures and proclaims it was their works that identified/substantiated their faith: Abraham and Rahab.

James’ final conclusion, which leaves no room for an alternative, was:

James 2:14 – What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? (NKJV)

James 2:26 – For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (NKJV)

You might wonder why James has to even make the effort to clarify something so obvious. The answer to that is simple: the fickle, petty, and immature nature of humans. We want the easy way out. We want to be part of the “club” with as little commitment, effort, and sacrifice as possible. It is a by-product of our sin nature.

So like a good father reminding his children that good intentions are not enough, they must be accompanied with self-sacrificing and diligent action, James takes care to remind us that faith alone, without attending good works, is a dead faith.

On a deeper level, the mature Christian is COMPELLED to good works by his faith. How can a Christian sit by in the face of so much need, hurt, and want... and do nothing? Yet, proclaim his "faith" to the world?

- "Oh, you are hungry? Well, God will care for you. I'll pray for you" without giving food? That is not faith.
- "Oh, you lost your job and your electricity is cut off and your kids are cold? God bless you. All will be well" without paying their electric bill? That is not faith.
- "Need to go to the doctor and no way to get there? I'll pray God will provide a ride" without going and taking them? That is not faith.
- "Your wife left you and you need help with the kids? Have faith brother, God will see you through" without making time to help? That is not faith.

Of course I am talking about when it is within our power and ability to physically help, but we send them on with a "God bless you" and do not lift a finger. . . that is not faith. True faith is demonstrated by our actions, our commitment, our sacrifice, our ministry to others, and our willingness to physically and tangibly HELP and bless.

James 2:14 – What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? (NKJV)

James 2:26 – For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (NKJV)

## That Little Thing That Controls Your Entire Life

James 1:22 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (NKJV)

There are few things that have more influence or cause us more regret than our MOUTH... that little thing between your teeth that does indeed at times seem to be utterly untamable.

A few rare souls exist that do not fight the constant battle of tongue but they are few and far between, or they are liars and self-deceived. There is always room for tongue improvement no matter how mature or self-controlled we are. We can always be kinder. We can always be wiser in what we say. We can always hold our tongue just a little more. We can always choose better words. We can always say something more edifying, more blessing, more effective.

But... most of us are not at the point where we are simply fine-tuning and improving our "tongue" (our words, our language, our communication). Most of us are still WAY BACK near square one where we are cleaning up our language from

foul or crude words; we are trying to learn not to gossip; we are working hard not to be so abrasive... and the list goes on:

- Complaining
- Mumbling discontentment
- Gossip
- Ungratefulness
- Impatience
- Rudeness
- Sarcasm
- Veiled criticism
- Open criticism

Those are things we need to QUIT. Then, there is the matter of the things we do not say that we should be saying:

- Blessing
- Thanks
- Encouragement
- Kindness
- Sympathy
- Compassion

See what I mean? The tongue is a HUGE issue, a monumental, pervasive part of our life; something that affects every moment of our waking hours.

## **Don't Get in a Hurry to Teach**

Typical of James, he has very practical and blunt advice about the Christian mouth. Let's take a look:

James 3:1: My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (NKJV)

In context, James warns us that few should become teachers. What is the primary tool of the teacher? The mouth. Every word a teacher utters, using their tongue to influence and guide others, will be judged by God. Teachers will be held accountable for what they say. In a broader application, there are other reasons.

Not all are gifted as public teachers (we are all private teachers in some manner to our family and friends). The temptation of wanting to be "up front" can result in pride and the desire for recognition. If a teacher is not willing to do the hard work of preparation and to diligently learn God's Word, they can misguide hearers no matter how good their intentions may be. James specifically warns against many becoming teachers because they have to be very diligent about controlling their tongue, not only while teaching but in their daily life as well.

## The Key to Perfection

Jas 3:2: 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. (NKJV)

Of course we know that no man can truly be perfect in this sin-cursed world. This bit of rhetoric is used to emphasize both the importance of controlling the tongue, and the difficulty of controlling our tongue. James is saying something like “we fail in a lot of ways but all of our other failures combined aren’t equal to how much our tongue gets us in trouble. You’d be perfect if you could keep that thing under control.”

From a practical perspective, if we could perfectly control our words, how much trouble would it save us? How many mistakes would be avoided? How many regrets would not be realized? How many more opportunities for blessing would be utilized instead of missed? In that sense, James does not exaggerate... if we could control our tongue, it would seem like our life is pretty much perfect compared to what it actually is now.

Imagine this: in heaven, all of us will say only the right thing. Really... stop and think about that. No words to regret, no embarrassing miscues, no angry outbursts we wish we could take back, no gossip, no lies, no false teaching, no misunderstandings. I would say one of the greatest gifts of heaven will be that our tongues will no longer be sin-cursed and we will not have to feel the sting anymore of knowing that once again we just said something we should not have said.

## The Power of the Tongue

Jas 3:3-6: Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 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. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 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. (NKJV)

Next, James gives us perfectly clear analogies about how powerful our tongue is. It is a tiny part that moves and controls big things. A spark that lights an entire forest on fire. A tiny rudder that steers a huge ship. A little metal bar in the mouth of big powerful horse controlling their every movement. It is the tiny hole in a dam that causes the whole structure to burst. It is the single atom that sets off a nuclear chain reaction.

The message is clear: do not underestimate the power of your tongue or it’s effect not only on you but those around you. Look at the extreme language (and nothing in the Bible is an accident): the tongue is a FIRE, a world of iniquity (evil). The tongue defiles the WHOLE body, set on fire by hell and able to destroy our entire life. James could hardly use stronger descriptions so it is to our benefit to sit up and really take notice.

## Preach It Brother!

Jas 3:7-9: For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. (NKJV)

James continues with extreme descriptions meant to really get our attention. Man can tame the wildest beast, the most ferocious animal... yet cannot keep his tongue still. The tongue is an out-of-control evil! You will not hear that proclaimed in today's "feel good, positive thinking, successful life, ear tickling" sermonettes.

*"All you people, listen up! Your tongue is an evil, uncontrollable monster! Your mouth is full of poison! You bless people one minute then tear them down the next! You should not be doing that. Get that wicked tongue under control and it will solve most of your other problems!"*

You probably won't hear that in a mega church today. James would not be invited back for a second sermon in most of our churches; yet who can deny that all humans have been guilty of this very thing? Truth be known, most people are guilty of using a wicked tongue on a regular basis. God did not have the writers of the Bible exaggerate unjustly so they could make a point. What James is saying is dead-on Truth and the spiritually mature have no difficulty in understanding and agreeing with his every word. The tongue is absolutely a primary cause of difficulties and failures as we walk through our daily life.

*Author's Note: of course what proceeds from the mouth starts in the heart, but that is a whole other lesson. Matt 15:18*

No, we will rarely hear James' words loudly proclaimed today. Yet this sweeping truth should dictate regular lessons and admonition about our tongue. Think about it: if the tongue is such a pervasive issue and struggle, can we give the topic a few minutes of consideration every couple of years and really hope to make progress? No. I would say that being alert, praying for God's help, and constantly evaluating the words that proceed from our mouth should be a priority every day. After all, if you can control your tongue, you can be "perfect."

## Squeezing Lemons

Jas 3:10-12: Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. (NKJV)

James concludes by saying in essence: "don't kid yourself." You cannot bless and curse with the same tongue and feel right about it. You cannot pretend your life is on the right track. That is like having clean water and dirty water come out of the same faucet. No water source can be both fresh and salty. If it has salt at all, it is all salty. In other words, you cannot compartmentalize your tongue and say "well

it's mostly good." If it is not all good, it is no good. Do not kid yourself. You have still got work to do.

One of my favorite sayings is "when you squeeze a lemon, you get lemon juice." This means what is truly inside someone cannot be concealed, especially when the pressures of life are applied. James presents the same idea... whatever you are, you are. You cannot be an apple tree and produce grapes. You cannot be a milkweed and produce cherries. If your tongue is spewing out gossip, unkindness, lies, and anger, do not pretend that a few words of kindness a moment later changes the essence of who you are.

It is a zero-sum game when it comes to the tongue: you either are, or you are not. You cannot bless and curse out of the same mouth. You cannot pray and gossip out of the same mouth. You cannot teach and lie out of the same mouth. You cannot get clean water out of a sewage spout. Well, you can... but you should not.

We will not be perfect until we shed this sin-cursed body and meet Jesus face to face. God does not require perfection... His only Son filled in the gap for us. But God does expect us to be WORKING TOWARDS PERFECTION, not in an effort to merit God's approval or salvation, but from a response of gratitude and love, wanting to be more like Jesus every day as we prepare to live for all eternity with Him. Oh yeah, and taming your tongue also makes you a lot nicer person to be around too.

I love James. He just gets right to the point, doesn't he?

## Two Types of Wisdom

James 1:22 – But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (NKJV)

Check out this passage:

Jas 3:13-18: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 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. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (NKJV; emphasis mine)

Everyone is "wise"... to some degree, in some way. Wisdom is taking the truth that you know, filtered through the experiences you have had, and then applying it both to your own life, and directly or indirectly teaching it to others (through word or example).

Everyone is "wise." Just depends on WHICH wise, and HOW wise.



At the highest level, pure wisdom is whatever God says.

On a personal level, wisdom is your personal truth (as you know it and have experienced) applied to life. For example, my teenage son recently had a car wreck. He was the passenger. Another car hit his door at highway speeds and almost killed him. His seat belt and an airbag saved him (of course we know God's Providential Hand was what actually saved him). So now he is "wise" about car safety: wear your seatbelt, make sure you buy a car with airbags, and be careful about pulling out into highway traffic.

My son will teach this wisdom directly by telling other kids to buckle up and saying "look how it saved my life." He will indirectly spread this wisdom by setting the example every time he gets in a car. It is a truth he has learned that he now applies to his life, and shares with others to use in their lives. Wisdom.

There is wisdom about life, business, relationships, marriage, family, money, and spiritual issues. Each of us has "wisdom" on all these topics. To the extent it is based on truth, and then communicated accurately, it is a good wisdom that benefits all. Our wisdom will exist in degrees based on our experience, the time we have taken to learn and contemplate something, and how much we have tested out our conclusions in real life.

So, we ALL have wisdom whether we think we do or not. Name a topic, especially a broad life topic (God, politics, money, family, marriage, relationships, etc.) and pretty much everyone has their own idea about it. That is their "wisdom." When that wisdom is expressed, we call that an opinion. Wisdom is just YOUR knowledge about life and then your application of it.

Of course we all know that some people are wiser than others. What we mean by this is that some people are closer to the "truth;" some people have more experience, some people live out truth more consistently, and some people are better able to communicate truth. A combination of these things is what we collectively call the "wisdom" of an individual. The closer to the truth (in our opinion) someone is, the more demonstrated experience they have on a certain topic, and the more effective they are at sharing it - all is the degree to which we say a person is more or less "wise."

As Christians we apply another layer... we then judge the degree to which a person's truth lines up with God's Truth and we consider a person more wise as they come into line with God's Word.

Okay, having said all that, what is the point? The point is, to be wise is a good thing. To share that wisdom is not only the right thing to do but a duty for us as Christians. God does not give us wisdom only for ourselves. He gives it so that we may share it among others.

## **There Are Only Two Choices**

The key is this: there are two source of wisdom, two standards by which we determine if wisdom is truly wise, or just seems wise in our human eyes. Genuine wisdom, authentic wisdom, effective wisdom, wisdom that counts for eternity has one measuring stick only: GOD. To the degree our wisdom agrees with,

illuminates, and parallels the revealed wisdom of God... to that extent our wisdom is TRUE wisdom (as God measures it).

Period. That is it. That is the standard. Your choice: man or God. Those are the only sources of intelligence (thinking; wisdom). Pick one. Here is what James says about it:

Jas 3:13: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. (NKJV)

First, wisdom is bolstered and authenticated by how we live. You cannot speak words that are not backed up by how you live. Even if your words are wise, a life not lived accordingly will cause those words to be doubted, rejected, or worse, seen as the OPPOSITE of the truth.

"John says marriage is sacred and you should be committed to your vows but look how badly he treats his wife and everyone knows he flirts like crazy..." Wisdom that is not backed up with good conduct is wisdom that will be ignored and rejected.

Jas 3:14-16: But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (NKJV)

There are two sources of wisdom, two springs, two origins. One is from the heart of man, one is from the heart of God. James does not have a lot of good things to say about wisdom that originates in the heart of man... it is envious, prideful, self-seeking, sensual, demonic, and confusing. Don't believe him? Look around.

- Look at all the "wisdom" in the political world today. Self-seeking? Envious? Deceitful? What a perfect example right in front of us all.
- Look at all the "wisdom" in pop culture today. Sensual? Evil?
- Look at all the "wisdom" of religion... talk about confusing.

The world is full of wisdom, with a million voices telling you their version of truth. This is exactly why the Bible makes the choice so definitive: God or man. Pick your source. Man's wisdom, just in case you missed it is: self-serving, self-seeking, self-bias, self-benefiting, self-motivated... see a pattern? Man's wisdom is always motivated by self-interest because of our nature to look out for NUMBER ONE.

Jas 3:17-18: 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. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (NKJV)

These verses tell us why we want God's wisdom, and what it looks like so we will be able to recognize it.

- Pure: unmixed with any other matter; free from dust, dirt, or taint; spotless, stainless; free from harshness or roughness and being in tune; being thus and no other.
- Peaceable: disposed to peace; not contentious or quarrelsome; quietly behaved; marked by freedom from strife or disorder.
- Gentle: free from harshness, sternness, or violence: delicate; moderate.
- Willing to yield: to give or render as fitting, rightfully owed; to give up possession of claim or demand; quick to show deference to others; willing submissiveness to others.
- Full of mercy: compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender; lenient or compassionate treatment; compassionate treatment of those in distress; charity, clemency, grace, leniency in disposition.
- Good fruit: the effect or consequence of an action or operation; the life of a Christian should produce Godly fruit (Gal 5:22 [3]; Eph 5:9 [4]).
- Without partiality: wisdom that shows no favoritism to people because of their status or because of personal benefit to us.
- Without hypocrisy: wisdom that is applied to our own lives as well.

Evaluate your own wisdom, and the wisdom pronounced by others, and see if it measures up to that standard. To the degree that it does, then you can safely embrace it as “wisdom from above” – God’s wisdom. This is wisdom that we can count on, that will truly make a difference, that will make our lives better, that will help us walk the Christian life in the most fulfilling way.

Most conscientious people want to be “wise.” Christians have a unique source of wisdom that is promised unconditionally:

James 1:5 – 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. (NKJV)

It is just like our good God to tell us we SHOULD BE wise, then turn right around and provide us with all the wisdom we can ever ask for (have you been asking?). God never directs us to do something or be something that He does not then provide for.

Wisdom... there you have it. It is either fleshly or Godly. Now you know how to tell the difference and where you should get more.

## Strife and Turmoil

James 4:1 – Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (NKJV)

1. STRIFE: bitter sometimes violent conflict or dissension; an act of contention; fight, struggle; exertion or contention for superiority.
2. CONTENTION: persistent argument or debating.
3. DISSENSION: disagreement; contentious quarreling.

4. DISCORD: lack of agreement or harmony; active quarreling or conflict.

DO NOT CONTINUE READING THIS SECTION UNLESS YOU HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF, OR PART OF, ANY OF THOSE THINGS LISTED ABOVE...

Okay, now that the liars are gone (I will do another lesson for them later), the rest of us can take a look at this issue: where does strife, arguing, fights, and contention come from? If you know where it comes from, can you chop it off at the source? I think so... let's take a look at James 4:1-6:

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 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. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 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. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (NKJV)

**Where do wars and fights come from among you?**

Wars and fights... a daily part of the human experience starting with countries, religions, races, cultures, gangs, political divisions, down to churches, families, homes, and individuals. Wars and fighting... there is no more accurate definition of humanity; never has been, never will be until God brings to an end this sin-cursed creation.

**Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?**

James, in typical practical fashion, cuts right to the heart of the matter. Wars and fighting come from our desire for "pleasure," an umbrella term for selfishness, wanting our own way, self-centeredness, and personal interest. It does not matter whether it is Catholics and Protestants bombing each other, Jews and Muslims at war... or a husband and wife slamming doors and cursing each other. Whether it is Hispanic gangs shooting Asian gangs or white supremacists killing Jews... a church member stirring up contempt for the Pastor, or a mother-in-law causing turmoil in the family... it all comes from the source: personal desire for pleasure (selfish interests).

**You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war.**

I want your wife. I want your oil. I want your position. I want your money. I want your life. I want your happiness. I want you to preach what I want to hear. I want you to fulfill my needs. I want you to make me happy. I will do whatever I have to do to get what I want, no matter how many times it takes, or what it takes.

Who am I talking about? A person? A religion? A culture? A country? A political ideology? A marriage? A church member? Yes.

Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Speaking directly to Christians, James addresses the heart issue: we want what WE WANT rather than wanting what GOD WANTS. As we mature, these two should continue to more closely align. As we transform our lives and begin to want what God wants, the wars and fighting ends. The farther away we get from God's desire, fighting and wars will increase. It is a simple and inevitable equation.

As we mature, we begin to recognize that even when we ask God something (in prayer), often we are asking for selfish reasons - we ask "amiss." Why? Because we want things to spend on our pleasures. In modern language, this verse might be worded as "you aren't being blessed because you aren't asking God for those blessings. And even when you do, you are asking for selfish reasons, wanting God to give you blessings that are really meant to promote your own selfish interests." Ouch... James just gets right to it, don't he?

**Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?**

Huh? What does adultery have to do with this? James is saying that our lives, our desires, our wants should be "married" to God's. When we chase off after our own selfishness, it is like a spouse who commits adultery. We are doing the worst kind of damage to our relationship with God.

Seeking after our own desires (which result in wars and fighting), is doing what the world does. We are identifying with the world, acting like the world, choosing the world. Don't you know that the world is against God? There is a deep-seated ill will between God and the world. There is a mutual hatred (enmity). When we choose our own way (our pleasures), we side with those who hate God.

**Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace.**

In short, God sincerely and intensely wants our loyalty. He wants us to choose HIM. Even when we are straying, the Holy Spirit within us jealously goes about trying to pull us back from the world onto God's side. Have you ever thought of that and thanked God for it? Even when we are choosing our own selfish ways, God relentlessly works to open our eyes and turn us back to Him. Wow...

**Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."**

James leaves this with some encouragement. It feels like we can never win the battle against our selfishness. It seems like wars, fighting, contention, strife, and arguments will never cease. They will not... for the proud. Who are the proud? Those who think they do not have a problem. Those who think they can do things without God's help. Those who blame it on everyone else.

However, for the humble - those who KNOW they can be selfish and KNOW that God is the answer - God has abundant grace and will help us in every way with the wars and fighting that come our way. He will help us not to be the cause. He will help us deal with others when they are the cause.

Take a look at the strife, contention, disagreements, and fights going on in your life. Are you ready to admit that the sources of them are your own selfish desires? If yes, then God has grace for you and is ready to help. If no, then you have sided with the world and God's not going to be all that happy about it.

## How to Cure Your Worldliness

James 4:10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (NKJV)

In this day and age of self-esteem, self-focus, self-improvement, self-love, self-forgiveness, and self-worth, any talk of humility and denying yourself is cast off as the old-fashioned ramblings of the out-of-touch religious zealot. It is a good thing that Jesus was not born in the 21st century. Nobody would leave their therapeutic pews long enough to listen to the self-esteem-robbing message of the Sermon on the Mount. James would not get much of a following either.

But way back in those archaic and unenlightened days of the early church, James was very clear about what we need to do to cure worldliness and human pride: humble yourself. No, not the self-aggrandizing version that lifts a person up by making them APPEAR humble, but the real humility that sees ourselves for what we truly are, how weak we truly are, and how prone to evil we truly are. THAT kind of humility- the kind that robs you of your treasured "self-esteem" (a term predictably missing from Scripture and easily refuted by the same).

James 4:7-10: Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (NKJV)

Before we take a look at each part of the passage, let's be reminded of the context. The book of James is about practical Christian living. He gives no-nonsense advice and instruction on how to be holy, avoid sin, and live right. Leading up to this passage, James tells us how pride causes strife, contention, and sin, which is how the world operates. He moves now directly to the cure for pride: humility.

James 4:7: Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (NKJV)

Submitting to God is exactly the opposite of human pride. Submission is the essence of humility, whether it is submitting to the truth, deferring to another's preference, accepting our God-given roles, or making our desires/will subservient to a greater Truth. Submit to God. That is humility. Humility is the cure for pride. Pride is the root of confusion, contention, discord, and strife. If you want to rid yourself of those worldly traits, then apply the cure.

Next we see “resist Satan and he’ll run away.” This is an interesting point. Nowhere in Scripture do we find commands to “rebuke Satan,” bind him, or constantly address him with arrogant and witty threats to control him. If Satan were affected one bit by every rebuke, declaration, or command uttered by Christians “in Jesus’ Name,” he would have been cast into the abyss and destroyed long ago. But we do not find Scripture telling us to confront or command Satan.

Scripture tells us to resist Satan, and he will find someone else to mess with. God does not give us control over Satan. Too many Christian teachers and Pastors mistakenly run around commanding Satan to do this or that, and encourage their listeners to do the same. Some of it is showmanship, some of it is arrogance, and some of it is Biblical illiteracy.

God clearly gives us instruction on what to do when Satan or his henchmen come calling. Resist them, and they will flee. They will run away. How do we resist them? By stomping our feet and using colorful (but arrogant) proclamations like “git on outta here you devil a’for I stomp you real good in Jesus’ name!!!” No, we resist. What is that? Glad you asked. Jesus answers that for us:

Luke 4:4-12 “it is written...”

I wish I could surprise you with some sensational new Prayer of Jabez or similar fad that will sweep Christianity, but there it is, modeled for us by none of than Jesus Himself. You resist Satan by answering his temptations and accusations with “the Bible says...,” “God’s Word tells us...,” or “the Scripture teaches...”

You see the problem with this simple approach though don’t you (other than it is boring compared to “7 Spiritual Power Laws” or Jesse Duplantis)? You have to know what the Bible says. That means you have to read it, learn it, study it, and live it. It is much simpler to use some positive confession or witty “in Jesus’ Name” rebukes, but those come from our sinful minds not God’s inerrant Word.

Why is Satan even mentioned in this context of pride and humility? Because Satan is the ultimate example of pride and as a hater of humility. He will do all he can to inflame your pride, which results in quarreling, contention, strife, and worldliness. We need to know how to run him and his buddies off when they come calling to our prideful flesh. Answer every temptation and every accusation with “The Bible says...” and Satan will tuck tail and run. Not because of your authority, your confidence, or your courage, but because he cannot hope to compete with or defeat the true power of God’s Word.

James starts by telling us to BE humble. Now he tells us HOW:

James 4:8-9: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (NKJV)

It is one thing to tell someone to be humble, but that leaves us to figure out how and you know what happens when sinful and deceived humans start trying to figure something out... even something Godly. We ruin it, distort it, falsify it, and

figure out to do it in such a way as to glorify us. Result: false humility. So James tells us how:

- Draw near to God: prayer, time spent listening for Him, reading His Word.
- Cleanse your hands: repent of your sin, recognize it, admit it.
- Purify your hearts: commit to no longer sin (“go and sin no more”).
- Lament, mourn, weep: express true remorse for sin, recognize it’s true destruction, believe how offensive sin is to God what His response to it is.

When we think on those things it is hard to be prideful. Rather, it shows us our place, our weakness, our contribution to the misery of mankind, because of our own sin. It is the opposite of being prideful (“I’m not that bad, I’m a good person, I’ve done more good than bad”). It is meditation on these Truths that will produce genuine humility.

James 4:10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (NKJV)

- What: be humble.
- How: think on the things of God listed above.
- Results: God will lift you up.

Huh? Isn’t that PRIDE? This is a different kind of “lifted up.” To be lifted up by God is like being rescued, comforted, cradled, refreshed, enlivened, empowered, and embraced by someone who cares for us when we have hit rock bottom. We do not deserve it, we have not earned it, and we cannot demand it. But in love, God comes along after we have discovered true humility and lifts us up, helping us to discover the glorious riches and eternal worth GOD achieved for us separate and apart from anything we have done, or could do (in fact, it is DESPITE us).

Like many Christian concepts (first shall be last, the least is greatest, the servant is exalted), we find something very OPPOSITE of the world’s thinking: to be lifted up by God and in God’s eyes, we must completely humble ourselves.

There is a human application of this “lifting up” too. If we humble ourselves, we rid our life of pride, which helps us to avoid worldliness, strife, and problems with our fellow humans. In that sense, we are “lifted up” in the eyes of others as a person of patience, graciousness, peace, and kindness.

Even though James would not get invited to speak at many of our huge churches where you can have your best life today, I will take his counter-cultural and life-producing advice any time over the ear-tickling, spiritual junk food of today.

## The REAL “Don’t Judge”

James 4:12 ...Who are you to judge another? (NKJV)

Every time I do a lesson that mentions “judging,” I have to open with a little lesson first. One of the most overused phrases by both Christians and unbelievers



is “the Bible says don’t judge,” Many Christians shrink in peer-pressure-induced fear in the face of this silly argument. They should not. I try to never miss a chance to arm Christians with a refutation of this popular proclamation.

## **The Bible Says Judge!**

The Bible does not say “don’t judge” in the sense of it being a universal declaration regardless of context. In essence, the Bible says “don’t judge in a way that will bring judgment on yourself.” It has a couple of implications: do not be a hypocrite (applying a Godly judgment you do not live by onto others), and do not judge too harshly (a lack of compassion or being unreasonable).

I am not going to expound that whole lesson here so let me give you the nutshell: we all make judgments every day. We judge rape to be wrong. Stealing is wrong. You would probably judge me hitting you in the face as wrong. Even pronouncing someone as “judgmental” is making a judgment (a blatant fact overlooked by everyone tossing that accusation around). As Christians, we make judgments about what is right, what is wrong, what is edifying, what is pleasing to God, NOT based on our own preferences but based on God’s Word. We “judge” everything by God’s standard found in Scripture. Christian or not, everyone makes judgments constantly.

Verses like Luke 6:37 (“judge not lest you be judged”) are telling us not to be hypocrites, not to judge without compassion or understanding, and not to judge based on our own standards rather than using God’s standards.

Again, the human experience is full of judging every day. Liberal, politically correct people (relentlessly guilty of saying “the Bible says don’t judge!”) make judgments by the minute about conservative ideas, environmental beliefs, political ideology, and without question, they JUDGE Christianity harshly. They JUDGE all the time. They just do not like being judged. That is not a trait exclusive to Liberals... the whole human race struggles with that hypocrisy.

Every person JUDGES every day, all day long about everything from the mundane (“that guy shouldn’t run red lights”), to the social (“the death penalty is wrong”), to the eternal (“I don’t believe in God”). You are not CAPABLE of NOT judging. No one is.

So quit quivering when someone says “God says don’t judge, nah-nah-na-na-nah...” and be ready to explain to them what the Bible really does say. And remind them they are being judgmental for accusing you of being judgmental! Now, on to our lesson about judging:

## **The Bible Says Do NOT Judge**

Ha, ha... couldn’t resist. Actually, the Bible DOES say that but you have to take it in context. Let’s see what James says about judging in chapter 4 of the book of James:

James 4:11–12 ~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. There is

one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? (NKJV; emphasis mine)

James engages in practical teaching about living the Christian life. He leads up to the statement in verse 11, having first taught us about wisdom, not to play favorites, faith without action is a dead faith, keep your tongue under control, and to rid yourself of pride and be humble. He continues with a direct command about not speaking evil of a fellow Christian. Let's break it down phrase by phrase:

**Do not speak evil...**

Evil here is the idea of badmouthing, unfairly criticizing, being derogatory or slanderous.

**... of one another...**

It works both ways friends.

**..brethren.**

James is giving specific instructions to Christians. Yes, we should not go around speaking evil about ANYONE but James is emphasizing the brotherhood and family aspects of being part of God's household.

**He who speaks evil and judges his brother...**

When you speak evil in this manner, you are putting yourself in God's place, setting yourself up as the Judge of your Brother or Sister. Remember, we are not talking about confronting someone over sin or rebuking obvious wrong (as determined by Scripture). We are talking about the kind of evil speak that is truly JUDGMENTAL, the kind of judging condemned repeatedly in Scripture.

**... speaks evil of the law and judges the law.**

When you speak evil of another Christian, you set yourself up as The Law thereby insulting and diminishing God's Law. You are judging God's Law to be inferior to your own personal law, which apparently approves of your evil speaking... even though God's law forbids it.

**But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.**

Again, if you set yourself up as judge by speaking evil of your brethren, you are not obeying God's law... you are elevating yourself over God and Brother as judge.

**There is one Lawgiver...**

And it ain't YOU.

**...who is able to save and to destroy.**

God is both Judge and Forgiver. He alone can forgive and show mercy to those who have broken His Law. Or punish those who do not repent. You have no right to be judge, lawgiver, or forgiver, in the sense of taking God's place. When you speak evil of another Christian, you are setting yourself up as the judge of them, applying your law to them, and executing your justice on them.

## Who are you to judge another?

This is not rhetorical. Answer the question... who are YOU to judge, condemn, and execute (their reputation, feelings, etc,) another Christian based on your own version of justice and law?

We are commanded to confront, rebuke, correct, and lovingly redirect those who violate God's law (Matt 18:15-17; Acts 20:31; 1Cor. 4:14; Col 1:28; Titus). Even Godly rebukes should never smack of badmouthing or slandering but be done with language and motives meant to restore the sinful.

There is no place in God's family for evil speaking. Remember what you are really doing next time you are tempted to badmouth someone: you are elevating yourself over God.

## Today Not Tomorrow

James 4:14 ...whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. (NKJV)

Christianity is about TODAY. That does not mean we have no care or plans for the future. It means we know that our future is in God's hands and we do not place our TRUST in our own schemes and declarations. Consider what James says starting with 4:13:

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.

Again, this is not an excuse for laziness or pretending that tomorrow or next year will never happen, so why bother preparing. No, this is about two opposing attitudes:

1. I'm the lord of my life. I'm going to make this happen and that happen. With no regard for God's plan for my life, I'll determine what I'm going to do and when.

### VERSUS

2. God is in control. He is Lord. I will make my plans for the future but make them knowing that this may be my last day on earth. I'm not promised tomorrow or next year. And my plans must always be subservient to God's will. They may happen, they may not... God may change them or He may bring me home to heaven.

James reminds us that compared to all mankind, compared to all human history, and especially compared to eternity, our life is a whisper, a vapor, a puff of smoke. And it indeed it is.

Do you remember your great grandparents? Do you even know their names? What about their grandparents or theirs? With few exceptions, no matter what we

accomplish, build, or plan, we are long forgotten after 3-4 generations, usually less. That is sad for unbelievers. It is inconsequential for those going to heaven because we will have all eternity to then get acquainted with all those who come before us, and all those who come after.

**15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."**

We should live our lives for today, submitting everything we plan and hope for to God's will. This flies in the face of much of the positive-thinking, positive-confession crowd who declare that you should proclaim what you want (and believe God will do it)... some magic spiritual law will force Him to do it. I have been told numerous times, and have heard it taught on television by several prominent "faith teachers," that saying "if it is the Lord's will" is a lack of faith and "negative, wishy-washy confession." Sorry... I will side with Jesus and the Apostle James before I will agree with any human.

- If the Lord wills... (James 4:15 [4])
- Not my will but yours be done... (Matthew 26:39 [5])

In fact, James goes so far as to call it sin if we do not have that perspective:

**16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

When we make plans that do not keep God's will and our temporal nature in mind (we are not promised tomorrow), we are guilty of bragging and arrogance. James tells us that all such boasting is evil; in other words, it is SINFUL. I would encourage you today, if you practice the popular concept of "positive confession," to consider this: be positive, there is nothing wrong with that. But consider whether declaring your "confession" without submitting it to God's will is a Biblical idea... or something a human has convinced you to do appealing to self-interest.

Again, there is nothing wrong with planning. There is nothing wrong with speaking in a positive and affirming way about the future or your life. There is everything wrong with not submitting it ALL to God's will and to the realization that you might not even be here tomorrow. That is not a "negative confession"... that is SCRIPTURE. That is reality.

Now, you know what is "good" straight from the Bible (to submit everything to the Lord's will, "if it is Your will" and "thy will be done"). To not do it, is sin.

## **Special Instructions About Money (Yeah, I'm Talking To YOU)**

James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! (NKJV)

This is one of those lessons that have to start with a preface and a definition or people will either immediately: 1), be offended; or 2), think it does not apply to them.

## **Preface**

There is nothing inherently sinful about being wealthy (we better hope not, as you will see from the definition). There nothing inherently pious or holy about being poor either. We are experts at being prideful no matter what social status we have. It is our sin nature at its best. So do not think this message is a slap at “the rich,” which has become the social-political weapon of choice in the West today (class envy... demonizing the “rich” so the “poor” will vote for you). That should lead us to an obvious question though... what does the Bible mean by “rich”?

## **Definition**

The Bible defines being “rich” as having more than what we need to survive TODAY. In other words, not worrying about food or clothes for tomorrow. “Tomorrow” is not symbolic for the coming weeks, months, or years. Literally, TOMORROW.

Americans, Europeans, and in general those in “the West,” do not realize or remember that life for most people for most of world history was basically this: wake up, work that day for bread and necessities... get up tomorrow and do it again. This continues to be true for much of the world today.

Now, I will be the first politically incorrect person to declare that the obvious reason for war-torn, poverty-stricken nations almost always parallels that country’s abject rejection of God and Christianity. Wherever you find a country that embraces God, true equality (the Christian version, not the current politically correct version), and genuine freedom, you usually find prosperity, personal responsibility, and a flourishing society.

IT IS SUPERIOR CULTURE. Gasp!!! Did I really say that???? Aren’t all cultures and societies “equal,” just some of us are more “fortunate,” and therefore should feel guilty about our “luck”? No. That is socialistic hogwash. There are lifestyles, principles, and cultures that are superior in their results and success. I mean more specifically there is ONE that is superior: a culture built on Godly fear, humility, and Biblical principle. How “intolerant” of me.

## **The Misery Is On The Way**

Now that you know you are not “holy” because you think you are poor; and, in reality if you are reading this, there’s a 99% chance you are rich by Biblical standards, let’s cut through all the sugar-coating and see what James is teaching us about our wealth. In his typically blunt and practical fashion, we find timeless principles about wealth that transcend all of man’s designs about economy, prosperity, and materialism (in other words, what James says is true regardless of what system is in place, ie. capitalism, socialism, etc.). Starting with James 5:1:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

James is saying “pay attention, this is serious...” He is using a triple exclamation point, a screaming alarm, big red flashing verbal lights. Pay attention, you rich (you and me by Biblical definition), James wants to teach you something very important about money; or, more specifically, the ungodly accumulation and use of money. That is the point of these six verses: condemnation for dishonorable ways of obtaining and misusing wealth, thereby dishonoring God - the One who blessed you in the first place.

## **Who's Your Real God**

Keep in mind that James is addressing professing Christians in his letter. So we can draw the conclusion from these verses that he had seen and needed to deal with people who claim Christ, but still had a completely worldly outlook about money and business. It is a dire warning of the consequences for those who put on Christ in name but whose real god is money. In our age of materialistic, positive-thinking, ear-tickling Christianity, it is no wonder that we do not hear this passage taught often.

v. 2-3: Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 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.

Ouch, that won't preach today. What is his point? All riches in this life not invested in heavenly treasure are doomed to destruction. They will rot, be stolen, decay.... lost to disease, theft, or disaster. No matter how much you accumulate or hoard, wealth not obtained and used to God's glory is destined to bring us misery and judgment, not fulfillment.

## **Treasure Heaping**

James points out one particular mindset: those who heap up treasure for the last days. In other words, they believe that if they have a big enough bank account, retirement fund, and material resources, they will be immune to the insecurities and troubles of life. How foolish... the poorest man is more secure in his trust of God than the richest rich in his wealth. Man learns nothing from history. Even if James did not declare this truth, we have seen it to be true in human examples over and over. How many stories are there about spectacularly wealthy people who end up miserable and lost at the end of their life?

Again, it is not the MONEY that causes this misery... it is the ungodly love and lust for money.

v. 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.

Because it was common in his time, James points out the field owner who cheated his workers. God hears the cries of persecution from all those who have been cheated out of income they truly deserved. Some thoughts on how this applies to us today:

Are you generous in nature? When others work for you or serve you, are you instinctively generous, or do you consider it “just business” to pay them as little as you possibly can? It may not even involve cheating them out of pay but simply an attitude of being as stingy as possible to keep more money for yourself.

When you enter into business deals or personal financial agreements, is your primary attitude to manipulate the most advantageous arrangement FOR YOU and “let the other guy worry about themselves”? Is it just “tough luck” if you are smarter or more experienced and can get them to agree to something that is heavily in your favor? That does not mean we should not be smart, shrewd, frugal, and conscientious about business... it means that our natural inclination should not be an effort to see if we can really “put it to” the other guy financially. Do you think internally: “what is a win/win, fair, God-honoring arrangement”? Or is it “how can I work this to MY greatest advantage regardless of what it does to them”? After all, business is business and if they are not smart enough to get a good deal, that is their problem, right?

Take those same thoughts above and apply it to any personal financial arrangements: personal loans, buying something from another person, or someone providing a casual service to you. Do you seek your greatest advantage regardless of the other person? Are you generous and Godly in your financial dealings with other? Even if it is something simple like paying someone to do basic chore? If they say “how about \$5?” is your first thought “how about less?” or “how about I bless you with \$10?”

For the person whose god is money, they seek to keep as much for themselves as possible... it is a mindset that does not consider the OTHER person

James reminds us that God hears all the genuine complaints from those we have manipulated, cheated, or taken advantage of for financial gain. And God knows our heart when we “milked” someone to our advantage. I am not sure I want to face a crowd of people I cheated, with God standing behind them, arms folded, with that “we need to talk” look.

v. 5: You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

If your god is money, then typically pleasure and luxury are a high priority too. The usual disclaimer here: God is not condemning our enjoyment of his material blessings... He is condemning those who compile wealth by taking advantage of others then living it up while those they walked over do without.

## **And Then You Flaunt It**

Leaving no doubt what God’s opinion is, James uses the harshest of descriptions: slaughter, condemnation, murder (into verse 6 too). On a side note, it is ironic today that our entitlement-minded, politically-correct, socialist politicians and activists use similar inflammatory rhetoric to condemn the free market and the honest, Godly accumulation of personal wealth. Once again, we see sinful man turning God’s principles upside down to do exactly what God is condemning: taking advantage of people.

In context, the “pleasure and luxury” James talks about is blatant, in your face, make-fun-of-the-poor flaunting of wealth. It is adding insult to injury. I cheated you out of your money, now I am enjoying it too! It also implies that the lust of this wealth and lifestyle becomes a consuming sin. It feeds on itself and perpetuates the cycle. Most of us have seen these types of people many times. Money is everything. Prosperity is primary. Lifestyle is paramount and the thought and pursuit of it takes primary focus in life, including their Christianity. For a couple of decades now, we have had an entire segment of Christianity that seems singularly focused on prosperity, turning it into a Godly attribute that is evidence of a so-called “faith.”

The “day of slaughter” is not just alluding to the consequences of ending up miserable and empty in this life... it is a direct proclamation of divine judgment by God. Ending up miserable in this life will be a cakewalk compared to the judgment God has waiting.

v. 6: You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

James describes the natural progression that occurs: a lust for wealth, the accumulation through manipulation and cheating others, hoarding and finding security in wealth, addiction to the lifestyle it brings, and finally a complete abandonment to it all when the person will go to any length to “get more.” The rich of James’ day were using the courts to “condemn” and “murder the just”... in other words, using the legal system to extract wealth from others that you do not deserve and did not earn. They were “killing” people’s lives in court. Of course, nothing like that happens today, does it?

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As Christians, we need to learn to rid ourselves of any tendency to think that “the rich” does not apply to us. It does. We are VERY RICH by Biblical standards. Given that, we need to be on alert for the sins, tendencies, and attitudes that James so ardently warns us about. If you think you are immune to ever making money your god, I have these famous words of warning: pride goes before the fall.

Sometimes we dismiss passages like this as warnings to Donald Trump and Bill Gates. That’s a mistake. We are all susceptible to the trap James exposes.

## Patience & Overcoming

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. (NKJV)

Ah... “be patient.” Is there any less-welcome admonition these days? We do not want to be patient... we want spiritual success NOW. We want prosperity NOW. We want Godly mountaintop experiences NOW. The long-term, methodical, routine, patient life just does not make good marketing. It is common today to seek after a consistent stream of extraordinary, exclamatory, and superlative experiences in our Christian life. We need to send old James to a “3 Keys to Spiritual Victory TODAY!” seminar.



But, since James said it, and it made the cut in the Bible, I guess we better take a closer look. Let's examine seven verses that outline practical Christian living for all ages in all times. James will not make the Bible Book Store bestseller club with any of his advice but I guarantee you one thing: it is relevant and appropriate for us today (especially when you add it to James' previous teaching on subjects like controlling your tongue)...

## Be Patient Like the Farmer

7-8 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. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

"Therefore"... this ties the thought in this verse with the previous topic which was people, not trials or suffering like in James 1. In context, the encouragement here is to be patient with other people, even the oppressors of world.

Why? James answers that too: because Jesus will return. This life is a wisp of a vapor in time compared to eternity. There is no need to be impatient or unnecessarily upset about people who mistreat us, because Jesus will return soon and: 1), avenge and correct all wrongs; and, 2) all wrongs will cease.

Be patient because you know the end. Be patient because the end is near. Be patient because the soon-coming Lord Jesus is on the side of the righteous. Be patient because no human, even an oppressive one, is worth making us anxious and impatient ESPECIALLY when we have already been assured by God, He is going to make all wrongs right in His time.

In case we cannot figure out what that looks like, James comes to the rescue with a picture of patience: a farmer does not plant a seed one day and get all bent out of shape that a basket of corn is not on his table a week later. No, the farmer PATIENTLY waits because...

- He understands the process.
- He knows the final outcome from the start.
- He realizes it takes time.
- He is aware that certain things have to happen during the process (rain, sun, time...).
- His expectations and knowledge cultivates patience.

In the same way:

- We understand this sin-cursed creation will produce difficult relations between people.
- We know the final outcome of all human interaction and the curse of sin.
- We realize that we must wait until the Lord returns in HIS perfect timing.
- We know that God has a plan, and while He may not reveal all things to us, we trust that God's plan must play out over time before the end of this sin-cursed existence will cease.

- Adjusting our expectations based on this knowledge gives us a foundation of patience.

## **Establish Your Hearts**

Persecution was at hand for the contemporaries of James, just as it is for much of the Christian world today. The phrase "establish your hearts" speaks to a firm resolution, an unbreakable conviction, a purposeful effort to "dig in" and endure until the Lord returns, no matter what the world and Satan throws at us.

The HOPE of the second coming is the fertilized ground in which both patience and endurance grows.

9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned.  
Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

James just reminded us the Lord is coming back. In the scope of God's timing, the Lord Jesus is literally standing with His blessed hand on the doorknob just waiting for the Father to say "open that door!" Given that, we are warned not to be grumbling about our brethren (fellow Christians) "lest you be condemned." In modern vernacular we might say "quit griping at each other before you get busted by Jesus who is coming back any moment." There is an aspect here of "do you really want Jesus to find you complaining and grumbling about someone when He shows up?"

Going back to the thought of Jesus' return, we can easily see where persecution and delay could tempt us to grumble. We get tired, impatient, irritable... and understandably. Notice that James does not condemn us for our human nature but rather encourages us not to grumble, and he gives us a reminder of why we should not grumble. "I know things are tough and going to get tougher but don't grumble at each other. We're on the same side. Jesus is coming back and you don't want Him to find you griping and bickering at each other."

10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

The prophets in the Bible often were terribly persecuted and the target of widespread grumbling and criticism. But we have their example to prove that God will prevail, His will IS always accomplished, and an end to difficulties is a certainty (as well as our reward).

## **Remember Job**

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.

Whenever we are tempted to think about how bad we have it, the example of Job brings us back to reality. He lost all his kids, all his family, all his possessions, his

health, his reputation, everything. Perhaps only Jesus Himself endured suffering more intense than Job.

James reminds us that we truly do "see the end." Christians have the unique and sole privilege of knowing the final score of human experience. That SHOULD instill great confidence, peace, and patience in our life.

Think of yourself in the Super Bowl. If you knew FOR A FACT you would win the game, would you lose heart at halftime even if down four touchdowns? Of course not! How much more sure then are we when the Creator of the Universe has declared the final score for us?

We are patient in the hope of His return, confident because we know the end, and comforted because we have real-life examples (the prophets and Job) to encourage and remind us.

## **Above All**

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.

"Above all"... whenever you see this phrase it denotes some sort of special emphasis. Sometimes it can mean "and #1 is..." or it can mean "especially" which is the meaning in this passage. So pay attention because James ESPECIALLY wants us to...

### **Have unquestionable integrity.**

The whole "yes, yes" and "no, no" direction from James means that what you say, you are committed to, even to your own hurt. You do not have to swear and emphasize and use superlatives to differentiate your normal "yes" from your "I REALLY mean it, yes." Your yes means yes, period.

It is a matter of honesty and integrity. If others cannot trust your "yes," how can they trust your Christian beliefs? "Trust God! Even if you can't trust me..." This does not work (of course we know in reality you can trust God even if people are not trustworthy, but on testimonial level in our life, it does not work).

Christians should be known for impeccable, unbreakable, unimpeachable, and unquestioned integrity even if it ends up not being to their benefit or advantage.

This also touches back to the "uncontrollable tongue" in chapter three of the book of James. Controlling your mouth means not saying "yes" if you are not ready to honor that "yes" through to the end, even if it does not get you what you want at that moment. Just as your tongue can destroy lives with gossip and criticism, your tongue can destroy others and soil God's reputation by uttering a "yes" or "no" that you do not honor.

On a secondary note, there is an application here for PLAIN SPEECH as well. We live in a world where people want to play lawyer and parse words to escape the truth. Former President Bill Clinton demonstrated to the world that even the most

powerful man in the world could use this technique of obscuring the meaning of plain words to avoid telling the truth or admitting the obvious.

In the same way, we should also avoid complicated and confusing verbiage meant to leave open loopholes in case we want to escape what we were obviously committing to. This is considered nothing more than smart business today, but it should not be so for Christians. Our agreements, contracts, and arrangements should be plain, straightforward, and devoid of obfuscation that can be leveraged at a future date should it be necessary. This is the way of the world... not of Christ-followers.

Say what you mean in plain words, and then honor your words. That is what honors God.

# Assurance of Salvation

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*You might save this section and return to it down the road. It's more about continuing your Christian walk and making sure you're on the right path.*

Every Christian asks themselves sooner or later:  
"am I really saved? How can I know?"

These are appropriate questions. Predictably, the Bible has much to say about how to authenticate and prove our salvation.

In this section, you'll find how to examine the evidence of your life so you can know you are truly saved and living in a way that pleases God.

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# The Evidence of True Salvation

Matthew 7:21-23 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (NKJV)

In my opinion, this is one of the most disturbing verses in all of Scripture.

I have often read this section of Matthew and pictured myself standing in front of the Lord saying: “did I not go to church?”, “did I not study my Bible?”, “did I not write a daily Bible devotional?”, and “didn’t I do a lot of works for you?” And it terrifies me to picture the Lord looking down at me with all-knowing eyes and saying, “who are you? I don’t know you. Go away and don’t come back.”

## Will Jesus Know You?

I believe the first and primary application of these verses is obviously to teach us that our good works will not save us. It does not matter if we cast out demons, or do miracles, or go to the right church, or say the sinner’s prayer, or be baptized... if we believe that these things save us rather than the atoning death of Jesus Christ, we will be lost. No amount of good works or deeds will merit us one single day in heaven.

What application do these verses have for those who know that works cannot save you? Is there an application for Christians who know and have responded to the true Gospel and do not necessarily doubt their salvation? I think there are many. First, these verses force us not to take our salvation for granted. They cause us to re-examine our faith and to make sure that our motivation for serving God is on His terms and not ours.

Philippians 2:12 – Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (NKJV)

What does it mean to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? We know without a doubt from other Scripture that this does not mean that you can earn salvation by works. Among other things, it is one of the many Scriptural admonitions for us to never take our salvation for granted, and to routinely examine our lives and search our hearts to make sure that we are doing things God’s Way.

Now let me stop for a moment and answer the obvious question that will arise at this point. No, I am not saying that we should live a life constantly doubting our salvation. Do I believe that a Christian can be 100% sure of their salvation? Yes,

read the book of 1st John. I also do not believe that we have to wait until Judgment Day and "hope for the best." Hopelessness is not a characteristic of true saving faith. But diligence and self-examination in light of God's Word is.

However, even though we are not to live a life of constant "salvation doubt," the Bible clearly teaches us that we should evaluate and test our lives so that we know our salvation is genuine. The book of 1st John over and over tells us things we can look for in our life so that "we may know" we are truly saved.

Matthew 7:21-23 encourages us to not take our salvation for granted and to examine our motivation for serving Jesus. Another application of these verses is for us to examine the "works" in our life and make sure that each of them are done for the proper reasons, i.e. for God's glory.

It is profitable for us to diligently examine and discern our true intentions and motivations for those things we do "in Jesus' name," God has promised us through His Word that he will reveal to us whether our motives are pure or self-serving.

Hebrews 4:12 – For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (NKJV)

Because of these verses in Matthew, I am asked if there are practical ways that we can examine our life to see if our works, behavior, and attitudes reflect true salvation. There is... it's the evidence of true salvation.

I want to look at the things that are the evidence, or fruit, of authentic salvation, and also examine those things that are often mistaken as the fruit of salvation but in reality may or may not be. It is good for us to know these things so that we can live in assurance that we will never hear those dreadful words "depart from me I never knew you."

As we look at these characteristics, you'll notice I categorize them in two ways: a "sign" that someone might be saved but not proof; or, evidence (proof) that someone is genuinely saved. Take note of this as you read.

## **Obedience & Morality**

The presence of morality in a person's life is an indication that there is a good possibility the person is a Christian, but most certainly not proof of it. In the world today, there has been a renewed emphasis on morality. Unfortunately, morality is being openly promoted as the way to salvation. Many large religious organizations today promote goodness (and allegiance to their hierarchy) as the way to salvation.

There are famous radio talkshow hosts, TV programs, and entertainment personalities who have become wildly popular by promoting common-sense morality and personal responsibility. While there is no doubt that much civil good comes from this, and that the good is commendable, it also represents one of the most dangerous and insidious forms of deception.

**The religion of morality is a dangerous trend  
in the world today leading millions to believe that  
being good is the path to heaven.**

Notice the good, moral things that are claimed by those whom Jesus does not know: casting out demons and doing great wonders. A modern-day version of this might be something like fighting crime and injustice, feeding the hungry, saving the environment, and curing cancer.

While these things can be laudable, they do not earn you a place in Heaven. However, the vast majority of people uninterested in God would typically be uninterested in giving their life for civil good, so the presence of these good works and morality MIGHT be an indicator of a person who is saved, but certainly not a proof of it.

Be careful of the growing “religion of morality” that is sweeping the world today. It is the pinnacle of human pride to declare that being good makes us deserving of God and that He would not dare deny us what we have earned through our “goodness.”

## **Obedience to God**

While morality might be a sign of salvation, obedience to God’s Word is a proof or fruit of authentic Christianity supported in numerous Scriptures. Let’s take a look at a few verses (emphasis mine):

John 15:14 – You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (NKJV)

1 Peter 1:22-23 – Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, (NKJV)

1 John 2:3-6 – Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (NKJV)

1 John 2:17 – And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJV)

1 John 3:22-23 – And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (NKJV)



1 John 5:2 – By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes over and over again (1John) that obedience is a key indicator of true salvation. Why? Because genuine, sustained obedience to God's Word is impossible before salvation when we were "slaves to sin" (Romans 6). So the very fact that we are CAPABLE of a growing, consistent, and authentic level of obedience to God is a proof of true salvation. And one final verse:

Hebrews 5:9 – And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, (NKJV)

Jesus is the author, the writer, the creator of eternal salvation for all those who do what? Be good? No. For those that obey Him.

Consistent and growing obedience to God's Word is a sure proof of authentic salvation.

## Religious Knowledge

There is no doubt that Bible knowledge can certainly be an indication of someone who is saved. There is also no doubt that Bible knowledge alone does not make one a true Christian. We live in an era where resources and information about the Bible are abundant and increasing. We have endless books, teachers, television programs, radio shows, and church events infusing us with more and more Bible knowledge every day.

It would seem logical to think that with this incredible increase of scriptural knowledge, we would see a corresponding and parallel increase in obedience.

Daniel 12:4 – "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."  
(NKJV)

I know that in an audience this large, there will be many different stances on eschatology (the Biblical study of the end of the world, the "end times"). It is not my intention to address those doctrines in this lesson. However, I quickly want to note this verse in Daniel because a very large segment of Christianity believes that an overall, exponential increase in knowledge is a sign that the Lord will return soon. Even if you do not believe this verse is a commentary on the last days of this earth from a doctrinal standpoint, it still has a practical and interesting application.

**Who can argue that we have masses of highly "informed" people running to and fro today, lost concerning the meaning of life.**

Disseminated through technology and information sources, we have more religions, philosophies, opinions, and experts than ever before filling our minds via print, television, movie screens, the Internet, and radio. And yet it is plain to see that

with the increase of knowledge, the confusion in the heart of man only grows more intense as he “runs to and fro” looking for the meaning and purpose of life.

Romans 1:20-23 – For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (NKJV)

The apostle Paul tells us that a person can clearly see God in creation, can understand that God exists through the things that exist because of Him, and can perceive God's eternal nature. Because of this fact, no man can be excused for rejecting God. God has put before us the plain knowledge of His existence and yet the majority of humankind will become “futile in their thoughts” and will have their “foolish hearts darkened.” They have “knowledge” but not salvation.

Knowledge about God - to know that He exists, to know what His Word says, and to increase in that knowledge - may very well be an indicator of a person who is saved, but it is clearly not proof that a person is saved.

## Selflessness & Serving

If I could sum up the life of Christianity and what characterizes a true Christian, I would have to choose the word “selfless.” The giving up of your own life for Christ's, to crucify the flesh, and to be a living sacrifice... every moment of living for Jesus is a decision to deny self and obey God.

The characteristic of selflessness is the most difficult and unnatural trait that we will ever try to develop. It goes against the very basic nature of our sinful hearts. Our flesh will use any trickery, deception, or confusion to make us believe that we are being selfless when in fact we are serving ourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:1 – Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (NKJV)

Of course Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of selflessness. He was the eternal holy God who chose to take on the form of lowly man (Philippians 2), and even after living a sinless, perfect life chose to sacrifice Himself for a world that rejected Him, ridiculed Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him.

Being a true Christian is being what? It is being “like Christ,” And what better proof of being a Christian than demonstrating one of the greatest qualities of Christ — selflessness. Consider these verses which mark a life of selflessness (emphasis mine):

1 John 3:14 – We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. (NKJV)

1 John 4:7 – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (NKJV)

Romans 12:10 – Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; (NKJV)

Romans 12:1 – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (NKJV)

Matthew 20:28 – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (NKJV)

Colossians 3:24 – knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. (NKJV)

Matthew 20:16 – So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” (NKJV)

Luke 9:48 – and said to them, “Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.” (NKJV)

True selflessness is all the more a concrete proof of true salvation because we are incapable of selflessness (righteousness - Romans 6) before God supernaturally changes our heart (Titus 3:5). Before salvation, we are slaves to Self. For those folks who claim Christianity but have not been born again (John 3:5-8), they will be unable to have consistent victory in this area.

A person who professes Christianity but is not truly saved will have a life that is characterized by the consistent motivation to look out for themselves, to gain the advantage for themselves, and to generally seek what is good for themselves over what is good for others. And no matter how hard this person tries to cover up the “self” motivation, it will always show through.

On the other hand a true Christian will certainly fail and have moments of selfishness, but overall their life will be characterized by an increasing, tangible growth in the area of serving others, denying themselves, and preferring others over themselves. For the genuinely saved, selfishness will rear it’s ugly head occasionally, but selfLESSness will be the victor over the long haul.

True selflessness is only possible for the true believer and in that sense is concrete proof of authentic salvation.

## Conviction About Sin

At first thought, you might think someone who is convicted of sin would have to be a Christian. But it is plain enough that the unsaved, or even children, often times know when they have done something wrong. Being created in God's image, we have a sort of natural sense of many things that are right and wrong, and along with general knowledge of societal rules and laws, we all have a sense of sin regardless of whether we are saved.

A thief knows that stealing is wrong and, at least initially, will probably feel guilty about it. An adulterer knows that sleeping with another man's wife is wrong and, until his conscience is seared, will probably experience guilt or conviction. A sinner may sense deep guilt after hearing a Preacher, knowing that he is guilty of the things he is hearing.

**Hearing God's Word may convict us, even frighten us,  
but conviction is no proof of genuine salvation.**

In Acts 24:25, we find a man named Felix (a Roman government official) who talked with Paul about righteousness, self-control, and the day of judgment. Felix became afraid, obviously convicted over what Paul was saying; but, instead of responding in humility, he sent Paul away and told him he would call him later. On top of that, despite his conviction over Paul's words, Felix had a greater desire that Paul was going to give him money in order to be released from jail. Felix had access to Paul for two years but his conviction over what Paul had said never changed him.

My favorite example of conviction without salvation is that of Judas Iscariot. Judas, being one of the original 12 called by Jesus, spent three years in daily contact with the Lord. His betrayal of Christ is familiar enough to all of us but have you ever stopped and thought about how convicted Judas was of what he did?

Matthew 27:5 – Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. (NKJV)

Judas had gotten the money he wanted. He had already been stealing from the disciples' treasury all along. But in the end, he became severely convicted of what he had done. He threw down the money and went out and hanged himself. You can't get much more sorry (convicted) than that, can you?

**Isn't repentance feeling really bad and being  
sincerely sorry for the sin you have committed?**

We might think that Judas had repented of his sin. Obviously, he was deeply grieved and remorseful for what he had done. Isn't that what repentance is all about? In contrast to Peter, whom we will look at in a moment, Judas was sorry but did not repent. Judas did not want to do the hard work of true repentance. In keeping with his character, while he was truly convicted and grieved over his sin,

he chose the route of "self" and responded with a quick and easy way out by killing himself (it became apparent that it was NOT the easy way out about one second after he died).

Judas did not possess the humility and true repentance that should have taken him to the feet of the One whom he had betrayed. So remember, conviction, even deep and sorrowful conviction to the point of death, is not a true proof of salvation. Alternatively, true repentance is proof of salvation.

## True Repentance

God desires the true repentance of each person. It is not enough for us to perform religious acts, or to even feel sorry about our sinfulness. We must turn to God in humility and admit our sinfulness... but even that is still one step short. We must turn away from our sin and turn to God.

Matthew 9:13 – But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."  
(NKJV)

So what exactly is repentance? There are a couple of different words in Greek used to describe repentance:

- *metamelomai* is a verb that means to change your mind because of regret or remorse over sin, but may or may not include a change of heart. This is the kind of repentance or conviction that Judas had.
- *metanoia* means to change your mind, or change your life or purpose, in light of knowledge that you have gained. This speaks of true repentance and a real change in your life in light of the promised forgiveness of sin.

**True Biblical repentance consists of:**

- A genuine realization of one's sinfulness manifested in a feeling of guilt; (Ps 119:28; Ps 51:4)
- A longing for or need of God's mercy in light of the just condemnation we deserve for sin; (Ps 109:21; Ps 130:4)
- A hatred for sin - denouncing and turning away from sin; (2Chr 6:26; 1Thess 1:9; Acts 3:19) and
- Turning towards God in a persistent effort to obey God and not continue to sin. (1John)

2 Corinthians 7:10 – For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.  
(NKJV)

Peter is a perfect example of true repentance. When he denied Christ, he was grieved and exceedingly sorrowful (Matt 26:75). But unlike Judas, he did not demonstrate his sorrow with a selfish act. Instead, he turned to the One whom he

has sinned against (Jesus; who is the ultimate target of ALL sin), and placed his trust in the mercy of his Savior. In keeping with the genuineness of his repentance, Peter then spent the rest of his life serving and obeying God.

**Repentance does not include a “cheap forgiveness” in exchange for a moment of sorrow with no intention of changing our behavior.**

The apostle Peter demonstrated clearly all of the elements of true repentance: conviction, sorrow, acknowledgment of sin, submission to God, turning in faith to God, trusting in the mercy of God, and a change of heart and life demonstrated by his desire to obey God from that moment on.

The Apostle John tells us very bluntly that if we do not confess our sin and turn from it that we simply are not saved (emphasis mine).

1 John 1:8-10 – If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (NKJV)

1 John 2:3-6 – Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (NKJV)

The combination of admitting our sin, confessing it, and receiving forgiveness; followed by a continual, growing effort to keep God’s commandments rather than sin, is what true repentance is all about.

If you are simply sorry about your sin, but in reality there is never any real change in your behavior or life, then your conviction over sin is not evidence of genuine salvation. On the other hand, if your sorrow and guilt over sin lead you to confess that sin to God, and turn away from your sin towards God in a sincere effort to obey Him... then you are demonstrating true repentance, which is an authentic proof of your salvation.

## **Religious Acts**

Often when you ask someone if they are saved, you will hear a list of answers that point to some sort of religious act or involvement that is offered as proof of salvation:

- I go to church every week.
- I “accepted Jesus” when I was young.
- I’m a Catholic.
- My family is Baptist.

- I “asked Jesus into my heart.”
- I said the sinner’s prayer.
- I’ve been baptized.

Obviously, most of these answers do not necessarily mean that a person is NOT saved, but none of these answers are proof that a person is genuinely saved.

A person who goes to church every week, or has “accepted Jesus,” or has been baptized, may very well be truly saved; but too often Christians point to a religious act or religious experience as the grounds for their salvation, rather than being able to articulate how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid for their sin.

Significant religious involvement is also not proof of salvation. Our theme verse makes it very clear that people can be extremely active in religion or at a church and still not be saved. The Church will always have those who appear to be saved and are not (Matthew 13:40), those who are involved in the activity of the Lord’s work (Matthew 25:1-10), those who perform many works in Jesus’ Name (Matthew 7:21-23), and those who are involved in the Church but not wholly committed (Revelation 3:16)... and yet still not be saved.

A religious act or experience may indicate that a person is saved but most certainly is not proof of it. However, separation from the world (sanctification) is.

## Separation from the World (Sanctification)

Living righteously instead of worldly is solid proof of authentic salvation. There are many reasons why, but one reason is because it is impossible for an unsaved person to live righteously, consistently separate from the ways of the world. Why?

- Without true faith is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
- Before true salvation we are slaves to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:20).
- No one can be righteous before salvation (Romans 3:10).

So the very fact that a person is capable of consistently living in a righteous manner is proof of salvation, because only the saved can live a sanctified life. We now have the Spirit of God rather than the spirit of the world (2Corinthians 2:12), and if we remain friends with the world, then we are going against God (James 4:4).

1 John 2:15-17 – Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJV)

The things of the world are listed here in three categories:

- *The lust of the flesh* - this is the nature of sin we are born with that longs for the things that are opposed to God. The natural man rebels against God and everything about this world seeks to attract a person through the lust of the flesh.
- *The lust of the eyes* - it is through what we see that we become attracted to the things of the world. Just as the forbidden fruit was pleasant to the eye of Eve in the garden, the forbidden fruit of sinful pleasure is still pleasant to our eyes. In this age of pervasive media, the lust of the eyes is fed a constant diet of immorality, covetousness, greed, and sensuality.
- *The pride of life* - this is the idea that somehow we are in control instead of God, and we are going to display those things in our life which demonstrate that fact: our success, achievements, and possessions. When godliness decreases, the pride of life increases as man becomes haughty and arrogant, lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:2).

We have to live in this world, and share the Gospel with this world, but we do not have to be a part of this world (in other words we do not have to live like the world). Everything about this world is sin-cursed and it will pass away in the end. So we are to live separated from what the world loves, from what the world does, and from what the world is. We are to consistently grow and become more like Christ (sanctification).

## Self vs. Others

If I had to sum up proof (fruit) of salvation it might be stated like this:

**The truly saved person denies Self and is focused on others.**

Of course, the primary “others” are God and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. After that, the truly saved person focuses on the needs and desires of other humans including his family, friends, other Christians, and even his enemies. After being saved, I believe you can most accurately sum up the Christian life by saying that it is a life-long process of “I must decrease, and Christ must increase” (John 3.30). I want to wrap up this section with a list of practical examples that emphasize the difference between someone focused on “Self” and a truly saved person focusing on “others”:

- A person focused on Self is self-conscious.
- A Christian focused on others is not concerned with self.
- A person focused on Self compares themselves with others.
- A Christian focused on others compares themselves to Christ.



- A person focused on Self generalizes their sin.
- A Christian focused on others is specific in recognizing personal sin.
- A person focused on Self has a hard time seeking forgiveness.
- A Christian focused on others craves forgiveness for their sin.
- A person focused on Self is protective of their rights, reputation, and time.
- A Christian focused on others sacrifices their personal needs for the needs of others.
- A person focused on Self is assertive, self-sufficient, and independent.
- A Christian focused on others is humble, needs accountability, and is dependent on Christ.
- A person focused on Self rarely misses a chance to promote themselves either directly or subtly.
- A Christian focused on others rarely misses a chance to promote Christ and glorify God.
- A person focused on Self is sorry because they got caught in sin.
- A Christian focused on others is convicted, repentant, and turns away from sin.
- A person focused on Self desires to be successful and noticed.
- A Christian focused on others desires others' success and welfare, and gives them recognition.
- A person focused on Self focuses on the shortcomings of everyone around them.
- A Christian focused on others is painfully aware of their own sinfulness and frailty, while being very forgiving about others' faults.
- A person focused on Self is quick to be defensive and blame others.
- A Christian focused on others is quick to take responsibility and look for their own faults.
- A person focused on Self pursues recognition and honor.
- A Christian focused on others pursues service and submissiveness.

- A person focused on Self needs to be appreciated and complimented in order to not get discouraged.
- A Christian focused on others relies on the appreciation and acceptance of God for encouragement.
- A person focused on Self thinks about how valuable they are to God and what they can offer Him.
- A Christian focused on others knows they have absolutely nothing to offer God outside of what God does through them.
- A person focused on Self is evasive and protective of their private life in order to look as good as possible.
- A Christian focused on others confesses their sinfulness, is transparent and vulnerable about their weakness.
- A person focused on Self believes that God is lucky to have them around, and so is their Church and ministry.
- A Christian focused on others realizes that they do not deserve to even be a part of God's work, but God is merciful and good.
- A person focused on Self keeps his spiritual needs hidden and his achievements displayed.
- A Christian focused on others proclaims his spiritual needs honestly and keeps his achievements between him and God.
- A person focused on Self waits for the other person to come and make things right.
- A Christian focused on others goes and makes things right first, no matter the cost.
- A person focused on Self does not give a lot of thought about the consequences of their sin.
- A Christian focused on others is grieved over what sin does to them and those around them.
- A person focused on Self is afraid that people will find out what type of person they really are.
- A Christian focused on others knows that we are all sinners and hates his sinfulness.
- A person focused on Self is blind about their true spiritual condition.

- A Christian focused on others constantly evaluates their spiritual condition in light of God's Word.
- A person focused on Self is focused on Self.
- A Christian focused on others is focused anything but Self, at all costs.

I trust this section will help you evaluate the nature of your salvation first (are you truly saved?); and secondly, help make you aware of those "fruits" that should be present in your life if you really are a Christian. If you walk like the world, talk like the world, spend your time and money like the world, dress like the world, enjoy what the world enjoys, and want what the world wants.... does it make sense to believe you are a Christian?

Christians look like Christ, act like Christ; walk, talk, and think like Christ.... what does the mirror show you today? The world, or Christ?

# Bible Abbreviations

In this book and many others you'll often find abbreviations for Bible books. I've included this handy chart to help you:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Genesis</b>         | <b>Gen, Ge, Gn</b>   |
| <b>Exodus</b>          | Exo, Ex, Exod  |
| <b>Leviticus</b>       | Lev, Le, Lv  |
| <b>Numbers</b>         | Num, Nu, Nm, Nb  |
| <b>Deuteronomy</b>     | Deut, Dt   |
| <b>Joshua</b>          | Josh, Jos, Jsh   |
| <b>Judges</b>          | Judg, Jdg, Jg, Jdgs  |
| <b>Ruth</b>            | Rth, Ru  |
| <b>1 Samuel</b>        | 1 Sam, 1 Sa, 1Samuel, 1S, I Sa, 1 Sm, 1Sa, I Sam, 1Sam, I Samuel, 1st Samuel, First Samuel                                 |
| <b>2 Samuel</b>        | 2 Sam, 2 Sa, 2S, II Sa, 2 Sm, 2Sa, II Sam, 2Sam, II Samuel, 2Samuel, 2nd Samuel, Second Samuel                             |
| <b>1 Kings</b>         | 1 Kgs, 1 Ki, 1K, I Kgs, 1Kgs, I Ki, 1Ki, I Kings, 1Kings, 1st Kgs, 1st Kings, First Kings, First Kgs, 1Kin                 |
| <b>2 Kings</b>         | 2 Kgs, 2 Ki, 2K, II Kgs, 2Kgs, II Ki, 2Ki, II Kings, 2Kings, 2nd Kgs, 2nd Kings, Second Kings, Second Kgs, 2Kin            |
| <b>1 Chronicles</b>    | 1 Chron, 1 Ch, I Ch, 1Ch, 1 Chr, I Chr, 1Chr, I Chron, 1Chron, I Chronicles, 1Chronicles, 1st Chronicles, First Chronicles |
| <b>2 Chronicles</b>    | 2 Chron, 2 Ch, II Ch, 2Ch, II Chr, 2Chr, II Chron, 2Chron, II Chronicles, 2Chronicles, 2nd Chronicles, Second Chronicles   |
| <b>Ezra</b>            | Ezra, Ezr  |
| <b>Nehemiah</b>        | Neh, Ne  |
| <b>Esther</b>          | Esth, Es   |
| <b>Job</b>             | Job, Job, Jb   |
| <b>Psalms</b>          | Pslm, Ps, Psalms, Psa, Psm, Pss  |
| <b>Proverbs</b>        | Prov, Pr, Prv  |
| <b>Ecclesiastes</b>    | Eccles, Ec, Qoh, Qoheleth  |
| <b>Song of Solomon</b> | Song, So, Canticle of Canticles, Canticles, Song of Songs, SOS   |
| <b>Isaiah</b>          | Isa, Is  |
| <b>Jeremiah</b>        | Jer, Je, Jr  |
| <b>Lamentations</b>    | Lam, La  |
| <b>Ezekiel</b>         | Ezek, Eze, Ezk   |
| <b>Daniel</b>          | Dan, Da, Dn  |
| <b>Hosea</b>           | Hos, Ho  |
| <b>Joel</b>            | Joel, Joe, Jl  |
| <b>Amos</b>            | Amos, Am   |
| <b>Obadiah</b>         | Obad, Ob   |
| <b>Jonah</b>           | Jnh, Jon   |
| <b>Micah</b>           | Micah, Mic   |

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Nahum</b>                     | Nah, Na   |
| <b>Habakkuk</b>                  | Hab, Hab  |
| <b>Zephaniah</b>                 | Zeph, Zep, Zp   |
| <b>Haggai</b>                    | Haggai, Hag, Hg   |
| <b>Zechariah</b>                 | Zech, Zec, Zc   |
| <b>Malachi</b>                   | Mal, Mal, Ml  |
| <b>Tobit</b>                     | Tobit, Tob, Tb  |
| <b>Judith</b>                    | Jdth, Jdt, Jth  |
| <b>Additions to Esther</b>       | Add Esth, Add Es, Rest of Esther, The Rest of Esther, AEs, AddEsth  |
| <b>Wisdom of Solomon</b>         | Wisd of Sol, Wis, Ws, Wisdom  |
| <b>Sirach</b>                    | Sirach, Sir, Ecclesiasticus, Ecclus   |
| <b>Baruch</b>                    | Baruch, Bar   |
| <b>Letter of Jeremiah</b>        | Let Jer, Let Jer, LJe, Ltr Jer  |
| <b>Song of Three Youths</b>      | Song of Three, Song Thr, The Song of Three Youths, Pr Az, Prayer of Azariah, Azariah, The Song of the Three Holy Children, The Song of Three Jews, Song of the Three Holy Children, Song of Thr, Song of Three Children, Song of Three Jews |
| <b>Susanna</b>                   | Susanna, Sus  |
| <b>Bel and the Dragon</b>        | Bel, Bel  |
| <b>1 Maccabees</b>               | 1 Macc, 1 Mac, 1M, I Ma, 1Ma, I Mac, 1Mac, I Macc, 1Macc, I Maccabees, 1Maccabees, 1st Maccabees, First Maccabees   |
| <b>2 Maccabees</b>               | 2 Macc, 2 Mac, 2M, II Ma, 2Ma, II Mac, 2Mac, II Macc, 2Macc, II Maccabees, 2Maccabees, 2nd Maccabees, Second Maccabees  |
| <b>1 Esdras</b>                  | 1 Esdr, 1 Esd, I Es, 1Es, I Esd, 1Esd, I Esdr, 1Esdr, I Esdras, 1Esdras, 1st Esdras, First Esdras   |
| <b>Prayer of Manasseh</b>        | Pr of Man, Pr Man, PMa, Prayer of Manasses  |
| <b>Additional Psalm</b>          | Add Psalm, Add Ps   |
| <b>3 Maccabees</b>               | 3 Macc, 3 Mac, III Ma, 3Ma, III Mac, 3Mac, III Macc, 3Macc, III Maccabees, 3rd Maccabees, Third Maccabees   |
| <b>2 Esdras</b>                  | 2 Esdr, 2 Esd, II Es, 2Es, II Esd, 2Esd, II Esdr, 2Esdr, II Esdras, 2Esdras, 2nd Esdras, Second Esdras  |
| <b>4 Maccabees</b>               | 4 Macc, 4 Mac, IV Ma, 4Ma, IV Mac, 4Mac, IV Macc, 4Macc, IV Maccabees, IIII Maccabees, 4Maccabees, 4th Maccabees, Fourth Maccabees  |
| <b>Ode</b>                       | Ode, Ode  |
| <b>Psalms of Solomon</b>         | Ps Solomon, Ps Sol, Psalms Solomon, PsSol   |
| <b>Epistle to the Laodiceans</b> | Laodiceans, Laod, Ep Laod, Epist Laodiceans, Epistle Laodiceans, Epistle to Laodiceans  |
| <b>Matthew</b>                   | Matt, Mt  |

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Mark</b>            | Mrk, Mk, Mr  |
| <b>Luke</b>            | Luk, Lk  |
| <b>John</b>            | John, Jn, Jhn  |
| <b>Acts</b>            | Acts, Ac   |
| <b>Romans</b>          | Rom, Ro, Rm  |
| <b>1 Corinthians</b>   | 1 Cor, 1 Co, I Co, 1Co, I Cor, 1Cor, I Corinthians, 1Corinthians, 1st Corinthians, First Corinthians                                   |
| <b>2 Corinthians</b>   | 2 Cor, 2 Co, II Co, 2Co, II Cor, 2Cor, II Corinthians, 2Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Second Corinthians                               |
| <b>Galatians</b>       | Gal, Ga  |
| <b>Ephesians</b>       | Ephes, Eph   |
| <b>Philippians</b>     | Phil, Php  |
| <b>Colossians</b>      | Col, Col   |
| <b>1 Thessalonians</b> | 1 Thess, 1 Th, I Th, 1Th, I Thes, 1Thes, I Thess, 1Thess, I Thessalonians, 1Thessalonians, 1st Thessalonians, First Thessalonians      |
| <b>2 Thessalonians</b> | 2 Thess, 2 Th, II Th, 2Th, II Thes, 2Thes, II Thess, 2Thess, II Thessalonians, 2Thessalonians, 2nd Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians |
| <b>1 Timothy</b>       | 1 Tim, 1 Ti, I Ti, 1Ti, I Tim, 1Tim, I Timothy, 1Timothy, 1st Timothy, First Timothy   |
| <b>2 Timothy</b>       | 2 Tim, 2 Ti, II Ti, 2Ti, II Tim, 2Tim, II Timothy, 2Timothy, 2nd Timothy, Second Timothy   |
| <b>Titus</b>           | Titus, Tit   |
| <b>Philemon</b>        | Philem, Phm  |
| <b>Hebrews</b>         | Hebrews, Heb   |
| <b>James</b>           | James, Jas, Jm   |
| <b>1 Peter</b>         | 1 Pet, 1 Pe, I Pe, 1Pe, I Pet, 1Pet, I Pt, 1 Pt, 1Pt, I Peter, 1Peter, 1st Peter, First Peter  |
| <b>2 Peter</b>         | 2 Pet, 2 Pe, II Pe, 2Pe, II Pet, 2Pet, II Pt, 2 Pt, 2Pt, II Peter, 2Peter, 2nd Peter, Second Peter                                     |
| <b>1 John</b>          | 1 John, 1 Jn, I Jn, 1Jn, I Jo, 1Jo, I Joh, 1Joh, I Jhn, 1 Jhn, 1Jhn, I John, 1John, 1st John, First John                               |
| <b>2 John</b>          | 2 John, 2 Jn, II Jn, 2Jn, II Jo, 2Jo, II Joh, 2Joh, II Jhn, 2 Jhn, 2Jhn, II John, 2John, 2nd John, Second John                         |
| <b>3 John</b>          | 3 John, 3 Jn, III Jn, 3Jn, III Jo, 3Jo, III Joh, 3Joh, III Jhn, 3 Jhn, 3Jhn, III John, 3John, 3rd John, Third John                     |
| <b>Jude</b>            | Jude, Jud  |
| <b>Revelation</b>      | Rev, Re, The Revelation  |

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