

The background features a series of vertical lines in the center and horizontal lines on the left and right sides, creating a grid-like pattern. The lines are light purple and vary in thickness.

RESTORING

WISDOM FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES

DEVOTION

Restoring Devotion: Wisdom from the Book of James

by Jason Ehmann

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502 W. Pippen St., Whitakers, NC 27891

www.positiveaction.org

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FROM THE AUTHOR

If you're like me, then you're a bit of an idealist. When I plan a creative or DIY project, I anticipate that the process will go smoothly, just like the instructional videos and tutorials promise. I envision that the end result will match those inspiring "after" photos.

However, as reality sets in, I find myself dealing with unexpected problems, missing parts, or just not enough resources—and often, I find that I overestimated my skills, as well. As a result, my project ends up looking nothing like what I envisioned at the beginning.

Our journey of faith can follow the same pattern. Maybe you read about the incredible faith of missionaries as they face threats and setbacks in their work, or the inspiring testimonies from seasoned Christians in which everything always turns out right. Or maybe you know someone who makes it look really easy to follow Jesus. But in your own experience, when the rubber meets the road, your life looks nothing like theirs. We see where we are now and where we want to be, but life keeps getting in the way of actually reaching our goal. We end up discouraged, thinking that the process is just too hard—that realistically, everyday devotion to Christ is impossible.

So how can we pursue wholehearted devotion to Christ, acknowledging that the journey is both difficult and strenuous? *Can* we actually live in devotion to Christ? It is possible to navigate our everyday ups and downs by faith? And if so, what does that look like?

Through the book of James, God offers us the wisdom we need to live our faith both genuinely and realistically. As we grow in our understanding of God's character, we can reflect His love and truth in tangible ways. We bear fruit—as Christ commanded (John 15:8)—thereby glorifying God. Just as God expects us to live devotedly, by faith, so He provides all that we need to reach that goal.

God's good news to us is that, in the end, we *will* reach the perfection He desires for us, by His grace. Until then, keep looking to Jesus.

Your friend in devotion,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. J. Ehmann", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason Ehmann

February, 2018

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

As you work through this student manual, you'll develop a great reference you can revisit long after this study is complete. The more thought you put into your Bible study, the more you'll get out of it, both now and later.

Each lesson in the student manual should be completed prior to the teacher's lecture. Every lesson in the student manual includes the following:

DAILY DEVOTION (DAYS 1-5)

Each day, you'll be guided through Scripture reading and application relating to the lesson's main text.

Memorization & Meditation

One goal of this study is to help you memorize the entire first chapter of James. But don't worry—you don't have to do it all at once. The memory chapter is broken down into manageable sections, covering one per lesson. Each day, you'll write out that lesson's memory passage to help you memorize it. In Lesson 13, you'll review each section and finally put them all together. To help memorize these verses, spend time each day meditating on them.

Reading

Every day, you'll be asked to read the lesson text, as well as related passages, and then answer questions about the reading.

Don't rush through this section to get it done. Try to set aside time to meditate on the passages and think about the questions before answering. Your study will introduce you to themes developed later in the teacher's lesson.

Restoring Devotion

Use for group discussion, prayer, and application. If you aren't completing this study in a group setting, find a Christian friend who would be willing to hold a guided conversation with you regularly.

OUTLINE AND LESSON TEXT

Here you'll find the lesson text from the Book of James, as well as the main points of the teacher's lesson. Use this fill-in-the-blank outline to help you keep on track during the teacher's lesson.

We pray that this study will benefit you and most of all, showcase God's magnificence. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to us by email (info@positiveaction.org) or by phone (800-688-3008). We'd love to hear from you.

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

LESSON 1 NOTES

◎ The Theme of James

- God offers us wisdom for a life of devotion as we grow in our understanding of His character.

◎ Key Concepts

- **Perfect** (1:4, 17, 25; 3:2) This concept involves wholeness or completion.
- **Double-minded** (1:8; 4:8) This describes way we vacillate between choosing Jesus and choosing the world. A divided mind is the opposite of wholehearted devotion to Christ.
- **Steadfast** (1:3–4, 12; 5:11) This word means *endurance* or *perseverance*.
- **Suffering, Trials, Temptation, Weakness** (1:2, 3, 12, 13; 5:10, 13–15) These words describe those experiences where we are presented with a choice to sin or to obey God.
- **Wisdom** (1:5; 3:13–17) Wisdom is God’s knowledge and perspective that He provides to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

◎ Context

- James, the brother of Jesus, ministered to the believers gathered in Jerusalem, as well as to those scattered over Asia Minor. These Christians faced intense persecution for their faith.

- James identifies himself as a “brother” around 20 times in the book, indicating that he is both a fellow believer and a fellow sufferer.

◎ **Chapter Content**

- Chapter 1—Trusting God’s goodness
- Chapter 2–3—Trusting God’s wisdom
- Chapter 4—Trusting God’s presence and sovereignty
- Chapter 5—Trusting God’s justice and power

RESTORING DEVOTION

Hard-hitting, yet relatable, James’s words help us put our faith in action. Christ’s holiness should pervade every word, action, and interaction of our lives. And although believers face difficulties, temptations, and everyday realities, we can depend on God’s grace to live practically and honestly in spite of those things, the way Jesus did.

- Talk with a trusted Christian friend about trials you are experiencing.
- Pray together for God to grow your faith through trials and to bless your study of the Book of James.

LESSON 2

FAITH AND TESTING

DAY 1

Memorization & Meditation

One goal of this study is to help you memorize the first chapter of James. Each day, write out and review the memory verses for the upcoming lesson.

Today, begin by reading James 1:1–3 five times.

Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- According to James, how should we view the trials we experience (v. 2)? _____

Read 1 Peter 1:3–21.

- List five truths from this passage that can help you view trials scripturally. _____

Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- What does our faith produce when tested (v. 3)? _____

- What is God’s ultimate purpose for allowing us to go through trials (v. 4)? _____

Read 2 Thessalonians 1.

- For what is Paul thankful (vv. 3–4)? _____

- Even though these believers were facing difficulties at the time, what hope did they have for the future (v. 5)? _____

Restoring Devotion

God allows us to face difficulties in order to refine our faith.

- Engage a fellow believer in a conversation about lessons you have learned through previous trials. If you are presently experiencing a trial and struggle to see its purpose, take some time to reflect on God’s character. What might God be showing you about Himself through this trial?
- Pray together, thanking God for His Person and character. Ask for grace to know God better through difficulties and to trust His wisdom.

Restoring Devotion

God not only has a goal in mind for our suffering, but He also gives us what we need to endure it. When the floor falls out from under us and we don't know what to do, we can find peace and confidence in the presence and wisdom of God.

- Initiate a discussion about the need to rely on God's wisdom for trials. If you can, recount a time when you chose your own wisdom and what happened as a result. Did God graciously turn you around? How?
- Pray together, thanking God for His generous gift of wisdom, given without blame.

DAY 4

Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:1–3 in the space below. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- How does God answer our request for wisdom (v. 5)? _____

Read Proverbs 2.

- Which of these promises help your faith in God's wisdom (vv. 6–12)? _____

Restoring Devotion

In every way that trials bring us low, God's gracious wisdom restores and exalts us. God's way really works, but only if we receive it and act on it by faith.

- Engage a fellow believer in conversation about God's promises to those who are struggling to believe. What do you struggle to believe? How can you use God's promises to encourage one another?
- Pray together, confessing that you believe God, and ask Him to help your unbelief (Mark 9:24).

DAY 5

Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:1–3 in the following space. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

Reading

Read James 1:2–12.

- What is the reward promised by God for those who endure trials and love Him (v. 12)? _____

Read Romans 8:12–39.

- How would you describe your current hardships compared with the glory that is going to be revealed to us (v. 18)? _____

- What are two truths from this passage that can anchor you through difficulties? _____

Restoring Devotion

Left to ourselves, we can despair and rage in times of suffering. But by using God's wisdom, we can get a bird's-eye view of our trials. We realize that the glories of eternity illuminate the darkest moments of our lives.

- Talk about the glory of our future reunion with Christ. What do you think that will be like? How does this affect the way you view your current struggles?
- Pray together, rejoicing in what God has promised for our future. Ask God for faith in the glory that He will reveal one day.

LESSON 2 OUTLINE

Text: James 1:2–12

- ◎ **Faith and Trials (vv. 2–12)**
- ◎ **Thinking and _____ (v. 2)**
 - Reason for Joy—_____ (vv. 3–4)
 - Roots of Joy—God's _____ (vv. 5–12)
 - Wisdom Given with _____ (v. 5)
 - Wisdom Received by _____ (vv. 6–8)
 - The Faithful _____ by Wisdom (v. 9)
 - The Proud _____ by Wisdom (vv. 10–11)
 - The Faithful _____ by Wisdom (v. 12)

LESSON 3

FAITH FIGHTS

DAY 1

Memorization & Meditation

Ready to review your memory verses from last week? Without looking, see if you can write James 1:1–3 on the lines below.

Now let's focus on this week's memory passage. Read James 1:4–6 five times.

Reading

Read James 1:13–18.

- What about God's character indicates that He will not tempt us with sin (v. 13)? _____

Read Job 7:1–21.

- Describe how Job felt in his suffering. Have you ever felt like this?

Read Job 42:1–6.

- Describe Job’s response at the end of God’s conversation with him. What did Job say changed his perspective of suffering (v. 5)?

Restoring Devotion

Our accusations against God reveal how little we know and trust Him. Consider Job’s situation. Job asked God the question *why*, but God didn’t answer that question. Rather, through a series of awe-inspiring questions of His own, God demonstrated His wisdom and power (Job 38–41).

- Discuss with a fellow believer this week about our typical response to struggles. Do you ever blame others for your difficulties? In what ways are you tempted to accuse God but excuse your own wrong responses?
- Pray together, thanking God for His wisdom and power.

Reading

Read James 1:13–18.

- What are some ways that temptation can be deceitful? _____

Read Matthew 4:1–11.

- What tactics did Satan use to try to trap Jesus (vv. 3; 5–6; 8–9)?

Read Romans 6:23.

- Satan was tempting Jesus to try to destroy Him. What is the end result of our sin? _____

Restoring Devotion

Although sin can seem innocently disguised as good, it's just a dirty trick with a hidden, nasty end. Temptation is often difficult to see for what it is, and even harder to resist. Don't be fooled by it.

- Talk or write about the deceptive nature of temptation. In what ways has temptation fooled you in the past?
- Pray with a believer, asking for grace to recognize temptation for what it is and to resist it.

- Think through your experiences and list several ways God has shown you His goodness. _____

Restoring Devotion

Even when temptations and trials come, God is still good because that is who He is. Our circumstances do not determine truth; God declares truth. Our experience of God’s goodness—or perceived lack of it—does not change the fact that He is good.

- Think about God’s goodness. How has God been good to you? Share your answers with someone.
- Praise God together, thanking Him for demonstrating His goodness to you.

DAY 5

Memorization & Meditation

Write James 1:4–6 in the space below. Then review the verses, using whatever method you find most helpful.

Reading

Read James 1:12–18.

- Contrast the process of temptation (v. 14) in this chapter with the process of sanctification (vv. 12, 18). How do they begin and end? _____

Read John 1:1–18.

- Who is the one in whom there is life (v. 4)? _____
- Who is the truth that gives us life (vv. 12–13)? _____
- Grace and truth come through whom (v. 17)? _____
- What are two truths from this passage that can help anchor you through difficulties? _____

Restoring Devotion

Remembering and accepting God’s goodness prove difficult during trials and temptations. But believing and living in God’s goodness lie at that heart of what it means for a believer to live devotedly to Christ—we must believe that God is good.

- Hold a conversation about Jesus as the embodiment of truth. How does that truth help you resist temptation?
- Pray together, rejoicing that God sent Christ into the world to show us truth and to give us grace. Ask for grace to live in ways that please God.

LESSON 3 OUTLINE

Text: James 1:13–18

◎ _____ **the Enemy—Understanding Temptation**
(vv. 13–15)

- Temptation Comes from Our Own _____ (v. 14)
- Temptation Is _____ (v. 14)
- Desire Draws Us Out and _____ Us (v. 14)
- The _____ of Temptation (v. 15)
- _____ Temptation (vv. 16–18)

Identify Our Own Worst Enemy—_____ (v. 14)

Believe that God Is the Only True _____ of Good
(vv. 16–17)

Pursue the Life-Giving _____ of God (v. 18)

Note: If you'd like to read more about God's sovereignty and suffering, see the appendix at the back of this book for a list of resources dealing with this topic.