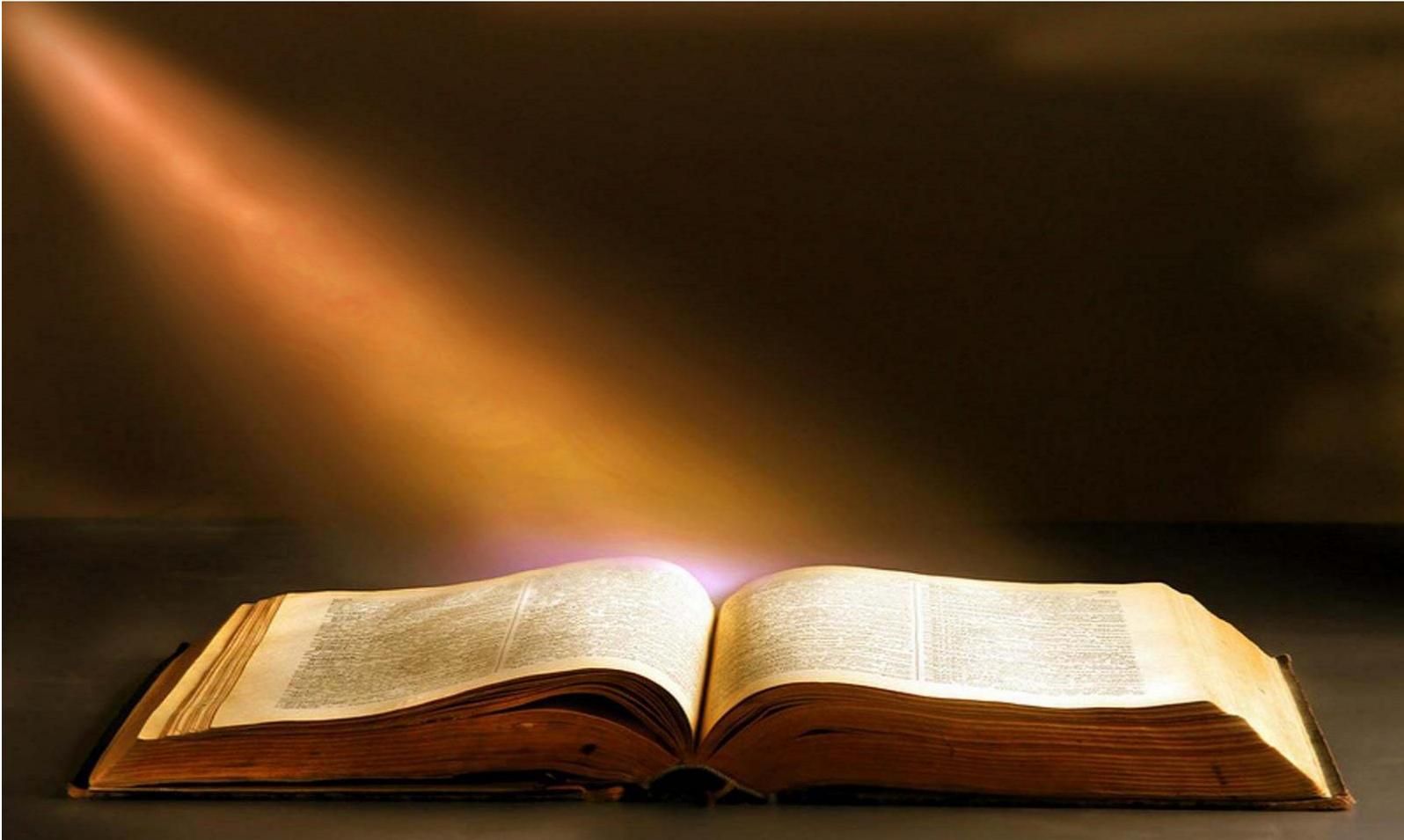


Reflections from the Book of James



By Dave Quinn of
PASSIONAustralia.org

About this booklet

Reflections from James is a collection of thoughts from my daily blog at The PASSION Blog (www.passionaustralia.org/blog).

They are quick thoughts that have grown out of my morning devotions and my prayerful reading of the Bible.

They are not meant to be deeply theological but to provide a connection between faith, life and the Bible.

For best use of this devotional booklet, read the daily reading in your favourite version of the Bible and then read the devotion.

If you read one devotion a day this booklet will take about two weeks to complete.

I hope you enjoy these short devotions or “blog posts”. For longer articles and sermons please visit my main website.

God Bless,



Dave Quinn
Founder of PASSIONAustralia.org

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Introduction to the Book of James

The Letter from James is a collection of practical instructions. It was written to all God's people scattered over the whole world.

In his Book James uses descriptive figures of speech to present instructions regarding practical wisdom and guidance for Christian attitudes and conduct.

From the Christian perspective he deals with a variety of topics such as riches and poverty, temptation, good conduct, prejudice, faith and actions, the use of the tongue, wisdom, quarrelling, pride and humility, judging others, boasting, patience, and prayer.

In his letter James emphasises the importance of actions along with faith. He says, "So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. (James 2:17 NLT)

Outline of James

Greetings from James - 1:1
Faith and Endurance - 1:2-18
A Warning against Prejudice - 2:1-13
Faith without good deed is dead - 2:14-26
Controlling the tongue - 3:1-12
True wisdom comes from God - 3:13-18
Drawing close to God - 4:1-10
Warning against judging others - 4:11-12
Warning against self confidence - 4:13-17
Warning to the rich - 5:1-6
Patience in suffering - 5:7-12
The power of prayer - 5:13-18
Restoring wandering believers - 5:19-20

Day 1—Faith and Endurance

For my morning devotions I am moving on to the Book of James. I really like James as it is full of practical advice.

The first heading in the book is “faith and endurance” is found in [James 1:2-18 NLT](#).

Verse 2 sets it up when it says, “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy”.

I don't know about you but great joy is not my first reaction when trouble comes my way! Often it is worry, stress and uncertainty.

But before long my reaction turns to prayer. My thoughts turn towards God and I seek His wisdom and understanding in the troubles.

At first I am more focussed on seeking God and asking for help, protection, wisdom and strength. I do this because I know His help from the past.

In the midst of the situation I have learned to ask some questions. Where is God in the midst of this? And what is He trying to teach me?

I have learned that troubles and hard times grow my faith and trust in God. They have a way of compressing me like the way pressure makes diamonds.

Verse 12 reminds us that, “God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him”.

If you are going through a hard time at the moment consider it pure joy because God is at work in the midst of the situation and blessing is coming.

He is not only helping and supporting you, but He is growing you in the process. Faith and endurance produces diamond like faith... and that is the type of faith we all need.

God Bless,

Dave

Day 2—Listening and Doing

The next section in [James 1:19-27](#) is titled, “Listening and doing”. Two very important truths jumped out at me today.

1. Being quick to listen

[James 1:19](#) says, “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry”.

Sometimes we have so much to say on a subject that we can be overcome with the desire to speak and be heard. At times it can be good and helpful, but at others we can overrun people and not hear what they think.

James warns us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. As someone once said, we have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen twice as much as we speak.

It is important to take the time to listen to others so they feel valued. It also allows us to hear fully and respond correctly when we do.

2. Don't just listen to the Word

[James 1:22](#) reminds us, “But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves”.

A few verses later James reminds us not just to listen, but to do something. This time he is talking about God's Words in the Bible. We need to put it into practice, to live it out.

I love the analogy of looking in a mirror and then walking away forgetting what we see. It brings it home to me that I need to have action to my memory verses and they need to be lived out.

I don't want to just fool myself thinking I am doing ok because I have a 123 verses memorised. I would rather know three and put them into practice to the best of my ability.

So today let us listen to people and hear what they are saying. And let us also listen to God's Word and then put it into practice.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 3—A warning against prejudice

In today's reading I am up to [James 2:1-13](#). The title grabbed my attention straight away – “A warning against prejudice”.

Verse 1 says, “My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people over others?” It is a pretty straight forward and clear reminder not to favour one person over another.

In verses 2-4 it gives the example of favouring richer well dressed people over poor people. It talks about giving richer people preferential seating, while the poor sit on the floor.

I have experienced this myself while shopping. When I went to one shop dressed in my work clothes of a shirt and tie I would be well attended. When I was unshaven and wore my dirty gardening clothes the next day I was almost ignored.

It really showed me how we can look upon people's clothing (or skin colour, age, gender) and make value decisions based on appearance. This is totally against what this passage and the Bible as a whole talks about.

God sees everyone as special, as created in His image and with a purpose. There is not one person in this world that Jesus did not die for. As a result we can't discriminate and treat others differently.

Verse 8 of the text brings it into focus. It says, “Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

It is all about loving your neighbour as yourself. Treating people equally and with respect. And treating others how you would like to be treated. Let us all purpose in our hearts to treat all people equally today.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 4—Faith without good deeds is dead

Today's reading is [James 2:14-26 NLT](#). It is titled, "Faith without good deeds is dead".

The opening statement from verse 14 says, "What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?"

In the passage we see two examples of faith in action. Abraham with his son and the sacrifice. And Rahab the prostitute who hid the spies. Both were accredited righteous with God because of their actions.

Verse 15 and 16 gives us a practical example of lived out faith. "Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?"

Real faith is both believed as truth and then manifests itself in actions. Verse 17 reminds us that, "faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless".

True faith is more than agreeing with a set of principles. It actually transforms our thinking and our actions. If our lives remains unchanged, we don't truly believe the truths we claim to believe.

What things can I do today to show my faith is real and alive? What good deeds can I do to demonstrate my faith is not dead? How about you?

God Bless,
Dave

Day 5—Controlling your tongue

Controlling the tongue is the next heading in my morning readings from James. It is found in [James 3:1-12 NLT](#).

At first it warns that not all of us should be teachers in church because teachers are judged more harshly. This is because teachers have the power to lead people astray or turn people from God if they are not teaching correctly.

Verse 2 says, “Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way”.

In verses 3-6 it gives us three examples of what the tongue is like – the bit in the horses mouth, the rudder on a large ship and the spark that starts a raging fire. The tongue has so much power to change and shape things.

One verse that jumped out at me today is verse 9. It says, “Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God”.

This reminds us that the tongue or the words we speak can go either way. It can be used well to praise God or used badly to curse others.

I know that over the years my tongue and words have improved, but it is still not perfect... it is a work in progress. God is still not finished with me thankfully!

Sometimes I say the wrong things or say them in the wrong way. Sometimes I speak too soon when I don't know all the facts. This is why James warns us in chapter two to be quick to listen and slow to speak.

I have learned that I need to use my words wisely. I need to consider them and take my time. I need to ask myself are they building up or tearing down.

Let us all purpose in our hearts today to use our words well today. Let us use words that build up and encourage and speak life and truth into others today.

Dear God, help me to use my words well today. Please help me to control my tongue. I pray I will speak words of truth and life today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 6—True wisdom comes from God

Today's reading is [James 3:13-18 NLT](#) and it is titled, "True wisdom comes from God".

Verse 13 says, "If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honourable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom".

In this verse James gives us another straight forward statement. If you understand things from God's perspective, then prove it in the way you live.

He goes on to contrast the wisdom from God and the wisdom from the world in verses 14-17.

Worldly wisdom has two main features – jealousy and selfish ambition. It sees what others has and wants it and the person wants these things only for themselves.

Compare this to wisdom from God and a person who understands God's ways...

"But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favouritism and is always sincere" (v17).

Those who live with Godly wisdom love purity and peace, are gentle, submissive, merciful, fruitful, sincere and do not show favouritism. They are not self focussed, but outward focussed.

Let us prove today that we understand God's ways and live an honourable life, with good works and humility. Let us display the things [James 3:17 NLT](#) talks about.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 7—Drawing close to God

The next reading in James is [James 4:1-10 NLT](#). It is titled, “Drawing close to God”. In the middle of this passage we get some clues about drawing close to God.

Verse 7 says, “So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”. This verse show us that humility and resisting the devil are keys of drawing close to God.

Verse 8 goes on to say, “Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world”.

We see in verse 8 that living right by rejecting the worlds ways are also important. We need to stop doing the things we know are wrong and seek God’s ways. We need to purify our hearts and not be divided in our loyalties.

Verse 9 tells us that genuine repentance is needed. “Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy”.

If we want to draw close to God we must come to Him in humility, be genuinely repentant and stop living by the worlds ways. We must also not be divided in our loyalties and we must chose God and His ways only.

Dear God,
Right now I humble myself before You. I am sorry for the times I have had divided loyalties and become a friend of the world. Please forgive me. Lord, I long to live in purity and the way You want me to live. Right now I draw near to You and ask You to draw near to me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 8—Warning against judging each other

Today's devotion looks at [James 4:11-12 NLT](#). The title is a "Warning against judging each other".

Verse 11 of this short section says, "Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you".

Judging and criticising each other is not what God wants for us. Our job is to mind our own business, be obedient and do the work God has called us to do. We should also build each other up and encourage each other.

When I judge others I am not only going against what God says, but I am doing it my limited vantage point. Rarely do I know what is fully going on in others lives. Only God knows that.

Jesus touched on judging others in [Matthew 7:1-5](#). Verse 1-2 says, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged".

Jesus went on to say in [Matthew 7](#) that we often have a plank in our own eye and we judge the speck in others. Jesus reminds us that we often miss our own faults and easily see the "faults" in others.

[James 4:12](#) of the passage today puts it plainly. "God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?"

Dear God, I pray that when I am tempted to judge others or criticise them, that You will remind me that is not what You want me to do. I am sorry for the times I have wrongly judged others or criticised them. Please forgive me. Please help me to focus on You and the work You have for me to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 10—Warning about self confidence

My next devotion comes from [James 4:13-17](#). In the NLT it is titled , “Warning about self-confidence”. In the NIV it is “Boasting about tomorrow”.

Verses 13 and 14 say, “Look here, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it’s here a little while, then it’s gone”.

These verses are a sober reminder that while we may make plans, ultimately our lives are in God’s hands. He alone decides when we are born and He alone decides when we die.

As I type I am reminded on [Luke 12:16-21](#). It is commonly titled, “The parable of the rich fool”. In it a rich business man makes plans to build bigger barns to store his wealth so he can sit back and relax. The story changes when God tells him his life will be over that day.

These passages are not telling us to have no plans or make no goals at all. What they are telling us is that it is pointless to make plans and goals that do not include God. As Proverbs reminds us, “We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

As the Creator and Sustainer of life, God needs to be woven into all of our plans. In fact He needs to be the One doing the weaving! When we allow God to weave our plans, they take on an eternal perspective. They are not just for the here and now.

So today let us remember that we are created by God, for God. Let us remember to seek God for His plans for our lives and allow Him to give us a vision that is for the here and now that is birthed in eternity.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 11—A warning to the rich

Today's reading comes from [James 5:1-6](#). The title is pretty strong in the NLT when it says, "A warning to the rich".

As I read through this passage one main thought jumped out at me. Verse 4 talks about God hearing the cries of the poor and oppressed workers when it says...

"For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the LORD of Heaven's Armies".

The warning to the rich is about mis-treating those who work for them. The main charge was holding back wages that were due and cheating people of their rightful pay.

It also says that the rich people have lived in luxury and satisfied every desire (v5) and the treasure accumulated will stand as evidence against them on the day of judgment (v3).

For me it comes back to treating people well by loving our neighbour as ourselves ([Mark 12:31](#)) and not building up earthly wealth only for ourselves by building up heavenly treasures ([Matthew 16:19-21](#)).

I am not an employer of others, but if I ever do become one, I will keep this warning and the verses from Mark and Matthew in mind.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 12—Patience and endurance

The next reading in the series comes from [James 5:7-12](#). The theme is “Patience and Endurance”.

The first part of verse 7 says, “Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return...”

One of the great truths of the Bible is that Jesus is coming back. Jesus Himself said, “When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:3).

That is a great promise for those who follow Jesus. That He will come back and take us to be with Himself and His Father for all eternity. It is a living hope we all share if we have put our faith in Christ.

In the end of verse 7 and in to verse 8 it tells us while this will happen, we need to be patient waiting...

“Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near”.

Moving to a farming area has taught me a lot about farming and patience. Each year the farmers prepare and wait for the first rains, then they seed for weeks. Then they wait patiently for the harvest which is months away.

Just as there is a gap between seeding and harvest, there is a gap between Jesus first and second coming. In the meantime we wait patiently and we do the things He asks us to do.

So today as we patiently wait for Jesus return let us remember His words... “When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am”.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 13—The power of prayer

[James 5:13-18](#) is the next reading in the series. It is titled, “The Power of Prayer”.

Verse 13 reminds us to pray when it says, “Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises”.

It reminds us to pray when things are going bad and to praise when things are going well. Whether good or bad is happening to us we should be connected to God.

The passage gives us two examples of how powerful prayer is. The first is healing for when we are sick. It tells us to call the Elders of the church to anoint a person with oil and to pray.

The second is when Elijah prayed for the rain to stop and the rain to start again three and a half years later. The text tells us that Elijah was as human as we are in verse 17. His prayers were powerful, so are ours.

I have experienced many amazing things as a result of a prayer of faith in God. When I trusted God’s ability to intervene or bring change, He has acted mightily.

Let us remember today the power of prayer. Verse 16b reminds us, “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results”.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 14—Restoring wandering believers

In the last section of James we are looking at the heading of “Restoring wandering believers”. It comes from [James 5:19-20](#). It says...

“My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins”.

These two verses tell us the importance of going out after people who have wandered away from the faith. Over the years I have seen a number of people wander away from the faith. Some of the reasons I have seen are...

- People have been hurt by the church or people in the church
- A breakdown of an important relationship and they withdraw
- A long term illness that they can't make sense of God allowing
- No solid foundation of discipleship when they came to faith
- They don't regularly pray and keep connected with God
- The decision to follow Christ was a quick alter call decision
- They feel their needs were not met by the church or by God
- They felt they didn't fit in to the church culture
- They love the world or someone in the world too much

It is not easy to approach people who we think have wandered away from God. It can be confronting and most of us would probably not do it if we are honest. But I think it is important to keep the lines of communication open.

Jesus reminds us of the importance of this in the parable of the lost sheep ([Luke 15:1-7](#)). In verse 4 He says, “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it?”

Jesus goes on to say in verse 7, “There is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away”!

As I type I wonder if there are people in my area who have wandered away from God who need a shepherd to go and bring them back into the fold? How about your area? Are there any people you know?

God Bless,
Dave

Day 15—My dear brothers and sisters

One thing I really noticed this time from reading James again was the amount of times James used the term “Dear brothers and sisters”. He used it 11 times in six chapters.

Not only did James see his fellow believers as family, but he used it to highlight his key thoughts. He introduced each major idea with it. Here are a few...

[James 1:2-3](#) – Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.

[James 1:19-20](#) - Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

[James 2:1](#) – My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people over others?

[James 2:14](#) - What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?

[James 3:1](#) – Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Have a look through the rest of James and see if you can find the other “Dear brothers and sisters” and see what the rest of his key thoughts were from the book.

Often it is a good learning tool to sit and read a whole Book of the Bible in one sitting. It helps you to get an overview of the major themes and to see any patterns in the writing that can lead to key messages the writer wants us to understand.

God Bless,
Dave