

Introduction to James

For the past few weeks I've mentioned from the pulpit that we would be starting a sermon series on the Book of James in November. Pastor Vinnie and I both feel that this is the perfect book for us to study at this time in our church's life. Why? Because James brings to light a clear and compelling truth:

Genuine faith in Christ results in life change.

Over the next few months, then, we will be praying for God to do a mighty work in our hearts. We want to see how we can put flesh to our faith in the context of our everyday lives. Here's a taste of what we'll learn in the upcoming weeks:

Genuine faith endures trials.

In James' day, people typically believed that the various gods people served were at their beck and call—like a cosmic Santa Claus who existed to add value to their lives as they determined. In stark contrast, James makes plain that a life of ease may not always be God's plan for our lives. Rather, we're to "count it all joy" when trials come into our lives (James 1:2), because God intends to use them to complete his work in us. The end result of these trials is blessing: "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial" (v. 12). Thus, God calls us to embrace trials, pray for wisdom during trials (v. 5), and continue to entrust our lives to him throughout the whole of our earthly pilgrimage.

Genuine faith results in works.

When most people think of the Book of James, their thoughts tend to drift toward the "faith and works" portion of the letter (2:14-26). Some even suggest that Paul and James contradict each other. No such contradiction exists, however. Rather, while Paul zeroes in on our "justification" or "right standing" before God (Rom. 5:1; 8:1), James focuses on the "justification" or "vindication" of our profession of faith. Simply put, we can't legitimately claim to have been changed by God's grace if it hasn't resulted in a change of behavior. As Paul told the Galatians, what really matters is "faith working through love" (5:6).

Genuine faith results in wise living.

James is a "boots on the ground" kind of book. It deals with everyday issues. Hence, he informs us: Wisdom involves taming the tongue (3:1-13), rejecting selfish ambition (3:14), adopting a humble outlook (4:10), refusing to speak evil of others (4:11), as well as acknowledging that our lives are in God's hands (4:13-17; cf. Ps. 90:12).

For these reasons (and many more!) we hope you'll make it a priority to be part of our Sunday services as we study this great epistle. We also trust that you'll listen prayerfully, attentively, and put into practice what we're learning together as a body of believers.

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