



Thesis: If we claim to have faith in Jesus, our lives need to be marked by actively pursuing God.

Objective: To help students understand that our works should be a natural outworking of a genuine faith in Jesus.

Scripture: James 1:22-25, James 2:14-26

Introduction:

Today we start a four-part series that will cover some of the major themes in the New Testament book of James. James is an incredibly practical book that contains a lot of wisdom for everyday life. In fact, some have suggested that James is the New Testament version of the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Proverbs is an ancient book, written mostly by King Solomon, to help his son (and eventually us) live a wise life in a complicated world. James, similarly, was interested in helping his readers live a wise life that honors God. Watch how Proverbs and James use some of the same language:

Proverbs 4:5-7 (NIV): Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have get understanding.

Look how important wisdom is in the book of Proverbs! Now, let's look at James:

James 1:5 (NIV): If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Wisdom is so important! And before we go much further, we should probably define wisdom. Does anybody want to try to define wisdom--what is it?

[Teacher's Note: Ask the group to try to define wisdom and get some responses from the crowd. Depending on how the responses go, perhaps ask a follow up question, "How is wisdom different than knowledge?"]

A lot of people think about wisdom as being smart or knowledgeable, and wisdom and knowledge are definitely related, but they are not exactly the

same. Think about it like this: being smart, or having knowledge, helps you *know* that tomato is a fruit. You guys knew that, right? A tomato is technically a fruit because...it has seeds! So, a tomato is a fruit. Being smart or knowledgeable helps you know that. But *wisdom* is understanding that even though tomato is a fruit, you should not put tomatoes in a fruit salad or in your triple berry smoothie. Yet, while it is technically a fruit, knowing when and how to apply that knowledge is what makes you wise. And Scripture has a lot to say about biblical wisdom. The book of James has godly advice on how to treat people, how to navigate difficult times, how to use your words, how to live in community, and so on. God cares about us living a wise life--a life that is best.

Transition to Week 1 Message: And today we are going to look at one of the most important messages in James, a message that really sets up all the other messages. The message is this: **we are not just to *hear or know* Scripture, but we are to actually *do* what it says!**

Body: James conveys concern about people who claim to have faith in Jesus but are not actually living a life that honors God. And the message this week, and really all four weeks, is very *SIMPLE* but not always *EASY*. Today, we are going to look at the relationship between faith and works. First, James explains how Scripture should move us towards action:

- **Scripture should be used like a mirror:** In the first chapter of James, James wrote about how Scripture is like a mirror. Let's read: *James 1:22-25 (NIV): Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

I love this illustration because we can all relate to this. How many of you looked at yourself in the mirror this morning before you went off to your day? You probably looked at yourself before you got ready, and then probably looked at yourself again after you got ready to make sure you took care of whatever you needed to take care of. [\[Teacher's Note: There is the potential here to share a story of a time](#)

maybe when you didn't realize you had something stuck in your teeth, in your hair, a hole in your clothes, etc.] Common sense says, if you look at yourself in the mirror and see a flaw, you should address it before you go on to the rest of your day. Or, to put it in modern terms, if you took a selfie and you noticed something was off in the picture, maybe you didn't like the angle or your hair was out of place or your smile wasn't "cool" enough, would you post it?

James knew the answer to this question! He explained that you look at yourself in a mirror to gain a picture of what you look like. And if you forget what you look like, or if you don't address what the mirror shows, that's foolishness! And James used that same logic to help us understand the role of Scripture. James said that if you look into Scripture and get a picture of what you and your heart is really like, as well as a picture of how you should really be living, but then just forget about it, you have totally missed the point of reading Scripture!

What if you started to think of Scripture like a mirror? What if, when you read Scripture, you **expect** to see something in it that will change your behavior or your thinking? What if you actually do what Scripture says? So, the first thing James wanted us to see is how Scripture should be used as a reflection of what it really means to follow Jesus! Secondly, James explained that:

- **Works SHOW your faith:** In James chapter two, James helps us understand the relationship between our faith and our deeds. This is a very important conversation because we know that our good works don't save us. We don't earn our way into heaven; we are saved simply by the grace of Jesus! But then, many have wondered, if works aren't a part our salvation, why does the New Testament place such an emphasis on acting correctly? It's a good question, and James helps us understand. *James 2:20-24 (NIV): You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,"^[e] and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.*



Thesis: Our words are incredibly powerful.

Objective: To help students understand the power of their words and inspire them to use their words in a way that honors God.

1. Come up with a list of “small but powerful” things.
2. Come up with a list of things that are “hard to tame.”
3. What is it about the tongue that makes it so powerful? In other words, what can the tongue do? (Positive and negative).
4. What makes the tongue so difficult to tame?
5. Can you name a time in your life recently that you let your tongue go off the reins; a time you should have tamed it? What about a time that you *did* tame your tongue and were proud of yourself?
6. *Read James 3:9-11.* What is James talking about? What do salt and fresh water have to do with our tongues and speech?
7. How does not controlling your tongue hurt your credibility with your friends? Why might it be more difficult to tell friends at school about Jesus if we don't use our words wisely?
8. What kind of things do we usually say or not say around certain groups of people? (In other words, how does our speech change based on our audience, like teachers, parents, pastors, small group leaders, teammates.)
9. Let's brainstorm some ways we can practice taming our tongue.

This preview includes a select number of pages from this resource.

If you like what you see, download the entire resource today!

downloadyouthministry.com