

BAND of BROTHERS

SUMMER SERIES 2026 – WEEK 1 HANDOUT

WEEK 1 – Faith Under Pressure

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.*

- James 1:1 ESV

- **Which James are we talking about?**

- James the brother of John? (Mark 3:17)
 - The sons of Zebedee
- James the son of Alphaeus? (Mark 15:4)
 - The father of Thaddeus (Luke 6:16)
- James the half-brother of Jesus? (Galatians 1:19)

*Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only **James, the Lord's brother**. – Galatians 1:18-19 NLT*

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? – Matthew 13:55 ESV

- James grew up with Jesus
- But he didn't understand who Jesus was
- He was not a "believer"

After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!"

For even his brothers didn't believe in him. – John 7:1-5 NLT

- They spent 30 years with him

- But never understood who He was
- But Mary knew

“Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” – Luke 1:29-33 NLT

- The same message the shepherds received

“Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!” – Luke 2:10-11 NLT

*They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph...the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, **but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.*** – Luke 2:16-19 NLT

- Jesus’ siblings thought he was crazy

One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon he and his disciples couldn’t even find time to eat. When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. “He’s out of his mind,” they said. – Mark 3:20-21 NLT

- But they became believers
- James saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7)
- They were in the room at Pentecost

*They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, **and the brothers of Jesus.*** – Acts 1:14 NLT

- James became a leader in the early church
- He was highly influential and well-respected
- And he had a particular audience in mind

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. – James 1:1 ESV

*I am writing to the “twelve tribes” — **Jewish believers** scattered abroad. (NLT)*

- Jewish Christ-followers living outside Judea
 - ~ A result of Jewish persecution

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. – Acts 8:1 NLT

But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. – Acts 8:4 NLT

- They are ...strangers living in foreign lands
 - ...despised and ostracized
 - ...suffering persecution
 - ...confused and lacking confidence
- So what is James' first message to them?
Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. – James 1:4 ESV

steadfastness – Greek: *hypomonē*
endurance, constancy, patient endurance

- This book is full of **paradoxes**
 - Seemingly contradictory statements
 - ~ Rejoicing in trials
 - ~ Having faith without doubt
 - ~ Showing love without partiality
 - ~ Faith alone is dead faith
 - ~ Humility is the path to honor
 - But it's also **practical** and **applicable**
 - ~ It's about real life...
...but from a spiritual perspective
 - ~ It's about holiness...
...for the here and now, not just the hereafter
 - ~ It's about heart transformation...
...not behavior modification
- **James is not a self-help book**
 - It set a high bar for godliness
 - ...patiently endure testing and temptation... (1:12)*
 - ...be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. (1:19)*
 - ...get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives. (1:21)*
 - Wash your hands...purify your hearts. (4:8)*
 - Don't speak evil against each other. (4:11)*

God helps those who help themselves. – Hezekiah 2:3 ESV (Not a real verse)

- The book of James...
 - ...doesn't offer self-improvement advice;
 - ...it promotes the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life

- The same thing Paul promoted
So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. – Galatians 5:16-17a NLT

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. – Galatians 5:19-20 NLT

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. – Galatians 5:22-23 NLT

- **Count it all joy – easy for you to say, James!**

- James had learned this truth the hard way
 - He is Jesus' blood relative
 - He is the head of the Jerusalem church
 - Persecution and poverty are commonplace
 - Herod has already killed James the disciple
 - The Sanhedrin is arresting Christians

- **The key to counting it all joy**

- James had learned the secret
- The same one Paul knew

I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. – Philippians 4:11-13 NLT

- Trials are **inevitable** and **unavoidable**
 - Jesus promised it
"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows." – John 16:33 NLT
- But wisdom is always available
 - Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit
 - He is the source of all wisdom

"But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you." – John 14:26 NLT

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future." – John 16:13 NLT

- Trials expose our weaknesses

Fear	Anger	Worldliness	Self-reliance
Doubt	Materialism	Discontentment	Ignorance

- What's our typical response to trials?
 - Why** is this happening?
 - What** did I do wrong?
 - When** will it be over?
 - How** can anything good come from this?

- When going through difficulties...
 - ...**worry** comes easily
 - "How will I ever survive this?"*
 - ...but **wisdom** is harder to come by
 - "Where is God in all this?"*

Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment. – Proverbs 4:7 NLT

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. – Proverbs 2:6 NLT

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. – James 1:6-7 ESV

- What are we supposed to ask God?
 - "What are You trying to teach me?"*
 - "What are You trying to reveal in me?"*
 - "How do You want me to respond?"*
 - "Where am I out of step with Your will?"*
 - "Would You reveal Your power in my weakness?"*
- Ask, believing that God has...
 - ...something He wants to teach you
 - ...a sin to expose to you
 - ...power to provide for you
 - ...a miracle to do on behalf of you
 - ...a transformation to do in you
- Don't "waver" – *diakrinō*
 - to differentiate, to create distinctions
 - to vacillate in your opinions about God
 - to question His sovereignty and goodness

to determine His goodness based on circumstances

- Poverty is not a sign of God's displeasure
- Wealth is not a sign of His blessing
- Both are temporal conditions

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. – James 1:12 NLT

- **Temporal trials vs eternal triumphs** (vs 13-15)

- Trials are **not** temptation
- They may **produce** temptations
- But those are the byproducts of the flesh
- They are the fruit of worldly wisdom

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. – James 3:13-16 NLT

*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 **the fruit of good deeds**. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. – James 1:17 NLT*

- This is the theme of the entire book
 - Faithful reliance on God's will and ways
 - Increased fruitfulness as we learn to trust Him
 - Trials are tools in His hands
 - They are tests of our faith and reliance
 - Wisdom turns them into fruit
 - Worldliness turns them into temptations

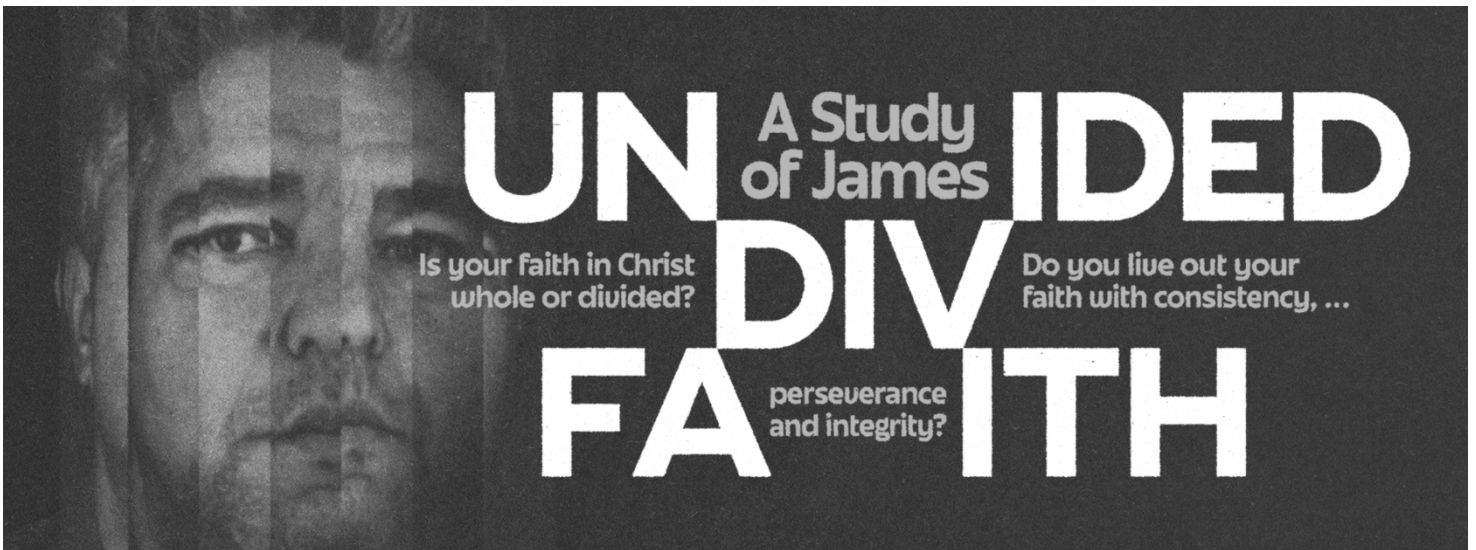
- **Discussion questions**

Discuss the following quote:

"The wisdom of God allows us to see trials and difficulties from an eternal viewpoint that puts them into proper perspective."

How have unexpected trials caused you to doubt God's sovereignty and question His goodness?

Why would asking God for wisdom be better than asking Him for deliverance?



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SUMMER SERIES 2026 – WEEK 2 HOMEWORK

WEEK 2 – Faith That Obeys

In this lesson, we will move from **faith under trial** to **faith that obeys**. James warns that merely hearing Scripture or agreeing with biblical truth—without obedience—leads to self-deception. He teaches that **true religion** is not measured by knowledge alone, but by a life shaped and transformed by God’s Word. This kind of faith is visible in obedient action, controlled speech, compassion for others, and personal holiness.

- You should have received a PDF containing Ken’s Devotional™ on the Book of James. If so, please read pages 19-22 sometime this week. They cover the section of James that we will be studying in week 2.
- Read **James 1:19–27** several times this week. Read it slowly and prayerfully, asking God to help you to discover what He is trying to say to you. Remember, last week, James encouraged us to ask for wisdom. Why not try doing that each time you read through these verses?

- Look at verses 19-21 and consider all the commands James lists. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “I’m doing great!” and 1 being “I’ve got work to do!”, how would you score yourself on the following statements:

I am quick to hear	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I am slow to speak	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I am slow to anger	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I put away all filthiness and wickedness	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I do a good job of listening to the Word of God	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I do a good job of putting the Word into action	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I don’t view myself as spiritually superior to others	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I place a high priority on widows and orphans	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- What do you think James means when he writes, “the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God”?

What are some of the things that make you angry?

James says, “Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires” (*New Living Translation*). Anger can surface when trials unexpectedly show up. How could asking God for wisdom help control our anger when going through difficulties?

- Verse 22 challenges us to avoid being those who hear the Word of God but refuse to obey it. What does this look like in your life? Give some examples of being a hearer but not a doer.

What do you think verses 23-24 mean? Read the following quote from Devotionary™ to help you.

“Hearing the Word without applying its truths is like glancing in a mirror and then walking away. Whatever flaws and imperfections the mirror may have revealed will be quickly forgotten once you walk away. Whenever the Word reveals an area of your life that needs attention, you must deal with it immediately – with the Holy Spirit’s help.”

- Verse 25 describes someone who looks at himself in the “perfect law, the law of liberty,” then takes action. First, how is God’s Word the “law of liberty”? How does it set us free?

Why would obeying what God reveals in His Word result in blessing? What could that look like?

- Consider verses 26-27. What are some ways we can think we are being religious, and why is this dangerous to our witness?

Why would James list the inability to control the tongue as a sign that we are play-acting when it comes to our spirituality? (Read James 3:1-12 for insight).