

# THE BOOK OF JAMES

LIFE LIVING LESSONS

## Session 2: How to Defeat Discouragement and Temptation

### James 1:9-12 NIV

<sup>9</sup> Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. <sup>10</sup> But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. <sup>12</sup> Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

### **The Blessing of a Poor Life**

Do you find that you place your confidence or security in earthly possessions at times? Things such as a full pantry, a hefty paycheck, a nice car, or a comfortable bed often leave us depending on our own possessions more than on God to provide. How can we combat these tendencies in an affluent country and culture?

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### Luke 18:18-30 NIV

<sup>18</sup> A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

<sup>19</sup> “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. <sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

<sup>21</sup> “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

<sup>22</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

<sup>23</sup> When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. <sup>24</sup> Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

<sup>26</sup> Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”

<sup>29</sup> “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

The easiest time to trust God in the world is in the ICU unit, or if you need food and you have no money. If you go over to a third world country, you'll see that people are rich in faith. They're rich in faith because they're poor. They can't go to the bank and write a check. They can't go to the refrigerator and open it. So, they are in desperate dependency. By contrast, when you're rich, it takes a huge amount of willful dependency to walk by faith. You have to willfully choose to get into the Bible and renew your mind. You have to willfully choose to realize that God is infinite, and the world is about Him, and it's not about you! Money and possessions will lull us into a false sense of security! We will unconsciously pursue significance, and security, and power in the things that we can accumulate and possess, to impress other people. And when we do, it dulls our spiritual mind and cauterizes my heart so that I begin to live with knowledge of God but act as though HE doesn't exist. The reason why is that I know I can write a check, and I can open the refrigerator door, and I have investments - from the outside it looks good.

- According to verse 9, what is it about a poor person that gives them a high position spiritually? \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Wealth promotes a false sense of security because \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Even in times of lack, I will not become discouraged because \_\_\_\_\_  
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- When we start thinking about our future, there are two myths that cause us to get discouraged. Number 1 is: "It's bad now and it's never going to change." It sounds like this: *"I'm in a rotten marriage, and it's not going to change. He's a jerk, and when I look back on it, he's been a jerk, he will be a jerk, and he will forever be a jerk! I'm getting out of this thing!"* This myth leads us to believe the way life is right now is how it will be stuck forever. Number 2 is: "If I do it God's way, if I endure, if I have a good attitude, if I'm the one that takes the step towards the marriage, Lord, if I do it your way, You are going to make my life easy!"

In Verse 12, we see two truths about the future. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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The phrase, "crown of life" is two words in the Greek. A crown was a wreath for victory made of flowers. A crown was often referred to with royalty, and a crown had to do with position and blessing. But it's not the "Crown of life." It is, "The crown, which is, life." When you persevere in the midst of your difficulty, it will come to an end, and the reward will be the crown which consists of life. And notice, there's a crown now, there's a life, a quality of life now, and to the one who's promised, there's a hope forever, and ever, and ever. This crown which consists of life, which the Lord has promised, it's what God produces in you through the test.

### **Overcoming Temptation (James 1:13-18)**

*<sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

*<sup>16</sup> Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup> He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.*

We live in a fallen world where Satan excels at deception and temptation. Do you realize that the word trial and temptation in the New Testament are the same word? God will use a trial to build your character, but Satan designs it to destroy you. Temptation and sin are not the same thing. Temptation means a desire in me to do something I know is wrong. That's not sin, it's just a temptation. But under pressure, when we abandon God's character-building program of endurance and opt out to take a shortcut that Satan offers, then it becomes sin. The devil is the Father of Lies.

*Πειρασμός (Perasmos): test, trial, temptation*

## Three Lies that Destroy our Lives

### Deception #1: We are deceived about the \_\_\_\_\_ of our sin. (v. 13-14)

- **The Lie:** *"I'm not responsible for my sin. It's not my fault."*

When you're deceived, you are that proverbial little frog that they put in the pan of lukewarm water, and then they turn on the stove real slowly, and you sit there thinking, "It's warm, it's a little bit warmer," and you're totally unaware it is now boiling, and you're dying. Often friends can see it, colleagues can see it, family can see it, but you can't. "I don't have a problem. You kidding me? No, you're exaggerating. There's no problem here." This is the first deception. We're deceived about the source of our sin. The lie is that I'm not responsible for my sin, it's not my fault. The idea is that, "I'm the victim, it's my circumstances. You think I've got problems? You should see the family I grew up in. You should see where I grew up. It's in my genes. You're saying I have a little anger problem? I'm Irish...it's in my DNA. I blow up because my dad blew up. I blew up because - do you realize what I've been through in the last seven months?"

We are good at rationalizing, excusing, or shifting blame. What does verse 13-14 say about this problem?

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**The Truth:** God does/does not (Circle one) people. The problem is \_\_\_\_\_.

What does Satan use to tempt us? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Deception #2: We are deceived about the \_\_\_\_\_ of our sin. (v. 15-16)

- **The Lie:** *"I can handle this! It's not hurting me or anyone else!"*

One truly heartbreaking time in life is when we hear a family member or friend say to us concerning sin, "Really, I can handle this. It's not a big deal." It breaks our heart because we can see more clearly the path that this person is headed down, while they seem to be blind to what is coming their way. However, we do the same thing. Maybe it is a TV show, magazine, or radio program that sits on the edge of sin. You believe you will not allow it to lead to any sin, and that it is just a hobby. Maybe your friends are the ones saying, "LOOK OUT! That is a bad road to go down!"

- **The Truth:** Sin is **NOT** simply an act; it is the result of a process.

According to verse 15, how does James describe or illustrate this? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Matthew 5:29-30 NIV**

*29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

In Matthew 5:29-30, what is Jesus' advice when it comes to combatting sin?

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**Deception #3: We are deceived concerning the nature and \_\_\_\_\_ of God. (17-18)**

- **The Lie:** "I've got to party and have good times now; I'll get serious with God later."

This lie comes in all different forms, but the lie is: following Christ means I'm going to miss out on all life's pleasures. God is a cosmic killjoy. So, I'm going to date some unbelievers because I don't think God could bring a really good-looking guy, or a really good-looking girl with a great personality to my life. If I really get serious with God, I'll miss out on too much. It's easy to be deceived. Could it be that down deep, we don't believe that God is good?

- **The Truth:** God is good, and His will always has my highest and best interest in mind.

**1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV**

*13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

Explain God's promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Conclusion**

A pastor went duck hunting with a Christian friend named Riley. He admitted some of his friends were making it difficult for him to stay strong so Riley asked, "Why am I having more trouble since I became a Christian than I ever did when I was spiritually lost? Everything seems to go wrong. I'm having such a struggle." The pastor said, "I'll tell you why. Let's say a couple of ducks fly over and you shoot. You kill one and injure the other. They both fall into the lake. What are you going to do? Which one will you go after first?" Riley said, "I'd go after the injured one first, the dead one ain't going nowhere!" The pastor continued, "That's the way it is with the devil. He goes after injured Christians. He's not going to bother with the person who's dead in his sin. But once you're committed to Christ, you'd better get ready; the devil is going to come after you."

What is your most vulnerable area? What is your weak spot? God knows it and He's ready to bring you through it. Turn to the Lord and say: "God, you know the areas where I've fallen. I want a clean slate. I want to start over."