

# BLUEPRINT

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FOR A FAITH THAT WORKS

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Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
James 1.1-12 | June 16, 2019  
Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan  
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

## I. Introduction to this Study

This week we begin a 12-week series in the New Testament book of James. We're calling this series *Blueprint for a Faith That Works* because James is filled with practical teaching about building a Christ-centered life in and for the family of God. And this blueprint doesn't just contain pithy encouragements or vague suggestions – of the 108 verses in the book, there are 59 commands!

## II. Connecting with One Another

When was the last time you were told to do something? By whom? How did you react?

## III. Study the Text

### a. *Read James 1.1.*

The very first word in the book of James reveals its source. While this was a common name in the first century, the half-brother of Jesus almost undoubtedly authored these words. While it's appropriate to call the book James, the author actually refers to himself as Jacob (which means "supplanter"), recalling the father of the nation of Israel who wrestled with the angel.

Why do you think James, the half-brother of Jesus, would intentionally remind his letter's recipients of the story of Jacob?

During his earthly ministry, Jesus' family once thought He was "out of his mind." How would that effect James' self-perception of being a "supplanter" after seeing the Risen Christ?

### b. "To the twelve tribes" recalls the twelve tribes of Jacob/Israel, clearly connecting the historic people of God with followers of Jesus, the Messiah.

Why do you think that was an important connection for James to make?

As we will see, these early Christians were experiencing persecution. Why would this make their connection with previous generations of Jews so important?

### c. James, writing from Jerusalem where he was a leader in the church, addresses those "scattered" in the "diaspora." Recall Jesus' instruction in Acts 1.8, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This first occurred as the result of persecution at the outset of Acts 8.

The Greek for "scattered" is literally "through a sowing." In other words, the persecution of these earliest disciples was used by God to sow the seeds of the gospel through disciples of Jesus around the world.



How could your place in your neighborhood (whether you want to be there or not!) be used by God as a “sowing” of the gospel?

- d. Okay, we better move on from verse 1! *Read James 1.2-8.*

We read the first command in verse 2. What is it? Consider it pure \_\_\_\_\_(!?)

How can he command such a thing? What is his rationale? Let’s fill in the blanks, summarizing verses 3-4: \_\_\_\_\_ produces \_\_\_\_\_, which prompts \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, so you won’t lack \_\_\_\_\_

Where have you seen this truth in your own life? What about the lives of others?

- e. The phrase “face trials of many kinds” uses the phrase “fell in with” in the Greek, just like the man who “fell in with” robbers in the Good Samaritan story (see Luke 10.25-37).

When have you “fallen in with” difficult trials? How did they shape you?

- f. In this first chapter, James uses one word that our Bible translations render two different ways: trials and temptations.

How would you distinguish between the two? Can you give examples?

- g. Catherine of Aragon once said, “None get to God but through trouble.” What do you think she meant? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- h. Why do you think James shifts his focus from patience to wisdom (in verse 5)?
- i. Who does God generously give wisdom to? Why does it seem like wisdom is in such short supply these days? (see verses 6-8 for a hint)

How do patience and wisdom go hand in hand?

- j. When have you felt like you were riding “a wave on the sea, blown and tossed by the wind”? How did you find solid ground again?
- k. *Read James 1.9-12.*

James paints a picture of an upside-down kingdom. How do you understand these words? How do these verses expand upon Jesus’ beatitudes in Matthew 5.1-12?

What other examples could James have given (other than riches and poverty)?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to open your eyes to the opportunities within your “many kinds of trials,”
- b. Pray that God would give you wisdom for whatever you need right now,
- c. Lift up the places where you live, work, and play – that your presence there would reveal the good news of Jesus.

#### V. Digging Deeper

- a. Engage the story of Jacob in Genesis 32 and 35, Jesus’ family’s perception of him in Mark 3.20-21, 31-35, and James seeing the Risen Christ in 1st Corinthians 15.7.
- b. We know James was a leader in the Jerusalem church as seen in Acts 15 and 21.

