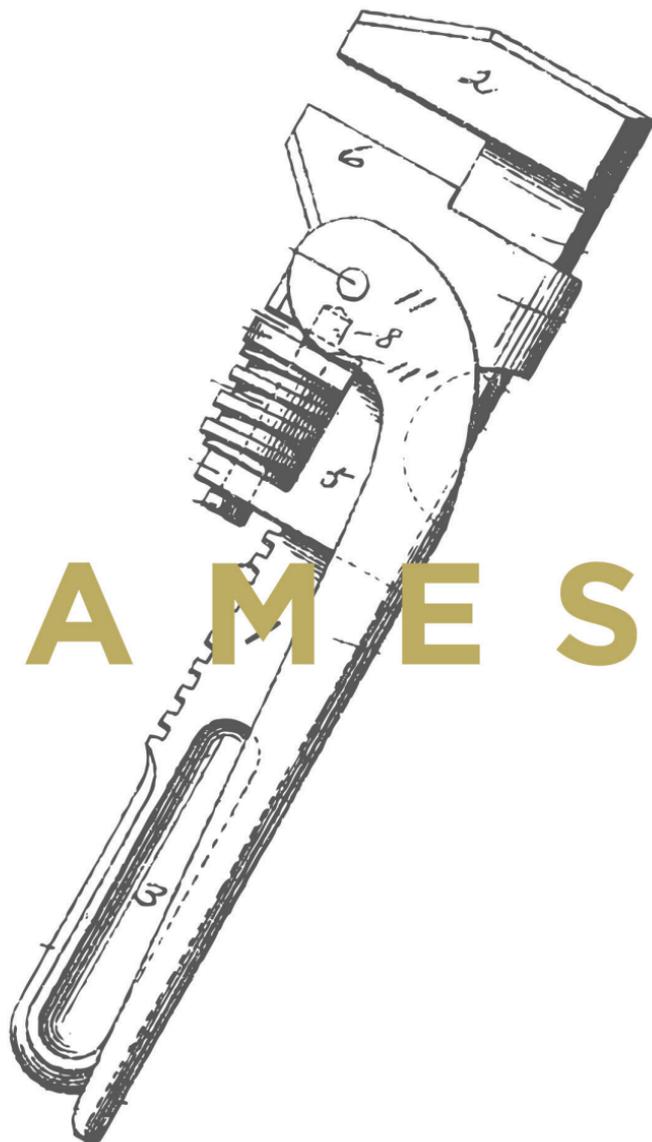


T H E L E T T E R



J A M E S

27 DAY DEVOTIONAL

VERSES ARE IN THE ESV TRANSLATION  
OF THE BIBLE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

# DAY 1

## READ JAMES 1:2-4

A silversmith works impure metal into pure, valuable silver. He uses fire at precisely the correct temperature allowing the metal to liquefy. He watches the metal and fire closely, for he knows that turning away even for a few seconds could burn the metal. As he watches, impurities in the metal begin to surface. The silversmith gently removes those impurities. The metal is fully purified when the silversmith can clearly see his reflection in the metal.

Trials are like a fire, creating situations that can either destroy us or purify us. Trials can destroy us when our hearts are centered on what could be destroyed. When the focus of our life is on the temporal things of this world, we will find ourselves centered in a revolving cycle of heartache, hurts, and failures. We find joy in trials when we understand that, like a silversmith with silver, God's eyes are always on us. God is in control even when our lives feel out of control. God's goal is not to burn us, but to remove impurities in our lives so he is able to see his reflection in us. Trials can form in us a longing for the heart of God, for the perfection of his kingdom, and to see his name made famous in and through our lives. Trials are joy when God is our goal.

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**PRAY AND ASK** God to reveal things in your life that are keeping you from fully reflecting him.

# DAY 2

## READ JAMES 1:5-8

The average person going through a trial is probably thinking, “How quickly can I get through this?” Often, it’s hard to find joy in trials because we don’t really know why we’re going through them (knowledge), we lack the ability to see the “big picture” behind the trial (perspective), and we don’t really know what to do as we walk through the trial (experience). James explains our lack of knowledge, perspective, and experience is really a lack of wisdom. In these areas of wisdom where we lack, God can meet us with his supernatural wisdom - all we need to do is ask. He holds all knowledge, he has an eternal perspective, and in Jesus he has experienced every trial and prevailed. What would trials look like if instead of asking God to get us out of them, we asked God to give us wisdom to go through them?

What you pray for, you often look for, and what you look for, you often find. When we ask God for wisdom, our hearts are in a position to look for wisdom, allowing us to find the goodness of wisdom that only comes from God. We discover joy in the midst of trials, when we confidently trust God and his wisdom.

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**ASK** God today for wisdom.

# DAY 3

## READ JAMES 1:9-11

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33

Trials show no impartiality. Trials see no race, no social standing, no family background, and no economic standing. Trials level the playing field. Trials happen to the poor and trials happen to the rich. Pity can't get us out of trials, and we can't use our financial resources in an attempt to bargain our way out. Those who are poor have the chance to trust God with less; those who are rich have the chance to trust God despite their resources. In the midst of trials, we learn to trust God and rely on his power. We can trust that God will do what he says he will do; we can trust that the promises of God are trustworthy. Before Jesus went to the cross he promised that as we followed him, we would meet trials. However, there is a second promise. As we go through these trials we can take heart, we can find comfort, and we can find peace because Jesus has overcome the world.

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**TAKE TIME TODAY** to fill in this blank, “I can trust God to \_\_\_\_\_ as I go through trials.” Pay close attention to the kind of people who accept Jesus' message, and the kind of people who oppose his message.

# DAY 4

## READ JAMES 1:12-15

In the 1960's, Stanford professor Walter Mischel and his team began conducting a series of psychological studies we now know as the Marshmallow Experiments. In these studies, researchers tested hundreds of four and five year olds by leaving the individual children alone in a room with a single marshmallow sitting in front of them. Before leaving the room the researcher would let the child know that if they didn't eat the single marshmallow while they were away, they would bring back with them a second marshmallow for the child to enjoy. During the 15 minutes alone, video footage revealed some children jumping quick to eat the single marshmallow, others doing well to avoid eating the marshmallow at first but eventually giving in, and then some children withstanding the test and eventually earning a second marshmallow.

Every day we are faced with the choice: one marshmallow or two. We get the chance to give into temporal desires, which give birth to sin, or we can choose to hold out, trusting God in our decisions and knowing there are eternal rewards coming for us. After running our race through trials, and temptations to give in to temporal desires, God meets us at the finish line with a crown of glory - our eternal reward.

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When you face temptation, **ASK** God to remind you of the eternal reward.

# DAY 5

## READ JAMES 1:16-18

God is good and is the source of everything good. You can count on God to be good and to be working things out for good in your life. His goodness is unchanging. Change is occurring every second of every day. Even in just the tick of a clock something is different. Despite ever changing circumstances, God doesn't change. He won't change for the worse because good can't be bad, and he can't change for the better because you can't get any better than God. He desires relationship with us because God wants good for his children. We can't earn God's goodness. That's the beauty of the Gospel - grace. We receive good when we should have bad. Goodness within us is a product of the work of God, not our works. We are able to produce good only because of the work that Jesus did on the cross and the cross in us. We don't deserve the grace given to us, but the grace given is the best thing that could happen to us. Someone once said, "Grace isn't about having a second chance, but having so many chances that you could use them all through eternity and still never come up empty." God's goodness is unending. God's offer for goodness is not a one-time deal, is a deal offered through all eternity. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even ourselves.

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**TAKE TIME** today to thank God for his goodness and his grace towards you.

# DAY 6

## READ JAMES 1:19-21

Humility is an easy lesson to learn, but a hard concept to live. Humility is the ability to sit quietly with an attentive heart, eager to hear from what is in front of us. We ask questions and take notes. We listen. We attentively listen.

How do you approach the Word of God? When you sit down with your Bible, when you open it in private, when you're with a small group of friends, or at church? Do you open it with a heart to listen? The Bible has the ability to impact our lives when we approach it with humility. James explains we humbly approach scripture when we do three things. The first is that we approach scripture quick to hear. When you open up the Bible, tune out distractions and be fully present with the Word of God that is sitting in front of you, ready to respond to what it asks of you. The second is that we approach scripture slow to speak. When you're alone with God's Word don't try to listen for a message to speak to someone else, let the Word speak to your heart. Lastly, we approach Scripture slow to anger. There are things that the Bible will ask you to do that may be uncomfortable to do. Don't let a heart hardened by anger keep you from doing what is asked.

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**RE-READ** James 1:1-21, slowly. Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

# DAY 7

## READ JAMES 1:22-25

James is centered around the ideas of faith and works, hearing and doing, and receiving and responding.

Hearing God's Word and not putting it into practice, is like a young child being told to clean their room and leaving it a mess. The child could think about cleaning their room, the child could pray and ask God to show them the way to clean their room, the child could even invite friends over to talk about cleaning their room, but if the child never took time to start picking clothes up off their floor or making their bed, their room wouldn't get clean. We can talk a lot about doing what God calls us to do, but until we actually do it, it will never get done. True faith is obedient faith. True faith is being willing to take steps of actions even when you have no idea what it will lead to. True faith is clinging so closely to the words of those you're trusting that they aren't just commandments but comfort as you journey to the unknown. They're the words that you repeat to yourself when you're wanting to give up, when you're feeling hopeless, or when you just need a reminder as to why you started in the first place. True faith is hearing, and then doing.

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What is God calling you to do?

# DAY 8

## READ JAMES 1:26-27

Pursue what pulls you closer to God. You get as much of God as you want. James 1:26 references the tongue and the heart. What we speak reflects what our heart pursues. It's easy to talk about God when our heart is pursuing God, just as it's easy to talk about the world when our heart is pursuing the world.

While pure religion is marked by personal purity it is also marked by public compassion. We can't expect people to show up seeking love from us; we go and love people where they are. Where would Jesus go if he walked the Earth today? Who would Jesus love if he was alive today? Jesus' love was a fearless type of love; he was unconcerned with what people would think of him because he was focused on his mission. Jesus spoke boldly to the religious elite, but he still loved them. He loved tax collectors, the sick, the dying, criminals, government officials, children, and social outcasts. He loved those he wasn't "allowed" to interact with, and he surprised people with his love. What would the world look like if we all chose to love like Jesus loved? James explains pure religion isn't just about loving those who are easy to love, but the outsiders as well - the ones who need love the most.

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**ASK** God today for more of Him in your life, and for opportunities to love people more like Jesus.

# DAY 9

## READ JAMES 2:1-7

Grace changes things. It transforms the culture of the world from a try harder, do better, and measure up way of life to a rest easy, forgive quickly, and love intentionally way of life. Grace allows us to receive without earning and give without an expectation of receiving. Jesus defined grace through his death on the cross. He gave without thinking about what he was getting. How can we model that same grace we, as Christ's disciples, are called to give?

Society tells us that relationships that don't give something to us have no value in our lives. Our understanding of the cross and of grace allows us to change the way we see relationships. The cross allows us to walk into relationships knowing we've already received something that can't be given. The cross frees us from seeking relationships that could benefit us and instead, allows us to see people the way that Christ sees them – people worth dying for. Our "dying" relationally may not involve a cross, or even physical death, but we have the chance to unselfishly give ourselves away. We are able to walk into relationships with the knowledge that we have the opportunity to love someone with freedom. The reward has already been won, and the person we are loving can do nothing to take away what we've already received.

When we walk into relationships expecting nothing, there's a chance we receive something.

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**DO** something for someone today, expecting nothing in return. Give yourself away.

# DAY 10

## READ JAMES 2:8-13

From the moment we were born we have fed off of the affection of others. As human beings, we love to be loved. We long for love – close relationships, encouragement, security, and community. We look for that love but we are also called to give that love. The fruits of our faith are not restricted to people who are easiest to love. The law calls us to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Partiality in our love hinders us from fulfilling the law. The law was complete, and failing to keep part of the law was failing to keep the law. The law of liberty gives us the ability to obey Jesus. If Jesus loved all should we not do the same? As Christ’s disciples we get the chance to show Jesus to the world, to model him in the way we act, the way we speak, and ultimately in the way we live and love. Does the way we love model the way Jesus would love?

Jesus loved the rich but he also loved the poor. He loved those closest to him and loved those in the crowd. He loved those who loved him, and loved those who sent him to the cross. He loved people in the calm and in the storm. He loved people on the mountaintop and on the cross. His love could not be hindered, his love was not partial, his love was complete.

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**THANK** God today for loving you, even when you were far from him.

# DAY 11

## READ JAMES 2:14-17

Fruit is the evidence of faith in our lives. Completing a marathon is the fruit of months of training. Running the marathon doesn't take the place of the training, but training would amount to nothing if the goal of finishing the marathon were not achieved. Training and finishing make little sense without one another. How we care for those in need is fruit of our faith. Pastor Tim Keller is quoted saying, "Mercy to the full range of human needs is such an essential mark of a Christian that it can be used as a test of true faith. Mercy is not optional or an addition to being a Christian. Rather, a life poured out in deeds of mercy is the sign of genuine faith."

Caring for the poor is like caring for Jesus. Matthew 25:40, "And the King will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" We are called to care not out of a place of guilt, but out of a motivation of grace. We care for those in need because Christ cared for us when we were in need.

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In addition to today's reading, **TAKE TIME** to read Matthew 25:31-41. Ask God for opportunities to care for those in need.

# DAY 12

## READ JAMES 2:18-26

“So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The Lord will provide;’ as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’”  
- Genesis 22:14

Faith is only a lofty belief until it is lived out; there is nothing passive about faith. There once was an American pastor who went on a mission trip to Africa. During his time in Africa he was amazed by the faith of the African people he was serving. Their faith challenged his own and at the end of his time in Africa, he asked the African pastor what was the reasoning behind the bold faith of their people. The African pastor was quick in his response, “In Africa we don’t just love God, we depend on God.” There’s a difference between simply loving God and depending on God. Physical growth requires us to learn independence, growth in our faith requires us to learn dependence. Faith costs us our lives so that we may gain a greater life. Faith calls us to do things that on our own we would fail to do. Natural things can’t produce supernatural results – something greater is needed. We don’t just talk about faith; we walk in faith which bears fruit. Works fueled by God-sized dependent faith honor God.

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James makes reference to the faith of Abraham when he was called to sacrifice his son Isaac. **TAKE TIME** today to read the story of Abraham in Genesis 22, looking for examples of Abraham’s faith. Today, how can you trust Jesus and who he says he is?

# DAY 13

## READ JAMES 3:1-5

With our tongue we have the ability to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe all that God commanded us. With our tongue we have the ability to speak words of life to others, to encourage, and to tell others about the love of God. Our tongue is powerful and can be used to further the Kingdom and glorify God. The tongue is like a bit in a horse's mouth. The bit is small but has the ability to push a horse faster, to turn it in one direction or another, or to stop a horse from moving. With a small bit in the horse's mouth one can control the entire animal. The tongue is like a rudder on a boat. A giant cruise ship turns only when the tiny rudder turns. The rudder navigates the course a ship is destined to take. The tongue is like fire: all it takes is a little spark in the right area to create a fierce flame.

The words we say can help us run faster or slow us down. The words we say can set us off the path we were called to take or keep us moving in the right direction. The words we say can spread. We can spread negativity with one word and we can spread positivity just the same.

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Today, **TAKE TIME** to speak positive words to someone.

# DAY 14

## READ JAMES 3:6-12

Our tongues cannot be tamed. They reflect what it is in the heart. Words are an indicator of the heart. Words are an indicator of your spiritual condition. Sinful words come from a sinful heart. Loving words come from a loving heart. You can't train a tongue to speak life if it's reflecting a heart that is dead. Expecting pure words to come from an impure heart is like expecting to grab fresh water from an ocean.

Our fruit comes from our roots. What comes out is a reflection of what is inside. The oak tree is a large tree that takes years to grow to full size. From a small acorn an oak tree can grow to reach 70 feet in height and 9 feet in width. Oak trees produce more than 2,000 acorns every year. Oaks bear acorns, and oaks find life through acorns. Our words can be like acorns. We find life through the words of others, and we can give that same life away to others through the words we speak. It's easy to give life from a life giving heart. It's easy to find good from a heart filled with goodness.

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At the end of today, **REFLECT** on the words that came out of your mouth. Were they words of goodness? Remember that if your life is under Jesus' authority, then you are no longer condemned for sin, but brought into eternal life with Jesus. Rejoice and give thanks for that truth!

# DAY 15

## READ JAMES 3:13-18

“... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” – 1 Corinthians 1:24-25

Godly wisdom isn't gained from intellectual efforts or practical world experience; it's gained from being with God in the presence of Jesus. The mark of wisdom is becoming like Christ. For us to become like Christ we have to know Christ, and we know Christ by being with Christ. Godly wisdom produces Christ-like attributes and Christ-like humility.

In chapter 1, James highlights the necessity to ask for wisdom. In chapter 3, he explains the meaning of wisdom. The gain of godly wisdom requires a humble ask. Wisdom from above is: pure, peaceable, gentle, considerate, merciful, produces good fruits, is impartial, and sincere. These are qualities of Christ. As we gain wisdom, we become more like Christ. The qualities listed in chapter 3 are also found in the Beatitudes, which are found in Matthew 5. The connection between James 3 and Matthew 5 allows us to understand that as we become more like Christ, we receive the blessings of Christ.

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**REFLECT.** Who in your life has displayed godly wisdom? What characteristics mark their life? Find out if he was who he claimed to be. John is calling us to do that today.

# DAY 16

## READ JAMES 4:1-3

“Where do you think your fighting and endless conflict come from? Don’t you think that they originate in the constant pursuit of gratification that rages inside each of you like an uncontrolled militia?” – James 4:1 (VOICE)

Ed Welch was quoted saying, “There is something about war that sharpens the senses... you hear a twig snap or the rustling of leaves and you are in attack mode. Someone coughs and you are ready to pull the trigger. Even after days of little or no sleep, war keeps us vigilant.” There is a war waging that, if we do not fight on the soul level, will come out and affect our relational life. We lust after the flesh, and if we’re not careful the lust can destroy us. We will do anything to gain what we seek, yet we could lose everything if we seek out the desires of the flesh. The flesh wages a great war, thus we must fight back with great awareness and a passion to fight for something greater. We seek the fulfillment of fleshly desires from God, but we are denied. Why would a good God let his children settle for anything less than the best? Our pursuit of self-indulgence hinders us from seeking God. The circumstantial good has the opportunity to hinder us from the eternal great.

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Today, **ASK** God to help you die to self-indulgence with a heart to gain spiritual intimacy with Him.

# DAY 17

## READ JAMES 4:4-6

Lured by his desire for Turkish delight, Edmund was quick to board the chariot of the White Witch after walking through the wardrobe, stepping into the land of Narnia. He soon discovered his decision to trust the White Witch was not turning out the way he expected when he was enjoying the Turkish delight she first offered him. His union with the White Witch separated him from his brother and sisters and ultimately Aslan. He desired reunion with his family and union with Aslan, and the feeling was mutual. To satisfy the law, Aslan was killed for Edmund's freedom. Aslan was willing to fight for Edmund's life, even when Edmund was quick to chase the desire that the witch offered.

As Aslan was willing to die for Edmund's life, so Christ was willing to die for us. Although we are so easily swayed by the desires of the flesh and pursue what is in opposition to God (because it's not God), God is jealous for us. He wants us to pursue him not because he lacks self-confidence, but because union with him means we win. We were created in the image of God, and although we fall, pursue things other than God, and find ourselves separated from God, he still wants us. His jealous desire for our sinful lives is the greatest grace he could ever show us.

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**SPEND FIVE MINUTES** today in complete silence. Listening for what God might speak to you.

# DAY 18

## READ JAMES 4:7-10

Sin makes us spiritually dead. We mourn physical death over the loss of loved ones, over the life that wasn't lived, and over the broken relationship that death creates. Physical death results in life lost here on Earth, spiritual death result in life lost throughout eternity. We should mourn spiritual death with greater weight than physical death, because of our knowledge of eternity. Sin is not a laughing matter, it's a mourning matter.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Romans 6:23

We find life in relationship with God. When we draw near to God, he promises to draw near to us. We must purify ourselves as we enter into relationship with God. The purity of God can't mix with the filth of sin. Hebrews calls us to “set aside weight and sin” as we chase after God. We must learn how to set aside sin which is rooted in the promotion of self and learn to pick up humility, desiring to make the name of Jesus famous. When we humble ourselves in the pursuit of God, God will exalt us in ways only he can do.

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**EXAMINE** your life. What sin do you need to confess? Is there an area of your life you need to ask for accountability?

# DAY 19

## READ JAMES 4:11-12

Humility before God influences our relationships with others. We talk differently, interact differently, and live differently.

Our humble submission to God produces purity in our words. James commands us in verse 11 to “not speak evil against one another.” Evil speech discourages others and dishonors God. We do no good for others when we speak evil toward them. Whether hate, negativity, or deceit, evil produces no good for others or for us. Evil speech dishonors God because it goes against the commandments of Scripture. We honor God when we obediently follow his commandments. Purity in speech exalts God and encourages others. When we obey God and his commandments we reflect his goodness to others. Obedience reflects Christ. Pure words encourage others. Our humble hearts allow us to quickly view the good in others, and when we see the good, we can let others know. Our humble hearts are quick to sense the needs of others because we aren’t focused on only ourselves. When we sense a kind word is needed, let’s be quick to speak it.

Our humility toward God ultimately reminds us that we are not God. We don’t sit in the Judge’s chair, we don’t wear the robe or pick up the gavel for that matter. Our humility before God reminds us of his kindness, and the greatest thing we can do is to show that same kindness to others.

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**TAKE TIME** today to write a note of encouragement to someone God lays on your heart.

# DAY 20

## READ JAMES 4:13-16

Time is constantly moving and constantly changing. We can't add time to our lives, we can't slow it down, and we can't speed it up. Time is a funny thing. There are two types of time. First there is Chronos. Chronos is the tick of the clock: seconds turning to minutes, minutes to hours, hours to days, and days to weeks. Chronos is the numerical measurement of time. Then there is Kairos. Kairos is what we make of the time that we are given. Kairos is the moments in which we get to decide to go one way with our lives or the other. Kairos is the moments in which time seems to stand still and we are fully present in the moment.

We are not promised time. Our lives are like a mist, here one day and gone the next. We are given limited Chronos and an unlimited opportunity for Kairos. We can worry about what will happen today or tomorrow or what we can earn and how hard we should work, but at the end of the day, God is in control of our lives. If God wills, we will have time, and we will live. If God wills, we will act. Our responsibility is not to figure out how to spend Chronos, but how to create the most Kairos moments.

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**TAKE FIVE MINUTES** today to be still before God. Ask God to help you understand his control over your life and in your life.

# DAY 21

## READ JAMES 5:1-6

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moths nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” – Matthew 6:19-21

George Muller, a Christian evangelist and director of the Ashley Down orphanage cared for 10,024 orphans in his life. He lived a life marked by radical generosity. Muller never held on to what was given to him, he kept it moving and God always provided for him and the orphans. When any orphan became old enough to leave the orphanage, Muller would place a Bible in the orphan's right hand and a coin in the orphan's left hand. He would pray with the child and tell them that if they clung tightly to what was in their right hand, God would always make sure there was something in their left hand.

It is eternal foolishness to gather wealth for yourself. Our hearts follow our treasures. Do our hearts follow what is eternal or what will be destroyed?

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**DO** you practice tithing? If so, what have you learned from practicing tithing? If not, pray this week about moving forward with the discipline of tithing

# DAY 22

## READ JAMES 5:7-8

Farmers are hardworking people. Farmers have no idea what a day off looks like, they don't know what it means to sleep in on weekends, they wake up when the sun rises, they work hard throughout the day, and they go to bed knowing they earned their sleep. At the end of the day, a harvest does not depend solely on the hard work of the farmer. In farming communities, you depend on the weather - too much rain can cause crops to rot, too little rain can cause crops to dry up, and frost can kill crops. Farming takes patience. You work hard day in and day out, not knowing an outcome but trusting that your crops will yield harvest in due season. Farmers celebrate when they receive the desired outcome, and when the results are less than expected they get back to work, hopeful for what will come from the next season.

Faith is a lot like farming. Faith takes patience. Faith trusts God with what can't be controlled, and honors God with what can be controlled. You may not be able to control the results of the harvest, but you are able to control how hard you work. You may not be able to control the dry seasons or frost, but you are able to control whether or not you wake up every morning to do what you know you need to do.

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In what areas do you need to **TRUST** God?

# DAY 23

## READ JAMES 5:9-11

“The prophets who declared the word of the Lord are your role models, my brothers and sisters, for what it means to live patiently in the face of suffering. Look, we bless and honor the memory of those who persevered under hardship. Remember how Job endured and how the Lord orchestrated the triumph of his final circumstances as a grand display of His mercy and compassion.” – James 5:10-11 (VOICE)

Even in our trials, God has the potential to use our story and the circumstances in front of us for his glory and our good. Prophets speak in good times and hard times; circumstances don't stop prophets from pointing others to the glory of God. Lives are changed and eternity is impacted when people are taking opportunities to speak of a good God in both easy and difficult circumstances. James equally encourages us to follow in the footsteps of Job. As trial after trial came Job's way, he continued hoping in God's purpose. God is merciful and compassionate. Our lack of ability to see his purposes in our trials does not hinder his good purposes from being fulfilled. Your trials aren't the end of your story. James encourages us to be patient in our trials – speaking truth when given the opportunity and enduring in the hope of the purposes of God.

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**WHO** have you seen endure trials well? How did they do so

# DAY 24

## READ JAMES 5:12

Truth defends truth. Truth doesn't need a long story to defend or extra words to prove its validity. Truthful promises are filled with integrity. They result in action. These promises are not hidden behind religious speech but are lived out. "I'll pray for you" results in prayer. "I'm here for you" is shown through friendship in times of need. "Let me know how I can serve you" results in genuine service. God isn't seen through empty promises, but fulfilled commitments.

A "no" is better than an unfulfilled "yes." Football teams win games by moving the ball down the field and scoring touchdowns. Football teams lose games by dropping passes. Sometimes we are catching passes in many areas of our life, and we can't attempt to have another ball thrown our way. We have to understand that is okay, there are other receivers on the team who are wide open. By allowing others to catch a pass, our potentially dropped ball may result in a team touchdown. Catch passes when able, and when you aren't don't be afraid to say "no."

"Let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no."

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**WHAT** promises in your life have you said yes to? How are you fulfilling the commitments?

# DAY 25

## READ JAMES 5:13-15

“I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God, it changes me.”

Prayer is our response to life, not in an attempt to change the circumstances of life or change God’s will in our life, but to change ourselves as we respond to what God is doing in our lives. Prayer aligns our hearts with the heartbeat of God. It reminds us of our desperate need for God. Prayer allows us to approach God personally and on behalf of other people. When we pray for other people hoping that God would move powerfully in their lives, our lives change in the process. Prayer allows us to be vulnerable before God, celebrate with God, and approach God humbly with our requests.

Prayer is our way of saying, “I trust you, God.” Prayer reminds us whether we stand on mountaintops or in the valleys, it’s God who is ultimately the one in control.

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Thank God today for the ability to speak with him through prayer.

# DAY 26

## READ JAMES 5:16-18

Go to God for forgiveness, go to God's people for healing.

There is power when we confess to one another. Confession allows others to show tangible love in the hidden parts of our lives where true healing is needed. It positions others to love us as Jesus would love us. Confession is our way of saying we don't have it all together, but we know who holds us together. It allows us to begin a journey toward full embrace of the life God calls us to live, and opens up the door to let others walk alongside us on that journey. Forgiveness frees us and confession heals us in order that we may pursue righteousness.

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” When we chase after righteousness our hearts more closely align with the heart of God, allowing us to pray with a greater understanding of his heart. Elijah was an example of this. He prayed for no rain, and then he prayed for rain. He fervently prayed trusting God would keep his promises to him, and people saw the glory of God through his prayers. Our prayers rooted in righteousness are fixed on trust that God is working things out for our good and his glory.

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**HOW** do you need to find healing? What in your life do you need to confess, and who do you need to confess it to?

# DAY 27

## READ JAMES 5:19-20

We are in a season of choosing: choosing majors, choosing classes, choosing professors, choosing friends, choosing where we are going to live, choosing how we will use our independence, and choosing what we desire the rest of our lives to look like. Choices are tough. There is a 50/50 chance that the choices we make today can positively or negatively influence our future. We also get to choose how we respond to others' choices and our attitude in how we relate to others as they are living out the decisions they make.

There are Christians who make wrong choices, and are faced with consequences they never saw coming. Strong faith is weakened and hope is diminished as the consequences that are faced turn a God-focused perspective to a man-centered view. The consequential difficulty rises as community is lost. Loneliness gives ways to victimhood. The Gospel is opposed to victimhood, loneliness, and lost hope. As people changed by the Gospel, we can't keep it to ourselves. James reminds us in the last few moments of his letter that we are to remind those who have tasted the Gospel of its power, love, and forgiveness. Life is found in the hope of Jesus. The Church breathes life into a dying world, and sometimes pumps extra oxygen to a lung that needs reminding of the life Jesus offers.

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**REFLECT** today on how the Gospel has changed your life. Thank God today for the power of the Gospel.

**C**  **M**