

A cluster of pink and white Amaryllis flowers with green stems and buds, set against a white background.

B R C

Study the Bible
and follow Jesus

Pink Amaryllis

***Hebrews 12-13;
James 1-3***

NT #47 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

W.Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and **training in righteousness**, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)*

A Blessed Journey

1. *May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.*
2. *May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.*
3. *May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.*

Study the Bible, follow Jesus



The Guiding Principles of BRC



- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

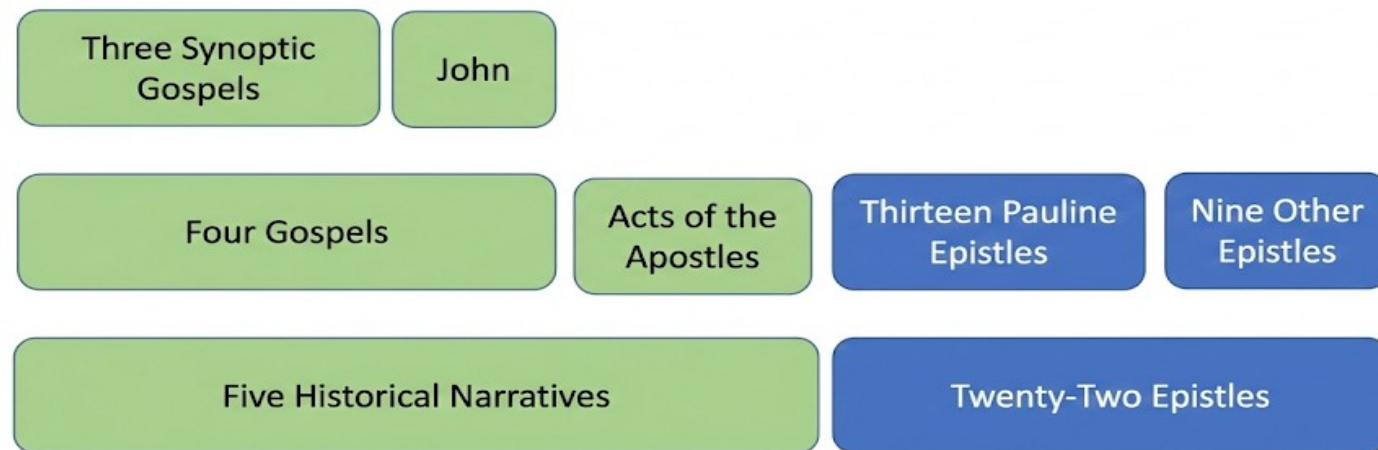
BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement



- *I'll complete weekly reading assignment*
- *I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety*
- *I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)*

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- *The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John*
- *The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)*
- *Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching*





Better!

Hebrews

W.Wang

7



12:1–3

Summary of Chapter 11

- *Run the race set before us*
- *Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we should:*
 1. *Lay aside every weight* (things that hinder your running)
 2. *Cast off the sin that so easily entangles* (sin easily entangles, but can be cast off)
 3. *“Run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”* (NIV)



12:1–3

Summary of Chapter 11

- *Fixing our eyes on Jesus*

1. ***He is The Author and Perfecter of our faith***
(Faith begins with Jesus and is perfected in Jesus)
2. ***For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame***
(He endured with determination in order to fulfill God's will)



12:1–3

Summary of Chapter 11

- *Fixing our eyes on Jesus*

3. *He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*
(*The One who reigns and intercedes*)
4. *Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners*
(“Opposition,” NIV; “hostility,” NASB; “contradiction,” KJV)
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

3. An Excellent Life of Discipline

1. The Privilege of Being Disciplined

- Recognize the nature of discipline: *“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children... We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!” (Hebrews 12:7, 9, NIV)*

Discipline is a father guiding his children—not punishment, but leading us out of error. If you misunderstand discipline, you will resist and complain. If you understand it, you will submit and thus “live”—experience true life. Satan wants you to enjoy the pleasures of sin to destroy your life. Submitting to God’s discipline frees you from sin and leads to true living!

- Only sons are disciplined; those without discipline are not sons: *“Because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son... If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.” (Hebrews 12:6, 8, NIV)*

*If you see someone doing the same wrong yet not being disciplined, do not envy them. It is because God regards **you** as a son, and not them.*

3. An Excellent Life of Discipline

2. The Purpose of Discipline

- To become holy (like God): *“God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.” (Hebrews 12:10, NIV)*

God’s discipline is loving, not an angry outburst. It is wise guidance so that we may “share in His holiness”—becoming righteous and loving like God. The greatest benefit a person can receive is not wealth, but sharing in God’s holiness.

- To produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness: *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11, NIV)*

“Peace” means complete well-being of body, mind, and spirit. “Righteousness” means being in the condition God considers right. Discipline results in righteousness, bringing full blessing to body, mind, and spirit.

3. An Excellent Life of Discipline

3. The Attitude Toward Discipline

- **Do not take it lightly:** *“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline.”* A child who accepts discipline walks the right path and becomes mature; one who refuses discipline ruins his life and regrets it.
- **Do not lose heart:** *“Do not lose heart when he rebukes you.”* Discipline requires patience, like physical rehabilitation. If you quit halfway, you will not recover and your future will be harder.
- **Move forward courageously:** *“Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.” (Hebrews 12:12–13, NIV)*

This precious truth teaches: ***If you don’t use it, it gets worse; if you use it, it gets better!***
A therapist makes you repeat movements daily until healed. If you speak poorly—practice daily. If you walk poorly—walk daily. The condition is: ***“Make level paths for your feet.”*** If the path is straight, the lame person who walks it daily will not be crippled but healed.

4. An Excellent Daily Life

1. Have Love

- Love one another: Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.
- Show hospitality: Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.
- Remember those who suffer: Continue to remember those in prison.

2. Maintain the Holiness of Marriage

- Honor marriage: Marriage should be honored by all.
- Do not commit sexual immorality: The marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.



4. An Excellent Daily Life

3. Continually Praise God

- Praise through Christ: Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise.
- The fruit of lips: The fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

4. Do Not Love Money

- Be content: Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.
- Trust the Lord: Because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'



A central orange clock face with black hands is surrounded by ten illustrations of a woman's daily activities. The activities include: sleeping in a bed, washing her face at a sink, sitting at a desk with a laptop, exercising with a potted plant, walking outdoors, sitting at a desk with a laptop, eating at a table, and walking outdoors. The illustrations are in a flat, colorful style with a warm color palette.

- Stay focused on sound teaching: *Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.*
- Rely on grace: *For it is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace.*

- *Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

The Relationship Between Believers and Their Leaders

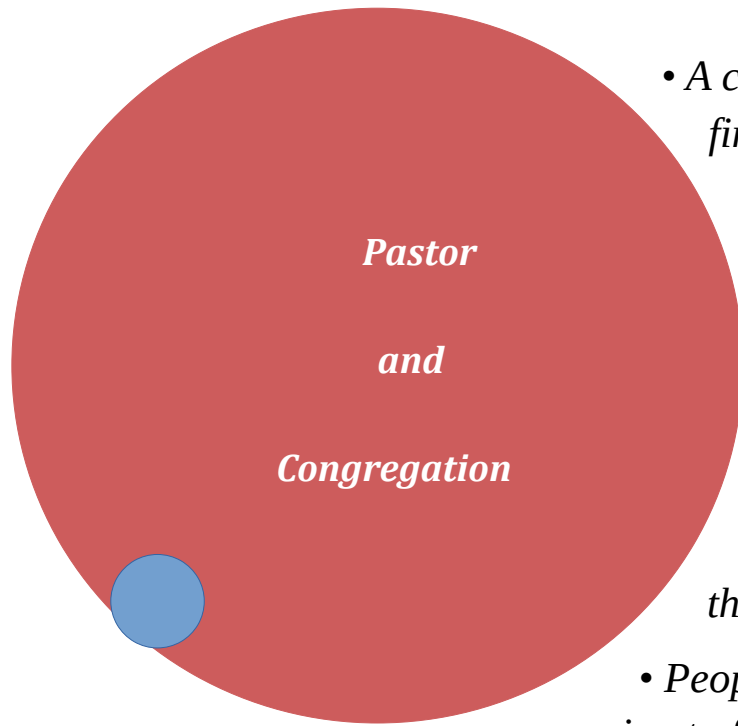
- *“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7, NIV)*
- *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.” (Hebrews 13:17, NIV)*



The Relationship Between Believers and Their Leaders

- ***They** lead you (lead, rule over you) and speak the word of God to you.*
- ***You** are to imitate their faith, carefully observe the outcome of their way of life, and obey them and submit to them.*
- *For they keep watch over you and must give an account to the Lord; you should make their work joyful, not sorrowful, for sorrow would not benefit you.*





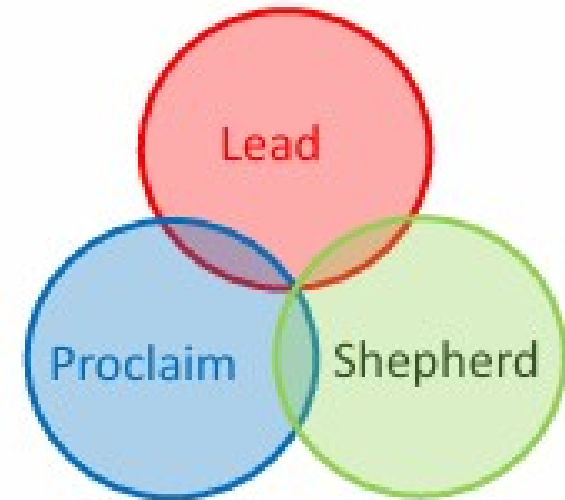
- *A church's pastor retired. After a long pastoral search, they finally called a new pastor. At first everyone was excited, but gradually the congregation felt the pastor was too dull. Complaints grew louder and louder, eventually forcing the pastor to resign.*
- *After another very long pastoral search, they finally called a new pastor. Again, everyone was excited at first, but gradually the congregation felt the pastor talked too much. Complaints grew louder and louder, again forcing the pastor to resign.*
- *People slowly left. Attendance kept decreasing. No one was coming to faith or being baptized. The remaining congregation*

continued praying, asking God to give them a servant who would be neither dull nor talkative, but one who is after God's own heart...

Pastor and Congregation

• *The responsibilities of a pastor are threefold: to lead, to proclaim, to shepherd.*

1. ***A pastor must lead***— *guiding the church to walk in God's ways.*
2. ***A pastor must proclaim***— *faithfully serving on the pulpit, giving spiritual food each week, correctly handling the word of truth.*
3. ***A pastor must shepherd***— *caring for and loving God's flock.*



The responsibilities of a Pastor

Reflecting on the Theme of Hebrews: “Christ Is Better”

- *Hebrews was written to Jewish believers. To these people who had a deep religious foundation and later believed in Jesus Christ, the author repeatedly and patiently tells them: “Christ surpasses everything—He is better and more glorious than all you value!”*
- *In Jewish tradition, the Law, Moses, the high priest, the tabernacle, and the covenant between God and His chosen people were considered the most beautiful and unshakable realities. Now that Jesus had come, and they had believed in Him, how should they view these things they once treasured? Are they higher than Jesus? Equal to Jesus? Or not as great as Jesus?*
- *The Jesus presented in Hebrews is the real Jesus— Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Not the Catholic Jesus, the Presbyterian Jesus, the Baptist Jesus, or Calvin’s Jesus. None of those existed yet. There was only Judaism and the crucified-and-risen Jesus Christ. Hebrews says: Compared with the Son of God, everything you once valued is nothing. Christ alone surpasses all.*

Reflecting on the Theme of Hebrews: “Christ Is Better”

- *Today, ancient Judaism has long been replaced by Catholicism, Presbyterianism, Baptist churches, Calvinism, local congregations, and preachers far inferior to Calvin. What is truly “better”? Your denomination? Your church? Your preacher? Or the Son of God, Jesus Christ? For those who never read the Bible and spend a lifetime believing in confusion, what is most precious to them? Their relationships and status in their church? The only theological system they understand? Or the Son of God, Jesus Christ?*
- *Add to this the modern waves of populism, ideologies, hostile political parties, hostile nations, and groups who dislike each other. Once Christians take sides, they immediately gain new “favorites” and new “enemies.” For many Christians, Jesus Christ must step aside for their beloved political stance or ideology. Such people need to read Hebrews.*
- *Honestly, those who value other things above Christ yet still call themselves Christians grieve the Lord and exhaust people’s patience. If you openly say you don’t believe, though regrettable, at least you have some integrity. But this half-hearted, pretentious attitude— frankly, it’s tiring! May God give you heavenly vision to re-examine and carefully observe whether Christ is truly more beautiful than all you value?*

General Epistles

- The seven letters after Hebrews (James; 1 & 2 Peter; 1, 2, 3 John; Jude) are called the **General Epistles** or **Catholic Epistles**, because they were not written to individuals or specific churches, but to believers in general—broad and widely circulated.
- The name can be traced back to the church father Eusebius (AD 265–340), who first used this term in his *Ecclesiastical History*.
- These seven letters were added to the canon later and are relatively short— three of them have only one chapter (2 John, 3 John, Jude).

James

HEARING
THE WORD
AND
DOING IT

雅各書



The Author of James

- *In the early church there were two well-known men named James:*
 1. ***James, the brother of John***— *One of the Twelve Apostles who followed Jesus, and who was martyred very early.*
 - *“It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church...He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.”(Acts 12:1–2)*
 2. ***James, the brother of Jesus***— *Leader of the Jerusalem church, called a “pillar” of the church.*
 - *(Paul said)“I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother.” (Galatians 1:19)*
 - *“James, Cephas, and John, those esteemed as pillars...” (Galatians 2:9)*

The Author of James

- *Most scholars believe the author of James is **James, the brother of Jesus**.*
 - *The author writes with authority, teaching Jewish Christians scattered across many regions. Only the two Jameses above had such qualifications.*
 - *Since the apostle James had already been martyred, the most likely author is Jesus' brother James.*
 - *James, the brother of Jesus, was martyred around AD 62.*

Characteristics of the Book of James

1. Very practical content

- *The book focuses almost entirely on Christian living, emphasizing that genuine faith must be expressed in action—not only hearing the word but doing it.*

2. Similar to Proverbs

- *It teaches through contrasts and has the flavor of wisdom literature.*

Characteristics of the Book of James

3. Echoes the Sermon on the Mount

- *Many passages reflect Jesus' teaching, such as:*
 - *2:5 see → Matthew 5:3*
 - *3:10–12 see → Matthew 7:15–20*
 - *3:18 see → Matthew 5:9*
 - *5:2–3 see → Matthew 6:19–20*
 - *5:12 see → Matthew 5:33–37*

Outline of James

1. *Trials and Temptations* — 1:1–18
2. *Hearing and Doing* — 1:19–27
3. *Favoring the Rich, Despising the Poor* — 2:1–13
4. *Faith and Works* — 2:14–26
5. *Praise and Cursing (Taming the Tongue)* — 3:1–12
6. *Earthly Wisdom vs. Heavenly Wisdom* — 3:13–18
7. *Loving God vs. Loving the World* — 4:1–10
8. *Human Will vs. God's Will* — 4:11–17

Outline of James

- 9. *Other Teachings — 5:1–20*
 - A. *Warning to the Rich — 5:1–6*
 - B. *Perseverance in Faith — 5:7–11*
 - C. *Integrity of Speech (Do Not Swear) — 5:12*
 - D. *The Power of Prayer — 5:13–18*
 - E. *Turning a Sinner Back — 5:19–20*

Trials and Temptations — 1:1–18

- **The distinction**

- *The same Greek word **peirasmos** can mean either “trial” or “temptation.” The meaning depends on context.*
 - **Trial**: *A hardship that tests and strengthens faith, shaping the believer’s character. Trials come from God.*
 - **Temptation**: *A lure toward sin, drawing a person away from God. Temptation comes from one’s own desires.*

Trials and Temptations — 1:1–18

- **About trials**

- **Scripture:** *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*
- **Example:** *Being persecuted for faithfulness to the Lord.*
- **Attitude toward trials:** *Consider it great joy (which requires heavenly wisdom, 1:5).*
- **Purpose of trials:** *To test faith—revealing whether it is true or false, strong or weak.*
- **Effects of trials:** *First, trials increase the endurance of faith (“trials produce perseverance”).
Second, trials bring a believer to maturity (“so that you may be mature and complete”).*

Trials and Temptations — 1:1–18

- **Wisdom in Trials**

- **Why wisdom is needed**: *Trials are one of life's greatest tests. Trials are painful; to consider them joy requires spiritual insight. Without heavenly wisdom, it is impossible.*

- **Asking for wisdom**: *When facing trials, if one humbly asks the Lord for wisdom, He will give it.*

- **Two attitudes in asking:**

1. **Ask in faith**: *Ask without doubting, and the Lord will give.*

2. **Ask with doubt**: *The doubter is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind—unstable and unable to receive from the Lord.*

Trials and Temptations — 1:1–18

- **Changes during trials**
- *Circumstances may shift—some may lose health, wealth, or status. Christians should face these changes positively.*
 - *The lowly brother being exalted: For example, some believers have very low social status, yet in trials they display peace and joy, which earns the respect of other Christians, so that their standing among believers is elevated.*
 - *The rich being humbled: For example, believers who were originally wealthy may lose their wealth and social status during trials (a situation very common when the early church faced persecution).*

Trials and Temptations — 1:1–18

- **About temptation**

- ***The steps of temptation:***

- 1) From conception to birth: “*Desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.*”
- 2) From birth to growth: “*And sin, when it is full-grown...*”
- 3) From growth to death: “*...gives birth to death (separation from God).*”

- ***How to deal with temptation?***

- ***Deal with it early:*** Temptation begins very small—a sentence you overhear, a fleeting thought that flashes across your mind. But when you think about it, discuss it, enjoy it, or allow it to grow in your heart, it leads to its birth, its growth, and eventually produces bitter fruit, evil fruit, and deadly fruit.

- *The earlier the stage, the easier it is to deal with. The later the stage, the harder it becomes, and the greater the cost. If it becomes severe enough, it may be nearly impossible to handle; unless God shows special mercy, a person may perish together with the temptation (death).*

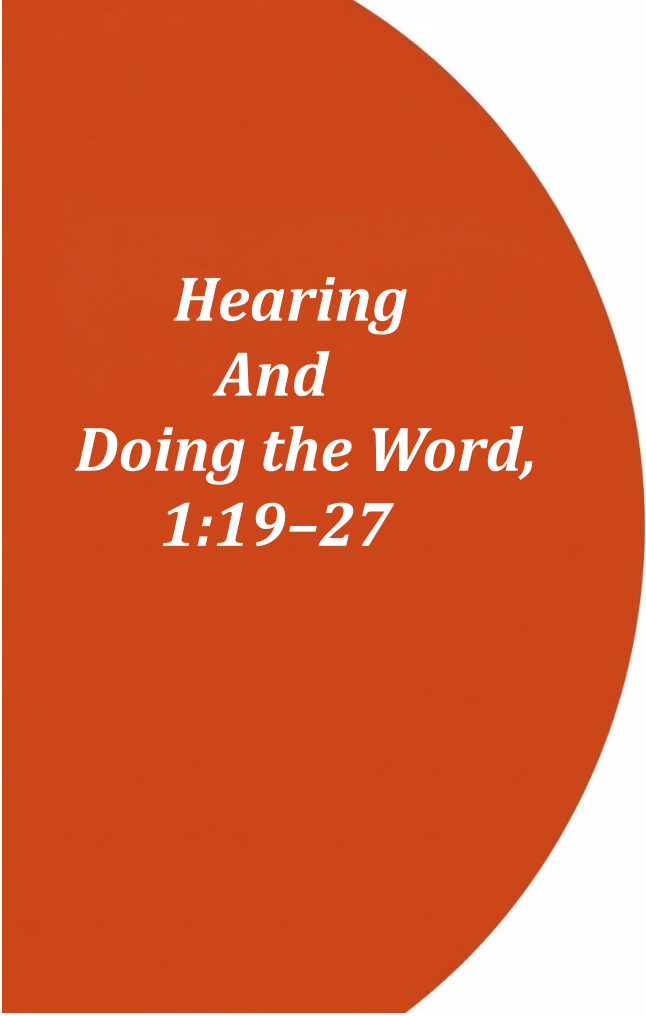
Trials and Temptations — 1:1–18

- Scripture: *“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.”*
- Source of temptation:
 - 1) ***Temptation does not come from God***: God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.
 - 2) ***Temptation comes from one’s own desires***: Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own desires and enticed.

Knowing God



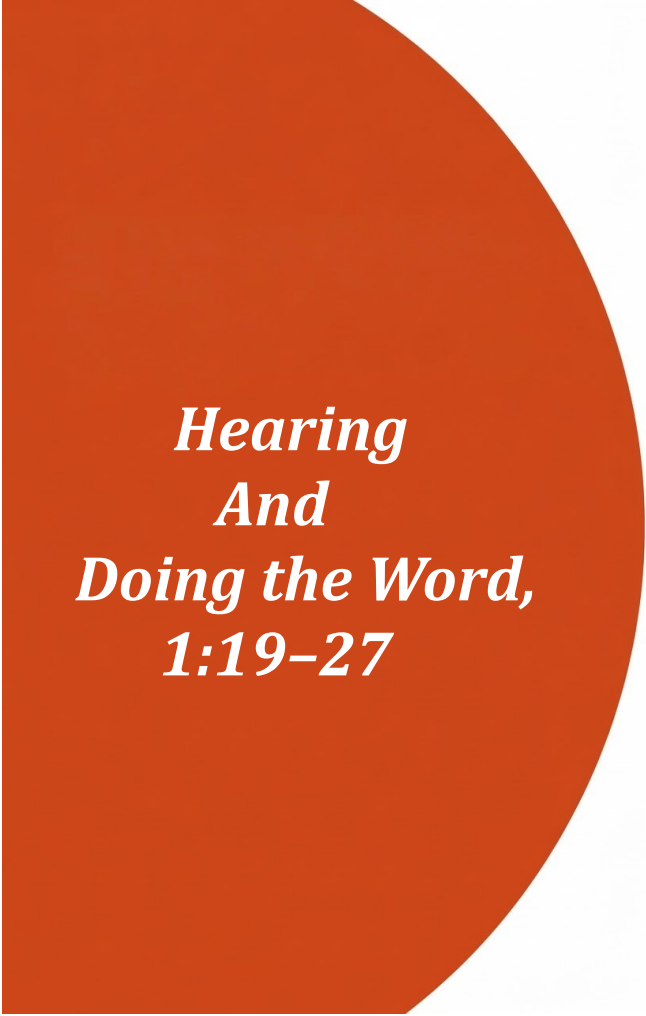
1. ***God is the source of all blessings (God is good):***
 - *Every good and perfect gift comes from God.*
2. ***God is light:***
 - *God is the Father of lights, the source of all light.*
3. ***God does not change:***
 - *In Him there is no change, nor shadow of turning.*

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Hearing And Doing the Word, 1:19–27

1. Christians Are Born Again Through the Word of God

- *Scripture: “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth.” (James 1:18)*
- *“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God...And this is the word that was preached to you.” (1 Peter 1:23, 25)*
- *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” (Romans 10:17)*
- *A person must first receive God’s word (the gospel) before they can be born again and saved. New life comes only through God’s word—without the word, there is no new life. James says: “He gave us birth through the word of truth.” Every new birth is brought forth by God through His word.*



Hearing And Doing the Word, 1:19-27

- **How to Hear the Word**

- *Scripture: “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry...humbly accept the word planted in you.”*

1. Quick to listen: Listen attentively, with focus and humility. Do not be distracted or let your mind wander, lest you miss God’s word.
2. Slow to speak: Do not react immediately. Understand and absorb first, then express your thoughts.
3. Slow to become angry: Do not react with anger simply because the message does not match your preferences.

*Anger
from
Hearing the Word,
Example 1*

- **Example 1 — Stephen**

- *Stephen said: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me!... You received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”*
- *When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him... They dragged him out of the city and stoned him.*

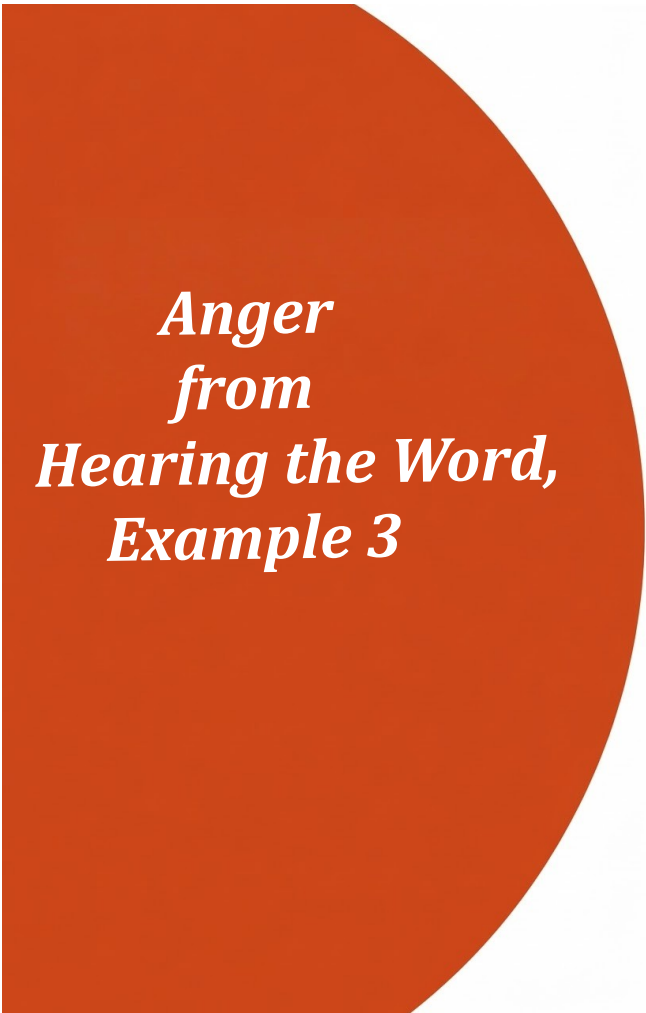
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*Anger
from
Hearing the Word,
Example 2*

- **Example 2 — Paul**

- *Paul said in Hebrew: “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense...The Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”*

- *The moment they heard the word “Gentiles,” they shouted: “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!” They shouted, threw off their cloaks, and flung dust into the air.*

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Anger from Hearing the Word, Example 3

- **Modern Imaginary Example A**

- *The pastor says: “Believe in the Lord Jesus—He is the only Savior; there is no other name under heaven given to mankind...”*

- *Mr. Hard-Hearted feels anger rising in his heart and thinks: “Who is he to say Jesus is the only Savior? My grandmother was a vegetarian, chanted Buddha’s name all her life, and did many good deeds—does that mean she isn’t saved? Nonsense...”*

- *“Jesus loves you; He died for you on the cross...” the pastor continues.*

- *“Ridiculous! I’m done listening!” Mr. Hard-Hearted stands up angrily and strides out of the hall, leaving everyone staring at him in surprise...*

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*Anger
from
Hearing the Word,
Example 4*

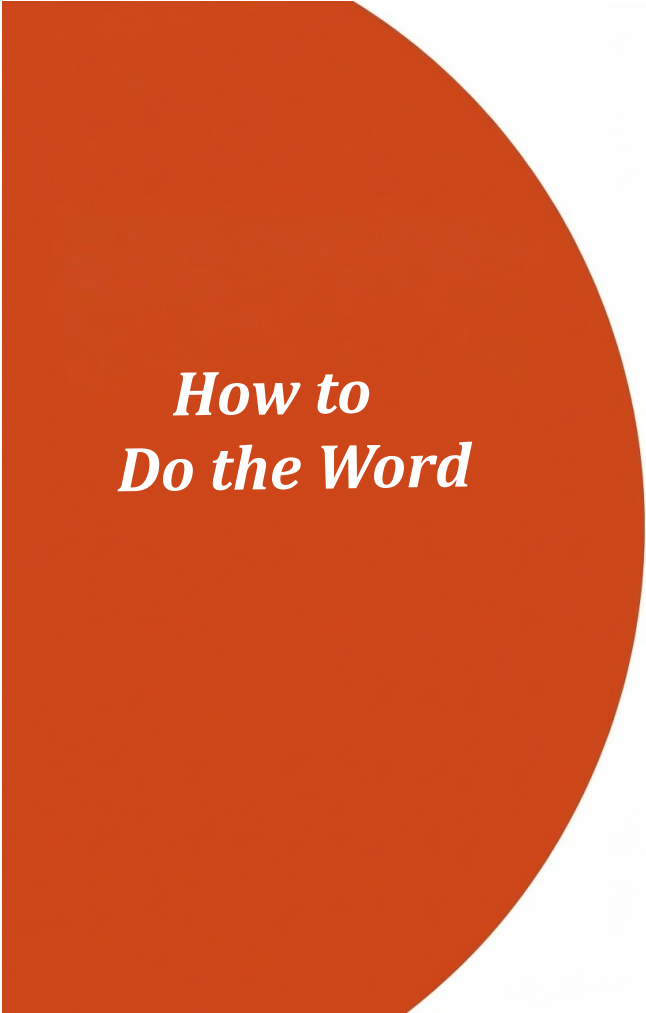
- **Modern Imaginary Example B**

- *The pastor says: “God loves you, and you must love God—offer Him your best: your time, your money, your gifts...”*
- *Miss Worldly grows angrier as she listens, thinking: “I finally came to hear a sermon, and instead of comforting words, he tells me to offer things? This is outrageous...”*
- *“You must be holy; do not be stained by the world...”*
- *“Not stained by the world? What a joke—if you’re so holy, why don’t you stop breathing earthly air...” Miss Worldly closes her eyes and falls asleep right there in the service.*

Reasons for Anger When Hearing the Word

• *Scripture: “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”*

1. Too much filth and evil in one’s life: God’s word is holy. If a person is filled with “all filth and the overflow of wickedness,” they cannot receive God’s word.
2. Lack of humility: Only a humble heart can receive God’s word. A proud, self-centered heart resists God and reacts negatively to His word.

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How to Do the Word

• **Three Practical Suggestions for Doing the Word**

1. **Control your tongue:** *The first step in doing the word is not allowing your mouth to become a channel of sin. Do not gossip, slander, lie, or spread lies. Do not stir up division or destroy others. Use your words to build up, not tear down.*
2. **Care for orphans and widows:** *The second step is loving action. In that time, orphans and widows were the most needy and least able to help themselves. Doing the word means helping those in need.*
3. **Keep yourself unstained by the world:** *The third step is resisting worldly influence. Christians are set apart—belonging to the Lord, not the world; heavenly, not earthly. We live in the world, following Jesus among the crowds, but we do not belong to the world.*

*Partiality
Toward the
Rich —
James
2:1–13*



- *James 2:1–4 is one of the strongest passages in Scripture describing favoritism toward the rich:*
- *“My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you,’ but say to the poor man, ‘You stand there’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet,’ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”*

• Snobbish Christians: An Oxymoron

- *Jesus came into the world as a human being, born in a manger, lived in poverty, and did not even have a place to lay His head.*
- *Jesus' disciples and most early Christians were poor and without social status. Peter said: "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk..."*
- *Logically, if one is a Christian, one should not be snobbish; and if one is snobbish, one is not truly a Christian. But strangely, why are there so many "snobbish Christians"? Not only in ancient synagogues, but also in modern churches.*
- *Do you treat people differently based on their wealth, social status, or race?*



• Self-Examination Checklist: Favoring the Rich

- ☐ When speaking to wealthy people, do I flatter them—intentionally or unintentionally?
- ☐ When I see someone wearing designer brands or driving a luxury car, am I more polite?
- ☐ When a wealthy or influential person comes to church, do I try to please them?
- ☐ When speaking to someone who is not wealthy, is my tone less respectful?
- ☐ Do I subconsciously look down on those without status or education?
- ☐ If someone in shabby clothing comes to church, do I avoid them?





Faith and Works — James 2:14–26

- *A famous passage: James on faith and works, Romans on justification by faith, 1 Corinthians on love, Hebrews on faith—all are classic New Testament teachings.*

- **Key verses:**

- ❖ *“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”*

- ❖ *“If someone claims to have faith but has no deeds, can such faith save them?”*



Faith and Works — James 2:14–26

- Key verses:

- ❖ *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”*

- ❖ *“You see that faith and actions were working together, and faith was made complete by what he did.”*

Faith and Works — James 2:14–26



• What True Faith Is Not

1. ***True faith is not merely nice words:***

- *“If a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs—what good is it?”*

2. ***True faith is not merely intellectual belief:***

- *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” O foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is dead?*

Faith and Works — James 2:14–26

• What True Faith Is



1. **True faith acts in love:**

- *In those days, some believers truly lacked clothing and food. Today the situations differ, but the principle remains: when a brother or sister is in genuine need, help them.*

2. **True faith obeys God:**

- *“Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac?”*
- *Abraham’s greatest characteristic was obedience.*

3. **True faith takes risks:**

- *“Was not Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?”*
- *Faith involves risk— Rahab risked her life to protect the Israelite spies.*

Faith and Works — James 2:14–26



- **Justified by Faith vs. Justified by Works**

- **Justified by faith:** A person is declared righteous by God not because of good works, but by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

- **Justified by works:** A person who is justified by faith will inevitably show it through actions. Not merely saying "I believe," but actually following Jesus.

- **The two complement each other:** Justification by faith refers to **the method of justification**; justification by works refers to **the evidence of justification**. They do not contradict but work together: *"Faith and actions were working together, and faith was made complete by what he did."*

Praise and Cursing — James 3:1–12

- **Scripture:** *“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be!”*
- **Proper use of speech:** Words are tools for praise and blessing—to praise God and bless others.
- Words express your inner state and also reinforce your inner state. Continually using positive speech strengthens a healthy mind. Continually misusing speech produces a sick mind.
- Speech habits shape your entire life. Those who habitually speak well tend to live with joy, light, and positivity.



Controlling the tongue

- **Teaching on the Tongue**

1. *Though small, it can cause tremendous harm:*

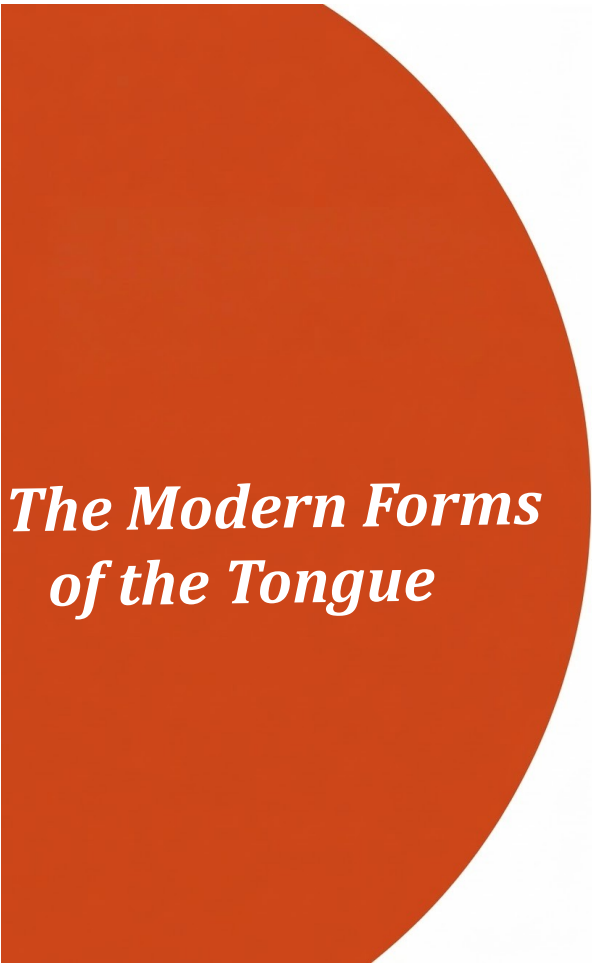
- *“The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.”*

2. *If the tongue is uncontrolled, the whole life suffers:*

- *“The tongue is a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”*

3. *Since we praise the Lord, we must not curse others:*

- *“Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?”*

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The Modern Forms of the Tongue

- *The tools for expressing thoughts have become modernized; one no longer needs the physical tongue. Examples include: email, text messages, Tweets, WeChat, Line, and anonymous comments posted online...*
- *Modern tools can be even more destructive than spoken words, because they are expressed without feedback. When a person is immersed in negative thoughts, unable to see the other person's facial expression or hear their tone of voice, their anger ferments unchecked. The words they type often become far harsher than what they would say face-to-face.*
- *What should we do? Praise the Lord! Let bright and positive thoughts fill you. Praise the beauty and glory of the Lord, and dark, negative thoughts will flee. Here is how it works: When your heart and your mouth are filled with the Lord, you cannot curse others.*

***A poisonous tongue
is a sign
of weakness
and damages
your character***

- *The internet has brought great convenience, but it has also ushered in an “age of the poisonous tongue.” On message boards and other platforms, people who are inwardly weak display their poisonous speech. Without any fear of the other person punching back, they use sharp and cutting words to hurt others.*
- *Those who do this frequently harm themselves. They fall into a habitual pattern of bitterness, and their core character is continually eroded. Over time, the person hiding behind those sharp words will eventually step out into real life, replacing the original self— eating his meals, sleeping in his bed, and stealing his happiness. When the mask is removed, the original face is gone; what remains is a face identical to the mask. You have become a different person.*
- *Believers guard their hearts and guard their mouths. They refuse to be swept away by worldly trends. They use their tongues to praise the Lord and their words to build others up, and they reject becoming a poisonous tongue.*

Earthly Wisdom vs. Heavenly Wisdom — James 3:13–18

- **Scripture:**

- *“Who is **wise and understanding** among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But **the wisdom that comes from heaven** is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”*



Earthly Wisdom vs. Heavenly Wisdom — James 3:13–18

• **Earthly Wisdom**

- **Nature:** *Earthly, unspiritual, demonic.*
- **Source:** *Bitter envy and selfish ambition—plotting to harm others.*
- **Expression:** *Boasting and lying.*
- **Impact:** *Disorder and every evil practice.*



Earthly Wisdom vs. Heavenly Wisdom — James 3:13–18

- **Heavenly Wisdom**

- **Source:** *From God—“from above.”*
- **Expression:** *First, Purity of heart, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, full of good fruit, impartial, sincere.*
- **Impact:** *First, it makes people peace-makers. Second, it leads people to do **what God considers good**. Peacemakers sow in peace and reap a **harvest of righteousness**.*



True Wisdom vs. False Wisdom

- *Bad people are often smarter than good people. They stir up conflict, set traps, and their schemes are hard to guard against. Before you even realize it, you've already fallen into their tricks.*
- *But that is not wisdom. Cleverness looks at the process; wisdom looks at the result. True wisdom produces good fruit—bringing happiness, joy, peace, and goodness. False wisdom produces evil fruit—bringing destruction, harm, jealousy, strife, chaos, and pain.*
- *Disciples of Christ possess heavenly wisdom. From a pure and sincere heart flow words and actions that are peaceful and good, full of mercy and rich in good fruit. This brings glory to God, builds up the church, strengthens people, and makes one's own life more blessed and beautiful.*



Peacemakers Sow Peace and Reap Righteousness

- *“Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”*
(James 3:18, NIV)

• *Jesus is the Prince of Peace; His disciples are children of peace. They sow peace and reap righteousness. Whatever is earthly, fleshly, or demonic produces jealousy and conflict. Whatever is heavenly, spiritual, and of Christ produces peace and righteousness. In today’s world—divided people, divided nations— does your presence increase peace or decrease peace? Not others—you and your church. After reading James, which emphasizes action and lived-out faith, answer this question honestly.*

