

# A Walk Through James

## Introduction

The Book of James offers a vivid window into the everyday discipleship of the earliest Jewish believers in Jesus. Written by James, the Lord's brother and a leading shepherd of the Jerusalem church, this short letter speaks with the urgency of a pastor who loves scattered congregations walking through pressure, poverty, and cultural compromise. James writes to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad," Jewish Christians dispersed across the Roman world, calling them to live out a **whole** faith—one that shows itself in endurance, integrity, and practical love.

James belongs early in the story of the New Testament church, likely before many of Paul's letters, when Christian communities were still discovering what allegiance to Jesus looked like under trials and discrimination. The book's focus is less on abstract doctrine and more on concrete obedience. You'll encounter powerful teaching on responding to trials, resisting temptation, caring for the poor, refusing favoritism, controlling the tongue, and seeking wisdom "from above" that is pure, peace-loving, gentle, and full of mercy. James insists that genuine faith produces visible fruit; "faith" that never acts is dead, no matter how correct its words may sound.

James also functions as a spiritual diagnostic. It probes whether our speech reflects heaven or hell, whether our treatment of rich and poor mirrors God's heart, and whether our planning, conflicts, and prayers arise from humble dependence or selfish ambition. Far from contradicting the gospel of grace, James shows what grace looks like when it grips a community's life. Read within the unfolding story of Acts, James becomes an early pastoral voice helping the newborn church move from confession to embodiment, showing that authentic trust in the risen Jesus must be heard in the tongue, seen in works of mercy, and felt in communities of justice and peace.

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## Chapter 1

'This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the "twelve tribes"—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings! Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. '

James 1:1-4

James is the half-brother of Jesus, also born of Mary. But he identifies not as Jesus' brother, but a slave of God, and a slave of Lord Jesus the Messiah. He is now the pastor to the church in Jerusalem, mostly Jewish believers. So he writes to Jewish believers scattered from Jerusalem in every direction.

James reminds them that they are God's promised people, twelve tribes called to follow God. His message is that the Lord is still at work, even in the midst of trial. Being scattered, far from your homeland, is actually the work of God, and He is producing fruit through it all. God is in the trials, and He continues at work. This is true for you and me as well. So count the trials as joy, and keep following Jesus!

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'If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do. '

James 1:5-8

Are you uncertain, not sure what to do? Here's the believer's path: Ask the Lord what to do. Set your heart to obey whatever He says, and then ask. Sit quietly. Give Him time to answer. Wait for His leading. Commit your heart to His answer, and then follow it. And don't muddle His answer by polling a bunch of others too. The Lord will answer. So focus on following. You will get your answer.

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'Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements. '

James 1:9-11

What is it that we boast about? We boast about how our Father provides. He cares for us, and we see it in so many ways. God's provision holds whether we are strapped for goods or we are flush with treasures. All of it comes and goes, but we are beckoned to trust God and stay with Him.

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'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. And remember, when you are being

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tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. '

James 1:12-15

Patiently endure the temptation. Don't cave into it. The Lord will take you through it. Don't give in to your own desires, as they will entice you and drag you away. Hold fast to the Lord, and receive His crown. You are His Beloved One.

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So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.

James 1:16-18

I was born when God the Father gave me His true word. Life rushed in, and a hunger for more of Him. That's when I realized I was one of His prized possessions. And so are you! This is our turning to Christ, being born again, as in John 3. Everything before is washed in Christ's blood. Every sin is forgiven and we are made brand new. This is where our life comes from. Our Father is utterly reliable, and following Him, walking with Him, is the most secure and satisfying life we could ever hope to live!

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'Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the justice that God desires. So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. '

James 1:19-21

Quickly listen. Don't answer. Don't work on your defense. Listen. Hear the word of God. His grace has enveloped us. His Son has already carried away every burden, every failure, every heinous act, every impure thought. We stand in God's grace alone. So listen. Getting angry does not resolve injustice. Work instead on the evil and filth you carry. As the Lord exposes them, confess them. They belong to Jesus whose blood bought them. Accept and embrace the redemption which God purchased. Receive it from Him, you are His. So be quick to Listen. His grace is the message. You are His.

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'But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. '

James 1:22-25

Hear the Word. Is there a command to be obeyed? Is there a principle to add to my life? Am I learning more of God so I can praise Him or pray to Him? Oh, Jesus, help me obey each word you have given!

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'If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.'

James 1:26-27

Let the love of Christ go deep in you. Give Him your mouth to use as He sees fit. Let His love and grace overwhelm you, change your words, and redirect your steps. Let Him spend your money on kids with no families, on people with no home, on moms and wives who have lost their guy. Jesus is not a crutch, He's an entire medical facility. Let Him use you!

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## Chapter 2

'My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others? For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives? '

James 2:1-4

Each person before me is made in God's image, has His fingerprints, His crafting, and His stamp of authenticity. I must not choose the ones I like and reject others. When someone comes to the gathering, welcome them! There's no preference for seating, for eating, for recognition. What is the Lord doing in their life? How can I come along side of Him? Don't discriminate, but instead be a blessing to each one!

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'Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? '

James 2:5-7

The way we treat the poor is the measure of how we love the Lord. These poor are His people, rich in faith, and destined for His table forever. Don't pick the wealthy over these. Don't ignore their need while honoring the ones who already have it made. Be careful to honor those who love and honor Christ, especially the poor.

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'Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder. So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law. So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you. '

James 2:8-13

God's call to us is obeying His law. Not some of it, but all of it. As far as I am able, I want to obey Him, and I strive.

Oh the good news of Christ, that He died and covers all my sin and failure. So I receive the Father's gift, and He makes me whole. But I also work to bring Him joy by obeying in very way I can. Press on and bring Him glory my friends!

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'What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. '

James 2:14-17

Don't just offer a blessing. Help! Do the thing that moves the person forward. Get them started. Don't pass by an opportunity to serve. Help out! This is real faith. It does things.

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'Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds." You say you have faith, for you believe that God is one. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? '

James 2:18-20

Faith is much more than head knowledge. Faith is active trust in God, the sole giver and provider. He gets us through. He washes away sin. He guards and protects. He gives life.

So take that life and do something with it! Give. Pour into others. Keep trusting and counting on God. But then put everything else you have on the line, and give. Make it happen!

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'Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.'

James 2:21-24

I have been saved by God's grace, even as I placed all my trust and faith in Him. But it plays out in actions. My faith is entirely on what God has done. But the evidence of my faith is the lifestyle and conduct. Everything I do is an evidence of the faith I have in the Lord. Here is where faith and actions come together - in life!

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'Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.'

James 2:25-26

There's something about her, we can all see it. She cares, helps, gives, serves. I wonder what caused this? All these acts show a deep salvation! You know, if we don't see the fruit in someone's life, we wonder if there is real life. Faith means putting it into action!

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## Chapter 3

'Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. '

James 3:1-2

Teaching is wonderful. Opening up God's Word so others can flourish, it's great. But it's also risky. A little too much of me, and not enough of Jesus, and now I'm tripping someone. Guard the Gospel, and study. Prepare. Walk closely with Jesus. Get some accountability and input. And then be cautious. If Jesus has you teaching, then teach. But confirm. Know your walk with Him. And guard what you say.

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'We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.'

James 3:3-6

What a small and subtle deceiver is my tongue! I manage life pretty well, speaking with care and grace. And then one day I get pricked or upset, and my tongue tells the world what fires are burning deep inside. The tongue betrays me and rips others to pieces. Oh Jesus help me to bridle my tongue. And work on the embers and fires that hide deep in my soul. I want to be more like You, and bring my whole life under your Lordship. Let's get the tongue in order!

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'People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. '

James 3:7-9

Nobody can tame the tongue, and yet we must. Deep inside our soul is a pool of anger and venom that creeps out when we least expect it. Thoughts harbored and angers cultivated will all come out one day. Oh we need a savior, and yet we have one. Jesus has paid the price and washed our sins away, and so we are justified. Yet these pockets of hate and poison still brew deep within, just waiting to come out. I must bring these to Jesus. I must confess my weakness and ask Holy Spirit to cleanse the evil. I must guard myself. I live a life striving for obedience, knowing I've been saved by grace. But my tongue is the long lost holdout, and refuses to comply. So I work hard to reign in the beast!

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'And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter

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water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.. '

James 3:10-12

My tongue is confusing! Fresh water and salt water remain in different places, but my tongue pours out honor and dishonor. Here's a call to me to reign in that tongue. There's work to be done, tilling and plowing the garden of my speech. Faith came by God's grace, but work remains on my part to draw into Him. There remains more effort required to pull my speech back into alignment with God's great heart. His word gives me a roadmap, but work and responsibility still remains with me. It's time to bring out more praises and blessings, and to curtail harshness and spite from my mouth!

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'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

James calls me in for a review. Am I wise? Do I understand God's ways? Am I striving to live an honorable life? Am I doing good works, and staying humble?

Am I jealous of others? Am I bitter as I look at how other people are living? Do I have goals and ambitions that consume me? Do I find myself boasting and lying?

There's no place in God's family for the bitterness, the jealousy, the boasting, or the lying. These are all demonic, earthly and unspiritual. And they result in disorder and evil.

The checkup is a call to put on humility, to love and serve, and live in God's wisdom. He really is enough.

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'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. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of justice.'

James 3:17-18

Oh how I long for God's wisdom. Every day I wake up and there's a desire to know more of Him. Jesus, fill me with your thoughts, ideas, interests and pursuits. Pour your word into my heart, and let it run through my life. I want your purity, your pursuit of peace, your gentleness, your care for others. Use me to change this world!

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## Chapter 4

'What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.'

James 4:1-3

The thing is, it's not about the things. If you are all about the things, then you are consumed with pursuing them. There's the desiring, and then the longing. You envy the others and what they have. You fight and argue, quarreling to get the things you want. There's a war going on, and you are in the midst of battling to conquer.

Our Father knows what we need. He gives us the things He wants us to have, generously, and our hearts must pursue Him. He wants us coming to Him, adoring Him, asking Him for the things we need, and even the things we want. He's a wonderful Father, and He wants time with us. Our problem is we start with things desired, not with a loving pursuit of our Father.

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'You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.'

James 4:4-10

It's time to kill off the affection we have for the world. Riches. Fame. Excess. Selfishness. Condemn the flesh and oppose the devil. Come back to Jesus!

Wash your hands. Clean your hearts. Repent of your sin. Disown evil. Grieve over your wicked heart, and seek the Lord. He will be found by you! He will turn sadness to joy, give you happiness and laughter. Oh come back to Jesus. He is worthy!

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'Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.'

James 4:13-16

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If the Lord wants us to, then we shall. Make your plans, but hold them loosely. Give Jesus opportunity to step in, to work in the midst, or even to redirect. Our God is an awesome one who works His plans. And we discover them in the midst of our life! But we must not boast about all that will happen. We can celebrate that Jesus steps into our life and does His work!

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'Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.'

James 4:17

Holy Spirit caught me. I knew I should have done this. And I didn't. I knew I shouldn't have done that. And I did. It's wrong. It's sin. Oh my soul, listen as Holy Spirit leads. Obey. Do what He says. I am not my own, I belong to Him. So listen and follow!

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## Chapter 5

'Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed the Righteous One, who do not resist you. Aren't they now accusing you before God? '

James 5:1-6

Oh wealthy ones, you're a caretaker, not a jet-setter. Anything ill-gotten should be returned. Your workers are due their share. Don't squander on luxury, but care for the poor, the neighbor, the one who is lacking. A day of reckoning will come. Let Jesus win your heart and own your bank account too. This is for every one of us!

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'Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. '

James 5:7-8

It's waiting season. Like the farmer, do the chores. Care for the animals. Hug your wife. Repair your tools. Harvest is coming. Likewise we must be patient awaiting the coming of the Lord. In the meantime, do the work. Share the faith. Care for the needy. Give generously. Repair what is broken. He is coming!

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'Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door! For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy. '

James 5:9-11

Brothers and sisters, don't envy someone else or murmur about anyone. Don't grumble or complain. The Lord is your supply, but also the one who judges. And His judgement is almost here. He is the one who corrects accounts, who gives rewards, and even provides now. Everything is not going our way, and there are gaps, holes, and broken pieces. The Lord knows all of this, and He knows you and me. How do we get through this? Keep stirring up hope in Him, in His love and mercy, and in His supply. At the right time we will receive from Him all that we need. Look at Job. He went through tremendous affliction and suffering. Yet he maintained his Hope in the one who knew him best, the Lord. Do the same! The judgement is almost here!

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'But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned. '

James 5:12

We are about the Lord. What He does, we will follow. Where are we going? What are we doing? No promises or oaths, we make a plan, but the Lord can change it. Promises made? Well, we give a yes or a no. But the power and order belong to the Lord, and we love and follow Him. We strive to not become arrogant, or make bold boastful claims. Instead we walk in humility. Jesus is worth it!

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'Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. '

James 5:14-15

But what about the practical side of life. What if I am in tough times? It's time to pray. We start here because our God is alive, powerful and loving. What if I am doing well, I don't need to pray do I? Friend, it's time to humbly give thanks and praise to God who is blessing you! Or if I am sick? Again, let's start with the one who made us. He heals. He fixes. And occasionally He uses doctors and professionals.

The Lord cares about our everyday life, the chores, the work, the needs, and our hearts. Start with Him in everything!

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'Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops. '

James 5:16-18

Accountability is hard. Telling my dear brother of my failings. And when it's a sin against him, it's even worse. But Pastor James tells us to confess our sins one to another. We help each other to stand back up. We help each other to walk again with Jesus. We remind each other that He has rescued us, canceled our sin and washed us clean. And we pray for each other. We ask God to heal the sickness, remove the affliction, help us pass the obstacles. And God answers. Elijah was just a man, but he trusted God. He asked God and he got answers. So will we.

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'My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.'

James 5:19-20

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Wanderer, come home! That's our heart. That's our pursuit. We don't sit and offer opinion over someone's salvation. Did he know the Lord? No, we take the shepherd call, and we seek out the wanderer. We go and sit. We listen. We invite. We compel. We do all we can to bring the lost one home. Jesus is worthy. And this one is in His image. Bring him back to the Lord. Welcome him. Help clean up the mess. Put a warm meal before him and call him to return home. Jesus died for sinners. Go call them home!