



Theme: Summer Wisdom in Proverbs and James

"Navigating Wisely"

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Weekly Memory Verse:

22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. – James 1:22

Meditation Moments for Monday, July 20 – Our memory verse for the week is **James 1:22**, "*But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.*" Read **James 1:2-11**. These verses address several key themes in the Epistle of James. Which verses speak to you?

- 📖 The opening verses (James 1:2-4) refer to joy that can come from the difficult times we face in life. Does this ring true for you? The scripture reminds us that faithful perseverance during difficult times helps us build endurance. This kind of endurance is meant to refine us and help us grow in our faith. Have there been lessons you learned during hard times that you never seemed to learn from any other experiences?
- 📖 Verses 5 through 8 remind us to seek God's wisdom and never to doubt that it will be given. James calls one who doubts the Lord "unstable," like the turbulent seas. I think this visual helps us remember the kind of angst we create for ourselves when we lose faith. Can you think of a time when you struggled to trust God and instead relied on another source? Can you see its impermanence?
- 📖 In verses 9 through 11, we have more powerful imagery that turns worldly norms upside down. The poor will be exalted, and the rich will be humbled, fade away, and die like a flower of the grass, along with all their riches. The imagery of a fading flower appears in Job 14:2, Psalm 103:15, and Isaiah 40:6-7. James' community would have clearly understood this as a reminder of their own human frailty. Can you connect with the freedom of accepting your own fragility, or do you resist it and cling to worldly sources of support?

Prayer: Gracious God, help me to be joyful in every season of my life. Help me to face the trials and temptations of life with humility and grace. May I trust only in you. Amen.

Tuesday, July 21 – Read aloud our memory verse for the week, **James 1:22**. Read **James 2:14-16**. Notice this section begins with the title, “Faith without Good Deeds is Dead.” Can you hear its similarity to our memory verse? Chapter 2 of the book of James unpacks the problem of faith without works. In these verses, James gives us a practical example of how our genuine faith is linked with the practice of justice. In verse 2:22, he says that the action in this example completes faith.

- At the end of verse 14, James asks a powerful question. “*Can that kind of faith save anyone?*” How does this land with you? Does it make you rethink what true faithfulness to God looks like? James’ question made me think of the first two lines of the Poem “*Christ Has No Body*” attributed to Teresa of Avila. The first two verses are: “*Christ has no body but yours; No hands, no feet on earth but yours.*” Are there times when you have withheld your time or gifts from others in need?
- Read the following verse, **James 2:17**. Can you hear the parallels with the gospel passages that refer to genuine faith bearing good fruit? Do you think knowing the right thing to do and not doing it reflects genuine faithfulness? Are there ways you could deepen your faith with action?

Prayer: Merciful God, help me to grow in my faith by serving my vulnerable neighbors in need. Help me see how my gifts can be used to serve others. Make me an instrument of your justice. Amen.

Wednesday, July 22 – Read **James 1:22** aloud slowly, four times in a row, then sit in silence with the words. What did you hear in the verses that you did not before? Read **James 4:4**. Don't let the word “adulterers” throw you off in this verse. James is not referring to infidelity here, but instead using the term to describe our unfaithfulness and lack of loyalty to God - this underlies much of the guidance in the book of James. James is challenging us to see how our loyalties are divided between God and the world, and we can't even see it. Do you recognize how you are more faithful to the world rather than to God? Do you care more about what others think than what God thinks? What keeps you from keeping God at the center of your life? What are you so attached to that it keeps you from loving God and neighbor with all your heart, mind, and strength?

- The reference to being “an enemy of God” because you are a friend of the world can be hard to hear. Remember that the reference to “the world” here does not refer to God’s creation. The world refers to those selfish ambitions, possessions, and attachments that are fleeting and do not advance God's Kingdom on earth. If you are a friend to those things, you are giving them your time, energy, and loyalty instead of directing that same energy towards God. Can you see how that works against God’s plan for us?
- Read **James 4:4** again. Can you see more clearly now the areas in your life where you are in friendship with the world? Are you having difficulty seeing

what you are putting before God in your life? Ask God to help you see the areas where you need forgiveness and help, so that you can put your trust in him alone.

Prayer: *Creator God, you are the giver of every good gift. Help me to see when I give my love and affection to things that are not holy and do not advance your love and light. Give me the strength to release my attachments to substitutes for you that are selfish and temporary. Amen.*

Thursday, July 23 – Read your memory verse again: **James 1:22**.

Read **James 3:3-10** slowly. There is a lot of imagery in these verses. James uses three illustrations to convey his point about the power of this small part of our body. He spends much of his letter on the idea of taming the tongue. Why is this so important? James recognizes the powerful influence of the tongue relative to its size. The tongue has tremendous power to do good or evil. Can you think of a time when your words were destructive to another person? How often do you use your words to lift someone up or share the good news with them?

 Re-read **James 3:6**. James refers to the tongue as a “flame of fire.” He sees its power to corrupt your entire life. It is one of the core ways he expects faithful Christians to demonstrate their faithfulness. Do your words reflect the love of Christ, or do they reflect judgment? Do your words reflect bitter complaints or compassion?

 Re-read **James 3:10**. James is calling out our inconsistent behavior. If we are faithful to God, then we should not profess loyalty to God and then have our words reflect the opposite. This strikes at the heart of our memory verse - we are fooling ourselves if we think speaking out of both sides of our mouths reflects living God's Word. How has your behavior been inconsistent? Do you speak evil to someone you think deserves it, while being kind to others?

Prayer: *Loving and Patient God, help me to use faithfully all the gifts you have given me. Give me wisdom and patience so that I will choose my words carefully. May they always reflect the love and compassion you offer me so consistently and abundantly. Amen.*

Friday, July 24 – Recite this week's memory verse, **James 1:22**, once again. Now, read **James 1:25**, just two verses down from our memory verse. It refers to “the perfect law that sets you free.” Have you ever felt lighter after reading the scriptures? Have you experienced the freedom of the gospel message?

 Re-read **James 1:25**. It is interesting that even in this short verse, James adds “if you do what it says,” which echoes our memory verse. Do you think it's possible to be truly set free without being a doer of the Word? Are you wrestling with the idea that God's law is called perfect? What are you resisting that might be limiting your freedom?

 In **James 1:25**, he adds another qualifier to this verse, an idea he revisits in many different ways throughout his letter. He says, “And you don't forget what you heard.” What is James getting at? He is calling out our inconsistency and

duality, similar to what we discussed in **James 3:10**. Are we consistent in serving God and our community, or is that something we can only manage when it's convenient or when there isn't much at stake?

Read **James 2:19**. This is where the rubber meets the road in the book of James. James puts us in the same bucket as demons if we think that knowledge of God alone will save, even though such knowledge has not changed our behavior. What do you think separates us from the demons, if not our actions? Are there areas of your life that you need to invite God's grace into? Take a hard look at where you spend your time, money, and energy. Are they spent on the glory of God and advancing His will, or on advancing your own will and selfish pursuits?

Prayer: Lord God, grant me the wisdom to obey your perfect law in all that I do. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart always be acceptable to you. I long to experience the freedom you offer. Help me to grow in my faith and trust your will. Amen.

Saturday, July 25 – Do you know your memory verse (**James 1:22**) by heart now? How has it felt to read that this week? Was it hard to hear the scriptures tell you to stop fooling yourself about something so important? Read **James 5:19-20**. These are the closing verses in the book of James. What do they remind you of? I hear the parables of the lost sheep and of the prodigal son. Do you think the end of James' letter applies to you? Do you think everyone is called to bring those who have wandered away from the church back, or is that the Pastor's job?

Re-read **James 5:19**. What does it mean to "wander away from the truth?" Is that the same as changing your mind about where you want to go to school, or what hike you would like to take this weekend? Or does it refer to walking away from something more fundamental and life-giving? Have you ever walked away from your faith for a time? Did you ever imagine you would be found and brought back to your faith? Do you see God's Word as the truth?

Re-read **James 5:20**, which includes the following phrase: "whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death." Do you think you have the power to save a wanderer from death? Is James really asking this of us? What is meant by death? If being in right relationship with God brings life, then life without God is death. It is every Christian's job to share the good news of Christ. Have you ever helped someone through their darkest times? When their faith was at its lowest? What did it feel like to live into your call?

Prayer: God of Truth and Wisdom, help me to live your holy Word. Grant me the strength and ability to model your way so that others may follow. When I encounter others in need, give me the courage to walk with them through their highs and lows, knowing that you walk with us. May we walk the path of life that your Son has laid before us. Amen.