

# Session 5

James 1:12

## Prayer

As a group, spend time praying through the verse below. Consider each word and meditate on the promises and commands of the scriptures. Make note of any insights, questions, moments of clarity, convictions, gratitude, or promises as needed in your reflection.

*<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

*-Romans 8:38-39*

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### Suggested Prayer Prompts

Prayers of gratitude for the gift of scripture.  
 Prayers for understanding what God is communicating through this study.  
 Prayers for spiritual growth and maturity as you study.  
 Prayers for conviction as you strive to be more like Christ.  
 Prayers that the Lord will bring your group together in unity and accountability as you study His word.

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## Sermon Tie-In

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

## \*Memory Minute\*

## MAY CHALLENGE

## James 1:5-11

How many verses can you memorize this week? Shade in a block for each verse you learn!

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

*“The word, stored in the heart, provides a mental depository for the Holy Spirit to use to mediate His grace to us, whatever our need for grace might be.”*

-Jerry Bridges

\*See page 11 for this week's practice exercise.\*

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## Launch

This week's session will be focused on the following verse.  
Read it out loud three times as a group. Try to rehearse it together.

*"<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."*

*-James 1:12*

It seems to circle us back to the main idea of trials and summarizes much of what we've learned. Because this verse is a hinge point that both summarizes the previous verses, while also creating a bridge to the next section, it seems like a great option to commit to memory.

To begin, copy the words of James 1:12 in the space below. Be sure to include the reference as well.

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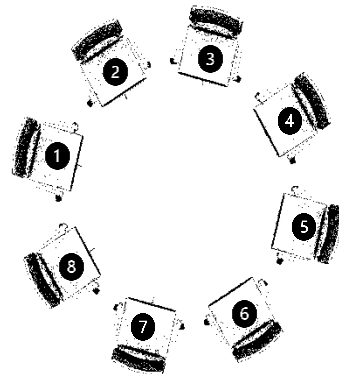
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Next, elect one member of your group to be the accuracy officer.  
They will be in charge of making sure the verse is memorized correctly. Write their name here: \_\_\_\_\_

Next, decide how the rest of your group will take turns.  
You may go left to right, around the circle, by age, alphabetical, or some other way.

Each person will say ONE word of the verse in order.  
Practice a few times, remembering to check for accuracy.

When you're confident, have each member turn their paper over.  
Repeat the activity from memory, checking for accuracy. Try to memorize the verse as a group in no more than 3 tries!



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# THE WORD

# James 1:12

Before we take a deeper dive into the scripture, take a minute to soak up the entire section together. Listen for repeated phrases, unfamiliar words, several points in a row, attributes of God, ideas you don't fully understand, or any other thoughts that come to mind. Feel free to note them below or just relax and take in whatever God may be speaking to your heart.

*"<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will*

*receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."*

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

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## Explore

### James 1:12

*"<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."*

#### A

James begins verse 12 with a significant word that we hear frequently, particularly on social media.



If someone finds \$20 on the ground they weren't expecting?  
They got a promotion at work?  
Bought a new home?  
Got a new girlfriend?



But is that what it truly means to be blessed by the Lord?  
Are God's only blessings those given for earthly gain?

We will explore this idea by asking four questions.

- What does it mean to be blessed?
- Who does this scripture say will be blessed?
- What is the blessing?
- Who is the source of the blessing? (see APPLY section)

#### B

#### What does it mean to be blessed?

This verse starts off by clearly presenting the topic James will be discussing.

*"Blessed..."*

The word blessed in James 1:12 is the Greek word "*makarios*" which refers to the favor of God.

In the spaces below, work with your group to list as many uses of the word favor as possible.

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Keeping those examples in mind, what is the difference between favor and obligation?

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Before moving to the details of blessing, we must first understand God's heart behind His blessings. Read the following scripture and answer the question below.

*"Let those who delight in my righteousness  
shout for joy and be glad  
and say evermore,  
"Great is the Lord,  
who delights in the welfare of his servant!"*

-Psalm 35:27

Do the blessings of God come from His kindness or His obligation?

As we focus on the blessings of the Lord, we must adopt a heart of gratitude, knowing that His favor flows from the abundance of His love, care, and compassion.

In the Old Testament we see many blessings of God. Some examples include God's promised blessings of descendants, land, wealth, reputation, and possessions. Other blessings are found throughout scripture, but these examples are taken from Genesis 12 and Deuteronomy 28..

It can sometimes be complicated to maintain gratitude when we compare the blessings in the Old Testament to those in the New Testament. If we assume that the same statements of blessings apply to our lives now, we will likely assume that if those things are not seen, we must not be blessed.

In Episode 1677 of his podcast "Ask Pastor John", John Piper makes a bold statement regarding the differences. See the quotes below.

#### OLD TESTAMENT

*"...in God's wisdom, the Jewish religion of the Old Testament was largely a "come and see" religion. Israel was the showcase of God's blessings among the nations."*

#### NEW TESTAMENT

*"...instead of telling the world to come to us- "Come see how I bless my people"; God never says that — he says, "Go — go to the world. And if it costs you your life, lay it down." ...Put it at the disposal of me and my mission."*

Keep these distinctions in mind as we continue on through verse 12, remembering that James is writing in the same New Testament period that we are living in today. Christ has come, the church has been planted, and the gospel is moving.

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## C

## Who does this scripture say will be blessed?

*"...is the man who remains steadfast under trial..."*

The next phrase of verse 12 gives a clear description of the one who will be blessed.

In your own words, who does James say will be blessed?

Now refer back to verse 12 above. Circle the recurrent theme of the book of James so far.

To this point, we've covered several trials a believer may experience.  
But what does Jesus say?

In the beginning of Jesus' famous "Sermon on the Mount," we see the same word used here by James (*makarios* meaning "blessed") repetitively. Each use points to a blessing promised by God given through a specific circumstance or trial.

In the space below, work with your group to summarize each circumstance and its associated blessing.

| Scripture    | Circumstance (the/those who...) | Blessing (theirs is/shall...) |
|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Matthew 5:3  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:4  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:5  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:6  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:7  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:8  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:9  |                                 |                               |
| Matthew 5:10 |                                 |                               |

Now that we've seen several other examples of trials, refresh your memory of our study of steadfastness with the definition below.

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STEADFASTNESS (*hupomonē*): perseverance, endurance, patience

James makes it clear that simply experiencing those trials and difficult circumstances does not necessarily guarantee the blessings of God. Instead, he states specifically that those who remain STEADFAST in those trials can expect His blessing.

But what is promised for those who keep the faith?

D

What is the blessing?

*“...for when he has stood the test ...”*

As we move on, we see James once again point out that the following promise is for a specific population. Although it is phrased differently, the recipient is the same.

Those who have stood the test.

Which icon below do you feel best represents *“remains steadfast”* and *“stood the test”*? Be creative in your choice. Does the bed remind you that you can rest in peace during trials? Does the dart board remind you that you continue to focus on Jesus? Share your choice and reasoning with the group!

Keep this representation of the recipient in mind as we explore the blessing itself.



*“...he will receive the crown of life...”*

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James is very clear when stating the blessing reserved for believers who stand firm when trials inevitably come. They will receive the *crown of life*.

But what does that mean?

When the American ear hears of a *crown*, we likely imagine a crown of royalty, similar to the image on the left below. However, James audience would likely have thought more of the laurel wreath given to the victors in athletic contests, as seen on the right.



Work with your group to list as many differences as possible between these two types of crowns. Consider the recipient, how they are earned, how they affect the opinions of others, worth, cost, significance, etc...

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Read the following scriptures.

*"<sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."*

-1 Corinthians 9:25

*"<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*

-Hebrews 12:1-2

What prize is given when the race on earth is finished in the life of the believer? Who or what are we running to?

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## Apply

### Who is the source of the blessing?

The final section of this verse is once again very clear in stating who is the source of the blessing. Read the entire verse once again as we begin the discussion about how this scripture should produce real change in our lives.

*"<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."*

*-James 1:12*

Underline the section of the scripture that identifies the source of blessing.

### GOD

God promises His blessings to those who remain faithful to Him, regardless of the difficult circumstances of life. He promises his presence with us on earth as well as an eternal life with Him. This is promised specifically to those who love Him.

Read the verse below.

*"<sup>36</sup> Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

*Matthew 22:36-39*

Spend some time in prayer as a group, taking time to examine the state of your hearts, and asking that God would help you to love Him more fully, that you may remain steadfast as you navigate life together.

Consider how you might love in *heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.*

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## Memory Work

### James 1:5-11

For this week's memory work, complete the fill in the blank exercises below. Each verse has several words replaced with blank spaces. Read each verse out loud, substituting the correct missing words. Once you are confident, mark out a few other words yourself and recite the verse. Repeat the process, crossing out additional words and reciting, until you have memorized the entire section. You may also consider covering each word with a sticky note (page marker or flag style) to practice, and then remove it to see if you're correct!

Reorder the verse on the next page, keeping in mind how each verse connects to the others!

#### Verse 5

"If any of you lacks \_\_\_\_\_, let him ask God, who gives \_\_\_\_\_ to all without \_\_\_\_\_, and it will be given him."

#### Verse 6

"But let him ask in faith, with no \_\_\_\_\_, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is \_\_\_\_\_ and tossed by the \_\_\_\_\_."

#### Verse 7

"For that \_\_\_\_\_ must not suppose that \_\_\_\_\_ will receive \_\_\_\_\_ from the Lord;"

#### Verse 8

"he is a \_\_\_\_\_ man, \_\_\_\_\_ in all his ways."

#### Verse 9

"Let the \_\_\_\_\_ brother boast in his \_\_\_\_\_,"

#### Verse 10

"and the \_\_\_\_\_ in his \_\_\_\_\_, because like a \_\_\_\_\_ of the grass he will pass away."

#### Verse 11

"For the sun rises with its \_\_\_\_\_ heat and \_\_\_\_\_ the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty \_\_\_\_\_. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his \_\_\_\_\_."

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Handwrite the most difficult verse here!

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### Challenge

Verses 5-11 are listed below. What order should they be in? Write the reference for each, thinking about how each verse is connected to the next.

| REFERENCE | VERSE                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.                                           |
|           | he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.                                                                                                                          |
|           | If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.                                                          |
|           | For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. |
|           | and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.                                                                                        |
|           | For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;                                                                                                 |
|           | Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation,                                                                                                                                |

Use the chart below to track your study habits by checking off each day you study!

| Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       |       |       |       |       |       |       |

Check in with other group members who are attempting the challenge and encourage each other to practice every day!

*"<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." -Colossians 3:16*



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