

LIVING out LOUD

# James

*Studies in Practical Christianity*

*Session #7 Know your Enemy*

James Chapter 4 Verses 1-17

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.” – James 1v 22*

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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## **Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:**

The book of James is often considered to be the most practical book in the Bible. Apart from the logical lessons of the Proverbs and, of course, the unavoidable challenges we find in the Sermon on the Mount that is probably true! As the half-brother of Jesus, James shoots from the hip; having witnessed firsthand what a life before God should be lived like, he speaks clearly with penetrating truths that leave little room to manoeuvre or excuse.

James wrote with divine insight that cannot be compromised. His epistle, written to scattered saints in need of encouragement, comes fresh upon each reading. Some books of the Bible require not only careful examination, but also careful interpretation, as different views can surface and political persuasions are formed. Not so with James. The challenge of this short book of 108 verses is not so much interpretation, but application! The meaning is all too clear and the challenge unequivocal. James' message throughout is clear: Practical Christian living reflects genuine faith that goes on to transform our lives. So says James, if you believe it, your life should show it!

The aim of this series is to highlight this teaching and the need to "Live it out Loud" personally and within our corporate context. James wrote to Jewish Christians facing all sorts of trials and who due to their heritage, were tempted to resort to the thankless task master of law keeping, rather than to Christ. James' message is clear: We are to aim for all that God intends us to be; not by merely verbalising a creed, or looking back to law, but by expressing a radical, counter cultural Christ-life that defies the wisdom and ways of this world. As a local church, we need to hear James' words again and heed their heart beat if we are to embrace all that Christ would have for us, both within the fellowship and as we reach out to those yet to see what genuine faith looks like: As God's people, may we learn to "Live out Loud" the truths we discover during the time we spend in the book of James.

## **LIVING out LOUD #7: Introduction**

Jesus never promised that following Him would be easy. Yes, there are blessings, prospects and rewards that the Christian has been promised and, to some extent, should anticipate now. After all, knowing Christ and following Him are exciting realities, full of surprises whenever we see the tantalising touch of God in our lives. However, much of what the New Testament outlines as blessing is future. Heaven is our home, where all will be made well, where rewards will satisfyingly endure and these are yet to come. The Christian who pursues instant gratification in this life or flounders at the prospect of hardship betrays a worldly misunderstanding of the gospel. James says such presumption, impatience and greed might not stand out in secular society, but it should never characterise the Christian!

To think in such a way and to covet such instant gratification is, says James, how the world thinks and what the world expects. Faith however, should be exactly that: not simply assuming that with enough passion, patience and persuasion we can expect God to deliver everything we want Him to, but rather to join with the gathered greats in Hebrews 11, shunning the expectation of earthly ease, and temporary treats in favour of Christ and His coming. For He is coming quickly and His reward is with Him! James calls the faithful of his day to look for a world beyond and to a reward that far outweighed the paltry portions being served up by the world and to live accordingly.

In this section of the letter James addresses the rugged realities Christians face. Anyone seeking to live for Christ will experience resistance to the things of God. The opposition James refers to comes from within as well as without. He challenges his hearers about squabbles and schisms that have broken out among them (4v1). Whilst this may be commonplace in the warring world around them, it has no place in the community of grace. Fuelled by sinful motives, James says such behaviour must not only be recognised, but resisted. He also states that whilst world is alluring; succumbing to its seductive pleasures is like being unfaithful to God. Those who clamour to go back and drink again from its counterfeit cup risk their spiritual integrity and prove adulterous rather than faithful to God (4v4). James also exhorts his hearers to submit to God and (in doing so) resist the devil. (4v7) He ends this section with more general instructions to avoid the sloppy slander (4v11) that betrays the already condemned loose tongue of chapter 3, as well as the temptation to usurp God as the ultimate judge in the way we are prone to condemn our brothers and sisters in Christ. To draw everything he has just said into sharp focus, James reminds us all of the brevity of life and the need therefore, in a world that wars to prevent us, to live for Christ and Him alone.

## **Know your Enemy**

*James reveals three enemies that halt the Christian's progress. He describes not only some of the signs that indicate their activity, but also points to practical ways which can combat their influence and keep us close to Christ.*

### **1. V1-3: The enemy that seeks to disrupt: How the flesh betrays us**

*James states that every angry outburst and greedy motive is stirred from within. Evil desires and wrong behaviour stem from the sinful source of our old nature.*

### **2. V4-6: The enemy that seeks to defile: How the world beguiles us**

*James warns that like an adulterous affair, putting worldly pleasure before God exposes what matters most to those whose heads are easily turned from Christ.*

### **3. V7-10: The enemy that seeks to destroy: How the devil battles us**

*James says the devil and his activity are real. we should not only acknowledge this fact, but be ready to combat it in our own lives, by resisting, repenting and ultimately relying on God alone for victory.*

## **LIVING out LOUD:**

- *Do you relate to the different enemies James mentions here? If so, which one do you struggle with most? If not, why not?*
- *Do you ever consider the battle "within you"? (4v1) Think about the struggle between flesh and Spirit that should characterise every Christian. How apparent is it in your life? Who is winning at the moment?*
- *What is worldliness? How worldly are you? To what extent is worldliness inevitable? Suggest some ways in which Christians should try and avoid becoming worldly?*
- *What do you think about the idea of an actual devil? How do you feel about him being interested in preventing you from growing? Have you had any experience of the devil's attack in your life? What happened? Did you resist him? How?*
- *What does submission to God look like?*
- *Take some time to examine your Christian life. Are you growing in the things of God? Identify any areas where you think you have become compromised and confess them. Commit this week to the battle and ask God to help you overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. What has He given you to help in this?*