

What's God's Main Point in James?

The following are the top Words, Themes, and Ideas found in James (the **red** number is the number of times the item appears in James):

1. Sin, 1:6-8, 11, 13-15, 19, 20, 21, 22-24, 26, 27; 2:1-13, 14-17; 3:5-6, 8-12, 14-16, 17-18; 4:1-4, 6, 7-10, 11-12, 13-17; 5:1-6, 9, 14-15, 16, 19-20. **25**
2. God, 1:1, 5, 6-7, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19-20, 27; 2:5-6, 11, 18-19, 20-23; 3:9; 4:2-3, 4, 5-6, 7-10, 12, 15. **20**
3. Doer-of-God's-Word vs. Hearer-Only-of-God's-Word, 1:2-5 vs. 1:6-8; 1:9-10, 12 vs. 1:11, 13-15; 1:19, 21-22 vs. 1:20, 22; 1:23-24 vs. 1:25; 1:26 vs. 1:27; 2:1-13, 14-26; 3:13-18; 4:1-17; 5:1-6 vs. 5:7-20. **20**
4. Following Satan/World (Pride) vs. Following God (Humility), 1:2-8, 9-11, 12-18, 19-25, 26-27; 2:1-7, 8-13, 14-17, 18-26; 3:1-12, 13-18; 4:1-6, 7-10, 11-12, 13-17; 5:1-6, 7-20. **17**
5. God is the source of a victorious (wise, faithful, godly, selfless) life, 1:2-5, 9, 10 [1:4, 11, 12], 12, 19-20, 21, 25, 27; 2:5, 21-23, 25; 3:13, 17-18; 4:1-6, 7-10, 13-17; 5:7-20. **17**
6. We are the source of a failed (foolish, faithless, ungodly, selfish) life, 1:6-8, 11, 13-15, 22-24, 26; 2:1-13, 14-17, 18-19; 3:6, 9-10, 14-16; 4:1-6, 7-10, 11-12, 13-14, 16-17; 5:1-6. **17**
7. Brethren, 1:2, 16, 18, 19; 2:1, 5, 14, 15-16; 3:1, 10-12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19. **16**
8. Lord / Jesus Christ, 1:1, 5-7, 12; 2:1, 6-7; 4:10, 12, 15; 5:4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15. **15**
9. Faith, 1:2-3, 5-6; 2:1, 5, 14, 15-17, 18, 20, 21-22, 21-24, 26; 5:14-15. **12**
10. Trials / Testing / Temptation, 1:2, 2-3, 12, 13-15; 2:1-13, 14-17, 21-24, 25; 5:7-12, 13-18, 19-20. **11**
11. God's Word, 1:18, 21, 22, 23-25; 2:8, 9-12, 21-23; 4:5, 6, 11-12; 5:19. **11**

So what's the main point in James? Life is full of very difficult trials and if we respond by living in sin, God will kill us. God saved us [from hell] through His Word and that Word can save us from physical death. But to study and believe God's Word yet fail to apply it is useless, i.e., faith without works is dead. We must be doers of the Word not hearers only. We can't mistreat the poor, favor the rich, ignore the needy, use our speech to curse men and praise God, or abuse our wealth and destroy others to get more—this is Satan's wisdom not God's. We must submit to God and resist the Devil. Therefore, we must endure like Job and trust the Lord, even to heal us through prayer. We must return those living in sin to God's Word and save them from death.

James Summarized:

Chapter 1, There's a reason to smile in the trials we face because God will use them to make us perfect, individuals who lack nothing. If we lack wisdom, the Lord'll give it to us if we ask. But we must ask without doubting or we'll get nothing; to do this is to be double-minded and unstable. But if we endure our trials, the Lord'll grant us a perfect, lacking-nothing existence. If we sin during a trial, we can't blame God. He's not the father of sin and death; we are. He's the father of good and perfect gifts. In fact, He gave birth to us by His Word. Therefore, to only hear and not do the Word God planted in us, is to forget our true identity. That is, to be religious but fail to control our tongue or care for the less fortunate is to practice a religion that is useless.

Chapter 2, [This is what it looks like to be a doer of God's Word and not just a hearer only:] we must not practice our Christian faith, what our glorious Lord taught us, with discrimination. We're not supposed to favor the rich over the poor, dishonoring the very ones God's chosen to be rich in faith and heirs of His Kingdom. We'll do well if we obey God's royal law, "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if we discriminate, we're convicted by God's Law as sinners because breaking one command is breaking the whole Law. For God didn't just say, "Don't commit adultery," He also said, "Don't murder." If we keep one and break the other, we're guilty. We must speak and do as those who'll be judged by God's law of liberty. For His judgment is without mercy to the one who's shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. After all, what does it profit if someone says he has faith but doesn't have works? Can faith save him? If someone says to a naked and hungry brother, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," it won't save either of them. So faith without works is dead. Now someone might argue, "James, it's impossible to see someone's faith by their works. Look at the demons; they believe that there's one God, yet all they do is tremble!" This is a foolish argument. Faith without works is dead, just look at Abraham and Rahab: after they had been justified by faith before God, they were justified by their works before others: Abraham when he offered his only son Isaac on the altar, thus they called him God's friend, and Rahab when she protected Israel's spies, thus she and her family were saved. Therefore, there are two justifications, one by faith and one by works. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Chapter 3, [This is what it looks like to be a doer of God's Word and not a hearer only regarding speech:] those in James' audience should not be eager to open their mouths to teach since teachers will receive a stricter judgment. Because though we stumble in other areas, the tongue is unique. It's a tiny thing that can control and ruin every area of life. It's impossible for any man to tame it; if anyone can, he's a perfect man, able to control other sinful impulses. But the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison and it is set on fire by hell. We use it to bless God and curse others. This hypocrisy should not be. Thus, if anyone wants to show their wisdom, they should do something rather than open their mouths to say something. But if they're full of envy and self-seeking, then they will boast and lie against the truth. To speak this way, is to speak with Satan's wisdom and it will result in confusion and wickedness. But if we speak with God's wisdom, then our actions will be pure, unifying, and full of compassion, i.e., we will be individuals who unify instead of divide.

Chapter 4, [This is how you live life when you follow Satan's arrogance vs. God's humility:] when we give in to our powerful desires, we war, fight, lust, murder, and covet, yet we fail to get what we want. We don't ask God and if we do, we fail again because we ask altogether selfishly. We befriend the world and war against God when we should yearn for God as His Spirit—who dwells in us—yearns for us. But God is ever gracious, so, He says, "I resist the proud, but give grace to the humble." Therefore, we must submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee. If we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. If we humble ourselves before the Lord, if we repent of our sinful, corrupt, two-timing ways, then He will grant us our godly desires. We must see our brethren and ourselves through God's humility: we must not speak evil of or judge our brethren because God is the only Lawgiver, Savior, and Destroyer. Nor must we arrogantly boast about a prosperous future. Instead, we must see that our life is but a vapor and say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." Therefore, to know the right thing and not do it is sin.

Chapter 5, [The arrogant wealthy will get their due and the suffering must endure] the Lord's been watching how the wealthy have brutally mistreated the just to amass their wealth in order to live in luxury. So He will turn their wealth against them and slaughter them as a fatted calf. Therefore, the suffering must persevere patiently because the Lord of justice will return. They must not complain about each other and experience the Lord's condemnation. Instead, they must endure like the prophets and Job. If they do, the Lord will use their suffering to bless them. They mustn't swear, but simply keep their word. If anyone is suffering, they should pray. If anyone is happy, they should sing. If anyone is sick, they should call for the elders to pray and anoint them and if they pray with faith, the Lord will heal the sick. If the illness is due to sin, the Lord will forgive. Thus, if they're struggling with sin, they should confess to each other and pray for each other so they'll be healed. Intense prayer avails much, e.g., Elijah, who's just like you and me, prayed intensely that it wouldn't rain and it didn't for 3 ½ years. He prayed again and it rained. Finally, if one of them strays from God's truth and another brings them back, their actions will save the sinner's life and conceal their many sins.

James Chapters 1-5, Life is full of trials. But God can use them all to make us individuals who can persevere through anything, who are perfect, complete, and lack nothing. God's Word saved us [from hell] and it can save us from physical death. But to study and believe God's Word yet fail to apply it is useless, i.e., faith without works is dead. If we do this, God will kill us. We must be doers of God's Word, not hearers only. Thus, we can't mistreat the poor in favor of the rich, or say to our naked and hungry brother, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled" and think we've fulfilled God's command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." We can't use our tongue to curse men and praise God or war and fight to get our way. This is Satan's wisdom not God's. We must submit to God and resist the Devil. This means we don't judge our brethren, boast about our future, or hoard our wealth and destroy others to get more—if we respond to wealth like this, God will kill us. Therefore, we must persevere through trials like Job, knowing that the Lord will return to set things right. That is, we must be honorable with our word and seek the Lord's healing when we're ill. If our illness is due to sin, we must confess and ask for prayer knowing that prayer can bring and stop rain. And if our brother has wandered from God's truth and is living in sin, we must help them turn back and thus save their life before God kills them.