

LIVING out LOUD

# James

*Studies in Practical Christianity*

*Session #1 Have we Trials and Temptations?*

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

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

[www.sladebrook.org.uk](http://www.sladebrook.org.uk)

## **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 #1: Introduction**

Whenever we face adverse circumstances, we wonder at God's whereabouts in the midst of the trial. *Is He aware? Does He care? Why doesn't He do something?* Such gnawing doubts attempt to pull the rug out from our faith and leave us groping for answers as the darkness of our difficulties unfolds. Likewise, when sin's seductive voice is heard and we face temptation, we can question why this is happening and, incredibly, can even blame God for putting such allurement before us! What is God doing in such situations, what are we to think and, as a Christian, what is the best way to respond?

Having introduced himself and his audience, James commences his book of sound advice and stark warnings by drawing back an invisible curtain for us to see what lies behind such circumstances. As we shall discover throughout the book, James pulls no punches: He points out the source and intention of both trials and temptations and reminds us to look to God who is in absolute control, seeking our spiritual sanctity and long term development while, at the same time, providing daily blessings. We can, according to James, chart a safe, Christ-like course however slippery the situation we may face.

For the reader who is willing to not only read, but also meditate on the black and white bible passages before us, there are rich pickings to enjoy. Whatever we may face, as James is so famous for pointing out, none of his teaching will mean a thing, let alone make a difference unless we are prepared to be ruthlessly honest in coming before God to respond. If we are to live lives of compelling witness to those around us and, more importantly before our loving Father who seeks to lead us and bless us all the way to heaven, we need to accept that within our fallen world there will be trials and temptations as well as high times and fresh blessings. Only with grim, faith-fuelled, Christ-focused determination can the true disciple hope to overcome. That is something James powerfully outlines and encourages over and again in his short, punchy, practical book. *Have we trials and temptations?* Yes, but we also have a heavenly Father we can trust as the God who not only knows, but cares and can, whatever we face "... supply your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4v 19)

## **Have we Trials and Temptations?**

*James distinguishes between trials and temptations and, in both cases, encourages us to remember their ultimate outcome: trials God intends for our blessing, whilst temptations are deadly to our Christian lives.*

### **1. V2-12: Trials: How to approach them and what they produce**

*When facing the steepest slopes, we are reminded to persevere, because even within such trials, God is at work refining His people to be more like Christ.*

### **2. V13-15: Temptations: Where they come from and how to resist them**

*Rather than blaming God, when temptations come, we are to resist their flowery facade, and remember the deadly motivation that lies behind them.*

### **3. V16-18: Trust: Looking to the Lord who loves us**

*Whatever we face, God can be trusted at all times: He provides daily blessings and encourages the eternal view to help us navigate life's trial and temptations.*

## **LIVING out LOUD:**

- *What trials are you currently facing? How are you coping with them? What part does your faith play in such situations? What do you think God is trying to teach you?*
- *Are you aware of any ongoing temptations that you face? How is this manifesting in your life and how do you intend to overcome?*
- *Which is harder: to trust God during easy times or adverse times?*
- *If you are using these notes in a group context, spend some time praying for each other, sharing any relevant situations that need break though.*
- *If you are using these notes on your own, spend some time bringing any relevant situations before the Lord asking for His intervention. Re-read James 1 and note down its main points and a key verse.*
- *Ask God to show you one way in which you can make a deliberate effort this week whatever your circumstances to demonstrate your trust in Him.*