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INTERACTIVE
STUDY BIBLE

1500 PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY

GENE A. GETZ

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THE FIRST **FULLY INTERACTIVE** STUDY BIBLE.

In the *CSB Life Essentials Study Bible*, renowned Bible teacher Dr. Gene Getz guides readers through Scripture by expounding on 1500 life principles found throughout the Bible. Distilling these truths into life principles, Dr. Getz helps readers remember and apply the Bible's wisdom to everyday life.

The *CSB Life Essentials Study Bible* integrates a multimedia digital study system with more than 250 hours of in-depth video teachings from Dr. Gene Getz on these essential life principles (accessed through smartphone-accessible QR codes). Questions follow each principle to inspire personal reflection or group discussion. A topical index and cross references for all 1500 life principles are included, and each book introduction provides a list of corresponding life principles found in that book.



SCAN THIS CODE
TO WATCH A
SHORT VIDEO
INTRODUCTION

FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Commentary and application questions on 1500 life principles
- 250 hours of in-depth video teachings from Dr. Gene Getz
- Smyth-sewn binding
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- Black-letter text
- 9-point type
- Textual footnotes
- Concordance
- Full-color maps

READ. WATCH. APPLY.



DR. GENE GETZ entered fulltime Christian service in 1956, joining the faculty at Moody Bible Institute when he was just 23 years old after completing his undergraduate degree. Although he often felt he was barely staying one step ahead of his students, Dr. Getz recalls that time as one of his greatest learning experiences.

After a dozen years at Moody as well as earning his MA from Wheaton Graduate School and a PH.D. from New York University, Getz received a life-changing invitation when Dr. Howard Hendricks offered a faculty position as his associate at Dallas Theological Seminary. “The 70s and 80s were challenging days in our culture,” said Getz. “The culture at large was developing an anti-institutional mentality—which definitely spilled over into the Christian community. I actually had students in class who were questioning the viability of the church.”

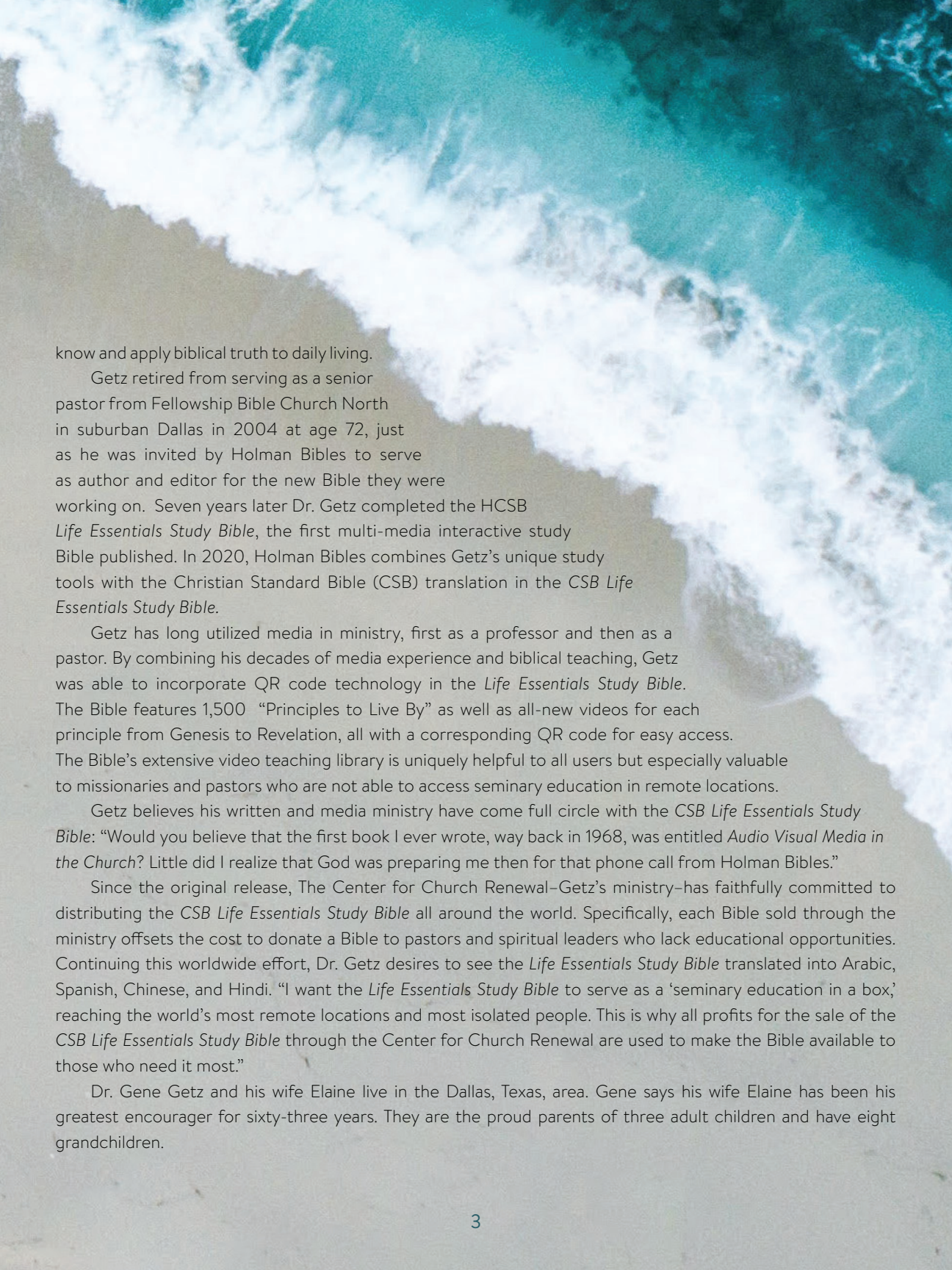
Getz responded to his students’ questions with an experiment that revolutionized his ministry—and the lives of his students. In the middle of the semester, Dr. Getz told his

students to trash the syllabus he had prepared. He instead directed his class to what Dr. Getz called “the Divine Syllabus”—the Great Commission, the book of Acts, and the New Testament letters that were written to the first churches.

As a result of his teaching turnaround, Getz wrote a book titled *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*. This led him to plant the initial Fellowship Bible Church (Dallas) in 1972, which led to world-wide church planting ministry. Today over 30,000 people worship in Fellowship Bible churches in the Dallas area alone and several hundred Fellowship Churches have been started throughout the world.

For more than sixty years, Getz has followed his passion to encourage other church leaders in vibrant ministry and spiritual growth by writing, preaching, and teaching. He has authored more than sixty books, including *The Measure of a Man*, which has been in print for more than forty-five years and has been published in more than 30 languages.

Dr. Getz has also been influential in Christian broadcasting throughout his career. He conducted a weekly call-in radio program titled “Let’s Talk” for five years on the Criswell Radio Network. And for twenty-four years he hosted a daily fifteen-minute radio program called “Renewal,” which aired nationally and internationally. He currently hosts an international two-minute daily radio program called “Bible Principles,” which helps listeners



know and apply biblical truth to daily living.

Getz retired from serving as a senior pastor from Fellowship Bible Church North in suburban Dallas in 2004 at age 72, just as he was invited by Holman Bibles to serve as author and editor for the new Bible they were working on. Seven years later Dr. Getz completed the HCSB *Life Essentials Study Bible*, the first multi-media interactive study Bible published. In 2020, Holman Bibles combines Getz's unique study tools with the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) translation in the *CSB Life Essentials Study Bible*.

Getz has long utilized media in ministry, first as a professor and then as a pastor. By combining his decades of media experience and biblical teaching, Getz was able to incorporate QR code technology in the *Life Essentials Study Bible*. The Bible features 1,500 "Principles to Live By" as well as all-new videos for each principle from Genesis to Revelation, all with a corresponding QR code for easy access. The Bible's extensive video teaching library is uniquely helpful to all users but especially valuable to missionaries and pastors who are not able to access seminary education in remote locations.

Getz believes his written and media ministry have come full circle with the *CSB Life Essentials Study Bible*: "Would you believe that the first book I ever wrote, way back in 1968, was entitled *Audio Visual Media in the Church*? Little did I realize that God was preparing me then for that phone call from Holman Bibles."

Since the original release, The Center for Church Renewal—Getz's ministry—has faithfully committed to distributing the *CSB Life Essentials Study Bible* all around the world. Specifically, each Bible sold through the ministry offsets the cost to donate a Bible to pastors and spiritual leaders who lack educational opportunities. Continuing this worldwide effort, Dr. Getz desires to see the *Life Essentials Study Bible* translated into Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, and Hindi. "I want the *Life Essentials Study Bible* to serve as a 'seminary education in a box,' reaching the world's most remote locations and most isolated people. This is why all profits for the sale of the *CSB Life Essentials Study Bible* through the Center for Church Renewal are used to make the Bible available to those who need it most."

Dr. Gene Getz and his wife Elaine live in the Dallas, Texas, area. Gene says his wife Elaine has been his greatest encourager for sixty-three years. They are the proud parents of three adult children and have eight grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION: A MORE CAREFUL LOOK AT THE UNIQUE DESIGN

To help you understand how I've arrived at each Principle to Live By, I want to illustrate the process from Nehemiah Principle 1. You'll see this principle section illustrated on the opposite page.



**PERSONAL VIDEO
EXPLANATION
FROM DR. GENE GETZ**

1 First, note Nehemiah Principle 1 entitled “Intense Prayer” (see opposite page):

This Principle to Live By and the commentary are embedded in the biblical text immediately following verses 1-4 in chapter 1 and are based on Nehemiah's personal experience.

2 Second, note that the blue highlighted Scripture is just one verse, which in this case succinctly forms the basis for this principle. In other

instances, you'll find more than one verse highlighted. But as you read this verse, you will understand that Nehemiah's prayer was indeed intense. He was weeping and mourning over a period of time.

3 Third, note why Nehemiah was engaging in this intense prayer, which is described in verses 1-3. He had received some very bad news.

4 Fourth, note the first succinct paragraph in the commentary following Principle 1, which explains more definitively why Nehemiah was devastated and why he began to pray so intensely.

5 Fifth, note the second paragraph in my commentary where I begin to verify this Principle to Live By from the New Testament, which is very important in determining what we consider to be enduring principles from the Old Testament. In other words, when we are attempting to discover enduring truths from Scripture, we need to consider what God says in the whole biblical story from Genesis to Revelation—in this case, about prayer.

6 Sixth, note in the third paragraph that intense prayer is a unique form of prayer that God honors. To verify this kind of prayer, I support this principle from what Jesus said in a parable. In this sense, Nehemiah was practicing what Jesus was

teaching. God is not a pagan magistrate—like the unjust judge Jesus referred to, or King Artaxerxes, a pagan king whom Nehemiah served. He is our heavenly Father, and he responds to intense prayer. As you can imagine, verifying each principle from the whole biblical story became one of my most challenging tasks, but a necessary one in order to demonstrate that these principles are enduring and supracultural.

7 Seventh, note the question for application, which I call “Reflection and Response.” This question enables the readers to take this Principle to Live By from Nehemiah's experience and apply it personally, whatever their specific need is for intense prayer.

As you study all 1500 Principles to Live By you'll note that all of these questions are designed to enable us in individual or group study to apply each principle in various cultural situations, and at any moment in our lives.

8 Eighth, note the cross-references to other principles in the commentary that relate to Nehemiah Principle 1:

- [Psalms Principle 122](#),
- [Philippians Principle 11](#),
- [Luke Principle 39](#).

As you use this study Bible, you'll discover more than 3000 of these cross-references that demonstrate the unified message in all 1500 Principles to Live By.

In conclusion, the process I've just shared regarding Nehemiah Principle 1 can be applied to all 1500 principles, all 1500 commentaries, and all 1500 questions for Reflection and Response. To view my presentation where I teach these principles, you can use the QR codes to access the videos on your smartphone or tablet.

NEHEMIAH

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

NEWS FROM JERUSALEM

During the month of Chislev in the twentieth year, when I was in the fortress city of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, arrived with men from Judah, and I questioned them about Jerusalem and the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile. ³They said to me, "The

remnant in the province, who survived the exile, are in great trouble and disgrace. Jerusalem's wall has been broken down, and its gates have been burned."

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

⁴When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of the heavens.

NEHEMIAH PRINCIPLE 1 - INTENSE PRAYER

When we are in the midst of agonizing circumstances that seem hopeless, we should freely share our painful thoughts and feelings with God.

Nehemiah received a report that Jerusalem's walls were a shambles, making all the inhabitants vulnerable to attacks from their enemies. Nehemiah was devastated. His only viable recourse was to share this horrific burden with God. Furthermore, he was unrelenting in his prayers as he wept and fasted. (See **Psalms Principle 122 - Scripturally Oriented Prayers**, p. 758.)

Throughout the New Testament, we're encouraged to pray and seek God's help on a consistent basis. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to "pray constantly" (1Th 5:17) and urged the Philippians not to "worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present [their] requests to God" (Php 4:6). (See **Philippians Principle 11 - Standing Firm**, p. 1538.)

However, we are encouraged to pray more earnestly when we face difficult circumstances that seem beyond our control. Jesus taught us this truth with a parable of the unjust judge and the poor widow. The judge was a man who didn't "fear God or respect people" (Lk 18:4-7). However, he eventually responded to this widow's request for help, primarily because she kept bothering him. Jesus's point was this: If a pagan magistrate would listen to a poor widow, how much more would God—who is a just judge—respond to those "who cry out to him day and night" (Lk 18:7)? (See **Luke Principle 39 - Persistent Prayer**, p. 1329.)

Reflection and Response

Though prayer should be a pervasive part of our lives, what are some of the more difficult events in our lives when we should seek God's help more earnestly?



⁵I said,

LORD, the God of the heavens, the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands,

⁶let your eyes be open and your ears be attentive to hear your servant's prayer that I now pray to you day and night for your servants, the Israelites. I confess the sins ^awe have committed against you. Both I and my father's family have sinned.

⁷We have acted corruptly toward you and have not kept the commands, statutes, and ordinances you gave your servant Moses. ⁸Please remember what you commanded your servant Moses: "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. ⁹But if you return to me and carefully observe my commands, even though your exiles were banished to the farthest horizon, ⁸I will gather them from there and bring them to

the place where I chose to have my name dwell."

¹⁰They are your servants and your people. You redeemed them by your great power and strong hand. ¹¹Please, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to that of your servants who delight to revere your name. Give your servant success today, and grant him compassion in the presence of this man. ^c

At the time, I was the king's cupbearer.

^a1:6 Lit *sins of the Israelites* ^b1:9 Lit *skies* ^c1:11 = the king

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MARK PRINCIPLE 4 - TRANSFORMATION

We should allow the Holy Spirit to transform our negative tendencies into positive qualities that God can use to accomplish his purposes in this world. (See [Matthew Principle 26 - Equipping Leaders](#), p. 1228; [Luke Principle 13 - Leadership Appointments](#), p. 1306.)

Though he had changed Simon's name to Peter months earlier, it appears that Jesus gave James and John the name “Sons of Thunder” (v. 17) when he appointed them as apostles. It was not complimentary as it was with Peter, but it reflected Jesus's assessment of their present character traits. They would, of course, be dramatically changed during their time with the incar-

nate Christ, but they still demonstrated these insensitive, self-serving traits just before Jesus was crucified. However, when the Holy Spirit transformed their lives, James was the first apostle to give his life for Christ, and John became known as the apostle of love.

Reflection and Response

If Jesus changed your name to describe your character traits before you became a committed Christian, what might he have called you?



made for man and not man for the Sabbath.²⁰ So then, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”
3 Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a shriveled hand.²¹ In order to accuse him, they were watching him closely to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath.²² He told the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand before us.”
 4 Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent.²³ After looking around at them with anger, he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts and told the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.²⁴ Immediately the Pharisees went out and started plotting with the Herodians against him, how they might kill him.
 • Matthew Principle 29 - Inappropriate Traditions, p. 1230.

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Reflection and Response

If Jesus changed your name to describe your character traits before you became a committed Christian, what might he have called you?



A HOUSE DIVIDED

20 Jesus entered a house, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat.²¹ When his family heard this, they set out to restrain him, because they said, “He’s out of his mind.”

22 The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and, “He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

23 So he summoned them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan?²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.²⁵ If a

house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished.²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.

28 Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter.²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” — **30** “Because they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”

• Matthew Principle 30 - The Unpardonable Sin, p. 1231.

¹3:27 Or because of ²3:34 Other mss omit: he also named them apostles ³3:35 Other mss add: heal diseases, and to appoint the Twelve ⁴3:30 Or eat a meal, lit eat bread ⁵3:29 Other mss read: is subject to eternal judgment

1

READ the Principle called out in the passage. Visit the additional Scripture references for deeper study if desired.

2

WATCH Dr. Getz teach on the principle by simply scanning the QR Code on your phone or mobile device.



3

APPLY the principle to your life, using the *Reflection and Response* section to help you.

THE CSB WAS CREATED TO HELP MORE PEOPLE
READ AND UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD.



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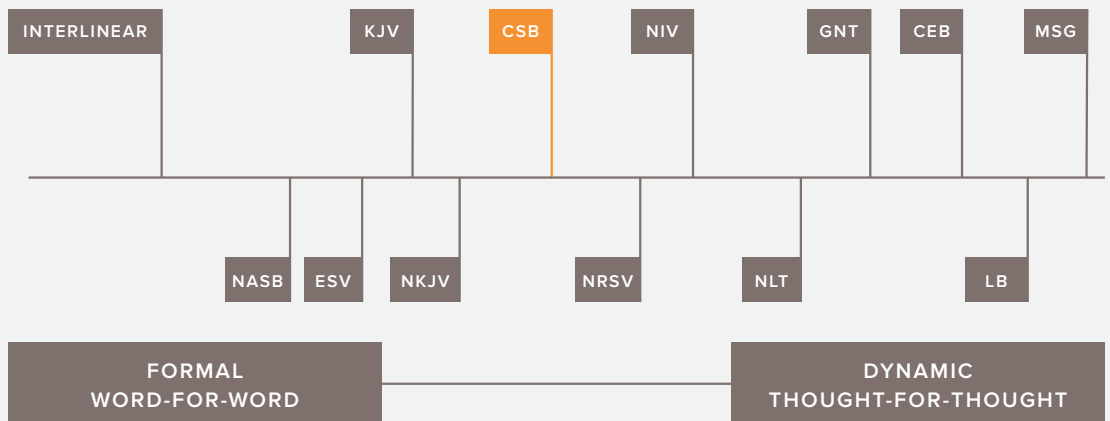
The Christian Standard Bible presents the truth of God's Word with accuracy and clarity for today's readers, equipping them for lifelong discipleship. It's a Bible you can teach from with confidence and a Bible you can share with your neighbor who is hearing God's Word for the very first time.

OPTIMAL EQUIVALENCE

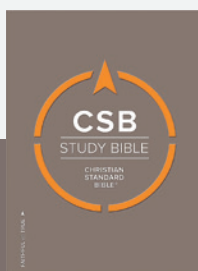
The CSB was created using Optimal Equivalence, a translation philosophy that pursues both linguistic precision to the original languages and readability in contemporary English.

In the many places throughout Scripture where a word-for-word rendering is clearly understandable, a literal translation is used. When a word-for-word rendering might obscure the meaning for a modern audience, a more dynamic translation is used. This process assures that both the words and thoughts contained in the original text are conveyed as accurately as possible for today's readers.

BIBLE TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



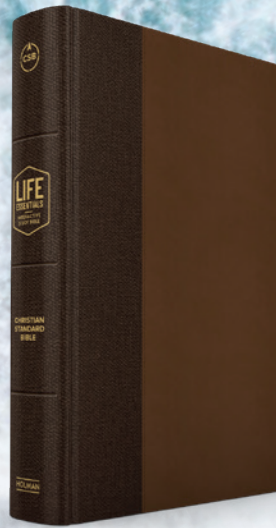
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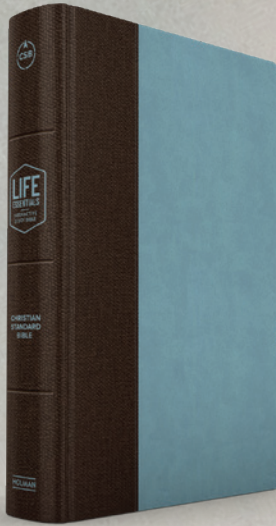
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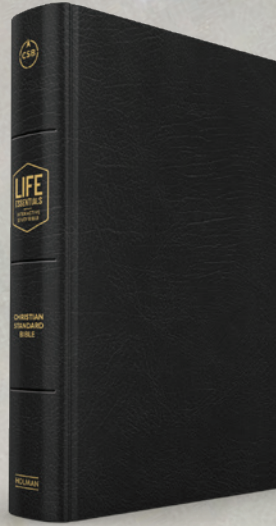
A



B



C



D

	<i>isbn</i>	<i>binding material</i>	<i>price</i>
A	9781535949620	Hardcover	\$44.99
B	9781535956468	Brown LeatherTouch®	\$59.99
B	9781535956475	Brown LeatherTouch® - Indexed	\$69.99
C	9781535956482	Brown Sky LeatherTouch®	\$59.99
C	9781535956499	Brown Sky LeatherTouch® - Indexed	\$69.99
D	9781535956505	Black Genuine Leather	\$89.99
D	9781535956512	Black Genuine Leather - Indexed	\$99.99



JAMES

Author: James **Date of writing:** AD 48–52

INTRODUCTION

James teaches us principles of life as citizens of heaven

The book of James was written by Jesus's half-brother. James had become the lead pastor of the church in Jerusalem. Since he made no mention of the Jerusalem Council, it was probably written before that event, making this book, along with Galatians and 1 Thessalonians, the earliest writings of the New Testament. James's audience was "the twelve tribes dispersed abroad," that is, Jewish Christians living in the Roman

provinces outside of Judea. This may have included some who responded to the gospel message in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and then returned to establish churches in their local communities. James addressed the challenges they faced living for Christ in those circumstances among friends and enemies. Today, every Christian effectively lives as an alien, being a citizen of heaven but living on earth.

James teaches us principles of faith and works

James would agree with Paul that a person is saved by grace through faith, and works do not contribute to salvation. But James goes on to stress that genuine faith will eventually produce good works, as it did in

the lives of Abraham and Rahab. Today, Christians who don't see good works in their own lives need to evaluate the genuineness of their faith.

James teaches us principles of impartiality and compassion

James puts riches in proper perspective. The value of material possessions is insignificant compared to the Christian's inheritance in heaven. Therefore a rich person should not be treated better than a poor one. In fact, people who gain their riches through unethi-

cal and immoral means or who love money need to reexamine their spiritual lives to see whether they really have committed their lives to God. One mark of true believers is how they help the poor and underprivileged.

James teaches us Principles to Live By

James teaches specific, practical wisdom for living the Christian life. For other issues, not specifically addressed in this correspondence, God grants divine wisdom to the one who asks for it in faith. This wisdom helps believers go through life and its trials

with a proper perspective. From the perspective of patience, humility, and love granted by the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can avoid using words destructively, we can draw near to God and resist the devil, and we can acknowledge our dependence on God every day.

JAMES – Principles to Live By

Section	Title	Principle	Page
1:1-4	1. Persecution and Trials	When we face various trials, we should ask God to help us view these painful experiences as opportunities to become more mature in our spiritual walk with Jesus Christ.	1619
1:5-8	2. Wisdom from Above	To face trials with a proper perspective, we must seek God's wisdom through faith and prayer.	1619
1:9-12	3. A Biblical Priority	Regardless of our earthly possessions, we are to remember that what ultimately matters is our eternal inheritance.	1620
1:13-18	4. Temptation and Rationalization	We must take full responsibility for our sinful attitudes and actions.	1620
1:19-27	5. Applying God's Word	To please God, we must not only listen to his Word but also put it into practice.	1621
2:1-13	6. Avoiding Prejudice	We are to honor one another without showing favoritism.	1621
2:14-26	7. Good Works	If our profession of faith does not eventuate in good works, we should evaluate the validity of our salvation experience.	1622
3:1-12	8. Sinful Anger	To keep our words from becoming destructive, we must be able to control what we say.	1623
3:13-18	9. Heavenly and Earthly Wisdom	To gain God's wisdom, we must walk by the Spirit and not in the flesh.	1623
4:1-10	10. Humility versus Pride	To apply God's wisdom, we are to imitate Christ's example of humility.	1624
4:13-17	11. Money and Humility	When we accumulate and use material possessions, we are to reflect Christ-like humility.	1624
5:1-6	12. Materialistic Idolatry	Spiritual leaders should warn people never to allow materialism to deprive them of eternal life.	1625
5:7-12	13. Christ's Return	When we are frustrated and distracted by people who are evil and cruel, we are to focus on our eternal hope in Jesus Christ.	1625
5:13-20	14. Prayers of the Righteous	When we are experiencing various illnesses, we should seek guidance and prayer from the leaders in our churches who are living godly and righteous lives.	1626

JAMES

GREETING

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ: To the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. ^A Greetings.

TRIALS AND MATURITY

² Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 1 - PERSECUTION AND TRIALS

When we face various trials, we should ask God to help us view these painful experiences as opportunities to become more mature in our spiritual walk with Jesus Christ.

James was writing to Jewish Christians who lived in Greek or Roman countries away from their Judean homeland. One of his purposes was to encourage them to stand firm in the midst of persecution. They had been God-fearing Jews and then had become believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and crucified Savior. We can only imagine the hostility they faced from their Jewish brethren. James challenged these believers to “consider it a great joy” when they faced these trials (v. 2).

This joy was not merely some kind of emotional elation, but a deep-seated sense of confidence and

well-being that enabled these believers to look beyond the difficulties and see the opportunity to become more like Jesus Christ.

As James wrote this letter, perhaps he was reflecting on the children of Israel as they faced God’s tests in the wilderness. Those painful experiences revealed whether their faith in God was sincere and whether they could handle the blessings that God wanted to give them. (See Deuteronomy Principle 14 - Wilderness Experiences, p. 221; Judges Principle 3 - Tests of Faith, p. 287.)

Reflection and Response

How have you observed various trials providing opportunities for personal growth in your own life or in the lives of others?



⁵ Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God — who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly — and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith without doubting. ⁸ For the doubter is like the

surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ being double-minded and unstable in all his ways. ^C

JAMES PRINCIPLE 2 - WISDOM FROM ABOVE

To face trials with a proper perspective, we must seek God’s wisdom through faith and prayer.

Clearly, we need divine wisdom to view various trials as opportunities to grow spiritually. The source of this wisdom is God, who is always ready to give it to his children. The means of receiving it is prayer and faith (Mt 21:22; Mk 11:24). We must decisively determine that we are going to trust God completely, without wavering back and forth from day to day.

As we’ll see later, the wisdom James was writing about is inseparably linked to Christian character and is identified as “wisdom from above” (Jms 3:17-18).

(See James Principle 9 - Heavenly and Earthly Wisdom, p. 1623.) Divine wisdom gives the believer a divine perspective on trials. The true Christian can then better comprehend the promised blessing for perseverance, which in turn provides motivation for endurance and spiritual growth.

Reflection and Response

What advantages do we have today compared with these believers in AD 50, before the Gospels, Acts, Letters, and Revelation were written?



^A1:1 Gk diaspora; Jewish people scattered throughout Gentile lands ^B1:6 Or without divided loyalties ^C1:8 Or in all his conduct

⁹ Let the brother of humble circumstances boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ but let the rich boast in his humiliation because he will pass away like a flower of the field. ¹¹ For the sun rises and, together with the scorching wind, dries up the grass; its flower falls off, and its beautiful appearance perishes. In the same way,

the rich person will wither away while pursuing his activities.

¹² Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God^A has promised to those who love him.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 3 - A BIBLICAL PRIORITY

Regardless of our earthly possessions, we are to remember that what ultimately matters is our eternal inheritance.

In this section, James focused on a specific issue: a “double-minded” person (v. 8) was “driven and tossed by the wind” (v. 6). Materialistic believers were building “treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Mt 6:19). They were attempting to serve two masters.



Jesus stated categorically that we cannot “serve both God and money” (Mt 6:24). This is being “double-minded” (Jms 4:8). Instead, poor people should focus on

the fact that their inheritance is in heaven (1:9), and rich people should know that, even though what they have on earth will disappear (vv. 10-11), they too will have an eternal inheritance that will endure forever (v. 12). Furthermore, rich people should be using their wealth to lay up “treasures in heaven” (Mt 6:20). (See [Psalms Principle 39 - Victory through Christ](#), p. 690; [James Principle 6 - Avoiding Prejudice](#), p. 1621.)

Reflection and Response

What other examples are there among Christians today that illustrate indecisiveness and the intention to serve two masters?

¹³ No one undergoing a trial should say, “I am being tempted by God,” since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn’t tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. ¹⁵ Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.

¹⁶ Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ By his own choice, he gave us birth by the word of truth so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 4 - TEMPTATION AND RATIONALIZATION

We must take full responsibility for our sinful attitudes and actions.

When we fail God by yielding to temptation, how easy it is to put the blame on someone else, including God. This has been true ever since sin entered the world. When Adam sinned, he blamed Eve, and Eve in turn blamed Satan. Ultimately, they both blamed God. The fact is that even though Satan is at the root of our evil desires, we are ultimately responsible for our actions. (See [Genesis Principle 5 - Avoiding Rationalization](#), p. 8.)



Apart from a salvation experience, we are always vulnerable to yielding to temptation. Furthermore, we cannot avoid the ultimate results of yielding

to temptation: “the wages of sin is death” (Rm 6:23). However, if we receive God’s gift of eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ, God will provide a way to face temptation victoriously:

No temptation has overcome you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide a way out so that you may be able to bear it. (1Co 10:13)

Reflection and Response

In what ways can we use the Word of God to overcome temptation? (See [Matthew Principle 5 - The Power of Scripture](#), p. 1214.)

HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, ²⁰ for human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness. ²¹ Therefore, ridding yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent,^B humbly

receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face^C in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself,

^A1:12 Other mss read that the Lord ^B1:21 Or the abundance of evil ^C1:23 Or at his natural face

goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works — this person will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶ If anyone^A thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, his religion is useless and he deceives himself. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 5 - APPLYING GOD'S WORD

To please God, we must not only listen to his Word but also put it into practice.

James once again addressed the recipients of this letter as “dear brothers and sisters,” indicating that he was writing to believers (vv. 16,19). He exhorted them to “be doers of the word and not hearers only” (v. 22). When we listen and do not act on what we hear, we have not received and are not responding in obedience to God’s Word. We have not allowed the truth to penetrate deeply into our hearts. (See Hebrews Principle 7 - The Word of God, p. 1603.)

James succinctly addressed three areas of sin, explained more fully later in this letter: sinful anger (Jms 1:20,26), immorality (vv. 21,27), and indifference to needy people (v. 27). Regardless of the specific issues, James was definitely concerned about the same sinful practices that plagued the children of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they went into captivity.

As James exhorted his fellow Jewish believers to not only hear the Word of God but to also respond to it, perhaps he was remembering what the Lord revealed to Ezekiel in Babylon:

So my people come to you in crowds, sit in front of you, and hear your words, but they don't obey them. Their mouths go on passionately, but their hearts pursue dishonest profit (Ezk 33:31). (See Ezekiel Principle 30 - Hearing and Doing, p. 1053.)

Reflection and Response

If James were writing to Christians in our particular culture today, what three sins might he address?



THE SIN OF FAVORITISM

2 My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. ² For if someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and a poor person dressed in filthy clothes also comes in, ³ if you look with favor on the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Sit here in a good place,” and yet you say to the poor person, “Stand over there,” or “Sit here on the floor by my footstool,” ⁴ haven’t you made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Didn’t God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ Yet you have dishonored the poor.

Don’t the rich oppress you and drag you into court? ⁷ Don’t they blaspheme the good name that was invoked over you?

⁸ Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, **Love your neighbor as yourself**,^B you are doing well. ⁹ If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all. ¹¹ For he who said, **Do not commit adultery**,^C also said, **Do not murder**.^D So if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you are a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has not shown mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 6 - AVOIDING PREJUDICE

We are to honor one another without showing favoritism.

James expanded on what he had already addressed briefly: wealth does not provide a spiritual advantage. (Review James Principle 3 - A Biblical Priority, p. 1620.) Some believers were showing favoritism to rich people by granting special privileges. At the same time, they were withholding certain considerations from poor people. According to James and other New Testament authors, this was terribly

sinful. (Review 1 Corinthians Principle 24 - A Sacred Remembrance, p. 1482.)

This does not mean that it’s inappropriate to give honor to those to whom honor is due (Rm 12:10; 13:7). The apostles illustrated this point with Barnabas. They actually changed his name to demonstrate to everyone that he was an unselfish and generous man. However, they did not relegate poor people to a lower position in the church because they could not do what Barnabas did. (See Acts Principle 8 - Generosity, p. 1395.) ►



► Reflection and Response

In what specific ways can we honor one another in the body of Christ without demonstrating prejudice and showing favoritism?

FAITH AND WORKS

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?

¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.”^A Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe — and they shudder.

²⁰ Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Wasn’t Abraham our father justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was made complete, ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,^B and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, wasn’t Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route? ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

■ Joshua Principle 5 - Faith That Works, p. 257.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 7 - GOOD WORKS

If our profession of faith does not eventuate in good works, we should evaluate the validity of our salvation experience.

Once again, James expanded on a specific concern he had mentioned earlier: “to look after orphans and widows in their distress” (1:27). There were believers among them that had true physical needs, lacking the necessities of life. Furthermore, there was no way they could earn a living, particularly if they were orphans and widows. Though there was plenty of money in the Jewish coffers in the various synagogues, when people professed Jesus Christ, they were excommunicated from the Jewish community. Since there was no welfare system in the Roman Empire, they had no way to meet their physical needs. This, of course, is what happened in Jerusalem when the

Hellenistic Jewish widows were neglected in the daily distribution of food (Ac 6:1-2).

James was very much aware of God’s instructions in the Old Testament. Moses stated,

For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, “Open your hand willingly to your poor and needy brother in your land.” (Dt 15:11) (See Deuteronomy Principle 21 - Grace and Generosity, p. 229.)

It’s also significant that when James and the other apostles endorsed Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, they asked very specifically that he “remember the poor” (Gl 2:10). In this letter, James was questioning the reality of the faith of some in his audience because of their selfish and materialistic attitudes and actions. He was not teaching that we are saved by good works but that a true saving faith will eventually produce good works. (See Ephesians Principle 4 - God’s Gift, p. 1523.)

Reflection and Response

In applying this good works principle, why should we be careful not to become judgmental of those who profess to be Christ followers?

CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

3 Not many should become teachers, my brothers,^C because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. ² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body.

■ Malachi Principle 2 - Leadership Accountability, p. 1200.

³ Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we direct their whole bodies. ⁴ And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder

wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. ⁶ And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed^D among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, ⁸ but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse

^A 2:18 The quotation may end here or after v. 18b or v. 19. ^B 2:23 Gn 15:6 ^C 3:1 Or brothers and sisters ^D 3:6 Or places itself, or appoints itself

people who are made in God's likeness.¹⁰ Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way.¹¹ Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same

opening?¹² Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 8 - SINFUL ANGER

To keep our words from becoming destructive, we must be able to control what we say.

Following the pattern in this letter, James continued to elaborate on a succinct statement he had made earlier: "human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness" (1:20).

To demonstrate how powerful the tongue is, James used three vivid illustrations:

1. controlling a horse with a small bit (3:3),
2. turning a large ship with a small rudder (v. 4), and
3. igniting a raging forest fire with a little spark (v. 5).

He applied the lessons from these illustrations by pointing out that even "though the tongue is a small part of the body" (v. 5), it can do terrible damage in

destroying God's people and God's work. It can indeed become "a world of unrighteousness" (v. 6). (See [Psalms Principle 50 - A Wicked Tongue](#), p. 699.)

With three final illustrations, James allowed these Jewish believers to once again evaluate the validity of their faith (Jms 3:11-12): just as what a spring or a plant produces reflects its essential nature, so a person's speech reveals what is in that person's heart.

Reflection and Response

According to Paul, in what other ways can anger become sinful? (See [Romans Principle 24 - Avoiding Vengeance](#), p. 1455.)



THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE

¹³ Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom.¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth.¹⁵ Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly,

unspiritual, demonic.¹⁶ For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice.¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense.¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 9 - HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY WISDOM

To gain God's wisdom, we must walk by the Spirit and not in the flesh.

James introduced this letter by reassuring these Jewish believers that if they lacked wisdom, they could receive it if they—by faith and without wavering—asked God to provide it. With this wisdom, they would be able to endure trials and, at the same time, grow and mature spiritually. (Review [James Principle 2 - Wisdom from Above](#), p. 1619.)

At the midpoint in his letter, James elaborated, showing that God's wisdom and Christlike living are inseparable. Conversely, earthly wisdom always accompanies worldly attitudes and actions.

We know that divine wisdom is activated in our lives by the Holy Spirit when we present our bodies to God as

a living sacrifice (Rm 12:1-2). By contrast, carnal Christians manifest the wisdom of this world activated by self and Satan, resulting in ambivalent and double lives. Believers who are living according to the flesh are "double-minded" and "unstable in all [their] ways," causing their prayers to be ineffective (Jms 1:7-8). (See [Psalms Principle 117 - Wisdom from Above](#), p. 756; [Proverbs Principle 19 - Godly versus Ungodly Wisdom](#), p. 793.)

Reflection and Response

How does this section in James's letter compare with Paul's description of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians? (See [Galatians Principle 10 - Life in the Spirit](#), p. 1515.)



PROUD OR HUMBLE

4 What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you?^a ² You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war.^b ³ You do not have because you do not

ask.³ You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people!^c Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes

^a 4:1 Or war in your members ^b 4:2 Or You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war.

^c 4:4 Lit Adulteresses

the enemy of God.⁵ Or do you think it's without reason that the Scripture says: The spirit he made to dwell in us envies intensely?^A

⁶ But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says:

**God resists the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.⁸**

⁷ Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 10 - HUMILITY VERSUS PRIDE

To apply God's wisdom, we are to imitate Christ's example of humility.

After contrasting “wisdom from above” (3:17) with “earthly, unspiritual, demonic” wisdom (3:15), James addressed a root problem. Rather than reflecting humility in all of their relationships, many of these so-called Christ followers were motivated by pride and arrogance. Though James continued to speak to all who had claimed to be followers of Christ, he was focusing on those whose professions of faith were not verified by works. (Review

[James Principle 7 - Good Works](#), p. 1622.)



Many were in fact true believers but were still manifesting the “works of the flesh” (Gl 5:19) rather than “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gl 5:22). They were attempting to maintain a

“friendship with the world” and yet be followers of Jesus (Jms 4:4). As James stated earlier in this letter, they were “double-minded” people (v. 8) who were asking God for assistance but were not experiencing answers to their prayers because their motives were selfish (see 1:5-8). If indeed they were to reflect God's wisdom in their lives, they must with humble hearts trust God completely and reject all the devil's suggestions (4:7). (For an elaboration on how James used the terms *murder* and *adultery*, see [Matthew Principle 10 - Internalizing God's Word](#), p. 1217.)

Reflection and Response

How do Paul's instructions to the Philippians correlate with this section in James's letter? (See [Philippians Principle 6 - Imitating Christ](#), p. 1535.)

¹¹ Don't criticize one another, brothers and sisters. Anyone who defames or judges a fellow believer^C defames and judges the law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is one lawgiver and judge^D who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

- [Romans Principle 28 - Accepting One Another](#), p. 1457.
- [Romans Principle 29 - Protecting One Another](#), p. 1457.

OUR WILL AND GOD'S WILL

¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring — what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

¹⁵ Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 11 - MONEY AND HUMILITY

When we accumulate and use material possessions, we are to reflect Christlike humility.

James addressed a specific sinful practice that reflected pride rather than humility. He had already alluded to this issue when he wrote, “let the rich boast in his humiliation because he will pass away like a flower of the field” (1:10). Here James used another metaphor: “you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes” (4:14). (Review [James Principle 3 - A Biblical Priority](#), p. 1620.)



Many of the affluent believers were operating their businesses in self-centered and arrogant ways, as if they were in charge of their lives. In essence, they were excluding God from their daily activities.

James was not teaching that it is wrong to plan ahead in terms of meeting our immediate and future material needs. In fact, Jesus commended those who were astute in business (Lk 14:28-30). Neither was James teaching that it is wrong to accumulate material possessions. However, it is wrong and sinful when we leave God out of the equation or even make him secondary. He must be first in our lives in order to live in his will (Mt 6:33).

Reflection and Response

What are some specific attitudes and actions that demonstrate that we are applying this Principle to Live By in relationship to our material possessions? (See [1 Timothy Principle 16 - Being Generous](#), p. 1575.)

^A 4:5 Or Scripture says: He jealously yearns for the spirit he made to live in us?, or Scripture says: The Spirit he made to dwell in us longs jealously?

^B 4:6 Pr 3:34 ^C 4:11 Or his brother or sister ^D 4:12 Other mss omit and judge

WARNING TO THE RICH

5 Come now, you rich people, weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you. ²Your wealth has rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure in the last days. ⁴Look! The

pay that you withheld from the workers who mowed your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. ⁵You have lived luxuriously on the earth and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned, you have murdered the righteous, who does not resist you.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 12 - MATERIALISTIC IDOLATRY

Spiritual leaders should warn people never to allow materialism to deprive them of eternal life.

In this paragraph, James became very forthright regarding wealth. He sounded like the Old Testament prophets when they addressed materialistic idolatry (see Is 10:1-4; Jr 5:27-29; Mc 2:1-2). What he wrote is also a reflection of what Jesus Christ taught. Consider the parables of the rich fool and of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 12:16-21; 16:19-31). There is no question regarding the eternal destiny of the latter—at death, he was separated from God. (See Luke Principle 27 - Eternal Investments, p. 1319; Luke Principle 37 - Loving Money, p. 1327.)

Against this broader biblical backdrop as well as the larger context in this letter, James may have once again been addressing individuals who claimed to have faith but who gave no evidence—no “fruit of righteousness” (Jms 3:18). They were

1. hoarding wealth (5:2),
2. exploiting their own employees to accumulate wealth for themselves (v. 4),
3. living in luxury while the poor were suffering (v. 5), and
4. destroying people, probably by using the legal system to their own advantage (v. 6).

In essence, they were worshiping money instead of God.

Reflection and Response

Though James may have been addressing unsaved materialists, what lessons can believers learn from this indictment? (See 1 Timothy Principle 14 - Materialistic Motivation, p. 1574.)



WAITING FOR THE LORD

⁷Therefore, brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near.

⁹Brothers and sisters, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door!

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name as an example of suffering and

patience. ¹¹See, we count as blessed those who have endured. ⁸You have heard of Job's endurance and have seen the outcome that the Lord brought about — the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

TRUTHFUL SPEECH

¹²Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “yes” mean “yes,” and your “no” mean “no,” so that you won't fall under judgment. ^c

■ Matthew Principle 11 - Practicing Integrity, p. 1218.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 13 - CHRIST'S RETURN

When we are frustrated and distracted by people who are evil and cruel, we are to focus on our eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

In this New Testament setting, the disenfranchised believers had no way to meet their physical needs—they were persecuted and mistreated. Like those Peter addressed in his first letter, they were treated like noncitizens. In addition to being mistreated by the rich, they had no legal protection. (See 1 Peter Principle 1 - Identity in Christ, p. 1629.)

In view of these difficult circumstances, James encouraged these believers

1. to be patient, realizing that when Christ returns, he will deliver them from their earthly circumstances (Jms 5:7-8);
2. to not allow their circumstances to cause tensions among each other as believers (v. 9);
3. to take comfort by remembering the Old Testament prophets who suffered under those who rejected the message of truth (v. 10); and
4. to continue to be honest in the midst of a culture permeated with lying, cheating, and manipulative behavior (v. 12). ►



► Reflection and Response

Why is it difficult for Christians who live in free societies to identify with the struggles of many first-century

Christians as well as with those who live in repressive societies today?

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righ-

teous person is very powerful in its effect. ¹⁷Elijah was a human being as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰let that person know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

JAMES PRINCIPLE 14 - PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

When we are experiencing various illnesses, we should seek guidance and prayer from the leaders in our churches who are living godly and righteous lives.

There are a lot of questions and a variety of opinions regarding James's intent when he wrote these words regarding prayer, but one thing seems clear: many of these believers were not experiencing answers to their prayers because they were living sinful, double lives and praying with selfish motives (1:5-8; 4:3). Like the Corinthians who were using the Lord's Supper as a means for selfish indulgence, they too may have been "sick and ill" because of their sinful attitudes and actions (1Co 11:27-30).



James encouraged these believers to turn to the leaders in their churches for spiritual guidance and prayer. These godly and righteous shepherds who reflected the spiritual character of Elijah

could lead them, first of all, to confess their sins. Second, they could pray for their healing (Jms 5:16). Rather than dying, like some of the Corinthians, they could be healed in this life and, if unsaved, repent and receive the gift of eternal life (vv. 19-20).

In interpreting what James wrote in this passage, we must be careful, however, not to conclude that all illnesses are caused by deliberate sin. In fact, James used two Greek terms translated "sick" to describe people who were feeble, weak, exhausted, and weary or worn out. In this New Testament setting, many believers were physically and emotionally exhausted from intense persecution. (See *Psalms Principle 6 - Deliverance from Depression*, p. 662.)

Reflection and Response

How can we help those who are ill to be more proactive in seeking prayer from their spiritual leaders?

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