



*James Reviews The
Sermon On The Mount*

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James reviews the Sermon on the Mount.

James offers a larger number of similarities to the Sermon on the Mount than any other book in the New Testament. James relied heavily on Jesus' teachings.

The Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7 in the gospel according to Matthew, contains the most important teachings of Jesus. The Sermon begins with the Beatitudes, and their call to humility, peacemaking, purity, and righteousness, and continues on to sharp condemnations of anger, lust, revenge, and hypocrisy, and then to the beautiful exemplar of the Lord's Prayer.

This is followed by strong admonitions against materialism, worry, and judging others. But it's not all "thou shalt not," for the Sermon on the Mount ends with Jesus' encouragement for his followers to pray frequently and fervently, to live by the Golden Rule, to bear good fruit, and to build on the rock.

Trouble may become great joy.

James 1:2

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [3]
Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

We can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure. It is easy to be kind to others when everything is going well, but can we still be kind when others are treating us unfairly?

God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain. Instead of complaining about our struggles, we should see them as opportunities for growth. Thank God for promising to be with you in rough times. Ask him to help you solve your problems or to give you the strength to endure them.

Then be patient. God will not leave you alone with your problems; he will stay close and help you grow.

When persecution comes

Matthew 5:10-12

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

[12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Jesus said to be happy when we're persecuted for our faith. Persecution can be good because (1) it takes our eyes off earthly rewards, (2) it strips away superficial belief, (3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure, and (4) our attitude through it serves as an example to others who follow. We can be comforted knowing that God's greatest prophets were persecuted (Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel). The fact that we are being persecuted proves that we have been faithful; faithless people would be unnoticed. In the future God will reward the faithful by receiving them into his eternal Kingdom, where there is no more persecution.

James 1:4

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

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Ask God and He will answer

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

By "wisdom," James is talking not only about knowledge but about the ability to make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. Whenever we need wisdom, we can pray to God, and he will generously supply what we need. Christians don't have to grope around in the dark, hoping to stumble upon answers. We can ask for God's wisdom to guide our choices.

The wisdom that we need has three distinct characteristics:

(1) ***It is practical.*** The wisdom from God relates to life even during the most trying times. It is not a wisdom isolated from suffering and trials. This wisdom is the tool by which trials are overcome. An intelligent person may have profound ideas, but a wise person puts profound ideas into action. Intelligence will allow someone to describe several reasons why the car broke down. The wise person chooses the most likely reason and proceeds to take action.

(2) ***It is divine.*** God's wisdom goes beyond common sense. Common sense does not lead us to choose joy in the middle of trials. This wisdom begins with respect for God, leads to living by God's direction, and results in the ability to tell right from wrong. It is a wisdom that James will describe at length in [chapter 3](#).

(3) ***It is Christlike***. Asking for wisdom is ultimately asking to be like Christ. The Bible identifies Christ as the "wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24; 2:1-7).

Be perfect.

Matthew 5:48

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

How can we be perfect?

(1) *In character*: In this life we cannot be flawless, but we can aspire to be as much like Christ as possible.

(2) *In holiness*: Like the Pharisees, we are to separate ourselves from the world's sinful values. But unlike the Pharisees, we are to be devoted to God's desires rather than our own and carry his love and mercy into the world.

(3) *In maturity*: We can't achieve Christlike character and holy living all at once, but we must grow toward maturity and wholeness. Just as we expect different behavior from a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult, so God expects different behavior from us, depending on our stage of spiritual development.

(4) *In love*: We can seek to love others as completely as God loves us.

We can be perfect if our behavior is appropriate for our maturity level—perfect, yet with much room to grow. Our tendency to sin must never deter us from striving to be more like Christ.

Christ calls all of his disciples to excel, to rise above mediocrity, and to mature in every area, becoming like him.

Those who strive to become perfect will one day be perfect, even as Christ is perfect (1 John 3:2, 3).

God has honored believers who are poor

James 1:9

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

Christianity brings a new dignity to the poor and not-so-influential people of this world. That dignity is most apparent in the church, where there are not (or should not be) any class distinctions. All believers share the distinction and dignity of being changed by the gospel and being charged with the mission of taking that same Good News to the rest of the world.

Believers know they have dignity before God because Christ died for them. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a great example of this truth. The dignity that she displayed when she realized what God had done for her is seen in her prayer of praise, called the *Magnificent* ([Luke 1:46-55](#)).

Whatever our social or economic situation, James challenges us to see beyond it to our eternal advantages. What we can have in Jesus Christ outweighs anything in this life. Knowing him gives us our high position, where we find our true dignity.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

With Jesus' announcement that the Kingdom was near ([4:17](#)), people were naturally asking, "How do I qualify to be in God's Kingdom?" Jesus said that God's Kingdom is organized differently from worldly kingdoms. In the Kingdom of Heaven, wealth and power and authority are unimportant. Kingdom people seek different blessings and benefits, and they have different attitudes.

Are our attitudes a carbon copy of the world's selfishness, pride, and lust for power, or do they reflect the humility and self-sacrifice of Jesus, your

king?

Watch out for your anger

James 1:19-20

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: [20] for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

These verses speak of anger that erupts when our ego is bruised: "I am hurt;" "My opinions are not being heard." When injustice and sin occur, we *should* become angry because others are being hurt.

But we should not become angry when we fail to win an argument or when we feel offended or neglected. Selfish anger never helps anybody.

Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Killing is a terrible sin, but anger is a great sin, too, because it also violates God's command to love.

Anger in this case refers to a seething, brooding bitterness against someone. It is a dangerous emotion that always threatens to leap out of control, leading to violence, emotional hurt, increased mental stress, and spiritual damage.

Anger keeps us from developing a spirit pleasing to God. Have you ever been proud that you didn't strike out and say what was really on your mind?

Self-control is good, but Christ wants us to practice thought-control as well. Jesus said that we will be held accountable even for our attitudes.

Show mercy to others, as God has shown mercy to you.

James 2:13

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Only God in his mercy can forgive our sins. We can't earn forgiveness by forgiving others. But when we withhold forgiveness from others after having received it ourselves, we show that we don't understand or appreciate God's mercy toward us (see Matthew 6:14, 15; 18:21ff; Ephesians 4:31, 32).

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Your Faith must express itself in your actions.

James 2:14-16

When someone claims to have faith, what he or she may have is intellectual assent—agreement with a set of Christian teachings—and as such it would be incomplete faith. True faith transforms our conduct as well as our thoughts. If our life remains unchanged, we don't truly believe the truths we claim to believe.

Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus exposed those people who sounded religious but had no personal relationship with him. On "judgment day" only our relationship with Christ—our acceptance of him as Savior and our obedience to him—will matter. Many people think that if they are "good" people and say religious things, they will be rewarded with eternal life. In reality, faith in Christ is what will count at the judgment.

Blessed are the peacemakers for they will reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:17,18

True wisdom can be measured by a person's character. Just as you can identify a tree by the type of fruit it produces, you can evaluate your wisdom by the way you act. Foolishness leads to disorder, but wisdom leads to peace and goodness. Are you tempted to escalate the conflict, pass on the gossip, or fan the fire of discord? Careful, winsome speech and wise, loving words are the seeds of peace.

Matthew 5:9

If Jesus did not come to abolish the law, does that mean all the Old Testament laws still apply to us today? In the Old Testament, there were three categories of law: ceremonial, civil, and moral.

(1) The *ceremonial law* related specifically to Israel's worship (see Leviticus 1:2, 3, for example). Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ; these laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. While we are no longer bound by ceremonial law, the principles behind them—to worship and love a holy God—still apply. Jesus was often accused by the Pharisees of violating ceremonial law.

(2) The *civil law* applied to daily living in Israel (see Deuteronomy 24:10, 11, for example). Because modern society and culture are so radically different from that time and setting, all of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. But the principles behind the commands are timeless and should guide our conduct. Jesus demonstrated these principles by example.

(3) The *moral law* (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and it requires strict obedience (see Exodus 20:13, for example). The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies today. Jesus obeyed the moral law completely.

Friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God.

James 4:4

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

The cure for evil desires is humility (see Proverbs 16:18, 19; 1 Peter 5:5, 6). Pride makes us self-centered and leads us to conclude that we deserve all we can see, touch, or imagine. It creates greedy appetites for far more than we need. We can be released from our self-centered desires by humbling ourselves before God, realizing that all we really need is his approval. When the Holy Spirit fills us, we see that this world's seductive attractions are only cheap substitutes for what God has to offer.

Matthew 6:24 Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus contrasted heavenly values with earthly values when he explained that our first loyalty should be to those things that do not fade, cannot be stolen or used up, and never wear out. We should not be fascinated with our possessions, lest *they* possess us. God alone deserves to be our master. Either we store our treasures with God (6:20, 21), focus our "eyes"

on him (6:22, 23), and serve him alone—or else we do not serve him at all. Where does your ultimate allegiance lie?

When you humble yourself, God will lift you up.

James 4:10

How can you come close to God? James gives five ways:

(1) ***Humble yourselves before God*** (4:7). Yield to his authority and will, commit your life to him and his control, and be willing to follow him.

(2) ***Resist the devil*** (4:7). Don't allow Satan to entice and tempt you.

(3) ***Wash your hands... and purify your hearts*** (that is, lead a pure life) (4:8). Be cleansed from sin, replacing your desire to sin with your desire to experience God's purity.

(4) ***Let there be sorrow and deep grief for your sins*** (4:9). Don't be afraid to express deep heartfelt sorrow for what you have done.

(5) ***humble yourselves before the Lord***, and he will lift you up in honor (4:10; 1 Peter 5:6).

Bowing in humility before the Lord means recognizing that our worth comes from God alone. To be humble involves leaning on his power and his guidance, and not going our own independent way. Although we do not deserve God's favor, he wants to lift us up and give us worth and dignity, despite our human shortcomings.

Don't speak evil against each other.

James 4:11

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

When we fail to love, we are actually breaking God's law. Examine your attitude and actions toward others. Do you build people up or tear them down? When you're ready to criticize someone, remember God's law of

love and say something good instead. Saying something beneficial to others will cure you of finding fault and increase your ability to obey God's law of love.

Matthew 7:1,2

Judge not, that ye be not judged. [2] For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Jesus' statement, "Do not judge others," is against the kind of hypocritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down in order to build oneself up. It is not a blanket statement to overlook wrong behavior of others but a call to be *discerning* rather than negative. Jesus said to expose false prophets (7:15-23), and Paul taught that we should exercise church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2) and trust God to be the final Judge (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).



Prayer to salvation.

Lord God in heaven, I come to you in the name of Jesus.

I acknowledge to you that I am a sinner, and

I am sorry for my sins and the life that I have lived;

I need your forgiveness.

I believe that your only begotten Son Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on the cross at Calvary and died for my sins, and I am now willing to turn from my sin.

Your Holy Word declares in Romans 10:9 that if we confess the Lord our God and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we shall be saved.

Right now I confess Jesus as the Lord of my soul. With my heart, I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead.

This very moment I accept Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior and according to His Word, right now I am saved. Amen

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

0 New American Standard Bible

1

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

