# LG Leader

11/22 - James (Apologetic Review)

## LOVE

**A new commandment I give to you, that you love *one another*... (John 13:34)**

- *Internal*: How was your week? Any new life updates? How was your walk with the Lord this week?
- *External*: Practically, is there any individual or family that needs encouragement from us as a group?

## TRUTH

**Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing *one another*... (Col. 3:16)**

**1. Faith and Works (James 2:14–26)**

**Cultural question:** "Doesn't James contradict Paul? Paul says we are justified by faith alone, yet James says faith without works is dead and that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Isn't this legalism or works-righteousness?"

**Biblical response:** James and Paul are addressing different errors or "ditches" and using "justified" in overlapping but distinct senses. Paul (Romans 3–4; Galatians 2–3; Ephesians 2:8–9) confronts the idea that human effort or law-keeping earns right standing before God. He insists justification is by faith in Christ, apart from works of the law, so that no one may boast. James confronts the opposite error: a claim to faith that produces no obedience, no love of neighbor, and no transformation (James 2:14–17). He uses Abraham (James 2:21–23, citing Genesis 15 and 22) the same way Paul does, showing that true faith is demonstrated and completed by works. The "justification" James describes is the visible, public demonstration that the person has genuine faith—consistent with Jesus' teaching that a tree is known by its fruit (Matthew 7:16–20) and with Paul's own insistence that faith works through love (Galatians 5:6) and that we are created in Christ for good works (Ephesians 2:10). Dead faith (James 2:17, 26) is not saving faith. The Bible does not teach that works earn salvation; it teaches that saving faith inevitably produces works.

**2. Trials, Suffering, and God's Character (James 1:2–12)**

**Cultural question:** "If God is good and all-powerful, why does James tell people to 'count it all joy' when they face trials? Doesn't suffering disprove a loving God, or at least make joy-in-suffering psychologically unhealthy?"

**Biblical response:** James does not claim trials are pleasant or that God is the author of evil. He states that trials test and perfect faith, producing steadfastness and maturity (James 1:3–4), and that the one who endures under trial will receive the crown of life promised by God (James 1:12). This is consistent with the rest of Scripture: God uses suffering for good in the lives of those who love Him (Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18; Hebrews 12:5–11; 1 Peter 1:6–7). The ultimate answer to the problem of evil is not a philosophical formula but the cross, where the innocent suffered so the guilty could be reconciled (Isaiah 53; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21–24). James points believers to ask

God for wisdom in the midst of trials (James 1:5), not to pretend the pain does not exist. Joy is possible because the outcome is certain, not because the trial feels good.

**3. Favoritism, the Rich, and the Poor (James 2:1–13; 5:1–6)**

**Cultural question:** "Isn't James just promoting class warfare or modern social-justice ideology when he condemns partiality toward the rich and warns the wealthy? Doesn't Christianity teach that everyone is equal before God, so economic differences shouldn't matter?"

**Biblical response:** James condemns the sin of partiality (favoritism) because it violates the royal law "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (James 2:8, quoting Leviticus 19:18 and Jesus in Matthew 22:39). Showing preference to the rich while dishonoring the poor is inconsistent with the faith of the Lord of glory (James 2:1). The poor are often rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5). This is not a call to envy or redistribution by force; it is a call to impartial love and justice within the church and in personal conduct. Scripture elsewhere affirms that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11), that honest labor and stewardship are good (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12), and that the wealthy have special responsibilities and dangers (1 Timothy 6:17–19). James 5 warns of the judgment coming on those who oppress laborers and live in self-indulgence—language that echoes the prophets (e.g., Amos, Isaiah). The standard is God's impartial righteousness, not contemporary political programs.

**4. The Tongue and Speech (James 3:1–12)**

**Cultural question:** "In an age of social media, constant commentary, and 'speaking your truth,' isn't James's teaching about the tongue outdated and unrealistic? How can anyone be expected to control their words when platforms reward outrage, when processing emotions out loud is treated as healthy, and when staying silent can be seen as complicity or weakness?"

**Biblical response:** James does not claim that speech is unimportant or that silence is always the goal. He shows that the tongue has outsized power, small in size yet able to direct an entire life or set a whole course ablaze (James 3:3–6). No human can fully master it in their own strength (James 3:7–8); that inability itself reveals the depth of our fallen condition and our need for God's transforming work. Scripture elsewhere commands believers to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), to put away corrupt speech and speak what builds up (Ephesians 4:29), and to let their words be always gracious and seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). Jesus taught that the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45) and that people will give account for every careless word (Matthew 12:36–37). Therefore, the solution is not unrestrained expression, nor forced silence, but a heart changed by the implanted word so that speech becomes consistent, blessing rather than cursing those made in God's image (James 3:9–10).

**5. Worldliness, Friendship with the World, and Double-mindedness (James 4:1–10)**

**Cultural question:** "James says friendship with the world is enmity with God and calls people 'adulterous.' Isn't this an anti-cultural, anti-engagement stance that makes Christians irrelevant or hostile to society?"

**Biblical response:** "The world" in this context is the present evil age organized in opposition to God (cf. 1 John 2:15–17). Friendship with it means adopting its values, desires, and priorities. James calls for humble repentance, drawing near to God, cleansing hands and purifying hearts (James 4:7–10). This is the same call Jesus made to be in the world but not of it (John 17:14–18) and Paul's instruction not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2). Christians are sent into culture as salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16); they are not called to isolation. The conflict is with the world's opposition to God, not with people created in His image. The double-minded person (James 1:8; 4:8) is unstable because divided loyalty cannot please God.

## GREAT COMMISSION

**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... (Matt. 28:19-20)**

- *Internal:* Did you make time to disciple your family this week? Pray with them?
- *External:* Is your life marked by joy/contentment? Are you prepared to share the gospel if the Holy Spirit prompted? Is the name of Jesus on your lips in your day-to-day activity?

## CONFESSION/PRAYER/REPENTANCE

**But exhort *one another* every day, as long as it is called "today,"... (Heb. 3:12-14)**

- Confession is agreeing with God about our sin according to the Scriptures. Is there anything you want to confess before the group (generally)? *[apathy, idolatry, selfishness, jealousy, anger, envy]*
- Let's pray, asking God to help us apply His word to our lives.[1]

[1] Sources: ESV Study Bible, GotQuestions.org, Multiple AI Resources