

**Reading Together**  
**New Testament Bible Reading**  
**March 14 - 20**

**Monday, March 14 – Hebrews 13: 1 - 25**

As the writer of Hebrews brings his letter to a close he gives his readers some very practical encouragement. He starts by giving advice on how to behave toward others in verses 1 to 3: love each other well; be hospitable to others, because you may be entertaining angels (see Genesis 18, 19 and Judges 6 for examples of times when this happened); remember those who are suffering.

Next in verses 4 to 9 the writer exhorts us to live honorable lives: in our marriages, in our finances (the idea is for us to trust in God rather than our money and possessions), and in the way we interact with those in authority over us. Pay close attention to verse 9 as the writer wants to make sure that we understand that honorable lives are lives filled with grace rather than empty religious practices.

The final exhortation deals with how we live our lives in relationship to God: by sharing in the sufferings of Christ and praising God even in the midst of adversity, doing good to others, and being good followers of the leaders God has placed over us.

**Tuesday, March 15 – James 1: 1 – 18**

The book of James was written by Jesus' half-brother James (both had Mary as their mother but James had Joseph as his biological father). It is interesting that James was not a believer in Jesus until after Jesus' resurrection. James became a leader of the early church (Acts 15), and it is believed his letter was actually written before any other books of the New Testament were written. James wrote his letter to remind early Christians of how they were to live. Martin Luther did not like

the book of James because in his mind it emphasized works over faith and grace, but James' point, throughout his letter, is that faith without works isn't really faith at all. James never says that we are saved by our works, but rather, James says our faith is proved genuine by our works. James was martyred in AD 62 when he was thrown from the parapet of the temple and then beaten to death by a mob.

James begins his letter by telling us that we should never be surprised when we experience suffering in our lives. In fact, James makes the point that suffering is necessary to produce Christian character. In fact, in verse 12 James makes the point that persevering through suffering is one of the marks that proves our faith to be genuine.

There are several important facts that James brings to our attention in these first verses of his letter. First, in verses 5 – 8, James tells us to ask God for wisdom and then trust God to give it to us. In verses 9 – 11 James reminds us that when we are going through difficult times in our lives (humble circumstances) we can be happy because of the riches we have in Christ, and if we are well off in life James tells us to keep in mind that sooner or later those things will pass away, which means we are just as needy as a person who is poor.

Finally, in verses 13 -18 James reminds us that God is not a God of evil but a God of good. When we sin it is not God's fault, or even Satan's fault. It is our fault!

### **Wednesday, March 16 – James 1: 19 - 2: 13**

These verses are filled with very practical advice for how we are to live our lives. First, in verses 19 – 21 James tells us the importance of listening well, carefully speaking and getting angry wisely. Next, James tells us that it is of no value to us to only hear the word of God and do nothing with it in our lives.

In verses 26 and 27 the word that our Bible's translate as religious means to be God-fearing. James is therefore telling us that God-fearing people are people who learn how to control their tongue. Jesus told us in Matthew 12:34 that what comes out of our mouths is a reflection of what is in our hearts. God-fearing people also care about those in need, see James 2:13 "Mercy triumphs over judgment!" Finally, God-fearing people are people who want to keep their lives clean by not letting the world pollute their lives after Jesus' blood has cleansed them.

James 2: 1- 13 deals with treating everybody the same no matter what their position is in life. After all, no matter what our physical circumstances are, we are all living in absolute spiritual poverty and desperately need Jesus.

### **Thursday, March 17 – James 2: 14 – 26**

In some ways these verses make up the heart of James' letter. James point isn't that faith isn't necessary. His point is that faith, if it is not backed up by works, is not genuine faith. Verse 19 is very sobering. Even demons believe in God, and tremble at the thought of him. Mere belief is not enough, because mere belief is not true faith. True faith changes a person so that their actions prove what they believe.

### **Friday, March 18 – James 3: 1 – 18**

In verses 1 – 12 James goes back to speaking about the difficulty and importance of controlling the tongue. James says that even though our tongues are a small part of our bodies they can get us into big trouble. My guess is you can think of a time when you said something you shouldn't have said and it got you into big trouble. In verse 8, James tells us that no one can control their tongue on their own. The only way our tongues will change is if our hearts change.

Next James tells us what true wisdom looks like. True wisdom is to live a life that is pleasing to God by living a life that is not

filled with selfishness and envy, but filled with mercy, grace and peace toward others.

### **Saturday, March 19 – James 4: 1 – 17**

In this chapter James deals with the idea of living our lives in submission to God. James makes a point of telling us that most of the unhappiness in our lives comes because we do not trust God to give us the things we need, instead, we try to get things for ourselves. Most of our problems in our lives come because, rather than serving God, we try to fit in and become part of the world. By submitting to God we learn to be content with what God gives to us, and we as we submit to God we at the same time resist the devil. The closer we come to God, the further Satan runs from us.

In the last few verses of chapter four James is not telling us that we should not plan for the future, rather, what James is telling us to do is to submit our plans to God and let Him have complete control over our future.

### **Sunday, March 20 – James 5: 1 – 19**

James begins chapter 5 by telling his readers that if they are well off in this life, they should not fall into the trap of using their wealth only to satisfy themselves. God gives us wealth to use to help others to make their lives better.

For those who are not well off and who are suffering in this life, James tells them to be patient and stand firm. Jesus will come soon.

Finally, James concludes his letter with an exhortation to prayer for each other.