

LIVING  
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**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Wise Advice

December 2, 2019

Today's Scripture: [James 1](#)

Most often we cannot control what a *jerkface* does or doesn't do. But, we can control our response. *And*, we can control whether we are a jerkface or not. The book of James gives us some practical tools to use in our daily lives, which help us *pursue humility*. For example, verse 19 tells us to:

*"Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."*

*Quick to listen.* In Stephen Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the 6th habit is to *seek first to understand, then to be understood*. Too often we listen with the intent to reply instead of the intention to hear actually what the other person is saying.

James reminds us that we must be *quick to listen*. The old adage, "God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason," applies here - it is more important to hear other people than to make whatever point we want to make.

*Slow to speak.* A verse I often quote to myself is, "When there are many words, sin is unavoidable" (Proverbs 10:19 HCSB). The NLT states it this way, "Too much talk leads to sin..." and the next line says, "Be sensible and keep your mouth shut." What more is there to say about that? HA!

But, before we move on, think about the power of words. Words can cut deep and cause much pain. James 3 continues this discussion about controlling the tongue. In fact, he goes so far as to say that "if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way" (James 3:2). It is wise (sensible) to be attentive to the advice in these verses.

*Slow to get angry.* Anger falls on the list of things that Paul tells us to “get rid of” in Colossians 3:8. Proverbs 29:22 says, “An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin.” In contrast, “LOVE is patient and kind...” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). The fruit of the *SPIRIT* is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Zach Williams sums up a prayer we can sing in relation to these three areas in his new song “Less Like Me:”

*“Oh Lord, help me be*

*A little more like mercy, a little more like grace  
A little more like kindness, goodness, love, and faith  
A little more like patience, a little more like peace  
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me.”*

### **Questions:**

Which of these three areas are you currently having the most trouble with? Listening? Speaking? Or anger?

Does this post remind you of someone in your life? Does it remind you of yourself?

### **Next Steps:**

Next time you’re dealing with a *jerkface*, or you're tempted to be one yourself, pause. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for his strength and control to help you be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

### **Prayer:**

*God, on our own we are a hot mess. We are jerkfaces! What comes naturally is to make sure our point is heard, to feel justified in our anger, and to block out those we don’t want to listen to. But, with your help and the help of your Holy Spirit, we can be more like Jesus. Help us to*

*practice the pause. Help us be patient, kind, and gentle. Help us trump the natural with your supernatural. Amen.*

*This post was written by Kendra Grubinski, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Transcending Prejudice

December 3, 2019

Today's Scripture: [James 2](#)

James chapter 2 begins with a provocative question which is as relevant today as when it was first posed nearly 2,000 years ago:

**James 2:1**

*My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?*

The book of James was authored by Jesus' brother, who was a leader in the Jerusalem Church. As a point of context, both the Old and New Testaments were written in an era when prejudice was rampant, even among Christians. Discrimination thrived in the first century amid a misplaced emphasis on differences in ethnicity, gender, nationality, social status, and religion.

Like Jesus and James, we too live in a time of prejudice. We are not born prejudiced, it is learned. Prejudice exists because we are sinful beings. We need look no further than the daily headlines or social media sites to find examples of the venomous prejudice that exists today. Truth be told, there are times when we need only look in the mirror to see them.

Though its application may be subtle and even subconscious at times, we all exhibit prejudice. Our selfish nature tells us that there may be more gained from the person with status or power, so we favor them over others who seem to have less to offer. We make snap judgments about others based on their appearance or the opinions they express. And in our worst moments, when we are feeling vulnerable or weak, we may even choose to lift ourselves up by bringing others down.

## **James 2:14**

*What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?*

The beauty of Jesus' teachings – and his exemplary life – is that they transcend prejudice. It has been said that prejudice cannot see the things that are because it is always looking for things that aren't. Jesus turned the tables on this notion of accentuating our differences by instead focusing on what believers have in common. What we have in common is that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. As the Bible tells us, we are all "made in his image, in the image of God he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, the man who looks down on others cannot see that which is above him. And this, friends, is where understanding, acceptance, and healing begin. When we fix our gaze on God, we focus on him and not our differences. We do this in a selfless and loving brotherhood that enables us to not only declare our faith in Jesus, but also live it.

### **Questions:**

Do you believe there are degrees to prejudice – that some instances are less egregious than others? What do Jesus' actions show us? Is there someone in your circle of friends or relatives that you can rely upon to "keep you honest" when it comes to regarding all others with equal value?

### **Next Steps:**

Set aside some time to recall an occasion when you exhibited prejudice. Rather than focusing on the degree of the sin, think about the factors that drove your behavior. Consider how you could have handled the situation differently and seek to apply this approach going forward.

Devote a portion of your prayer time this week to asking God for awareness and guidance in acting impartially toward others.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for your perfect example of impartiality. Grant me the eyes to regard others as you do and the desire to serve all others justly. And when I fall short of your standard, I ask that you provide me the conviction to see my prejudices, confess my sins, and seek to love others as you do. Amen.*

*This post was written by Todd Romain, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# The Power of the Tongue

December 4, 2019

Today's Scripture: [James 3](#)

The tongue is a powerful weapon. If used properly, it can help mend the broken, encourage the weak, create positivity, and bring nations together. The *same* tongue can also break a person's spirit, curse humankind, and divide cultures out of fear and hate.

## James 3: 9

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.*

How can an individual who knows they are a child of God behave in such a way? Some of the most spirited people use their tongue to praise God with songs and prayer, then turn around and curse their family, friends, and anyone in-between.

## James 3: 10

*Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.*

Consistency is a must. Don't shout your love for God and whisper your disdain for another. With the same breath, don't say you love the Lord but call yourself ugly, unforgivable, or unworthy.

## Questions:

When is the last time you praised the Lord? How does your criticism of self or others take away joy in your life? To whom will you express your appreciation this week? How are you treating non-believers?



**Next Steps:**

Practice speaking at home, work, and other places the same way you talk at church. Be consistently good with your words.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, thank you for showing us how to love with our words as well as with our hearts. Help me to continue to speak wisdom, faith, and love to others, and remind me to swallow my pride and ask for their forgiveness when I do the opposite. Amen.*

*This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Pride vs. Humility

December 5, 2019

Today's Scripture: [James 4](#)

"Pride" is a buzzword in our culture today. Phrases abound from the accomplishments of our children to the identities we have created for ourselves. We are proud of what we do, who we are, and what we or our family members have accomplished. Clearly in our culture, people want to feel good about themselves and are not afraid to let the world around them know it. But what does the Bible say about pride?

James 4:6 says "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Proverbs 11:2 says "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." Proverbs 29:23 says "Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor."

Pride in the Bible is **always** portrayed as a negative attribute. Why?

According to the dictionary, pride is defined as "a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's **own** achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired." At its definition, pride is all about me. Pride causes me to want others to look at how good I am, how unique I am, how gifted my children are. It's always selfish. As Ben said this weekend, pride says, "I matter more than you."

James 4:7 says "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Pride is an attribute of the devil. Only in humbling ourselves can we resist him. Pride in anything of ourselves or our own making brings us down. It damages our relationship with God and with others. It brings a false sense of independence and confidence in our own abilities. When we humble ourselves before God, we are

embracing a posture of needfulness - a posture that says I am nothing without you Lord, and that is good. In our humility, God will lift us up and give us the acceptance, and approval, and value we so long for.

**Questions:**

In what areas of your life do you struggle with pride? What areas of your life, or what relationships could benefit from more humility on your part?

**Next Steps:**

The Book of Proverbs is full of verses about pride and humility. Spend some time looking up these verses and come to your own conclusions. Here are a few to start with: Proverbs 8:13, 11:12, 15:33, 16:18, 18:12, 22:4, 29:23.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, Thank you for your grace and wisdom. Thank you that we can find our worth in you alone and we do not need to strive after achievements and glory for ourselves. Forgive my prideful attitudes. Forgive me for ever thinking that I can direct or control my life by my own efforts. Help me to maintain a spirit of humility when approaching you and those around me. I pray that I honor you with my life. Amen.*

*This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Life with Jesus is Rich!

December 6, 2019

Today's Scripture: [James 5](#)

When I read "Warning to the Rich," the heading in today's reading, I thought, "doesn't apply to me, I'm not "rich"." Taking a closer look, I think James isn't talking about monetary wealth. I remember a time when I had it all! I was leading worship at our local church, my family attended and supported me, I had good friends that I met with and did Bible study and prayer on a regular basis. I loved my job and my life felt like it had a purpose. But then I took my eyes off the Lord and began to pursue worldly pleasures.

## James 5:5

*You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter.*

I lost my peace and was left with the emptiness brought on by a selfish lifestyle that only leads to bondage. Terrible things began to happen all around me and to me. Finally, the pain of staying the same became greater than the pain I would have had to face in order to change. I cried out to Jesus to save me, and I waited patiently. Things began to change in me and consequently in my life. I am living proof that prayer is very powerful!

## James 5:16

*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

I was able to confess my sins and make amends to my family, friends, and the church. I discovered there had been many prayers lifting me

up! I'm sure if it weren't for those prayers, I would not have made it back to walking with the Lord. I am so humbled to know that there was not judgment and condemnation, but only love and prayers for me when I went astray. Please think about that if you know someone who is on the wrong path. The most powerful thing you can do is pray!

Life is far better than I could imagine now. I am back in the arms of Jesus! My life has a purpose, I am remarried to a wonderful man, my family is part of my life, I am part of a life group, and I love to worship at CedarCreek Church and write about my experiences. The things of Earth don't hold the appeal they once did.

**Questions:**

Is there anything in your life that holds more value than your relationship with God? Do you have peace in your heart? If not, have you prayed and asked why? Is there someone who needs you to pray for or with them?

**Next Steps:**

Talk to a good Christian friend you feel you can trust. Make a confession about something you'd like to quit, change, or do better. Pray together for divine guidance and strength.

**Prayer:**

*Father, you are holy and deserving of our worship. We praise you for your grace and mercy. When life is out of control, help us to turn our eyes to you and not despair. We trust that you will heal us and guide us to the blessings and peace that only comes through a life with you. Thank you for who you are and all that you do. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*This post was written by Julie Estep, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*