

It's All Uphill

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Date: 14 February 2021

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would come with might and power and deep conviction upon each of us, that you would help us to understand who we really are, that you would grant us honesty about who we are in the real world, in the presence of you, the real God.

And Father, as you bring us to better and truer self-knowledge, that you would grant us first and foremost a better and truer knowledge of you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

So, a bit of a trigger warning, I guess, or a bit of a heads up. I'm going to be talking about money today. Not talking about money because of anything to do with the church finances or anything like that.

We're starting a new book in the Bible. Well, it's not a new book. We're starting a book that was written a long time ago. It wasn't just written and put in the Bible a few days ago.

As if, oh yeah, there's a new book to put in the Bible. No, we're going to be studying the book of James. We're going to go through it from beginning to the end, take a bit of a break for Easter and Holy Week. And the reason that I'm going to talk a little bit about money is because the book of James talks about money.

[1 : 15] If you are at all, if this is maybe one of the first times that you've watched one of these services or entered into one of these services, we preach through books of the Bible. And if you're a seeker, that should be a really good and important thing for you because it shows that we don't try to hide anything.

We don't just look at the good texts. The texts that all say that God has a wonderful plan for your life and don't look at the texts that tell you you have to give up certain things or stop doing certain things.

Or as a friend of mine used to say, they tell you that God had a wonderful plan for your life and not tell you that 10 years after you'd become a Christian, you were getting killed by cannibals in some distant place.

So we look at different things. We go from the beginning to the end. And our text today is also going to be talking about not just about money, but identity, life, allegiance, and hope. But money is one of the topics.

So let's get into it. If you have your Bibles, it's James chapter 1. We will have the words on the screen for most of it. But it's also very good to have a Bible of your own, to be able to look and read it for yourself.

[2 : 25] And I'll be using the English Standard Version for this. And the Bible doesn't begin with talking about money. James doesn't begin by talking about money. It sort of gives a bit of an introduction. But this is one of these cases where the introduction is actually really important for the entire rest of the book.

Here's how it begins. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings. And some of you, your versions of the Bible might have begun, James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And others of you will have a Bible that has a little footnote. And if you go down, if it said slave, it'll say servant and vice versa. And so James introduces himself, gives his name, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

You just sort of have to trust me in this. It's basically the twelve tribes of the dispersion. It's a letter for Christians. It's a sort of symbolic type of language, a bit of a metaphor which is used.

But some of you might be wondering right off the bat, especially if you're trying to figure out a little bit about the Christian faith and you've stumbled across this video, and you might say to yourself or

to the person you're with, here we go.

[3 : 42] It's sort of very interesting. This is one of the reasons why I would never be a Christian. Like, how weird is it that people in Ottawa in the year 2021 would actually sort of like the idea that somebody is a slave?

In fact, actually, I'm going to actually say that part of the significance of this text is that the Bible is calling us to a secure identity, a secure, true, individual identity for you and me in Jesus, if we understand that we are his doulos, his servant slash slave.

So if you're thinking this is exactly one of the reasons why I don't like the Christian faith is, I mean, George, gosh, some of you might even be saying, where can I even begin to show you where this is all wrong?

Like, life should be about figuring out who you are. Life should be all about being the captain of your own destiny. Life should be all about not letting other people tell you what to do or what to think. It should be all about not getting your identity from somebody else, but making your own. Like, George, everything about this is just wrong. And if you're thinking that, those are, I mean, if that's what you think, that's what you think.

[5 : 06] And it's, in fact, a very honest way. Christians often aren't very honest when we talk about this type of language, and it's actually very, very hard for us to try to live it.

So what's going on here with this text? Well, first of all, I guess I want to just challenge the idea that we actually ever create our own identity.

And the identity, if we do create our own identity, I mean, obviously people do create their own identity, but it's not really everybody's serving somebody, everybody's getting their identity from somebody else.

And you say, no, that's George, that might be true of other people. It's not. No, no, no, no, no. Just you think about it for a second. One of the ways that we see this is how we think about others. One of the things that people would say that was so terrible about Trump supporters is they were getting their identity from terrible things. And we don't think of that as a good example of getting your own identity.

[6 : 06] All of a sudden we say, no, no, no, no, no, no. There's things that can give you your identity which are very, very bad. And the other thing that we don't necessarily, if you just think about it for a second, depending on whatever age you are, or maybe if you're only eight, this won't make any sense to you.

Although even maybe at eight it will. One of the things that we understand about how transient identity is and how foolish it is, is when we think not only of, let's say, Trump supporters make American great again, but when we think of people who are younger than us.

So, you know, maybe you're a very mature 21 or 22 year old and, you know, the orange thing happens on Tuesday, you're actually able to see some family and you go see, you know, maybe your next door neighbors or maybe you go see some cousins and they're only 13 or 14 and you see what they're getting their identity around and you think to yourself very superior, in a very superior way, how foolish they are.

You know, how foolish you are to get your identity from a K-pop band or this particular YouTube influencer. But you say that because why you have a better band or a better Instagram or social media influencer and you don't think of the fact that you used to actually have these different phases and you will continue to have them.

That in fact the matter is, is that we don't actually, nobody actually looks inside and gets their identity completely and utterly from themselves. We're getting our identity from influencers and it changes over time in all sorts of different ways and we don't understand that.

[7 : 32] But the fact is, we always have some type of identity. And that identity, in a sense, is by allowing others to speak into our lives and have some type of control or by putting their hope in certain things.

So it's not the case that somehow or another, the person, if you're making this comment about how weird Christians are, that somehow or another, everybody is getting their identity from some other source.

So the issue is, what on earth about this particular, like why would this be the, so part of what is so, in fact, wise about the Christian faith is that Christians acknowledge this.

Like we understand it. Many people are completely blind to it. We understand it. Or at least the Bible understands it. Christians can be just as foolish. I am just as foolish. Sorry, if I slip in and making it sound as if somehow Christians are elite, you all know that's not true. We are definitely not. In fact, the Bible even reminds us that God chooses the weak and the foolish of the world to shame the wise.

[8 : 34] But the Bible understands it. And that's what the Bible is saying. And so it's actually very interesting. Look again at what it says. James, a servant or a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And whether you use the word servant or slave, the reason that, the actual Greek word is the word *doulos*, and there's no real good English translation for it. But if you use the word servant, I don't know, those of you who remember the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air or a whole pile of movies, the servants have snotty English accents, actually run the house and are smarter than the people. On the other hand, if you think of the slavery as it exists, it still exists in parts of the world and has existed in North America, that's sort of too harsh. But the key idea is that you belong to somebody else.

You're actually somebody else's property and they can tell you what to do. In the ancient world, *doulos* could be quite powerful, actually. They could even make money and buy their own freedom. So there's no perfect word in English. But the idea that you belong to somebody else and that they have power and authority over you to tell you what to do, that is definitely in the text.

[9 : 43] But it's interesting. Here we have James introducing himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here's what's so significant about him. James could have introduced himself this way.

He could have been sitting, good suit, good tie, really expensive glass of wine right there, some very expensive nibblies to go along with the expensive glass of wine.

And he could be saying, by the way, did I mention that I'm actually the head of the church in Jerusalem? You know? And by the way, if you're the head of the church in Jerusalem, it really means you're the head of the church in the entire world.

Oh, and by the way, did I happen to mention that Jesus is my brother? I don't mean like brother in a spiritual way. I mean actually, after Jesus had his birth, Mary and Joseph had other children and I'm one of them.

I'm Jesus' half-brother. Did I happen to mention that? Some of you know you think you know Jesus, but I actually, I know what his poop smells like because I grew up with him. He could have said all that stuff, but he didn't.

[10 : 48] In fact, this is actually one of the things which is very, very interesting about this text and why, in a sense, it's one of those cases where the introduction casts a light on the entire rest of the book.

Because if you go back and you read any of the ancient biographies of Jesus and they actually exist, if you read any of the ancient biographies of Jesus that actually exist, what you'll see is that Jesus is, that the children that Mary and Joseph had after Jesus was born, that those children, that they actually thought Jesus was nuts.

They didn't believe him. They thought he was an imposter. They mocked him. And they, James wasn't at the crucifixion. And what, so what another, what completely and utterly changed James' life?

You see, the fact of the matter is, is that James knew Jesus very well. And James understood that Jesus really did die, like he really knew that Jesus died.

And he knew that Jesus really was buried. And he knew the tomb where Jesus was buried. And he knew where that was. And he knew that on the third day the tomb was empty. And he knew from personal experience, like literal personal experience, that Jesus had risen from the dead.

[12 : 06] because James was an eyewitness of Jesus's, of Jesus after he was resurrected. And the resurrection changes everything.

Like, you might not think it does because, you know, it's not the case that somehow or another history, historians have proved that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. and that it, in fact, actually, it's very, very interesting.

You can see time and time and time again, Frank Morrison, I think, was in the 50s. There's another fellow, I can't remember his name right now, J. Warner Wallace, who was a cold, a detective who

specialized in cold cases.

And he went to study to prove that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. The fellow who wrote the book, The Case for Christ, he went to study to prove that, in fact, Jesus had risen from the dead. And everybody who studies the issue ends up becoming a follower of Christ.

Because, in fact, the historical evidence is quite substantial. And if, in fact, it is the case that there was a man who did actually die, and then on the third day he didn't just sort of get resuscitated, but actually defeated death, if that has actually happened in history and it's happened in history in such a way that it's part of a larger story and narrative and that it can include and make a difference for you and your life for not only today but for all eternity, that changes everything.

[13 : 32] And that truth of the true death of Jesus and the true resurrection of Jesus and the true meaning of what it means, that changes everything.

See, the fact of the matter is Jesus knew what James' poop smelled like because they grew up together. And Jesus knew what James thought about him. And Jesus knew all of the terrible things that James would have said about him.

And Jesus knew all of that stuff, but Jesus died for James. And Jesus rose for James. And Jesus came to save James just as he came to save you. He comes so that ordinary people like you and me can put our faith and trust in him.

And it makes a difference for all eternity. And you can't put your faith and trust in Jesus as the one who actually knows the truth about God, the truth about creation, the truth about sin, the truth about eternity, the truth about you and all your particularity.

And he loved you so much that he died for you and rose from the dead. To know him is to belong to him, to become his doulos.

[14 : 45] And so all the rest of the way through the book of James as we read it, you have to, in a sense, keep toggling back to the beginning. There's a couple of other places. I'm going to mention one of them a little bit in a moment to remember, okay, all of this flows out of this real defeat of death, the real defeat of hell, the real defeat of judgment, the real defeat of the shame and the dishonor and everything which is just wrong about death and wrong about my life.

That has been defeated, has been dealt with by Jesus in a way that means that I can be in him and be right with God and the end of my story is going to be completely and utterly different. How on earth should I now live?

That's what the whole book is about. So, the very first thing that we're going to look at then after we have this as a bit of a beginning is some of you might say, well, okay, that's very interesting.

In fact, this is a perennial mistake made by Christians, even Christians today. See, the problem we have as Christians is we forget the gospel, we forget who Jesus is and we forget his word.

It's one of the reasons why a church like ours, we preach through books of the Bible so that, you know, we don't just pick and choose little verses. We look at the things which are going to be very hard, very challenging, very frightening, and the things which will elicit huge hope.

[16 : 00] We try to look at it all. And so, people might say, okay, wow, if you actually now belong to somebody who's defeated death and defeated hell, defeated whatever whole demonic or hostile spiritual powers have on you, they've all been defeated.

You now belong, you put your faith and trust in Jesus. He doesn't count how good you are. He accepts you and he's the one who makes you right with God. He now becomes, in a sense, your owner. Like, surely that means that life will be easy.

And many, many people make that connection. Life will be easy. Well, in fact, let's look and see the next three verses, verses two to four. It goes like this.

I have to watch my time running around out of time. Count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds. Okay, now, but here's, it gets actually a bit odder.

It goes against this idea that if you know Jesus, life will get easier. Look, when you meet trials of various kinds, verse three, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

[17 : 13] And the word perfect there is a telos word. It's an end word. In other words, it has this idea that there's this proper end for you. This, in a sense, if you have, you know, everybody, many, many people have this sense that we despair when we lose it, right?

But when we don't lose it, we have this sense that there's like a type of a destiny, an end, a summing up, a completeness, a direction, that life isn't just one dang thing after another and then

you die.

You know, and maybe if it's during COVID-19, you die all alone with people who don't even know you. And this perfect is, in other words, you come to that for which you were made.

And the implication of the text is that there's always going to be things that are trials. And the trials can be both surprising things that come out of the Christian worldview.

They can be things that happen like obvious trials like ill health, bad finances, loneliness, job setbacks, relational setbacks, many other problems that come with aging if you live long enough.

[18 : 25] But it's also other different types of trials, things that reveal who you are, things that reveal how you've treated people, things that reveal your character. character. It's a very, very general and all-encompassing word.

And the Bible here says that this is something which is going to be with you all of your life. In fact, I felt like saying at the beginning and I decided I'd talk about money, the book of James is only 108 verses, but there's 59 commands in the 108 verses.

So here's the good news. At the end of the book of James, you have 59 new things on your to-do list. Nobody likes hearing that. We like having small to-do lists.

But it's not going to be, these to-dos aren't things that are going to crush us. They're things to meditate upon to help us to make, to reach that end that fits with the uniqueness that we are, that have been woven into us in our creation and that have been redeemed into us through Christ.

But here's the thing. In self-help books, generally what happens in self-help books is they'll obviously talk about difficulties and obstacles. But the inherent message often in self-help books is that as you master the self-help books, these things will happen less and less.

[19 : 44] You know, because you just become smoother at seeing ahead, you get better at forming your own future, you know, you have your own preferred future that you move towards, you get better at handling comments, at handling feedback, you just get better and better and better at all of these things if you follow the self-help book.

And even though you're going to have to face things and there'll be maybe a lot of stuff at first and it's going to reveal things about you that have to be dealt with, but the idea is that once you master the things in the self-help book that life gets better, it gets easier, in a sense there's fewer obstacles.

And in this sense, the book of James is saying, that's the complete opposite of what, in fact, the Christian life is. And the fact of the matter is it's actually the opposite of what life is really like. See, the reason we keep going back to self-help books is because, in fact, they don't tell us the truth. There constantly ends up being things. And part of the thing about self-help books is they end up making, many of us, at first they're very exciting and at first they might work, but then crap happens to us.

And we feel even more depressed afterwards. So the Bible actually has, here's the thing which is so wonderful about the gospel, is when you understand that Jesus has died for you, he loves you so much that he died for you, that he knows everything there is to know about you and still he died for you.

[21 : 06] And he not only, in his death, deals with everything that's wrong with you, but at the same time, he doesn't present you in terms of the one or two little good things that are in your life or the 15 good things that are in your life.

He actually says, I'm going to give you, in a sense, all of my destiny I give to you. Not only do I take your doom, I give you my destiny and you're presented for all eternity, in a sense, covered with his perfect life.

But the thing, here's the thing which is so wonderful about the Bible, it is both, gives you, it gives you, at the same time, a realistic assessment of each day and a realistic hope for the end of the story of your life.

And that's what, that's what James is talking about. On one hand, here's the realistic thing about your life. You're always going to be dealing with selfishness, you're always going to be dealing, you know, those of you who are married, if you think there's going to be a time where you actually never say something cutting or hurting to your spouse, ha, ha, ha, you believe that myth.

It ain't going to happen. Where you're never going to have to struggle with selfishness, there's never going to be issues around money, there's never going to be issues, yeah, forget about it. If you read some book that tells you you can do that, throw it away.

[22 : 20] It's only going to make you depressed, okay? By the way, as well, you want to increase your wisdom quotient, stop looking at Facebook and Instagram. Maybe make it that you spend one

minute a day or five minutes a day, because all it does is show you everybody else's perfect life and depresses you, right?

So, so the Bible here is very, very, very realistic. realistic. Your life is going to be filled with trials. That's realistic. But here's the thing, in Jesus, in Jesus, it gives you a realistic hope that the end, for the end of the story of your life, which is that you come to your telos.

In fact, if you were to skip down to verse 12, which we'll just read briefly at the end, it says that the end of life, you have this crown of life, which is bestowed upon you by Jesus. It's already waiting for you.

That's the end of your life. And it gives you a profound energy to persevere through these trials and to create the type of personality which is steadfast, which can handle the setbacks that begins to have, the steadfastness means you have the maturity to apologize when you do make those cutting comments or you apologize because you should have done something and you didn't and to deal with the health issues and the financial issues and the relational issues that God is building into you as you walk with his son, this steadfastness to be able to walk and endure with it.

Now here there's going to be a little bit of a problem and I'm going to probably have to say this every week in the book of James. And one of the things, if you go and you look, basically there's very little structure to the book of James.

[23 : 58] Those of you who are familiar with the Bible are familiar with books like the book of Proverbs. And in the book of Proverbs there's lots of different individual proverbs. Sometimes they're grouped, sometimes they're not. In fact, if you wanted to look at all the Proverbs in money, you'd have to look, you know, here in chapter 3 and chapter 7 and chapter 10 and chapter 15 and chapter 20 and chapter 31 or whatever to try to see it because it just sort of goes in and out of all these different ideas and the same thing here with the book of James.

In many ways, the book of James is closer to the book of Proverbs where the book is a series of wisdom commands and wisdom insights that every one of them is something or a little group of them is something for you to meditate upon, to memorize and to pray into.

And so now the Bible seems to take a bit of a, James seems to take a little bit of a jump because it's now going to talk about something which actually touches on one of the fears that many non-Christians have about the Christian faith which is that the Christian faith encourages intellectual suicide, blind faith, and a refusal to deal with doubts.

Like, let's look and see what it says in verses 5 to 8. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask or her, ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach.

Need to make, and it will be given him, just, or her. You have to hear that, right? That if you lack wisdom, if you ask God, he will start to give you wisdom without reproach.

[25 : 28] He won't say, without reproach means it's like, I don't know, you know, somebody wants to borrow some money from you. You say, what do you mean you want to borrow money from you? You haven't paid back the last money. Like, all you do is waste the money. You know, your kid comes and says, you know, can you lend me 20 bucks, dad, or mom?

And you say, fine, you just wasted the last 20 bucks I gave. You're like, where is it going? You're just wasting it on Uber Eats or, I don't know, something like that. God gives you without reproach. He doesn't even tell you, yeah, I've been waiting for it because you've been an unbelievable fool for a long time, so I'm glad you're fine. No, without reproach. I read it to you again. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him or her ask God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given to them.

But let the person ask in faith with no doubting for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he or she will receive anything from the Lord.

They are a double-minded man, unstable in all their ways. And you can see how this, on a superficial reading, makes it sound as if, once again, Christians are very, very anti-intellectual because, in fact, most of us would say that doubt is good.

[26 : 42] In fact, for most people, a sign of wisdom is doubting. And the Bible's actually not going to disagree completely with that. One of the things, if those of you have heard me preach before, say, if you go back and look at the Gospels, the ancient biographies of Jesus, you'll see that Jesus actually never dismissed a good question.

He welcomed good questions. And if you go back and you read part of what we call the Old Testament or our Jewish friends call the Tanakh, books like Habakkuk are all organized around really good questions.

We just went through the book of Lamentations, which has people asking God really good questions. So it's not a matter that there should be no questions. So what's going on here in this particular text?

And what it is, is this. First of all, the word faith here, we have to begin with that. Faith isn't a power that you have. It's not like the little train that could.

That, you know, you've got to make it, got to make it, got to make it. I can do it. I can do it. I can do it. I have faith. I have faith. Faith is not a description about your own particular power.

[27 : 53] Okay? It's not as if the world is divided between, you know, those of us who have really strong abilities to have this faith power and be persistent in it, and those who are weak, although obviously some of us differ in those types of things.

The second thing is that it's not about, once again, it's connected to not being a power, but in the Bible, the word faith is always relational. It's inherently a relational word.

It's more to do with the idea of who you trust, who you hope in, who you see as being significant in terms of providing meaning, and, you know, there's a bit of a group of words around it, but it's always connected to a personal reality.

And the third thing is that the word power, you see, we tend to think of power, North Americans tend to think of faith as something in a sense which is a type of power, that if you just have the faith, you can overcome the obstacles.

If you have the faith, you can climb that hill. If you have the faith, you can make it to the top of Mount Everest. You can get that job. You can get that guy. You can get that girl. You've got to have faith, and it's as if it's your power.

[29 : 08] But in the Bible, the more important issue than the strength of your faith is the object of your faith. So here's the thing. I've known several people, still know several people who are terrified of flying.

I mean terrified of flying. One of the people that I know who's terrified of flying, basically he had to get a little buzz on before he got into the plane, and then he had to magnify his buzz once he was on the plane, otherwise he couldn't fly.

Others just basically just white-knuckle it if there's some reason that they just cannot avoid flying. But they have no faith in flying. But what matters isn't their faith but the plane.

I mean, if you think about it, if you met somebody who said, I can fly, I can fly. My faith is through the roof. I read this self-help guru. I've done the yoga. I've got the guru, the book.

I'm pumped, and they run off the edge of the Grand Canyon. It doesn't matter how strong their faith is. Their faith is completely and utterly foolish, foolish, foolish, foolish.

[30 : 12] They plunge to their death. You see that? So the person who has huge faith but it's a stupid object, foolish object, they plunge to their death. The person with virtually no faith but it's the right object that the plane, in fact, is good, they fly.

They make it to the other end of it. And so if you understand that, you start to understand what's going on in the text. That what the Bible is actually saying here, it's warning us about something which is very, very true in life all the time but it's also just as true when it comes to our relationship with Christ.

How do you think it would work if you love two women at the same time? Do you think that will help you to grow in love for one of them? How would it work if you decided that you were going to both be a fully committed agent of China and a fully committed agent of Canada at the same time?

How is that going to work? How is it going to work if you say you're going to devote your entire time everything you do in your time to being the best rock climber you can possibly be but at the other time you also think that your basic goal in life is to make a million dollars through some type of scientific innovation.

Well, you know, some of those things you might be able to manage it a little bit and dial some up and dial some down but the fact of the matter is is if you have two different faiths, two different hopes, two different trusts and they go in opposite directions, I mean, right?

[31 : 34] That's what the text is saying here. That's the significance of this idea of being a double-minded man unstable in all your ways. And so, and so the point is, you see, that if in fact, here's the Christian claim, you go back to what James said at the beginning of his book, there is a

person who actually left the splendor and the glory and the majesty of heaven took into himself our human nature was so willing to become weak for you that he became a fertilized egg in the womb of the Virgin Mary and lived a normal human life, suffered the trials and temptations that you and I do only without sin, actually died on the cross not for anything he did but for you and for me, that in a sense, his death is all of the things, all of the stuff that justice demands of you was laid on him and he does all of that, he takes all there is to it, he rises from the dead, he does it all and completely and utterly out of love for you in the hope that you would put your trust in him, that he could be your Lord and Savior, he could be your Lord and Christ.

Who better is there to put your trust in for facing life than him? But you know what, we know, we understand, well, you know, I can put my, but I know, oh, there's money, oh, there's sex, oh, there's power, oh, there's prestige, oh, there's the house, oh, there's this, oh, there's that, there's my body, there's my leisure time, there's all these things and so Jesus knows that we waffle.

See, part of the purpose of these texts is that on one hand it's a profound call for us to meditate about the fact that we can be going, trying to go in different ends at the, going in different directions at the same time.

Try going forward and backwards at the same time. You know, imagine somebody could fool with your car that they could put it in park, you could put it in drive and reverse at the same time and then you stepped on the gas, how's that going to work?

It's not going to move you either forward or backward. You're going to be unstable, right? And in a sense the human being is able to have in a sense their body, their foot on the gas and they can press the gas harder and harder and harder while the car's trying to go both forward, backwards and sideways all at the same time and it just makes it unstable.

[33 : 49] And so part of the point of the book is if you just flip through, it's not going to be on the screen, you just have to trust me, James 4, 6, it's a verse that you need to remember. In a sense if you remember James 1, 1 and the light it shines and James 4, 6 shines light it helps you to understand what's going on and James 4, 6 tells you this, but he gives more grace, therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

See, part of these texts is to humble us. To humble us to say, Lord, I really need wisdom. I don't know how to handle this thing which has just come to me. I need wisdom.

And Lord, I need to have a purity of will, a purity of heart, a purity of direction. I am just so torn. I renounce those things.

Please help me to not be double-minded or triple-minded or quadruple-minded but to be single-minded and following you and allow you to put those other things in my life because he cares about it.

That's why the book of James is going to talk about money. It's going to talk about power. It's going to talk about prejudice. It's going to talk about privilege. It's going to talk about how you use your tongue. It's going to talk about sickness. It's going to talk about how you spend time with others.

[34 : 59] It's talking about the real world. And you look at it and you say, Lord, I really need your wisdom. I really need you to put these things in their proper order and hierarchy that I might live well for your glory.

So that text is there in a sense that when we come to James 4, 6, we say, that's me, Lord, standing in need of prayer. Help me to get off my high horse. Help me to get off my pride.

Help me to acknowledge. Help me to be like a little child and just say, I need help. I need help, Lord. I need help. Well, I just have a few minutes to talk about the money bit, which I mentioned at the beginning because now the text goes in this other completely different way.

And the text is going to sound a little bit odd, but let's read it. It's verses 9 to 11. Let the lowly brother or sister boast in their exaltation.

Lowly here means poor, no power, lower working class, very, very, not even lower working class, like low. And let the rich brother or sister in their humiliate, sorry, so let the low, verse 9 again, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his or her humiliation.

[36 : 18] Because like a flower of the grass, they will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass, its flower falls and its beauty perishes, so also will the rich man or woman fade away in the midst of their pursuits.

So it's obviously talking about money and it sort of sounds very, very odd. It says, to the poor person, listen, what you need to remember, actually if we just jump up to verse 12 and then we'll go

back to verses 9 to 11.

Verse 12 said, blessed is the man or the woman who remains steadfast under trial, for when he or she has stood the test, they will receive the crown of life which God has promised for those who love him.

So on one hand, remember the Bible is giving us a realistic assessment of the life that we live right now, but it does it in the context of a realistic hope for what the end of this story of your life will be. And so if you're watching this, and the fact of the matter is you don't even have, I guess they still make nickels, you don't have two nickels to rub together, you're not even living paycheck to paycheck, you're sort of hoping that by the end of the year you'll end up being sort of around the place you were a year before, you're just, you're low income, and the Bible actually never says that that's a sin or anything like that, that that's a sign that there's something wrong with you, but we're going to be talking at other places about how you might deal with some of this stuff, but it says, you know, the thing for you to remember is the end of your story.

[37 : 56] You know, your mom and your dad might look down on you, your neighbors might look down on you, the rich might look down at you, no political party really cares about you, even the so-called left-wing parties in Canada have fundamentally given up on the poor, they're all consumed with identity politics, which is a middle class, upper middle class, and an upper class pursuit, and so, but Jesus hasn't forgotten about you, and this is the end of your story.

You think, think about that, how much he loves you, how much he loved you, and one day, you know, the funny thing is, this text is completely correct, because one second after death, poor person, you and Bill Gates have exactly the same amount of resources under your control, but if Bill Gates or any rich person, any tech magnate has died with their back in rebellion against Jesus, they've lost everything with more to lose.

You, crown of life. Jesus saying, I am so glad, Bob, I am so glad, Sue, that you are here. I died for you, I loved you, I've walked with you all these years, and now you can see me face to face.

That's the end of your story. And the message to the rich is a very interesting thing. If you look at it again, and the rich, let the lowly brother, verse 9, boast in his or her exaltate, that they're exalted, and the rich in his humiliation.

Because like a flower of the grass, he or she will pass away, for the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass, its flower falls and its beauty perishes, so also will the rich man or woman fade away in the midst of their pursuits.

[39 : 56] So what are they to boast in? Remember, this is talking about those who are in Jesus. It's, in a sense, helping us to try to have a proper eternal perspective on riches.

Now, it's very, very interesting. The Bible never says that money or riches are wrong. It never says that money or riches are evil. It's not like Marxism, it's not like cultural Marxism, which delights in creating the other.

It's very interesting. Cultural Marxism, which drives so much in our society, it always talks about inclusion, but it actually is the opposite of inclusion. It's entirely based on a narrative of inclusion and exclusion, that the other, the rich, the white, the whatever, that they're the bad ones, the evil ones, you can do anything to them, and they deserve it because it's terrible.

And the Bible never says there's something inherently wrong with riches. It never says there's something inherently wrong with wealth. Christians in the years, like one of the, some of my French-Canadian friends remember, or remember the stories within French culture about how the priests and the Catholic, you know, whether it's true or not, that they wanted to keep the Catholics ignorant and poor, talking about poverty if it's some type of a virtue.

The Bible never says that. In fact, even here, it's not saying, it's not saying to you if you're, you know, a 20-year-old, a 30-year-old, a 40-year-old trying to change your financial fortunes, trying to make more money, try to provide for your family.

[41 : 25] The Bible's not saying anything against that. It really isn't. It's very realistic. In fact, you can look at other texts that's going to talk about the significance and the importance of being able to provide and care.

The message of the Bible, it goes beyond this text, I'm just sort of giving you a big summary, is earn as much as you can and give as much as you can because, you see, the problem is that money does, that the big problem is money is one of the main things that rules you.

You think you rule it, but it rules you. You think it serves you, but you serve it. How do you know? Do you remember, you know what, in 2019, the inflation rate in Venezuela was 300,000%.

You had lots of money? None. impoverished you. 2008, housing prices fell by one-third, as did the stock market.

You folks here who own a home and you're maybe counting the dollars, \$750,000 house, that something like 2008 happens again, boom, boom, ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching, in a bad way, \$500,000.

[42 : 26] And maybe even less than that because if you actually tried to sell it, who knows if you could even get \$500,000 for it. And if you bought that house for \$650,000 and you're counting on the \$100,000 you just made in the housing market crash, you now own the bank, you now owe the bank \$150,000.

You've gotten poorer, not richer. And if I talk about that, does that make you anxious? Does that make you upset? We have a problem with money, friend. We put our hope and our trust and our faith in money.

We get our identity from money. You know, one of the things, it's so funny, movie stars who are rich, they'll give us all this advice on politics, on this and that.

They all think they're wise. You know? What is it about having money that makes you think you're wise? That you're wiser than poor people.

That you're better than poor people. I mean, that's just life, folks. And what is this text saying which is so wise? What you need to remember George?

[43 : 34] Let's say you become very, very wealthy. You're going to lose it all. That's what you need to boast in. That, you know, to sit lightly with it.

And by the way, just sort of in closing, one of the ways that you learn to sit lightly with it, you can't learn how to sit lightly with it by speaking in tongues, by having a vision. The only way it can become lighter to you is by giving money away.

If you wait to have enough money to be generous, you will never be generous. They've done surveys after surveys where people say, if I only had \$10,000 more, my life would be more comfortable.

That doesn't matter if you're making \$40,000 or \$120,000. It's always just beyond the horizon.

Which is why the biblical teaching of, you know what, you have this secure hope in Christ, the end of your story is known in Christ, He loves you so much He died for you.

Money is all, it's all going to be gone. It's really good. It's really important. Eating is good. Having a roof over your head is good. Clothes, good things. Make money. You have lots of kids or you just have lots of dependents or whatever, make money.

[44 : 43] But the way you need to be more light-handed with it or having this other, it's by giving. I remember when my wife and I started to try to move towards financial tithing, it was really hard. You know, increasing \$5 and then \$10 and then \$20 and then a bigger jump.

But it's the only way to begin to get free of money. Am I completely free of money? Absolutely not. Do I get anxious about it? Sure I do. What do I need more if I need more of a hope in Jesus?

And I need to remember that it's always worthwhile to give money away for the sake of the gospel and for the help of the poor. Just close with verse 12 and then we'll pray. Here's what it says.

Blessed is the man or the woman who remains steadfast under trial for when he or she has stood the test, they will receive the crown of life which God has promised for those who love him. Friends, there is no one here watching this who is so bad that Jesus does not love them and died for them, that he does not want to be your savior.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the practical gospel wisdom in the book of James. Father, you know some of us we really need, we need help because we have these double minds and issues in life or relationships or direction.

[45 : 52] Father, many of us, we think we're way wiser than we are. People around us think we're foolish but we think we're wise. Father, we can't even see that. Father, we really need your wisdom for life and most of all, Father, we need to be gripped by the gospel.

Help us to understand that our identity is secure in Jesus, that when he is our savior and lord and we are his doulos, his servant, his slave, that our identity is secure, the end of our story is secure and that we can walk with him as we manage the real issues of life from day to day to day to day with a realistic solid hope about what the end of the story of our life will be.

Father, grant us wisdom, grant us humility, grant us generosity all for your glory and we pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.