

We made it! We have finally gotten to the last two verses of the first chapter of James. If slow and steady wins the race, then we are on track to successfully study God's Word this year. What a gift it is dwell in scripture. To help our students with this, we will print the first eight devotions and hand them out in a packet next week. By the end of the year, they will have a complete devotional study of the book of James.

This week, as we read our verses, we realize that James is giving us a glimpse of the outline of the remainder of his letter. There are three key points that we will study as we move forward. See if you can find them! Read James 1:26-27

If you found speech or thought about the way that we talk to others, then you have found one of the key points. Just as James talked about careful listening and discouraged us from becoming angry, he is definitely going to talk a lot about how we talk!

A second point that he mentions is caring for widows and orphans. Why does he mention caring for these specific groups? Read Psalm 68:5

James mentions widows and orphans for two reasons. First, God cares deeply for them – He is the father to the fatherless and the defender of widows. Second, he needs us to realize that we should be willing to serve those who cannot give anything back in return. Jesus did the same thing for us! Before he gave his life for us, he promised not to leave us as orphans, and reminded us how we show our love for him. Read John 14:18-24

This brings us to James' third point: being unstained by the world. The only way that we can do that is to love God and keep His commandments. We need to put God first in everything that we do...our relationships, our decisions, and our foundational beliefs. To some that might seem legalistic, but John assures us that there is freedom in believing in Jesus, turning from our sin, and wholeheartedly following Him. Read 1 John 5:1-5

John tells us that we cannot only be unstained by the world, but overcome the world, simply loving God, believing in Jesus and following His commands. As we do this, we will find peace! Our world is riddled with problems but following God will not create problems. It will help us solve them! That doesn't mean that we won't face trials by standing up for God, but we will have the Holy Spirit's protection and peace as we do so.

There are tests and challenges to come, but we do not face them alone. As we follow God's plan for our lives, we will find the freedom and peace that only comes through placing our hope and faith in Jesus Christ. May we seek the Holy Spirit's guidance back to God's Word, dwell in God's steadfast love each day, and may His peace drown out the anxiety that the world creates.

*Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 5:3-5*