



How to have a

James

Faith that Works



Devotional – Final



I need a faith that works

How to get your foot out of your mouth

Read James 3:1-12

You've said the wrong thing. You're horrified as you realize the words that just came out of your mouth and wonder how you could have possibly let them slip. How many times have we put our feet in our mouths? A dozen? A hundred? The tongue has the power to bless and to curse (James 3:10). If controlling it seems hard, that's because it is.

What we say shows the condition of our hearts. And while it's important to be careful to use words that bring glory to God, it's the unfiltered words — the ones we don't catch before they come out — that are the most telling. Instead of just making a conscious effort to censor our words, we need to examine our hearts to find the root of the problem. Are our first reactions criticism? Judgment? Greed? Insensitivity? Then the Lord wants us to grow in grace, love, generosity, and encouragement. Controlling the tongue starts with a change in our hearts.

When we fully understand the way God loves us, our hearts begin to look more and more like Him. We'll still put our feet in our mouths now and then, but we'll see it as a prompt to let the Lord work. When our hearts look like His, our words point to Him.

Reflection: When was the last time you put your foot in your mouth? What can you learn about the condition of your heart from that instance?

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a silver adjustable wrench. The hand is positioned at the top left of the page, with the wrench extending horizontally towards the right. The background is a light, neutral color.

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Controlling the untameable tongue

READ: James 3:5

“Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.”

Your screen lights up in the middle of the night. You pick up your phone to see comments, likes, and shares popping up on your notification panel. It feels good, right? Comments are a major confidence booster. While this isn't bad, it goes to show the power of people's words. A positive comment can make your head spin, and a negative comment can make your heart sink. Words have weight. James echoed this thought by saying that the tongue is one of the most powerful parts of your body. Yes, it's small, but it's also significant. James uses the analogy that the tongue is like a small spark that can set fire to a forest. Sparks can be both helpful or hurtful. In one context, they can light a campfire to give you warmth and s'mores. On the other hand, a little spark can lead to a rapidly spreading wildfire. Knowing this, how do we ensure the words we share are positive sparks? We must let God guide our words. You are one person with one perspective. God is all-knowing and wise. We must look to God and make Him our focus. If the Spirit of God guides your words, then your conversations will be more constructive. The best way to nurture this way of speaking is through prayer and diligent study of the Bible. You can't get to know someone if you don't spend time with them. Let spending time with God be your focus. Start small by committing to a devotional every day or a few minutes of prayer time before you go to bed at night. By committing to these small steps over time, you will see a change in your conversations with others. Your positive sparks will fly and become contagious! Your life radically changes when you filter your words through God's Word.

Reflection: What are some practical ways you can use your words constructively this week? Who can you encourage? Write down their name, then reach out to them.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver adjustable wrench. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the fingers wrapped around the handle. The wrench is held horizontally, with its head pointing to the right. The background is a plain, light color.

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What would Jesus post?

Read James 3:13-18

Even in Christian circles, we think of wise people as the ones who can tweet out something profound in 140 characters or less. However, wisdom isn't measured in our status updates. Wisdom is formed when we do the hard work of reading the Bible and applying it to our lives.

Wisdom comes from reading the Bible and applying it to our lives.

God made everything and knows everything, and He's given us the Bible as a guide for our lives. The Bible says wisdom is shown by living a good life, not an extravagant life. Wisdom isn't simply something that we know in our brains; it is shown by the way we live.

Often, the examples around us are not full of true wisdom, but full of things that cause envy and selfish ambition in our hearts (James 3:14). Social media and reality TV are not real life but a carefully-produced highlight reel. Real wisdom starts with humility (James 3:13). If we want to be wise, we first have to humble ourselves and submit to the Bible's teaching. God promises a peaceful harvest when we seek His goodness and guidance (James 3:18). God promises to do His part, but we are required to participate.

God's wisdom is pure and considerate of others, even submissive. It loves peace, is full of mercy and bears good fruit. It is also described as impartial and sincere (James 3:17). God wants the best for us and has given us the Bible as a way to know what His best is.

Reflection: When you need wisdom, where do you go? Why? What's one way you've seen God's wisdom proved true in your life? What is one way you can show wisdom in the decisions you make and actions you take today?



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When following Jesus seems too hard

Read James 4:1-12

Have you ever felt like it is you against the world? You chose to follow Jesus, and now life just seems too hard. No one seems to understand or agree with your decisions, even when you know they align with God's Word. Some days, even the right choices feel like the wrong choices, causing fear and doubt to set in.

James 4:7-8 promises this: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you."

God calls us to live out His standards, no matter what anyone else says. Every decision we make is an opportunity to step closer to God or a step farther away from Him. When we make the decision to do what's right over what is easy, we draw near to God and our ability to resist temptation increases.

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People who don't know Jesus will tell us to do what feels good, but God tells us that if we'll humble ourselves and follow His lead, He will lift us up (James 4:10). Maybe your decision to go to church is causing family drama right now. But what about in three months or six months as your family sees the difference following Jesus is making in your life? Maybe your decision to get up 10 minutes early and read the Bible is causing you to change the rest of your morning routine. But how much more equipped will you be to face your day when it's covered in prayer?

Taking the easy road might feel good at the time, but if we live by God's standards, He will reward us in a much bigger way than the world could ever even offer.

Reflection: Is there anything in your life that God is asking you to take a stand for? What's one step you can take starting this week to draw near to God?

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Here one minute, gone the next

Read James 4:13-17

It's cold. There's a wind winding through the leafless branches of a tree nearby while you stand on your front porch, alone. And as you wait there, you breathe in, you breathe out, and every breath you exhale leaves a cold and chilly vapor that lingers in front of your face, holding there a moment, then disappearing completely.

That, in a way, is how James described it when he spoke about our lives. Only, in this analogy, we're not the person. We're the vapor.

Our lives in the grand scheme of God's plan and the universe are nothing more than a mist, a vapor, something that is gone so quickly we'd wonder if it was even there at all. So why do we wait when we know God has given us a burden to do something?

James 4:17 says,

"If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them."

By waiting, we are sinning. It seems absolute, but it's true. God has too much planned out for each one of us for us to wait for the moment we feel is most convenient to undertake his plans. He's good. We can trust Him, and when we do, we'll find that waiting was silly because the plans He had were greater than anything we could have possibly imagined.

Reflection: Is there anything in your life you know God has already given you the go ahead to do? What's one step you can take this week to follow through with what God has in front of you?

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All the grace we ever need

READ: James 4:6-7

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.' Submit yourselves, then, to God."

At our core, we like to control everything. It makes us feel safe. The opposite of control is submission, which is what the Bible calls us to do. Submission can be a very scary word to us. James says at the beginning of chapter four that if our actions are driven by a need to satisfy our own desires, it will lead us down the road of destruction. You can't control everything, but you can grow closer to the One who does. James reiterates this point with a verse that highlights a central theme in the New Testament. "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble." It's the epitome of pride to try to control everything. We are called to counteract our pride with humility. We can do this by knowing the true meaning of humility, which is freedom from pride and confidence in exactly how God made us — both in purpose and personality. Are you having a hard time with humility? James tells us how to be humble. He writes, "Submit yourselves, then, to God." When you submit to God, you are claiming that God is sovereign and that He will always work in your favour. Your act of submission shows God that you are willing to give everything to him. You are willing to give him all your worries, fears, and challenges. How do we submit? It happens when we say, "God, I cannot do this on my own. I need your help." Hand over your thoughts and actions and see what great work he will do in you.

Reflection: What would it look like if you gave your whole day over to God? How would you worry less and rely on him more



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What kind of wealth are you building?

Read James 5:1-12

How many times have we driven past a larger house in our neighbourhood and wished for more? Or envied a celebrity we see on our television screen? Or walked around a car dealership “just browsing” because our car is out of date? Envy takes our eyes off of our provider and convinces us that if we just had more of His provision everything would be OK. James saw this same lie gaining traction in the church thousands of years ago. People were getting rich from doing things their way while the church felt forgotten while doing things Jesus’ way.

James’ answer? “Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near” (James 5:8). When others receive things you feel you deserved, it is hard to be patient and wait on Jesus. The church will face all kinds of suffering and temptation, and James is careful to reiterate this truth: Those who persevere will be blessed (James 5:11).

We’ll experience many blessings over the course of our lives. The Lord loves to provide for His kids, and He loves to see us smile. But nothing we experience on Earth will come close to what it will be like to spend eternity in heaven. That’s why Jesus warned us not to get distracted with building up wealth on earth. Money and stuff will eventually disappear. Instead, Jesus tells us to focus on what lasts — our relationship with Him (Matthew 6:19-21). The Christian life may not seem to be paying off now. But steadfastly pursuing Jesus does something greater in our hearts than a boost to our bank accounts. It gives us security in our relationship with Jesus instead of the ever-changing wealth of the world.

Reflection: Where do you believe your security is? What worries or anxieties are making you wonder whether following Jesus is really worth it? What’s one area of your life where you need to demonstrate the patience James talks about?