

Authentic Christian Living

Message 6 of 6 in the series: "Authentic: Life Lessons from the Book of James"

A. James, an early church leader in Jerusalem, wrote an open letter of instruction on Christian living to believers who had been scattered by religious persecution.

"This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the 'twelve tribes'—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!" James 1:1 (NLT)

B. Since he could no longer teach them in person, James crammed a lot of practical instruction on authentic Christian living into his letter.

1. Authentic Christians don't criticize and judge each other. "**Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters.** If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So, **what right do you have to judge your neighbor?**" James 4:11-12 (NLT)

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with **the measure you use, it will be measured to you.**" Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV)

2. Authentic Christians surrender their families/careers/money/time/dreams to the Lord and ask Him to guide them. "Look here, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.' How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. **What you ought to say is, 'If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.'** **Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans,** and all such boasting is evil." James 4:13-16 (NLT)

"Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and **he will establish your plans.**" Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

"The Lord says, '**I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.** I will advise you and watch over you.'" Psalm 32:8 (NLT)

3. Authentic Christians view sins of omission the same as sins of commission. "Remember, it is sin **to know what you ought to do** and then not do it." James 4:17 (NLT)

"Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry, and **you didn't feed me.** I was thirsty, and **you didn't give me a drink.** I was a stranger, and **you didn't invite me into your home.** I was naked, and **you didn't give me clothing.** I was sick and in prison, and **you didn't visit me.**' Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?' And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life." Matthew 25:41-46 (NLT)

4. Authentic Christians never cheat others to enrich themselves. "Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! **Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.** You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you." James 5:1-6 (NLT)

"Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. **Tell them to use their money to do good.** They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life." 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NLT)

5. Authentic Christians patiently endure until the Lord returns. "Dear brothers and sisters, **be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers** who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in

the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door! For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.”

James 5:7-11 (NLT)

“God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12 (NLT)

6. Authentic Christians speak truthfully and don't need to take oaths. “But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. **Just say a simple yes or no**, so that you will not sin and be condemned.” James 5:12 (NLT)

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. **All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’**; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” Matthew 5:33-37 (NIV)

7. Authentic Christians pray for each other and confess their sins to each other. “Are any of you suffering hardships? **You should pray**. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? **You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you**, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. **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**. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.” James 5:13-18 (NLT)

Note: Unconfessed sin can have great emotional and physical consequences. “When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.” Psalm 32:3-4 (NLT)

Three helpful guidelines for confessing our sins to others: a.) We should confess our sins to the people we have sinned against. b.) We should confess our sins to those who can help us overcome our sins. c.) If we are unsure how to handle a confession of sin to others, we should seek counsel from a trusted Christian friend, pastor, or counselor.

8. Authentic Christians help backsliders return to God. “My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, **you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering** will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.” James 5:19-20 (NLT)

“Dear brothers and sisters, **if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path**. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.”

Galatians 6:1-3 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What godly counsel would you include in a letter to several young believers from our church who just started college and are living away from home for the first time? How would you instruct them to live out their faith authentically? What would you remind them of? What would you warn them about? (James 1:1)
2. Read James 4:11-12 & Matthew 7:1-2. How does it make you feel to hear Jesus say that the amount of judgment we show others will be measured back to us?
3. What's the difference between asking God to bless our plans and surrendering everything to the Lord and asking Him to guide us in making plans? (James 4:13-16, Proverbs 16:3, Psalm 32:8)

4. Discuss the following statements about authentic Christian living:
 - Authentic Christians view sins of omission the same as sins of commission. (James 4:17, Matthew 25:41-46)
 - Authentic Christians never cheat others to enrich themselves. (James 5:1-6, 1 Timothy 6:17-19)
 - Authentic Christians speak truthfully and don't need to take oaths. (James 5:12, Matthew 5:33-37)
 - Authentic Christians pray for each other. (James 5:13-18, Ephesians 6:18)
5. Some guidelines to discuss regarding confessing our sins to each other: (James 5:16, Psalm 32:1-4)
 - We should confess our sins to the people we have sinned against. (Matthew 7:23-24)
 - We should confess our sins to those who can help us overcome our sins. (James 5:19-20, Galatians 6:1-3)
 - If we are unsure how to handle a confession of sin to others, we should seek counsel from a trusted Christian friend, pastor, or counselor. (Proverbs 11:14, 12:15, & 27:9)