

In most popular magazines ~you'll find a horoscope,
Offering some vague predictions, about the future !
Because **Superstition** ~ is replacing ~ **faith** in the living God.

If these people ... could **really** tell us the future ...
Then, it would have to include ~ both the **good** & the **bad** !
But nobody, wants **bad news** ~ do they ?

The truth is ... **we can't** find out the future, by reading the stars.
BUT, we can trust the only One ~ who knows the future !
And **who made the stars** !

Our theme this morning is ~ '**Growing in Faith & Maturity**'
We're Reading ~ **James 1.vs.13-27** (but we'll start with v.12)

A genuine effort at Christian living ~ **always** gets God's help,
But it needs our **conscious effort** ~
To resist evil ...& **apply God's wisdom**, to every situation !

For 17 years ... I worked for **The Foundation for the Blind**.
So... picture a young man ~
Who's just lost his sight ~ in a serious **accident** !

When he's home from hospital ~ & getting used to the idea
That **he'll never see again** !

He must start learning **new skills**, to compensate for his loss.
But this terrible outcome ... doesn't only effect **him** !

It effects **everyone else** in the household, too !

So they **all** need to learn new skills ... for example:

Never leave things on the floor ~ to trip over ~ or anything dangerous, (like a hot roasting dish) in an **unexpected** place !

It takes some time, for the newly blind person, to learn to go out of the house & walk in the garden ~ or go to the shops.

They must overcome any embarrassment ~ & learn to use

A cane to find the kerb, or the wall, or the doorway !

(demonstrate sweeping motion) [~ **footpath sandwich boards...**]

And then ~ they must **re-learn** how to use their computer.

Now it **talks** to you, & tells you **which key** you've pressed.

The newly blind person, needs to **persevere**, in this training,

Noticing ... **Sounds** ~ & **smells** ~ & **touch**, because they all contribute to his understanding, of what's going on.

But ... if he ignores that input ... he'll **hurt** himself !

Getting a **guide dog** ... can be a huge step forward, to getting out of the house ~ & going places.

But if you're young ~ & want to do more **daring things** ...

You can still go running, (for example) with a **sighted guide** !

Your guide holds one end of a short rope, & you hold the other.

But ... Your guide **must think for you** ...

And tell you ~ when you're coming to a **kerb**, or a **lamp post**,

Or anything else ... you could crash into ! ... **BUT** ...

The most daring thing, for a blind person, is **downhill skiing**

Now you have ... **no** cane ... **no** rope ... & **no** dog !

Your only connection ~ to your sighted guide ... is **sound** !

You must ski, close behind your guide,

Listening for the 'hiss' of their skis, & for their voice ...
saying ... **turning left, left, left ... now straighten up'**

You must trust your guide ... & obey their instructions.

With, or without our sight ... it's important for **all** of us,

To only **trust** ... those who are **trustworthy** !

The spiritual application ~ is not hard to see !

Christian wisdom ... and Christian common sense,
must be applied to every facet ... of our lives.

Our God ~ is the trustworthy guide, who knows the way !

So when we sing the Hymn ... '**Trust & Obey**'

We're not singing about ... **harsh rules** ... or '**control**'

We're singing about, our **commitment** to follow our guide,

Who will lead us wisely ... And wants to **bless us** with ...
the ability to make wise decisions ~ ourselves.

One day ~ in the summer holidays ~ 3 teenagers,

took their 2 cousins out ... for a day at the beach.

After lunch ~ they decide to walk along the sand ...

And then, up some steps ~ to a path ~ along the cliff top.

Harry ~ the youngest, always wanting ...
To **prove** himself, and **impress** the others ...
Suddenly ~ climbs over the **safety fence** ...
And stands ~ right by the edge ~ of the cliff !

His older sister **screams** at him ...to 'come back'
Harry puts on a **mock tantrum** ~ and says '**he won't**' !
While the others ... fall about ~ laughing at them.
The 3rd time Harry stamps his foot, the ground gives way
Leaving Harry ... frantically grabbing the air !
Harry thought ... if the cliff began to crumble ...
He could jump back ~ to safety...
But ... there was ... no warning !

Fortunately ...this is **not** a true story !
But ... it's true in principle ... of many young people,
Who want to see ... how near the edge, they can go !

And ...it's **not only** ~ immature youth,
Who stand at the edge of **a moral danger** ...& say:
"I'm alright ... I know what I'm doing !"

You cannot ~ you must not ~ ignore the danger,
And dance on the edge ~ of a **Moral** issue ...
nor of the **Occult** ... nor of **New Age Religion**.

Because ...**when the ground gives way beneath your feet** ...
Grabbing at air ~ won't pull you back up !

The world's wisdom, goes horribly wrong ~
when it decides ~ **there can't be any God** ...
and then denies, there are any **absolute rules** of right & wrong !
Saying '**How can you know** ... if its good, or bad for you,
If you haven't **tried it** ?'

This ... is a totally **false** argument !
And it's a **deceptive** argument ... But then, sin is **deceptive** !
So don't be **deceived** or **mised** ... by sin's false arguments.
This subject is **so important**, the NT talks about it ~ **50 times**.

Here's ... **just 3** ... examples:

- Luke 21.v8 Jesus says:

Don't let anyone mislead you.

For many will come in my name,

Claiming to be the Messiah ... & saying:

'The time has come' ! ... But ... Don't believe them.

- In Galatians 6.v7 Paul says:

Don't be misled. Remember, that you can't ignore God,
& get away with it. You will always reap, what you sow.

- In 2nd Timothy 3.vs12-14 **Everyone who wants to live
a Godly life in Christ Jesus ... will suffer persecution.**

But evil people and imposters, will flourish.

They will go on deceiving others,

and they themselves ~ will be deceived.

But you, must remain faithful to the things you've been taught.

In this chapt. James mentions **deception**, 3 times (vs.16, 22, 26)
v.13. leads us into v.16 ~ & says:

Remember, no one, should **ever say**:
'God is tempting me'
God is never tempted to do wrong,
and He never tempts anyone else ~ either.

v16. ...**So don't be misled** dear brothers & sisters.
He's saying...Don't be deceived into thinking:
God is the source of our temptation !
That would be: **to misunderstand God's character.**

v.22. ...says: **It's a message to obey ... not just to listen to.**
If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself

v26. ... **If you claim to be religious,**
but don't control your tongue,
you are just fooling yourself,
and your religion is worthless.

Coming back to: v14-17, read...

James **implores** us, **not to be deceived** by our own evil desires,
& he uses the same Greek word, that the Greek fishermen use,
for the **bait** that **deceives** the fish...into thinking it's found food

v17. Tells us two things ...that God's gifts are perfect,
& that God doesn't change His principles.

v.18: **In His goodness, He chose to make us His own children, by giving us His true word. And we, out of all creation ~ became his choice possession.**

Wow ! He chose ... us !

And gave us **spiritual birth** through the **Word of Truth !**
The very opposite, of Satan choosing to **deceive** us with lies,
And hoping to bring about ~ our **spiritual death !**

For the new Christian ... an important part...
of the '**Conversion process**' is ... '*Cleaning up my act*'
Realising ... that certain language ~
certain behaviour ~ and certain attitudes,
are no longer fitting ...or appropriate ...
Now that **Jesus** ... is **Lord** of my life !

But, James ... **isn't** ONLY writing ... to new converts.

He knows that some of his readers ...
have drifted back into their old ways !
being tempted by the bad habits ...
of the non-Christians around them !

Wanting the very best for us ...

God gives us clear instructions in how to behave ~ vs.19,20

James writes: **My dear brothers and sisters,**

Be quick to listen ~ slow to speak ~ & slow to get angry.
Your anger, can never make things right, in God's sight.

When we ask a child to ... ‘take out the rubbish’ ~
or ~ ‘bring in the washing’ ~ We want **willing cooperation**.

We want them listening ... and getting on with it.
Not ~ getting stroppy ... or answering back ...
‘But I did it ~ last time’

Unfortunately ... If... **We** adults... (act like children)
It’s not a good example **to them** ~ of **our** growing maturity !

v21. Puts the responsibility directly on **us**, saying:
Get rid of all the filth & evil in **your lives,**
and **humbly accept the message**
God has planted in your hearts,
for it is strong enough ~ to save your souls.

It’s so easy ~ just to ‘**go with the flow**’ & follow the crowd !

But, James says... Get rid of the ‘**BAD**’ ...
& humbly accept **the Word of God**.

Next ~ James emphasises ... that we mustn’t ...
‘**Say**’ ... we accept God’s principles ~ & then **do nothing** !

Because ~ **what we say** ... Is of **no consequence** ...
if we don’t **practice it** !

Now, listen for how **often**, James uses ‘**IF**’ in vs.22-25, read...

In the same way ~ that a **mirror** reflects back to us ...
 what we look like **God's Word** ~ can reflect back to us,
 How, **God views** ~ our behaviour !

“When we do what God's Word says ~ it will set us free,
 Because ... God always blesses, obedience.”

v.26.

If you claim to be religious, but don't control your tongue
 You are just fooling yourself, & your religion is worthless.

The repeated **emphasis** ... is on **self control & self discipline !**

We know that ... To be an 'All Black' ...

Or run in the Rotorua marathon,
 requires ... **Training... Practice ... & Self Discipline.**

And so does **our journey** ~ into Christian maturity...

But, we must include our **tongue** ~ because it also has an
 important part to play ... on our **journey to Heaven.**

If our **language** as a **Christian**, is wrong, & we don't fix it up

Then we're **misrepresenting the Lord**,

James says, under these conditions ~ our faith, is worthless.

Because, **no one** will take any notice ... **of what we say.**

Let's look at **just 2 examples** ... about the tongue.

1stly: Profanity. We live in a community, where the people
 at work ~ and on TV ~ constantly use the word 'GOD'
 To express their surprise ~ or annoyance.

It's very easy ~ to 'carelessly' ~ COPY this habit !
But, James says ... "DON'T fall into this trap."
To think it doesn't matter ... is to **deceive** ourselves.

Perhaps you're wondering ... **what's the big deal ?**

In the 10 Commandments ... It says:

Do not misuse the name ~ of the Lord your God.
The Lord will not let you go unpunished,
If you misuse His name. Exodus 20.v7.

However, the **non-Christian** is not guilty in the same way
He's using words ~ that carry no meaning ~ for **him** !
Because he doesn't acknowledge Jesus ... as his LORD.

2ndly: Telling Lies. Is another habit, that's been creeping
into **some** Christian's lives.

We mix with people ~ whose concept of telling the truth,
Is controlled by, **What shall I say ~ to get what I want ?**

When lies suit their needs, they don't hesitate to use them.
Not realising ... their '**Integrity**' is being damaged !

As Christians ...

Our self-discipline, & self-control, can have God's help.
But, we need to **make use of the power**, God is offering.

James describes sin ~ in **four descending steps** :
Desire ... Deception ... Disobedience ... & Death.

v27. (read) Is James saying ~ that Orphans & Widows ...
 are the **only social concerns** we should have ?
 No ... I don't think so !

But ... in the **secular world** ~ of New Testament times,
 To be a Christian widow ~ or an orphan ~ was terrible !

There were no such things as ...
Government Social Services ~ or support from **Charities** !
 So the young emerging Church, had a special responsibility
 To care for their own ... No one else would !

But, James is also using them ~ as examples, and saying ~
 We need to show concern & compassion ..
 For those ... **who ~ genuinely ~ can't help themselves.**

Then ... our compassion will be an **outworking** of ...
 the Christian maturity ... the Lord's been developing in us !

An unusually literal **outworking** ~ of v.27 ~ occurred ...
 When some American soldiers ~ in the Korean War,
 (who were Christians)

Recognised the plight of the children ...
 That were **orphaned** ~ by the War !

When these soldiers, returned home ... They raised the money
To start ... **World Vision** orphanages, in South Korea, in 1950.

You may remember the **Korean Orphan Choir**
coming to NZ ...to sing ~ & raise support.

When God's Word is **understood, & applied, & obeyed,**
It's a powerful and purposeful teacher ! ...because ...
It brings God's blessing ~ to both the 'doer' & the 'receiver'

This morning James has taught us that ...

1. **God** doesn't tempt us ... or deceive us.
2. We should not let **sin** ... deceive us, either.
3. If our **faith** doesn't affect our behaviour, & our language,
Then our faith ~ is not a witness ~ to those around us !

Prayer:

Father we thank you, for your guidance & compassion,
And that **you know** all about the testing & trials
We're going through ...

- You offer us wisdom ~ in our perplexity,
- Power ~ in our weakness,
- Joy ~ in the midst of our sorrow,
- And a confident hope ~ in our Eternal future.

Thank you Lord Jesus ... Amen.