

## Part 1: James 2—Worthless Christianity

### Course Overview

Here's an overview of what I want to accomplish over the next month:

- We'll start by looking at what it means to truly be religious, examining the issue of judging, which is foundational to this whole discussion in James and what he says about the sins of the tongue
- Then we'll look at some of the symptoms of pharisaical judging, favoritism, anger, gossip and slander.
- Time permitting, after that we'll examine some of the ways that our speech reveals our heart and how to cultivate God-honoring, redemptive speech.

### Introducing James

Characteristics of the Letter:

1. Authored by James, the brother of Jesus (Acts 15:13, 21:18, Galatians 1:19)
2. Probably the first New Testament writing (between 44-62 AD)
3. Challenging style
4. Warnings and negative examples
5. Practical

*Summary: we can think of James as a field-guide for the revolution. James tells us what kinds of Christians are useful to God, how radical Christians live authentic and wise lives.*

## I. Test of Authenticity (James 1:26-2:1)

*“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” (James 1:26-2:1)*

Two ingredients to genuine Christianity:

1. Censored tongue (Psalm 39:1, 34:13-14, 141:3)

*“I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence,” (Psalm 39:1).*

*“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).*

*“Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:13-14).*

*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).*

***One of the main evidences of genuine Christianity is a censored tongue.***

2. Affection for the needy (i.e. compassion)

*“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:1-4).*

## II. Picture of Non-Authenticity (James 2:2-26)

**Main point: Religion without works is without worth**

### A. Religion without works (James 2:2-13)

*Judging is dividing people into categories based on what they own, what they have done or what they can do.*

*“The sin of judgmentalism is one of the most subtle of our ‘respectable’ sins because it is often practiced under the guise of being zealous for what is right” (Bridges, p. 141).*

#### 1. Judging is Making Illegitimate Distinctions

*“For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ while you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there,’ or, ‘Sit down at my feet,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:2-4).*

*“For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord Looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).*

#### 2. Judging is Nearsighted

*“Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in this world in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?” (James 2:5-7).*

#### 3. Judging is hypocrisy

*“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eyes,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first*

*take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).*

#### 4. Judging Breaks the Greatest Commandment

*"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgement is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:8-13).*

### **B. Religion without worth (James 2:14-19)**

*"What good is it, my brothers, if some one says he has faith, but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (James 2:14-19)*

1. Superficial faith is not genuine

2. Faith must be validated by its fruit

## Closing

To summarize the message of James 1:26-2:26—*stop talking and start working*.

*“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23)*

*“...work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12)*

Book recommendation:

*Do Hard Things, Alex & Brett Harris*

*Respectable Sins, Jerry Bridges (ch. 17—Judgmentalism)*

## Part 2: Symptoms of Worthlessness

### Review

- Introduction to James
- Test of Authenticity (James 1:26-2:1)
- Picture of Non-Authenticity (2:2-2:26)

### I. Favoritism

#### A. Biblical Definition of Favoritism

Judging: Separating people based on what they have or can do

Favoritism: Relating to people based on our judgments, rather than God's criteria and standards.

#### Romans 2

*"He will render to each on according to his works: For God shows no partiality"*  
Romans 2:6, 11

*"There is not respect of persons with God" KJV (God is no respecter of persons)*

*"Throughout our history, we humans have proven quite adept at finding any presumed needle of superiority—whether race, class, income, education, position, or something else—in our haystack of similarities" Dave Harvey, Am I Called?, p. 9.*

*"Truly, I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34).*

#### James 2

*"My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"*  
James 2:1.

*"Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"*  
James 2:4

*"...and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing"*

1. Flirtation

2. Parenting

Favoritism is not

- Having varying levels of friendships

*“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).*

- Avoiding negative influences, pursuing godly role-models

*“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, ‘Come with us’...my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their path” (Proverbs 1:10,15).*

*“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers” (Psalm 1:1).*

*“Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).*

- Courting

- Honoring those who deserve it

*“Pay...respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” (Romans 13:7).*

*“On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker, are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor” (1 Cor. 12: 22-23).*

- Allowing people to exercise public gifts

- Families serving together

## B. External Manifestations of Favoritism (James 3)

### 1. Centrality of the tongue (3:1-2)

*“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body” (James 3:1-2).*

*“It is not what goes into the mouth, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person” (Matthew 15:11).*

### 2. Powerful influence of the tongue (3:3-5)

*“If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also; though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things” (James 3:3-5)*

### 3. Perversity of the tongue (3:6-12)

*“How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond produce fresh water” James 3:6-12.*

Observation of this passage:

1. Tongue is more dangerous than the speaker realizes
2. Tongue reveals depraved motives and nature of the speaker
3. Tongue is clearest evidence of our need for a Savior
4. Uncensored tongue reveals hypocrisy

## **II. Anger**

### **A. Biblical Definition of Anger**

Anger: the negative response of the affections when a law or standard is violated

- Anger is a universal problem.

*“If I were forced to rank a list of sins from worst to the least destructive, the top two sins would be anger and deceit. Not everyone is an alcoholic; not everyone steals, or swears, or commits adultery. But everyone struggles with anger. It is a universal problem. I have observed it among primitive cannibals in Irian Jaya, among illiterate people in tiny villiages deep in the forest of Zaire, among my playmates when I was a child, in my parents, in church members, in pastors, in highly educated people, in the very rich, in people in government. And yes, in me” Henry Brandt, How To Deal With Anger, JBC, Vol. 16, No. 1.*

- Anger may be righteous or unrighteous

*“First, righteous anger arises from an accurate perception of true evil—that is, as a violation of God’s moral law. It focuses on God and His will, not on me and my will. Second, righteous anger is always self-controlled. It never causes one to lose his temper or retaliate in some vengeful way” (Bridges, Respectable Sins, 122).*

### **B. Illegitimate excuses for anger**

- Someone else’s actions

*“This sentence sums up what almost everyone declares who comes to the consulting room with an anger problem: ‘My anger is a normal and justifiable response to the way I was treated.’ Seldom does one inquire about the possibility of anger being sin in their hearts. That word has almost disappeared from their vocabulary. Instead, people declare that they are unhappy, tense, anxious, worried, disappointed, misunderstood, mistrusted, unloved, or under extreme pressure. The buzz words are stressed out, or burned out” Henry Brandt.*

- Being mistreated
- We don’t get our way

- Someone else is angry

*“Servants, be gracious to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God” (1 Peter 2:18-20).*

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well...You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” Matthew 5:38-40, 43-44.*

### **C. Sinful Expressions of Anger**

1. Volatility
2. Withdrawal
3. Self-Pity
4. Gossip & Slander
5. Complaining

### **D. Strategies for killing anger**

Romans 12:17-21

1. Identify the standard or craving
2. Take ownership and responsibility for the problem
3. Release the standard
4. Forgive unconditionally

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- Being mistreated

*“Most people will argue that they have the right to be angry”...*

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well... You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” Matthew 5:38-40, 43-44.*

- We don’t get our way (what causes fights among you?)

*“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder” (James 4:1).*

- Someone else is angry

*“Servants, be gracious to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God” (1 Peter 2:18-20).*

## **C. Sinful Expressions of Anger**

### 1. Volatility

- Physical violence
- Cursing and berating
- Arguing and bickering

2. Withdrawal
  
3. Self-Pity
  
4. Gossip & Slander
  
5. Complaining

**D. Strategies for killing anger**

Romans 12:17-21

1. Identify the standard or craving
  
2. Take ownership and responsibility for the problem
  
3. Release the standard
  
4. Forgive unconditionally

### **III. Gossip**

*“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” Ephesians 4:29-32.*

#### **A. Biblical Definition of Gossip**

Gossip: an outward and vengeful response when our law or standard is violated

Biblical pictures and descriptions of gossip:

#### **“Unnecessary babble”**

*“Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not” (1 Timothy 5:13)*

#### **“Deceptive Speech”**

*“All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me” (Psalm 41:7).*

*“A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends” (Proverbs 16:28).*

*“The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body” (Proverbs 26:22-23).*

## **“Careless speech”**

*“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give an account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).*

## **“Inciting speech”**

*“For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarrelling ceases” (Proverbs 26:20).*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

## **B. Steps to Enslavement to Gossip**

1. Misplaced sense of responsibility
  
2. False promise of healing and resolution
  
3. Spiritual ruin
  - i) Individual ruin
  
  - ii) Community ruin

### **C. Rationalizing Gossip**

1. "I don't have an axe to grind, I'm just being objective"
2. "I don't want other people to be hurt or deceived by this person like I was"
3. "How else will other people know the truth?"
4. "Everybody knows, so what's the big deal in talking about it?"

### **D. Dealing with Gossip**

#### Questions to ask when deciding whether or not to share a bad report

1. Am I sharing this out of a desire to experience a restoration of fellowship with this person, or am I happy not to be in fellowship with them?
2. Have I already forgiven this person without guarantee of their change, or am I calling them to repentance first?
3. Does my affection for this person grow as I'm sharing this report?
4. Is my primary goal to win my brother back, or to feel heard, understood and healed by the person I'm now sharing with?

#### How to respond when you hear a bad report

#### How to respond when you are the object of gossip

1 Peter 4:12-19

1. Do not be surprised (12, John 15)
2. Rejoice and be encouraged (13-14)
3. Keep doing what you were doing (15-16)
4. Pray with compassion for them (17-19, Romans 12:14)