

BELIEVE IT.

James: A Bible Study

PURE RELIGION

(Unless otherwise noted, all scripture is from the ESV.)

The central theme of James is being perfect.

1 THE LAW

TORAH originally meant "teaching, guidance, instruction."

God designed it to guide his people back to wholeness...
perfection... shalom... peace.

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

God wants his people to experience wholeness, well-being, completeness.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:27

God intended the law to instruct us -- to guide us toward perfection --
to show us the necessity of aligning what we BELIEVE and how we LIVE.

JESUS AND WORTHLESS RELIGION/HYPOCRISY

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. Matthew 6:1

HYPOCRISY IN: GIVING PRAYING FASTING JUDGING

2 THE LAW LIVED

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.

James 1:26-27

CONTROLLING OUR TONGUE

be slow to speak ♦ don't use pious/empty words
don't hunger for the limelight of being a teacher ♦ don't curse people
don't speak evil or judge your brother ♦ don't boast about your plans
don't grumble against one another ♦ don't deceive each other

COMPASSIONATELY SERVING OTHERS

...to visit orphans and widows in their affliction... James 1:27b

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. James 2:15-17

You have laid up treasure in the last days.
Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields,
which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you...

James 5:3b-4b

KEEPING OURSELVES MORALLY PURE

...to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27b NIV

3 THE LAW PERFECTED

A NEW HEART

Some people think they're religious, but have deceived their hearts.

James speaks of the heart five times.

The word **HEART** occurs 730 times in the OT and 112 times in the NT.

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery,
sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. Matthew 15:19

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick;
who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a
new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jeremiah 31:31, 33

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh
and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands,
you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Lord, I need a new heart.

My heart is impure and deceived.

I'm too often a religious hypocrite.

I too often look on injustice and suffering and don't do anything.

I'm stained and polluted by the world.

Replace my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh.

I will draw near to You. Please now, draw near to me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. For I want to see You.

NEXT STEPS

July 21/22, 2012