

## James Part 1

Big / Small

James 1:1

Memory Verses: Psalm 16:11

### MANUSCRIPT

**Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)** For the next several weeks we will be going through the book of James as a faith family. So let's kick it off this morning in **James 1:1** and let's read that together.

James a servant of God has been impressed upon by the Holy Spirit to share with the church a letter which really speaks to a myriad of issues and themes but at the center of it is this... God is big and we are small and yet God cares about the big and the small. I want you to think about this... the God of the universe who governs all there is; how hot the stars burn, how far the planets travel in orbit, the speed of light, the depth of the oceans, the amount of food needed to feed China today, and the amount of rain needed to grow that food, the same God that governs all of that Big stuff... is the same God who cares about you. **To quote Bill Paxton's character in one of my favorite movies, Tombstone; he says, "look at all the stars. You look up and you think, God made all of this and He remembered to make a little speck like me. It's kind of flattering, really."** It's more than a little flattering... it's downright scandalous. The Big God of Big things... who runs all that Big stuff... so Big we can't even comprehend... cares for us specks. It doesn't make a lick of sense. For example **Luke 12:7** tells us that even the hairs of our heads are numbered. Now, let me beat you to the joke. I don't have a lot of hairs on my head, so maybe that's not so impressive. God's like... Shevi, you have two hairs. Two hairs on your head. Thanks God... I appreciate it. That's why I always grow facial hair... make it a little more challenging for him... give him something to do you know. No, in all honesty think about the fact that God knows exactly to the number how many stinking hairs are on your head, were on your head, will be on your head no matter of what stage of hair loss or hair growth you are in. He cares about the Small stuff too! **Psalm 139:16** tells us that God knew us, he knew you, even before you were formed and wrote down every one of your days. He put together your personality, your humor, your IQ, EQ, ADHD, and IBS. He knit you together and made you alive, a unique, a specific awesome individual! He cares about the Big stuff and the Small stuff! The universe and your hair!

But why? Why does God care about your hair? Why does he care about you intimately and specifically? So he can lead you to walk in the fullness of Joy while at the same time bringing him the most glory possible. So we have verses that kind of bring meaning to life like **Psalm**

**16:11** where it says that He, the Big God, makes known to us specks the path of life; and within that we find fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. Let me say that again... on the path of God we will find fullness of joy and pleasures forever. That's quite the contrast to the God most of us have heard about; the God who has given you all these rules and regulations to follow and is waiting for you to step out of line so he can give you cancer. Like you test me and I'll show you. Did you look at porn... boom job is gone. Stay on my path or else. But that's not the God we see here in Psalm at all is it. He says you don't have to live in fear of me... the motivation for taking my path is not fear but fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore. Look, this is what God is saying... the rules I've put in place are not to be obeyed out of a sense of terror. I've put them here for you for your good. If you take my path you will find joy and pleasure. Get this... **John 10:10** tells us that the thief comes to steal kill and destroy but Jesus has come to give us life abundantly.

So back to James. This is what the whole book of James is trying to tell us this morning... this Big Celestial Giant God wants to lead you, an insignificant small speck of a human being, on a path that will bring you abundant life, the fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore! He's not a cosmic kill joy, he is the way to joy, the truth of joy, and the only one who can give you a life of joy forever and ever. The bottom line, the main point this morning which we will keep coming back to is this; **No matter how big our God is, no matter how small we feel, God cares about us more than we can imagine.**

And so the big question this morning is simply... how does God do it? How does God lead us to the path of abundant life? Look again at **James 1:1**. How does James a lowly small servant of a Big glorious God and Lord find the life of the fullness of joy?

### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

Two things here. One is primary, the second is ancillary, but still necessary. Both are essential. So the first here, the primary way God leads us to the fullest life is... **God Leads Us To The Fullest Life By Revealing To Us Who He Is.** Our hearts have been created to gaze upon the beauty, magnificence, might and glory of God. God and God alone is the only thing that will truly satisfy our longings as humans. Every thing else that we substitute for God will turn to ash in our mouths. The world says no, you need something else. You need a partner, a husband, a wife, a job, a degree, a hobby, a large bank account, a flashy car, on and on. But all of that falls short and will leave you longing if you make it ultimate. These aren't bad things they just aren't ultimate things and if we make them the one thing we gaze upon with the longings of our hearts they will destroy us and leave us empty – you will be left chasing the wind. **More than anything else what we need is to behold the glory of God.** Our hearts are restless

without it.. until they see it.

And that's why we have this book. The Bible is first and foremost about God, and the book of James is all about who? God. Look at a couple verses with me really quick. **James 1:5** – God who gives generously to all without reproach, **James 1:12** – God will give the crown of life to those he loves, **James 1:13** – God cannot be tempted by evil, **James 1:17** – Every good gift comes from God. And that's just the first chapter. The Glory of God is on display in his Word.

How many of you have heard that “the Bible is your road map to life?” or something like that? The phrase is true and we'll get to that in a second, but my problem with that phrase is simple... we tend to hear it and think it means that the Bible is primarily about you and its not. The Bible is not primarily about you. If the Bible were about us first we would see ourselves as the answer to the fullness of life... that would be soul crushing and lead to hell. No, the Bible is about God first and foremost because we must see his glory, and be transfixed by it, so that we will follow it into truth – thats how this works; when you look upon the goodness of God and allow it to transform you you will in essence be consumed with him. This is salvation. **We see the glory of God primarily through the death and resurrection of Christ.** Do you get it... WE MUST SEE GOD because we must see how Big he truly is. The cross shows us that Jesus is Big and we are small. We must see that... **No matter how big our God is, no matter how small we feel, God cares about us more than we can imagine.**

So that's primary. Now secondary but just as necessary is this... **God Leads Us To The Fullest Life By Making The Path of Life Known To Us.** He shows us how to walk with him. Once again, not because it's primarily about us but because it's primarily about him and his glory. So he gives us the whole counsel of scripture filled with Do's and Do Not's. And here's where we struggle. We don't like the Do's and Don'ts. So let me clear this up for you this morning. When God says Do... here's what he's doing... he's calling us to be a part of the way he designed life to work. God says; “here's your best possible life”... so come do this and it will be awesome. He's wooing us. His commands beckon us to abundant, fruitful, blessed, purposeful and joyful life.

And, when he says Do Not... he's not trying to rob you of something. He's not trying to rob your happiness and joy! He's leading you away from something that will wreck you to something that will fulfill you! Listen, God is not glorified by begrudging submission, and reluctant obedience. That won't work right? God's plan is not... “you better not do that or else... oh that's what I thought... thanks for the obedience!”

Think about it like this... if you were to ask Landon how his relationship is with his father and he said... “Well I do my best to honor

him and walk the straight and narrow because if I don't he'll beat me”... that's not good. I don't think all the other kids in the room will be like... yeah I wish he was my father. He keeps his house in order. But what's if you ask Landon how his relationship with me is and he says... you know what.. I love my dad so much. I can't even begin to tell you how he loves me, cares for me, plays with me... on and on. That sounds a lot better right? Kids are like.. yeah give me a dad like that. Sorry kids the house is full. God's commands are there to woo us to a better way, not scare us to fall in line.

And, I think we often think we know better than God and that's why we shy away from his commands. **We think; “you know God I'm 41 now so ... I've got this from here on out.” “I know you said to love the poor but i've done that and it didn't work.” “I know you said to feed the hungry but thats really messy work and I feel my time might be better spent elsewhere.” “I know you said to go share the Gospel and make disciples but we have online services now so.” We are tempted to think that God's commands limit our happiness but the reality is that they lead us from emptiness into true joy.**

Let me give you another illustration... and ill stay in my lane where I feel I have some expertise... food. You think if you eat what you want you will be happy so you consume greasy processed foods filled with trans-fats, and empty calories. What am I talking about really... Taco Bell. Listen I know what this is like because this is my life every day. I love me some Taco Bell. But if I eat Taco Bell everyday, even though it makes me happy for a couple of hours each day... in the end I will not be healthy... exhibit A. Now Lisa is my diet coach and she says to me... hey Shevi lay of the Taco Bell, the cookies, they soda... lets get healthy. I might be tempted to think she is trying to steal my happiness right... but what she's really trying to do is make me healthier and prolong my life so I can have more joy in the long term. The Bible, and more specifically the book of James is our spiritual nutritionist helping us to avoid the junk and be healthier happier people.

So get this... even though God is so big and we are so small... God cares enough to lay out a plan for us to have optimal joy in this life. And because he's big and we are small... we can trust him. **No matter how big our God is, no matter how small we feel, God cares about us more than we can imagine.**

### Application

So God loves us. He loves us enough to show us an abundant life full of joy and pleasures forevermore. And, we enter into this abundant joy filled life through the revelation of God's glory and the commands of the Bible. And here's the great thing about the book James. James teaches us both of these simultaneously. It's going to show us the might and majesty and power and glory of our great God while at the same time leading us to go this way to purpose, this way to joy, this way to peace. We get to see

both in one book. In the book of James we will see God's glory in salvation and we will be led by God in obedience to the fullest possible life here and now. **No matter how big our God is, no matter how small we feel, God cares about us more than we can imagine.** God is big we are small. God shouldn't care about us but he does anyway. God offers us abundant life through the revelation of his glory in salvation and through obedience to his commands in sanctification. That's the nuts and bolts of James; this book we will be reading through for the next several weeks.

## Conclusion

So who let me ask you a question... who do you think wrote the book of James? James. Good. And do we know anything about James? He had a very famous brother. He was the half brother of Jesus. And believe it or not... at first James didn't believe that was the Son of God. And we don't fault him for that... because how many brothers are going to just accept that their brother is deity. But then something happened that changed James' mind. Do you know what that was? The resurrection. Yep. When you see your brother die, and then see him come back to life... well that's a sobering encounter right? From that point on James is all in. Becomes a leader in the church and preaches that Jesus is the Christ until one day he is thrown off the temple mount and killed; a martyr of the faith. So get this. James, an unbeliever comes to believe that Jesus, his brother, is actually the Giant God of the universe and in verse 1 we see that he becomes his servant. James shows us what it means to believe that Jesus is Big and we are small. We become servants. And that's the take away this morning. We want the joy filled, eternal pleasure, abundant life... so we see the glory of God and we obey the commands of God... but in the end we are left completely humbled that a Big God would love us very very small people. **No matter how big our God is, no matter how small we feel, God cares about us more than we can imagine.**