THE MARKS OF A MATURE PERSON

Life Lessons from James (An overview of James)
29th June 2025

INTRODUCTION

Today we start a series on "**Life Lessons from James"**. I want to give a brief overview of James' challenge to every Christian. You cannot read this New Testament book without being deeply challenged on a number of everyday life issues.

When Christian believers gather in churches, everything that can go wrong sooner or later does. So Christian churches are not, as a rule, model communities of good behaviour. They are, rather, places where human misbehaviour is brought out in the open, faced, and dealt with.

The letter of James shows one of the church's early pastors skilfully going about his work of confronting, diagnosing and dealing with areas of misbelief and misbehaviour that had turned up in congregations committed to his care.

Deep and living wisdom is on display here, wisdom both rare and essential. Wisdom is not primarily knowing the truth, although it certainly includes that; it is skill in living. For what good is a truth if we don't know how to live?

NOTE: On Monday the staff suggested that we all read through James every week while doing the series. My suggestion is that we all take a chapter a day (5 chapters, one a day, Monday to Friday).

Today's teaching is "**The marks of a mature person**". Without a doubt, probably the number one cause of problems in the world is immaturity.

We get ourselves into all kinds of problems by saying immature things, making immature decisions, acting in immature ways. We just need to grow up. It is God's will for every person to grow to maturity.

JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE:

The Gospel of Luke gives us two statements about Jesus that speak about growth to maturity. He grew in …

Luke 2:40 (NLT2)
40 There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favour was on him.

Luke 2:52 (NLT2)
52 Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and all the people.

One of the purposes of our church leadership is to help everybody grow spiritually, emotionally, mentally, in every way – to a balanced Christian lifestyle.

WHAT MATURITY IS NOT

Let's quickly deal with what is not maturity. This will help us to know how far we have to go in reaching maturity.

MATURITY IS NOT AGE.

It has nothing to do with how long you've lived or how long you've been a Christian. You can be a Christian for fifty years and not be mature.

Saw a Bumper sticker: "I may be getting older, but I refuse to grow up."

MATURITY IS NOT APPEARANCE.

Some people just look mature. You can look real spiritual and not be spiritual at all. It has nothing to do with your appearance. (The size of the Bible you carry to church).

MATURITY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ACHIEVEMENT

You can accomplish a lot and still be very immature. You don't have to be mature to make millions. You don't have to be mature to simply live a happy lifestyle.

MATURITY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ACADEMICS (DEGREES OR EDUCATION).

You can have so many degrees they call you Dr. Centigrade / Fahrenheit but that does not make you mature.

God says maturity is about character (Life attitude).
D. L. Moody said,
"Character is what you are in the dark."

Charl has a saying: Maturity is nobody's responsibility but your own".

In the Letter of James we have a manual on maturity. The word "**mature**" in Greek is translated '**mature**, **complete**, and **perfect**'. James uses this word five times in five chapters.

His letter gives us **five marks of maturity**. The letter of James negates the popular view of Christianity that if you give your life to Jesus, everything is going to be nice and easy going.

1 A MATURE PERSON IS POSITIVE UNDER PRESSURE

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

How do you handle trials? The first test of maturity is how do you react to problems? Do they blow you away? Do you get nervous, uptight, and negative? Do you grumble and gripe? How do you handle problems? Do you live in Kingdom Forgiveness?

Christianity is a life. It's not a religion. Jesus said, *"I've come that you might have life, life in abundance."* Life means facing problems on a regular basis. And part of life means **solving problems** and **facing them** with the right attitude.

What is your natural attitude? What is your behaviour like when things don't go right and you're slightly irritated?

- Are you negative or are you positive?
- Are you basically a supportive person or are you a sceptical person?
- Is your life filled with gratitude or grumbling?
- Are you affirmative or are you angry most of the time?

James 1:12 (NIV)

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Perseverance, a sign of maturity, has a reward from God.

2. A MATURE PERSON IS SENSITIVE TO PEOPLE

James 2:8 (NIV)

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right.

A mature person is sensitive to people. They don't just see their own needs, they see other people's needs. They seek to understand their hurts. They are not just interested in themselves.

Children, when they're immature, only see themselves, "I want that, I want this, I don't care about anybody else."

God says that love, being interested in others, is a mark of maturity.

James gets very specific.

James 2:1-8 (NLT2)

[1] My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people over others? [2] For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewellery, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. [3] If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, [4] doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives? [5] Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? [6] But you dishonour the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? [7] Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? [8] Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

So James makes it clear we must not show favouritism, not to look down on people, not to judge by appearance, not to insult people, and not to exploit people.

3. A MATURE PERSON HAS MASTERED HIS MOUTH

James 3:2 (NLT2)

[2] Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

James 1:26 (NLT2)

[26] If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.

Therefore:

- If I've memorized hundreds of verses and studied every book of the Bible and go to church and never miss a service, but if I'm a gossip, my religion is worthless.
- If I spread rumours about others my religion is worthless.
- If I'm saying things that are not always accurate or exaggerate or speak impulsively, my faith is worthless.

The test of maturity is to manage your mouth so that no corrupt communication, no negative talk comes out of your mouth.

We get ourselves into so much trouble by what we think . . . and then we speak out that rubbish. Tongue control requires self-control big time.

James chapter 3 deals in depth with this subject, which we will deal with in a future teaching in this series.

The Apostle Paul agrees with James by saying:
Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

[29] Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

We really need to watch what we say. When we talk we ought to say things to build other people up. If it doesn't build somebody else up, don't say it, even if it's the truth. That's a mark of maturity.

Found an interesting statement:
Definition of gossip: **Hearing something you like to hear about .... somebody you don't like. (It is mouth to mouth recitation.)**

Have you ever heard someone proudly say, "I always speak the truth in love" or "I just say what's on my mind." These folk like to be frank and up front in what they say, and often they say what's on their mind without caution. This attitude really is one of not caring at all for others – often these folk create more harm than good. It is a sign of immaturity.

A lot of people just need a large dose of tactfulness. Speaking the truth in love ought to be done with genuine care for the other party. Not everything on our minds should be spoken or shared.

"Speak the truth in love" means the **right attitude**, the **right timing**, the **right situation**, the **right location**, the **right motive**.

If our attitude isn't like Christ's we are missing the point.

4. A MATURE PERSON IS A PEACEMAKER NOT A TROUBLEMAKER

Am I a peacemaker? Am I a troublemaker? Do I like to argue? Am I a contentious person? Do my feelings get hurt quickly? Do I get defensive easily? Do I hurt other people's feelings?

James 4:1 (NLT2)

[1] What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?

James is talking about conflict. He says they come from our own inner desires and inner conflicts. You want something and you don't get it. You kill and covet but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. The reason you do not have is simply because you do not ask God.

The mark of a mature person is the lack of conflict in their life.

James says there are two reasons for conflict:

A. SELFISHNESS

James 4:3 (NLT2)

[3] And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

The first cause of conflict is selfishness. When I want what I want then I'm going to have conflict with somebody. The issue is pride.

How do you know if a person is immature? One way is to check out their prayers. If their prayers are always self-centred -- bless me, prosper me, protect me, use me, help me. If this is the only kind of prayer they pray, that's immaturity, and they have an "I" problem. Selfishness – the profane trinity: me, myself and I.

B. JUDGMENTALISM

The other source of conflict is judging others -- Judgmentalism.

James 4:11-12 (NLT2)

[11] 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. [12] 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 neighbour?

All of us are guilty at times of Judgmentalism. James says, don't judge people. If you do this you're asking for a fight. You're always finding fault, always stirring up strife, always spreading rumours. Don't judge!

Why should I not judge?

1. I'm not God. When you judge somebody, you are playing God. There is only one judge, only one lawgiver -- God.

2. Only God has all the facts, you don't and neither do I. When I judge you, I don't have all the facts.

3. I don't know the motives. And you don't either. You can't tell what's in somebody's heart. You don't know. Only God does.

So only God has the right to judge. He has all the facts, He knows everything, He knows all the motives, He sees into our heart. He's got the truth so He can judge. But we are limited in our insight. We don't have any right to judge.

God says selfishness and judgmentalism causes conflict.

The Bible does speak about certain situations where we are to judge but that is a teaching for another time.
Just a quick reminder of what Jesus taught on judging:

Matthew 7:2 (NLT2)

[2] For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

5. A MATURE PERSON IS PATIENT AND PRAYERFUL

James 5:7, 11 & 16 (NLT2)

> ***7*** *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.*
> ***11*** *We give great honour 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.*
> ***16*** *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.*

The two key words in chapter five: The word, "**Patient**" is used four times, and "**Prayer**" is used seven times. James says the mark of a mature person is that he is patient and prayerful. Patience and prayer go together. They express an attitude of dependence upon God.

James uses the illustration of the farmer. If anybody has to have patience it's a farmer. He does a lot of waiting. He plants a seed, waits, prays, hopes, expects ... he waits. There are no overnight crops.

Just like a farmer has to wait, sometimes we have to wait. We have to wait on God in answer to prayer. We have to wait on God for a miracle. We have to wait on God to work in our lives.

Patience is a mark of maturity. The only way you learn patience is by waiting.

Many times God will say to you, "Not yet." He doesn't mean "No". He doesn't mean He's not going to answer your prayer. He just saying, you've got to wait, I want you to develop, to grow.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

I end with some questions that we need to consider.

1. How do you handle problems? Do you get uptight, negative, grumble, grip, and complain? Or are you positive under pressure?

2. Are you sensitive to other people? Are you concerned about their needs, desires, cares, hurts, or do you only care about yourself? Do you only pray for yourself or do you pray for others?

3. Can you manage your mouth? Have you learned to put a muzzle on it sometimes and just not speak? Do you refrain from sharing that juicy bit of gossip? Are you careful about the words that come out of your mouth? A managed mouth is a definite mark of maturity.

4. Are you a troublemaker or are you a peacemaker? Do you have a tendency to stir up trouble? Do you have a hair trigger temper where someone can tick you off quickly? Do you carry a grudge? Do you find yourself nursing bitterness, hatred or resentment? Or are you a peacemaker?

5. How long can you wait for an answer to prayer without giving up? Maybe God has every intention of giving it but He's waiting to teach you maturity.

How do you rate?

Next week we have a visiting preacher from the USA. Joel Lowery (My Crossroads Church).
The week after we tackle James 1:2-8. The "Life lessons from James" series is going to challenge us in many ways.