

# **Dr. David Mathewson, New Testament Literature,**

## **Session 29 - Hebrews, James**

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Welcome back, Deep Divers. Today, we're going to tackle some pretty huge ideas: the New Covenant and the Book of James. It's like Faith 101 meets a wisdom treasure chest, and we've got excerpts from a New Testament lecture and, of course, James itself to guide us.

We'll be exploring how these ideas connect and tackling that age-old debate about faith versus works. So are you ready to jump in? Let's dive in. All right, so first things first, what exactly are we talking about when we say New Covenant? It sounds kind of formal, don't you think? Yeah, it does.

But the idea of a covenant, like a binding agreement that's super important throughout the Bible, starts way back in Genesis with all those promises God made. Think of the New Covenant as a kind of reset button, a fresh start on that whole relationship between God and humanity. Oh, a reset button.

Okay, I like that. But what makes this covenant new exactly? How is it different? Well, the lecture we've got actually points us to the prophet Ezekiel. He talks about this new relationship in chapter 36, where God's cleansing his people, giving them a new heart and a new spirit.

But here's the real game changer. This New Covenant means a direct relationship with God. You're not relying on priests or rituals or anything like that anymore.

So it's like a more personal connection. Exactly. And it's not just about a one-time forgiveness for past mistakes, but this idea of complete forgiveness for the constant struggle to live up to God's standards.

I see. So does that mean that now Christians believe they can just perfectly follow God's laws, no more messing up? Not about perfection, no. It's more about transformation.

Under the New Covenant, God himself empowers us to obey, and he does it through the Holy Spirit. Think of it like, I don't know, trying to follow a complicated recipe on your own versus having a master chef right there with you, guiding you every step of the way. I like that.

That's a great analogy. So this whole New Covenant thing, it's a pretty big deal. It affects everything from how Christians see salvation to how they understand the role of the Holy Spirit.

But I keep hearing this phrase, already, but not yet, when people talk about the New Covenant. What in the world does that mean? It's key, actually. The professor in this lecture explains it like this: the New Covenant is already in effect right now, but its total, complete fulfillment is still in the future.

Kind of like, you've won the lottery, you've got the winning ticket in your hand, but you haven't actually gotten all that money yet. Okay. So I see what you mean.

So are there specific examples in the Bible that really show this already and not yet thing in action? Oh yeah. Tons. Hebrews 8, for example, really highlights the already.

You see how Jesus established the New Covenant there, but then you've got something like Revelation 21, with that amazing vision of the future God dwelling fully with humanity. That's the not-yet coming into its fullness. And we see this tension being lived out even today.

Like, Christians experience the benefits of the New Covenant right now in their lives, but they also know the full picture that's still to come. So speaking of historical things that happen, the lecture notes mentioned the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD. That seems like a pretty big deal to just kind of skim over.

Yeah, for sure. It was a huge turning point in Jewish history, Andy, for those early Christians. I mean, that temple, it was the center of everything for Jewish life.

To have it destroyed must have been just devastating. But the lecture also mentioned that the book of Hebrews barely even mentions the temple. Instead, it focuses on the tabernacle, that portable sanctuary they used before the temple was built.

What do you think that is? Hmm. That's a good observation. The professor seems to think that the person who wrote Hebrews was deliberately focusing on the tabernacle and that whole wilderness generation as a model for Christians.

It's about highlighting how temporary earthly things are, pointing to something bigger, more lasting. It's like saying God's presence dwells with his people. That's the ultimate reality, even without needing a physical temple building.

I never thought about it that way. That's fascinating. It seems like there's always another layer to uncover, another angle to explore.

Which brings us to our next topic, the book of James. I've got to be honest, James isn't exactly the most talked-about book in the New Testament. What do you think that is? Why doesn't it get more attention? Well, it could be because James doesn't quite fit neatly into some of those theological boxes that have become really popular in Christianity.

Remember Martin Luther? He was not a fan of James. Oh, right. The justification by faith alone guy.

Didn't James have some different ideas about that? Yeah. Luther really struggled with James because it seemed to contradict his teachings. You know, James 2.24, it just comes right out and says, a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

And that was like a direct challenge to Luther's whole emphasis on faith as the only way to be made right with God. Wow. Okay.

So who is this James who's causing all this theological controversy, and who is he even writing to in the first place? So according to our sources, it was most likely James, the brother of Jesus. And we know he was a leader in that early Jerusalem church. So his words, they would have carried a lot of weight.

Wait a minute, hold up. Jesus's brother wrote this. Okay.

Now that is a family dinner conversation I would have loved to be a fly on the wall for. Can you imagine the stories he could tell and think about his audience? He was writing specifically to Jewish Christians who had been scattered all over the Roman Empire. The source called them the dispersion.

So they were living far from home. Probably facing all kinds of challenges. How do you think that might've influenced what James wrote to them? Well, one thing that our source pointed out is this recurring theme in James about poverty and wealth.

That suggests that a lot of these scattered Christians were likely struggling financially, maybe even being taken advantage of. Understanding their situation, where they were coming from, is key to understanding what James is getting at, what he's really trying to say. This wasn't just some detached theological lecture then.

This was a letter from a leader dealing with the nitty-gritty of real life with a special concern for those who are struggling. Yeah, you got it. And that's part of what makes James so incredibly relevant even today, especially in a world where poverty and injustice are still so prevalent.

For sure. Now, the lecture called James a wisdom letter, similar to Proverbs in the Old Testament. What exactly makes it a wisdom book? What are those similarities? It's like, imagine a matchup of those ancient wisdom sayings you find in Proverbs, but delivered in the form of a personal letter from a respected leader.

It's got that personal touch, but it also goes deep into those themes and the style you see in the Old Testament wisdom literature. So it's not just a list of wise sayings, but about how you apply those truths to messy real-life situations. Yeah, exactly.

Our source says that James's main goal is to encourage Christians to live out their faith in practical ways, especially in how they treat the poor and vulnerable. It's about walking the walk, not just talking the talk. Okay, so if that's his goal, how does he go about doing that? What are the big ideas that he uses to get his message across? The source highlights three recurring themes that kind of weave their way throughout the whole letter: testing and endurance in trials, poverty and generosity, and then wisdom, especially in how we use our words.

And get this, all three themes are introduced in the very first chapter, and then he circles back to them, expands on them as the letter goes on. So it's not just a random collection of thoughts, but it's got this deliberate flow with those core themes weaving in and out. Yeah, it's like a tapestry.

Those three threads, they come together to create a much more detailed picture of what it means to really live out your Christian faith. We talked earlier about how some folks have misunderstood James, especially compared to how Paul wrote about things. But is there a way to read James, to understand him, that both honors his unique perspective? A and D see it in harmony with the rest of the New Testament.

Oh, I think that's exactly what we need to do. It's not about choosing James over Paul or vice versa. It's about appreciating what they both bring to the table.

It's like looking at a diamond through different lenses. Each one reveals another beautiful facet of that same gem. Ooh, I like that.

So how does this new lens change how we understand what James is trying to say? Well, it helps us to see that James isn't offering a totally different path to salvation. It's more like he's offering a complementary perspective on what it means to be transformed by God's grace. His focus on actions is not meant to downplay faith, but to show what happens when faith is real and genuine: it shows up in the world.

So it's not faith versus works, but faith working itself out in our lives and how we treat others. It's about living in a way that shows that connection with God is real, authentic. You got it.

And that's what makes James's letter so powerful and so challenging. Even today, it pushes us to go beyond just words and to really truly embody the love and compassion of Christ. Yeah, I can see that.

Now, one thing that really stood out to me from the lecture was the connection between James's teachings and the teachings of Jesus, especially what we find in the Sermon on the Mount. That really blew me away. Right.

It's remarkable how closely James echoes what Jesus taught. It's like we're seeing a direct line between Jesus's ministry and the early church, almost like a bridge. And the parallels are particularly strong with the Sermon on the Mount, you know, one of Jesus's most well-known teachings.

So it's not like James just vaguely remembered what Jesus said. He seems to have woven those teachings intentionally into his letter, particularly the stuff about how to live out your faith day to day. Oh, absolutely.

It makes you wonder, you know, what can we learn from how James took those teachings from the Sermon on the Mount and used them? How does that challenge us today to think about how we're living out our faith? Those are great questions. So which parallels specifically between James and Jesus stood out to you? I know you mentioned a few, but I'm curious to hear more. One that really struck me was the focus on hanging in there, on persevering through tough times.

You know, James 1.12, it says, Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial. And that immediately made me think of Jesus's words in Matthew 5.10, where he says, Blessed are

those who are persecuted because of righteousness. Both of them are emphasizing the blessing that comes from enduring hardship for your faith.

Wow. Yeah. It's like they're both saying that true faith, it's not about trying to avoid hard times.

It's about getting through those times with your faith intact, with grace and hope. Exactly. And, you know, that can be so encouraging when you're going through your own struggles.

It reminds you that you're not alone in those struggles, and they can actually make your faith stronger, more resilient. Another parallel that really resonated with me was the one about caring for the poor. James 2 says that God has chosen the poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith.

And that reminds me of what Jesus says in Matthew 5.3, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Yeah, it's like both James and Jesus are challenging the idea that wealth equals blessing. You know, they're highlighting the spiritual value of humility, of relying on God, no matter what your financial situation is.

And for James' audience, many of whom were probably struggling just to get by, that message would have been so encouraging, so powerful. It would have reminded them of their worth. Absolutely.

It would have said to them, "You are valuable in God's eyes, even if the world doesn't see it. And it would have challenged those who did have resources to use them to support and lift up those who were struggling. So this isn't just about personal piety.

It's about how faith should shape our communities. It's about justice. Exactly.

James is reminding us that authentic faith is never passive. It's never self-centered. It pushes us to get involved in the world, to work for justice, to care for those who are vulnerable, and to use what we have to make the world a better place.

It aligns so perfectly with Jesus' teachings about loving your neighbor as yourself. It's about taking love and putting it into action, not just keeping to yourself. Right.

And speaking of action, you know, one thing that really fascinates me about James is how he goes beyond just general principles and gives us practical advice. He tells us what to do, not just what to think or believe. What are your thoughts on that? I think it's brilliant.

James understands that true faith isn't just about having the right beliefs. It's about living those beliefs out. It's about making choices that reflect the reality of our relationship with God.

I completely agree. And that's part of what makes James so challenging, right? He's not afraid to get specific. He wants us to examine our actions, our behaviors, and see if they line up with what we say we believe.

Exactly. And it's not just about avoiding bad behavior. It's about actively pursuing good, seeking to make a positive impact on the world around us.

You got it. And James gives us a ton of practical advice on how to do that. He talks about controlling our anger, caring for the poor and marginalized, being hospitable to strangers, and speaking truthfully and kindly.

It's like he's giving us a roadmap, showing us the path to a life of integrity and purpose. And that roadmap, it's not just for individuals. It's for communities, too.

James wants to see entire churches transformed by the power of the gospel, living out their faith in a way that impacts the world around them. Now, something that really struck me as I was reading James was his repeated emphasis on the power of words. He keeps coming back to this idea that what we say matters, that it has real consequences.

Why do you think he focuses so much on speech? I think it shows just how deeply James understood the connection between what's going on inside us and how we behave. He knew that our words are not just empty sounds. They're powerful forces that can shape relationships, build up or tear down, and even influence who we become.

So it's not just about avoiding gossip or negativity, but about cultivating a whole way of speaking that reflects the character of Christ. Speaking truth, speaking with grace, speaking words that build others up. Exactly.

James wants us to take a look at our hearts, to root out any bitterness or resentment that might be lurking there, and then let our words flow from a place of love, humility, and compassion. Especially in today's world, which often feels so divided and hostile. That's a message we desperately need to hear.

We need to remember that our words have the power to heal, to encourage, to build bridges, and to help create a world where justice and compassion flourish. Couldn't agree more. And you know, James doesn't just tell us what not to do.

He actually gives us practical examples of what it looks like to speak wisely, to listen well, and to use our words to bring life and hope instead of hurt and division. So it's not about staying silent. It's about learning to speak in a way that is thoughtful, respectful, and full of grace.

You got it. And I think that's what makes James' teaching on speech so powerful and so timeless. It's not just about following rules, but about developing a way of speaking that flows from a heart that's been transformed by the grace of God.

And as James makes clear, when our hearts are truly changed, our words will reflect that change. They'll be encouraging, life-giving, and filled with hope. Yes.

And that's the kind of speech we need more of in our world today. We need to reclaim the power of words, use them to heal, to reconcile, to inspire, and to build a better future for everyone. One of the most striking similarities is their focus on practical wisdom, like how to live well day to day.

You know, both James and Proverbs want to give you actual advice: advice on relationships, on how to handle money, on work, family, all those tricky parts of life. So it's not some kind

of high-level philosophy, but down-to-earth guidance on making wise choices, choices that honor God. Right.

And they both use so many of those classic wisdom sayings, proverbs, and parables to really get their points across. It's like they want to make sure you don't forget what they're saying. Like they're giving us a toolbox full of wisdom, and we can take those tools and build a life of purpose, a life that's meaningful and good.

I love that. And both James and Proverbs, they're really big on character development. It's not just about doing the right things, but about becoming the right kind of person, the kind of person where your actions come from this deep place of commitment to God.

So it's about growing in those virtues, things like humility, patience, generosity, self-control. It's about who you are, not just what you do. Yes.

And both James and Proverbs connect that inner world, the heart, to your actions. Real wisdom isn't just about knowing the right answers. It's about getting your heart and your mind aligned with God's will.

Then your actions flow naturally from that place of integrity, from a place of love. It's about becoming the kind of person who naturally reflects God's character. You know, someone who's known for humility, for compassion, for justice, and for a deep respect for life.

I couldn't have put it better myself. And the best part is that both James and Proverbs give us really practical advice on how to actually cultivate that way of being, even when life throws you a curveball. Yeah.

And speaking of practical advice, one thing that really jumped out at me is how much both James and Proverbs talk about controlling our speech. What do you think? Why is this such a big deal in both of those books? Well, I think it highlights how powerful our words actually are. They can shape our own personal reality, A and D, the reality of the people around us.

Both James and Proverbs understand this. They know that our words can have a profound effect on ourselves, on our relationships, and even on the world around us. So it's not just about avoiding gossip or saying mean things.

It's about recognizing that what we say can have a real impact. Our words can encourage, they can heal, and they can even bring about positive change. Absolutely.

Both James and Proverbs challenge us to see our words as gifts, almost like tools that we can use to reflect God's love and his wisdom to the people around us. That's a really empowering thought, especially in a world where it feels like there's so much negativity, so much harshness in the way people talk to each other. It reminds us that we can make a choice.

We can choose our words wisely; we can choose to speak with intention, and we can use our voices to make the world a better place. Yeah, I love that. And the thing is, both James and Proverbs don't just leave us hanging with those high ideals.

They give us practical advice on how to do it. They tell us to be slow to speak, be quick to listen, and really consider how your words might land on the other person, how they might make them feel. So it's not about being quiet all the time.

It's about learning to talk better, to be more thoughtful, to be respectful, and to speak with grace. Exactly. And that kind of speech, that's the kind of speech we need to build strong relationships, to have healthy communities, and to make the world a more peaceful place.

Now, we've talked a lot about how similar James and Proverbs are, but are there any big differences, anything we should be aware of? Well, one big difference is the context in which they were written. Proverbs is coming from ancient Israel, right? But James was written within the early Christian church, and that difference, it shapes their messages in significant ways. So they're both concerned with wisdom, with ethical living, but they're coming at it from slightly different angles, because their communities had different values, different ways of seeing the world.

Exactly. For example, Proverbs talks a lot about fearing the Lord, about seeking his wisdom, but James emphasizes living out your faith in Christ. That's how you show your commitment to God.

It's about love and service. So both offer timeless wisdom, but we need to remember where they're coming from, what their background is, if we want to understand their message and apply it to our own lives. Right.

And that's a really good rule of thumb for studying any part of the Bible, honestly. You need to understand the context, the history, the culture, if you want to really grasp what it meant back then and how it applies to us today. Speaking of applying these teachings, you know what's been on my mind? How does James connect this whole idea of the new covenant with his call to live out our faith in these practical, ethical ways? That is such a great question.

We talked earlier about how the new covenant is this central idea in Christianity. It's a radical shift in our relationship with God, our relationship made possible through Jesus. Right.

And the lecture, it pointed out that the new covenant, it comes with specific promises and expectations. It's about forgiveness of sins, having the Holy Spirit living within us, and then having the ability to live a life that pleases God. Exactly.

It's not just about a change in our status. It's a change in who we are, in our very being. It gives us the power to live differently.

So James, in his own way, seemed to be spelling out what it actually looks like to live in light of this new covenant reality. His focus on putting our faith into action is not just some random add-on. It's an essential part of what it means to be under this new covenant.

It's about being recipients of God's grace, and then letting that grace transform us. You're exactly right. It's like James is saying, hey, true faith isn't just about believing the right things.

It's about aligning our actions with those beliefs. It's letting that transformative power of God's grace, it's letting that become visible in how we live our lives. So when he emphasizes caring for the poor, speaking wisely, or persevering through trials, it's not about trying to earn God's favor or proving how good we are.

It's about showing the reality of this new life we have in Christ. It's about our actions matching our words. Yes.

And James challenges us to see the new covenant not just as a theological concept, but as a lived reality. It's something that should affect every part of our lives. It should change our thoughts, our words, our actions, our relationships, and even how we interact with the world around us.

It's about bringing our whole lives into alignment with the values of God's kingdom. A kingdom where justice, mercy, and compassion are the driving forces. Exactly.

James, in his own way, is inviting us to fully embrace that kingdom reality and to live as citizens of a new and better world, a world that's already being transformed by God's grace and love. I love how he presents those ideas. So challenging and yet at the same time, so encouraging.

As we wrap up this part of our deep dive, what's the main takeaway you'd like to leave our listeners with? What's the one thing you hope they'll remember as they think about James's letter and what it means for their own lives? If I had to boil it down to one thing, I'd say James's letter is a call to action. It's a challenge to move beyond empty words, you know, to go beyond surface-level faith and to truly, authentically live out the love of Christ in every single part of our lives. And to do that, we need to be willing to look inward.

We need to ask ourselves some tough questions. Are we actually living out what we say we believe? Do our actions match our words? Oh, that's so important. And you know, James doesn't shy away from those hard questions.

He wants us to think critically about how we treat other people, especially those who are less fortunate than us. He wants us to consider how we use our words, or are they building people up or tearing them down? And he wants us to think about how we respond when life gets difficult. He's calling us to a life of integrity, of compassion, and of faithfulness, a life that shows the world what the power of the gospel can do.

So it's not about trying to earn our salvation through good deeds, but about letting our transformed hearts, hearts that have been changed by God's grace, letting those hearts overflow into actions that show what we truly believe. And that's where that whole argument, that tension between James and Paul, seems to disappear. It's not faith versus works.

It's faith expressed through our actions. Exactly. They're two sides of the same coin.

We need both of them for a complete understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. And that's why James's letter is still so relevant and so challenging today. It pushes us to move

beyond those empty words and superficial expressions of faith and to truly live out the love and compassion of Christ in everything we do.

It's not enough to just talk the talk. It's not just about what we believe, but about how we live. It's about putting our faith into action in ways that make a real difference in the world around us.

And James, he gives us this practical roadmap for how to actually do that. Absolutely. And that message is at the very heart of the gospel, right? Remember what Jesus said: you will know them by their fruits, by how they love one another, and how they care for those who are in need.

It's a great reminder that faith is not meant to be a solo act. It's meant to be shared. It's meant to be expressed.

It's meant to be lived out in our relationships, in our communities, and in how we interact with the world around us. And James's letter, even though it's short and a lot of people haven't really studied it, it gives us a really practical and powerful guide for that journey of putting our faith into practice. It encourages us to think deeply, to act courageously, and to live out the transforming power of the gospel in a way that brings hope and healing to a world that desperately needs both.

I love that. Now, before we wrap things up, we've got to address that elephant in the room. We've been talking a lot about the new covenant and putting our faith into action, but what about the apparent conflict between James's focus on good works and Paul's emphasis on faith? How do we reconcile those two perspectives? They seem so different.

That's a question that has been puzzling theologians for centuries, but maybe it's not about two completely opposing viewpoints, but about two different ways of emphasizing the same truth. So they're both getting at something important, but from different angles. Yeah, exactly.

Paul, he focuses on the inner transformation that happens when we place our faith in Christ. James, he's highlighting how that transformed life actually shows up in the things we do. So it's not faith versus works, but faith expressed through works.

They're like two sides of the same coin, both necessary for a complete picture of what it means to follow Jesus. You got it. And I think that integrated vision of faith- that's what makes James's letter so relevant and so challenging, even today.

He's calling us to go beyond just empty words and superficial faith. He wants us to live out the love and compassion of Christ in everything we do. It's not just about saying the right things.

It's about letting our faith shape how we live our lives every single day. And James gives us a practical roadmap for how to do just that. That's what I love about him.

He's practical, he's down to earth, and he doesn't let us off the hook. He challenges us to live out our faith in a way that makes a real difference in the world. Now, something that really stands out in James's letter is his emphasis on the power of our words.

He keeps coming back to this theme, highlighting how much our speech matters. Why do you think he focuses so heavily on what we say? You know, I think it shows a deep understanding of the connection between our inner lives and outward actions. James knew that our words, they're not just noises we make.

They have power. They have the power to shape relationships, to build up or tear down, and even to influence who we become. So it's not just about avoiding gossip or trying not to say anything mean.

It's about recognizing that our words can actually have a real impact on the world. They can heal, they can encourage, they can bring about positive change, and they can even point people to God. I think you've hit the nail on the head.

Both James and Proverbs challenge us to think about our words as gifts, almost like tools we can use to reflect God's love and wisdom to the people around us. That's a really encouraging thought, especially when you look around and see how much negativity and division there is in the world. It reminds us that we have a choice: we can choose to use our words for good, to build people up, to offer hope, and to create a world where everyone feels loved and valued.

I completely agree. And you know, James and Proverbs, they don't just tell us what to do. They give us practical advice.

They say, be slow to speak, be quick to listen, and think before you speak. Consider how your words might impact the person you're talking to. So it's not about never saying anything.

It's about learning to speak in a way that's thoughtful, that's respectful, and that's full of grace. Exactly. And that kind of speech, that's what builds strong relationships, that's what creates healthy communities, and that's what helps make the world a better place.

Okay. So we've talked a lot about the similarities between James and Proverbs, but are there any significant differences between them? Anything we should be aware of as we read and study those books? Well, one of the biggest differences is the context. Proverbs was written in ancient Israel, while James was written within the early Christian church.

And that difference in context really shapes their messages in some important ways. So they're both concerned with wisdom, with ethical living, but they approach those topics from different perspectives, reflecting the specific beliefs and values of their respective communities. Exactly.

For example, Proverbs often frames its teachings in terms of fearing the Lord and seeking his wisdom. But James, on the other hand, emphasizes living out your faith in Christ through acts of love and service. So both texts offer timeless wisdom that can speak to us today.

But we need to keep those contextual differences in mind as we interpret and apply their teachings to our own lives. Right. And honestly, that's a good principle to keep in mind whenever you're studying any part of the Bible.

You need to understand the historical, cultural, and literary context to really grasp what it meant back then and how it applies to us now. That's such good advice. And speaking of applying these teachings, something I keep coming back to is how James connects the idea of the new covenant with his emphasis on putting our faith into action.

How do those two things fit together? That is such a great question. Earlier, we were discussing how central the new covenant is to Christian belief. It marks this huge shift in our relationship with God, a relationship that's made possible through what Jesus did through his life, his death, and his resurrection.

Right. And the lecture pointed out that the new covenant, it comes with some pretty specific promises and expectations. It's all about the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and the ability to live a life that's pleasing to God.

It's a whole new way of relating to God. Yeah. It's not just about changing our label or our status.

It's a change in our very being. It empowers us to actually live a different kind of life. So James, in his own way, seems to be unpacking that.

He's explaining what it means to live out that new covenant reality. Exactly. And I think his focus on putting our faith into action is not some kind of afterthought or an add-on.

It's an essential part of what it means to be living under this new covenant covered by God's grace. It's about receiving that grace and letting it transform us from the inside out. So when he talks about things like caring for the poor, or speaking wisely, or being persistent in prayer, or persevering through trials, it's not about trying to earn brownie points with God.

We're trying to prove that we're worthy. It's about showing the reality of this new life we have because of Christ. It's about our actions lining up with what we say we believe.

You got it. And James challenges us to see the new covenant not as some kind of abstract theological concept, but as a lived reality, a reality that should impact every single part of our lives, our thoughts, our words, our actions, our relationships, and even how we interact with the world around us. It's about aligning our whole lives with the values of God's kingdom, a kingdom where things like justice, mercy, and compassion are at the very center.

Yes, exactly. And James, in his own unique way, is inviting us to step into that kingdom reality, to live as citizens of this new and better world, a world that's already being transformed by God's grace and love. I love how James combines this kind of challenging message with so much hope and encouragement.

As we're wrapping up this section of our deep dive, I'm wondering, what's the main takeaway you'd like to leave our listeners with as they think about James's letter and what it means for them personally? If I had to sum it up in one sentence, I'd say this: James's letter is a call to action. It's a challenge to move beyond those empty words and that superficial faith and to live out the love of Christ in tangible, practical ways in every single area of our lives. Our actions need to speak louder than our words.

And to do that, we need to be willing to look inward, to be honest with ourselves, and to ask some tough questions. Are we really living out what we claim to believe? Oh, that's so important. And you know, James doesn't shy away from asking those difficult questions.

He wants us to think critically about how we treat other people, especially those who are less fortunate than us. He wants us to examine our words. Are they building others up or are they tearing them down? And he wants us to think about how we respond when life gets tough.

Ultimately, James is calling us to a life of integrity, compassion, and faithfulness. He wants us to show the world what the power of the gospel can truly look like. So it's not about trying to earn our salvation through good deeds.

It's about allowing our transformed hearts, hearts that have been changed by God's grace, to overflow into actions that demonstrate what we believe. And that's where that whole debate between James and Paul sort of fades away. It's not faith versus works.

It's faith expressed through works. It's about living out what you believe. You're exactly right.

And they're both important. They're like two sides of the same coin. We need both of them if we want to truly grasp what it means to follow Jesus.

And that's what makes James's letter so relevant and so challenging today. It pushes us to move beyond just talking about our faith, to move beyond those superficial expressions of belief, and to actually live out the love and compassion of Christ in everything we do. It's not enough to just say we believe something.

We've got to show it. It's not just about what we believe. It's about how we live.

It's about putting our faith into action in ways that actually impact the world around us. And James gives us a really practical and down-to-earth guide for how to make that happen. I agree.

And that's what's at the very heart of the gospel, isn't it? Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits, by how they love one another, how they take care of each other, especially those who are in need. It's a great reminder that faith isn't meant to be lived in isolation. It's meant to be lived out in community, expressed in our relationships, and lived out in how we engage with the world around us.

In James's letter, even though it's often overlooked, it provides a compelling and insightful guide for that journey of putting our faith into practice. It encourages us to think deeply, to act courageously, and to live out the transformative power of the gospel in a way that makes a real difference in the world. It's a letter that invites us to bring hope and healing to a world that so desperately needs both.

I love that. Now, before we wrap things up, let's address that elephant in the room. We've been talking about the new covenant and about putting our faith into action, but what about the apparent conflict between James's focus on works and Paul's emphasis on faith?

How do we reconcile those two seemingly opposing viewpoints? They just seem so different.

It's a question that's been debated by theologians for centuries, but you know what? Maybe it's not about two completely opposing viewpoints, but about two different ways of emphasizing the same truth. So they're both trying to say something important, but they're approaching it from different angles. Yeah, exactly.

Paul focuses on that inner transformation that happens when we put our faith in Christ, and then James is all about highlighting how that transformed life actually plays out in the things we do. So it's not faith versus works, but faith expressed through works, right? Like they're two sides of the same coin. Both are necessary for a complete understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Yes, you've got it. And that's exactly what makes James's letter so relevant, so challenging even today. It's calling us to move beyond just empty words and superficial faith.

It's about embodying the love and compassion of Christ in everything we do, not just talking about it. It's not just about getting our theology right. It's about letting our faith shape how we live every single day.

And James gives us this practical, down-to-earth guide for how to actually do that. That's what I love about James. He's practical, he's down-to-earth, and he doesn't let us off easy.

He challenges us to live out our faith in a way that truly impacts the world around us. Now, another theme that really stands out in James's letter is his emphasis on the power of words. He keeps coming back to it again and again, stressing how important it is to be mindful of what we say.

Why do you think this topic received so much attention in his letter? I think it reflects a profound understanding of the connection between our inner lives and our outward actions. James understood that our words are not just empty sounds floating out into the air; they're powerful. They have the potential to shape relationships; they can build up, or they can tear down, and they can even influence who we become, both individually and as a community.

So it's not just about avoiding gossip or trying not to say anything mean, but recognizing that our words can actually make a difference in the world. They can heal, they can encourage, they can bring about positive change, and they can even point people towards God. Yeah.

Both James and Proverbs challenge us to see our words as gifts. Think about that. Our words are gifts.

They're tools that we can use to reflect God's love and wisdom to the people around us. That's a powerful way to think about it. It's so easy to get caught up in the negativity and division that we see all around us, but this reminds us that we have a choice.

We can choose to use our words for good, to build people up, to offer hope, and to help create a world where everyone feels loved and valued. Right. And you know, James and

Proverbs don't just tell us what to do; they give us practical tips too, like be slow to speak, be quick to listen, and think before you say something.

Consider how your words might affect the person you're talking to. So it's not about never saying anything or being silent all the time. It's about learning to speak in a way that's thoughtful and respectful.

Speak with grace. Yes. And that's the kind of speech that builds healthy relationships.

That's the kind of speech that creates strong communities. And that's the kind of speech that helps to make the world a more peaceful place. You know, we've highlighted a lot of similarities between James and Proverbs, but are there any major differences between them? Anything we should keep in mind as we study these two books? One of the most significant differences has to do with the context in which they were written.

Proverbs, that's coming from ancient Israel, right? But James, he was writing within the early Christian church. And that difference shapes their message in some pretty significant ways. So they're both dealing with wisdom.

They're both concerned with ethical living. But they come at it from different angles, reflecting the unique beliefs and values of their communities. Exactly.

Like Proverbs often talks about fearing the Lord and seeking his wisdom, James focuses on living out your faith in Christ through actions of love and service. So both of them offer timeless wisdom that can speak to us today. But we do need to be mindful of those contextual differences as we interpret and apply their teachings.

Yes. And that's a really good rule of thumb for studying any part of the Bible. Understand the historical, cultural, and literary context, and really grasp what it meant back then and how it applies to our lives today.

That's great advice. And speaking of applying those teachings, one question that keeps coming to mind for me is how James connects the idea of the new covenant with his call to put our faith into action. How do those two things fit together in his thinking? That's a great question.

Earlier, we talked about how central the new covenant is to Christian belief. It's this radical shift in how we relate to God, a shift that's made possible through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Right.

And the lecture source highlighted how the new covenant comes with certain promises and expectations. It's about forgiveness, the Holy Spirit living within us, and the ability to live a life that's actually pleasing to God. Yes.

And it's not just about a change in our label, our status, right? It's a change in our very being. It empowers us to actually live differently. So James, in his own way, seems to be spelling out what it actually means to live in that new covenant reality.

Exactly. His emphasis on putting our faith into action is not just an afterthought or something extra. It's an integral part of what it means to be living under that new covenant, covered by God's grace.

It's about receiving grace and letting it transform us from the inside out. So when James talks about caring for the poor and marginalized, or controlling our speech, or persevering through trials, or being persistent in prayer, it's not about trying to rack up points with God or to prove how good we are. It's about demonstrating the reality of the new life that we have because of what Christ did for us.

I think you've got it. James wants us to understand that the new covenant is not just some abstract theological idea; it's a lived reality. And it's a reality that should affect every single part of our lives, our thoughts, our words, our actions, our relationships, and how we engage with the world around us.

It's about aligning our lives with the values of God's kingdom. It's about justice and mercy and compassion, being at the heart of everything we do. Exactly.

James is inviting us to fully embrace that kingdom reality, to live as citizens of this new and better world, a world that's already being transformed by God's grace and love. I love how James manages to combine this incredibly challenging message with so much hope and encouragement. As we wrap up this part of our deep dive, I'm curious: what would you say is the main takeaway for our listeners as they think about James's letter and what it means for their own lives? If I had to sum it up in a single sentence, I'd say this.

James's letter is a call to action. It's a challenge to move beyond empty words and superficial expressions of faith and to truly live out the love of Christ in tangible, practical ways in every single area of our lives. And that means being willing to take a look inward and ask ourselves some honest questions.

Are we really living in a way that aligns with what we say we believe? That's so important. And you know, James doesn't shy away from asking those tough questions. He wants us to think critically about how we treat other people, especially those who are less fortunate.

He wants us to examine how we use our words. Are we building people up or are we tearing them down? And he wants us to think about how we respond when things get difficult. James calls us to a life of integrity, compassion, and faithfulness, a life that demonstrates the true power of the gospel to change us from the inside out.

So it's not about trying to earn points with God or to prove how good we are. It's about letting those transformed hearts of ours, hearts that have been touched and changed by grace, letting them overflow into actions that show the world what we truly believe. You've got it.

And that's where that whole debate between James and Paul kind of fades away. It's not faith versus works. It's faith expressed through works.

It's about living out what you believe. Right. Like they're two sides of the same coin.

We need both to really understand what it means to follow Jesus. I couldn't agree more. And that's what makes James's letter so relevant and so challenging.

Even today, it pushes us to go beyond just talking about our faith and to truly live out the love and compassion of Christ in everything we do. It's not just about what we believe. It's about how we live.

It's about putting our faith into action in a way that impacts the world around us. And you know what I love about James? He gives us this incredibly practical guide for how to do that. He does.

And that message, it goes straight to the heart of the gospel, right? Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits, by how they love each other and how they care for those who are in need. It's a powerful reminder that faith isn't meant to be lived in isolation, just me and Jesus. It's meant to be shared.

It's meant to be expressed. It's meant to be lived out in our relationships, in our communities, and in how we engage with the world around us. In James's letter, even though it's often overlooked, it provides such a practical and insightful guide for that journey of putting our faith into practice.

It encourages us to think deeply, to act courageously, and to live out the transformative power of the gospel in a way that brings hope and healing to a world that so desperately needs both. It really does. James doesn't pull any punches.

He challenges us to take a good, hard look at ourselves and to honestly ask, are we walking the walk or are we just talking the talk? And he doesn't just leave us hanging with those tough questions, does he? He actually gives us practical guidance on what it looks like to live out our faith authentically. Right. He gets specific.

He talks about controlling our anger, showing hospitality to strangers, taking care of the poor and the marginalized, using our words to build others up, and persevering through trials. It's a whole way of life. It's like he's saying, okay, here's what it means to put your faith into action.

This is what it looks like to live as a follower of Jesus day in and day out. You got it. And that's what makes James so challenging and so relevant even today.

He's not letting us off the hook with just believing the right things. He's calling us to live differently. He's calling us to a life of integrity, compassion, and faithfulness, a life that shows the world what the power of the gospel can really do.

It's not about trying to earn our salvation through good deeds, but about letting our transformed hearts- hearts that have been changed by God's grace- overflow into actions that show what we truly believe. And I think that's where that whole debate about James and Paul really starts to fade away. It's not faith versus works.

It's faith expressed through works. They're two sides of the same coin. We need both to have a complete picture of what it means to follow Jesus.

And that's what makes James's letter so powerful and so timely. He pushes us to move beyond empty words, to move beyond superficial expressions of faith, and to truly embody the love and compassion of Christ in all that we do. It's not just about talking the talk.

It's about walking the walk. It's about putting our faith into action in a way that impacts the world around us. Well said.

And, you know, one of the most striking things about James's letter is how much he focuses on the power of words. He keeps coming back to this idea that what we say matters, that it has real weight. Why do you think he gives so much attention to our speech? You know, I think it shows just how deeply James understood the connection between our inner lives and our outward actions.

He knew that our words aren't just empty noises that we make. They have the potential to shape relationships. They can build up or tear down.

And they can even influence who we become, both individually and as a community. So it's not just about avoiding gossip or trying not to say anything mean. It's about recognizing that what we say can actually have a real impact on the world around us.

Our words can heal. They can encourage. They can bring about positive change.

And they can even point people towards God. Exactly. And both James and Proverbs challenge us to view our words as gifts.

Like, think about that: our words are gifts. They're tools we can use to reflect God's love and wisdom to the people around us. That's a really beautiful way to think about it.

It's so easy to get caught up in all the negativity and division that we see in the world. But this reminds us that we have a choice. We can choose to use our words for good, to build people up, to offer hope, and to create a world where everyone feels loved and valued.

Right. And James and Proverbs don't just tell us what to do. They give us practical advice.

They say, think before you speak. Consider how your words might affect the person you're talking to. Be slow to speak and be quick to listen.

So it's not about never saying anything or always being quiet. It's about learning to speak in a way that is thoughtful, respectful, and full of grace. Exactly.

That kind of speech creates strong relationships. It builds healthy communities. And it helps make the world a more peaceful place.

Well, as we wrap up our deep dive into the New Covenant and the Book of James, I want to thank you for this amazing conversation. You've given us so much to think about. It's been my pleasure.

James is a book that's packed with wisdom and challenges, and I hope our listeners feel inspired to dive in and explore it for themselves. Me too. He challenges us to live out our faith in a way that's real, that's authentic, and that makes a difference in the world.

And honestly, in a world that so often feels chaotic and divided, who couldn't use a little more of that? So thanks for joining us, Deep Divers. Until next time, keep seeking truth and keep living out your faith in a way that makes the world a brighter place.