

Purpose To help class members understand the characteristics we should develop to live our religion more fully.

Preparation

1. Read, ponder, and pray about the following scriptures:
 - a. James 1:1–4; 5:10–11. James teaches that we should endure affliction patiently.
 - b. James 1:5–7; 4:8. James teaches that we should pray to God in faith.
 - c. James 1:19–20, 26; 3:2–18. James teaches that we should control our tongues and be “slow to wrath.”
 - d. James 1:22–25, 27; 2:14–26; 4:17. James teaches that we should be “doers of the word,” showing our faith by our works.
2. Additional Reading: Bible Dictionary, “James,” 709; “James, Epistle of,” 709–10.
3. Suggestion for teaching: “Teach the reality of personal communication from and to God. Help each individual understand how to pray worthily and how to receive and recognize answers from God” (Richard G. Scott, “Four Fundamentals for Those Who Teach and Inspire Youth,” in *CES Old Testament Symposium Speeches, 1987* [1987], 3).

Suggested Lesson Development

Attention Activity As appropriate, use the following activity or one of your own to begin the lesson.

Write *Pure religion* on the chalkboard, and ask the following questions:

- What does the word *pure* mean? (Answers may include real, genuine, complete, and perfect.) What does *religion* mean? (Answers may include the service and worship of God, a system of beliefs and practices, and a commitment or devotion to a particular way of life.)
- How would you define pure religion?

Ask a class member to read James 1:27. Explain that this lesson discusses how we can apply James’s teachings to help us live a “pure religion” and be “undefiled before God.”

Scripture Discussion and Application As you discuss the teachings in the book of James, list them on the chalkboard under the heading *Pure religion*. Discuss how each concept taught by James can help us live a pure religion.

Explain that the writer of the book of James is generally thought to be the brother of Jesus Christ. After Jesus was resurrected, James served as an Apostle and was an important leader in the early Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13–20).

1. We should endure affliction patiently.

Read and discuss James 1:1–4; 5:10–11.

- What did James teach about facing trials of our faith? (See James 1:2–3 and footnote 2a, which shows that in the Joseph Smith Translation, the phrase *divers temptations* is changed to *many afflictions*.) How can trials help us develop patience? How are we blessed when we endure afflictions patiently? (See James 1:4; Romans 5:3–5; Alma 36:3.)

Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote: “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God” (quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 98).

- Whom did James mention as good examples of patience in affliction? (See James 5:10–11.) How have you seen latter-day prophets demonstrate this patience? How has their example helped you?

2. We should pray to God in faith.

Read and discuss James 1:5–7 and 4:8.

- What counsel did James give to those who “lack wisdom”? (See James 1:5–6.) What will Heavenly Father do if we ask in faith? What experiences have you had with receiving answers to prayer?
- How was the Prophet Joseph Smith influenced by the counsel in James 1:5? (See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–13.) What can we learn from his experience? How did Joseph’s decision to follow the counsel in James 1:5 affect us? (See Joseph Smith—History 1:14–20.)

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “Because the fourteen-year-old boy went out in the woods to pray, having read in the scriptures, . . . because he did live the revelations from on high, we have The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have all of the blessings that can make us the happiest people in the whole world, because a boy of fourteen went out into the woods to pray” (in Conference Report, Melbourne Australia Area Conference 1976, 23).

If you are teaching youth, testify that asking of God in faith and receiving wisdom are not limited by age or other circumstances. Joseph Smith was 14 years old when he put James’s words to the test and received the First Vision. He was 17 years old when the angel Moroni visited him and revealed where the golden plates were being safeguarded.

- How did James describe those who pray without faith? (See James 1:6–7.) What can we do to strengthen our faith?
- James taught, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). How does sincere prayer bring us closer to God?

3. We should control our tongues and be “slow to wrath.”

Discuss James 1:19–20, 26; 3:2–18. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud.

- James taught that we should be “swift to hear, slow to speak” (James 1:19). What experiences in your life have confirmed the wisdom of this counsel? How can we become better listeners and more thoughtful speakers?
- James also taught we should be “slow to wrath” (James 1:19). What are some consequences of speaking or acting in anger? What experiences in your life have confirmed the wisdom of James’s counsel? How can we overcome or control feelings of anger?
- James taught that we should bridle our tongues (James 1:26). What is the purpose of a horse’s bridle? (To guide and control the horse.) How can we apply James’s counsel to “bridle” our tongues? (See James 4:11. Answers could include by avoiding gossiping, lies, quarreling, swearing, and angry words. Instead, we should use our tongues to speak kind words, to speak truth, to pray, and to make peace.)
- Read James 3:3–5. What did James compare the tongue to in these verses? (The bit on a horse’s bridle and the helm of a ship. You may want to explain that the bit is the steel part of the bridle that is inserted into the horse’s mouth.) What can we learn from these comparisons? How can learning to control our words help us control other aspects of our lives?
- Read James 3:9–13. What did James teach in these verses about controlling our speech? (Discuss applications of this counsel with class members. For example, if any class members are priests, you might discuss the importance of keeping their speech pure during the week so they can worthily bless the sacrament on Sunday. A similar application could be made for those who teach the gospel.)
- How can controlling our tongues help lead to peace? (See James 3:16–18.) Why is controlling our tongues an important part of pure religion?

4. We should be “doers of the word,” showing our faith by our works.

Read and discuss selected verses from James 1:22–25, 27; 2:14–26; 4:17.

- What does it mean to be “hearers only” of the word? (James 1:22). In what sense do “hearers only” deceive themselves? (See James 1:22–25; 4:17.) What are the blessings of being “doers of the word”?
- What did James teach about the relationship between faith and works? (See James 2:14–26.) Why is faith dead without works? How do good works strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ?
- What did James emphasize that we should do to live a pure religion? (See James 1:27 or remind class members of the attention activity.) Why do you think visiting and helping people in need is part of pure religion?
- What can we do to stay “unspotted from the world”? (James 1:27; see D&C 59:9). How does attending church and partaking of the sacrament each week help us stay unspotted from the world?

Conclusion	Testify of the truth of James’s teachings. Emphasize that we can live our religion more purely by being patient in affliction, praying to God in faith, mastering ourselves, and doing good works.
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Additional

Teaching Ideas

The following material supplements the suggested lesson outline. You may want to use one or more of these ideas as part of the lesson.

1. Class member presentations

The week before this lesson is to be taught, ask five class members to each study a different chapter of James. At the beginning of class (just after the attention activity, if you use it), have these people share their insights into the chapters they studied.

2. Video presentation

Read James 1:27 and then show “The Body Is a Temple,” a six-minute video segment from *New Testament Video Presentations* (53914). Discuss what this video presentation teaches about keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.

3. Additional discussion of the book of James

- In the Joseph Smith Translation of James 1:12, the word *endureth* is changed to *resisteth* (see footnote 12*b*). What is the difference between enduring temptation and resisting temptation? What are the promises to those who resist temptation? (See James 1:12; 4:7.)
- What did James teach about judging others? (See James 2:1–9.) Why do some people judge others by their earthly positions or material possessions? How can we learn to look beyond the outward appearance and into people’s hearts, as God does? (See 1 Samuel 16:7; D&C 38:24–27.)
- What did James teach about the effects of envy and lust? (See James 3:16; 4:1–6.) How can we overcome feelings of envy or lust? (See James 4:7–10.)
- What did James teach about administering to the sick? (See James 5:14–15.) How have you been blessed or seen others be blessed by the healing power of the priesthood?
- James emphasized the importance of helping people who “err from the truth” (James 5:19–20). How can we do this?