

# JAMES

GENUINE FAITH ON DISPLAY

## NO NEED TO SWEAR

GENUINE FAITH TELLS THE TRUTH

JAMES 5:12

# A HISTORY OF LIES

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- Satan lied to Eve, “You surely will not die” (Gen. 3:4-5)
- Cain lied to God after killing Abel: “I do not know [where my brother is]” (Gen. 4:9)
- Abraham lied saying Sarah was his sister (Gen 12:11–13; 20:2).
- Isaac lied by claiming Rebekah was his sister (Gen 18:15).
- Jacob lied in pretending to be his brother Esau (Gen. 27:19, 24).
- Herod lying that he wanted to worship Jesus (Matt 2:8).
- Peter lying that he didn’t know Jesus (Matt 26:70–74).
- Jewish leaders lying about Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 28:12–15).
- False teachers lying about the gospel (1 Tim 4:1–2).

# WHY DO PEOPLE LIE?

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- Fear of consequences for an action committed.
  - Desire for personal gain.
  - Fear of what other people may think – make yourself look better, or at least not so bad.
  - Avoidance of conflict or avoiding a difficult conversation.
  - Manipulating a person or a situation.
  - Habit (enslaving sinful pattern).
- ⇒ **Common denominator: selfishness.**

# OUTLINE OF JAMES

Section	James	Marks of Genuine Faith
	1:1	Greeting
1	1:2-18	Genuine Faith Considers Trials as Joy
2	1:19-27	Genuine Faith Receives the Word
3	2:1-13	Genuine Faith Loves without Favoritism
4	2:14-26	Genuine Faith Produces Good Works
5	3:1-12	Genuine Faith is Shown in Your Speech
6	3:13-18	Genuine Faith Exhibits a Humble Wisdom
7	4:1-10	Genuine Faith Seeks God's Grace
8	4:11-12	Genuine Faith Recognizes One Judge
9	4:13-17	Genuine Faith Understands Dependence on God
10	5:1-11	Genuine Faith is Patient in God's Timing
<b>11</b>	<b>5:12</b>	<b>Genuine Faith Tells the Truth</b>
12	5:13-18	Genuine Faith Prays Powerfully
13	5:19-20	Genuine Faith Calls Others to Genuine Faith

# JAMES 5:12 THREE INSTRUCTIONS ON SWEARING

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But above all, my brethren, do not swear,  
either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath;  
but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no,  
so that you may not fall under judgment.

1. **The Restriction Against Swearing**
2. **The Remedy for Swearing**
3. **The Reason Not to Swear**

# 1. THE RESTRICTION AGAINST SWEARING (V.12A)

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**James 5:12a — But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath**

**James again addresses our speech -**

- Chapter 1: bridle the tongue.
- Chapter 2: do not speak down to those who are materially poor.
- Chapter 3: the destructive power of the tongue.
- Chapter 4: quarrels and conflicts among them.
- Chapter 5: do not complain against one another.

**Above all** – what is intended here?

⇒ Pay attention to this more than any other aspect of your speech.



## Do not swear.

- **swear** — although we use the word to refer to vulgar language or profanity, that is not what it is in view here. Other passages speak out against such ungodly language:

**Ephesians 4:29** — Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need of *the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

**Ephesians 5:3–4** — But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

## Do not swear.

- **swear** — “making of an oath, a promise, or a vow.”

Understanding the cultural context of this command is critical. The Mosaic Law did not forbid oaths, but any oath must never be broken.

- **Numbers 30:2** — “If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”
- **Leviticus 19:12** — “You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.”
- **Exodus 20:7** — “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.
- **Ecclesiastes 5:4–5** — When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for *He takes* no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! <sup>5</sup> It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.



## The Jewish religious leaders (wrongly) concluded that a person was only liable for vows invoking the name of God.

Understanding the cultural context of this command is critical. The Mosaic Law did not forbid oaths, but any oath made must never be broken.

- **Matthew 5:34–37** — “But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. <sup>36</sup> “Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.
- **Matthew 23:16–22** — “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, *that* is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ <sup>17</sup> “You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? <sup>18</sup> “And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, *that* is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’ <sup>19</sup> “You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? <sup>20</sup> “Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. <sup>21</sup> “And whoever swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. <sup>22</sup> “And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

## 2. THE REMEDY FOR SWEARING (V.12B)

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James 5:12b — **but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no**

Speaking the truth must characterize believers' lives:

### A. Our God is a God of truth.

- **1 Samuel 15:29** — “. . . the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.”
- **Psalms 119:160** — The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.
- **Romans 3:4** — . . . Let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, “THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED.”
- **Hebrews 6:18** — . . . that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

## B. God hates lies.

- **Psalms 5:6** — You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.
- **Proverbs 12:22** — Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.
- **Proverbs 6:16–19** — There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: <sup>17</sup> Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup> A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, <sup>19</sup> A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

## C. Lying is characteristic of an unbeliever.

- **John 8:44** — “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

## D. Liars will be thrown into the lake of fire.

- **Revelation 21:8** — “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

In contrast, a portrait of a godly man is given to us in Psalm 15.

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?

<sup>2</sup>He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart.

<sup>3</sup>He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

<sup>4</sup>In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the LORD; He swears to his own hurt and does not change;

<sup>5</sup>He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

## Are all oaths forbidden?

- It is true we should be so marked by integrity and honesty that anyone who knows us should never feel the need to make us swear – they know we will always speak the truth.
- But the reality is that we live in a world where men are prone to lie. Therefore, our legal systems require those giving testimony or serving in a jury to make an oath.
- Such taking of oaths is not foreign to Scripture:
  - a) The Mosaic Law required oaths to be taken at times (Ex. 22:10-11; Deut. 6:13).
  - b) The Apostle Paul occasionally gave oaths (Rom. 1:9-10; 2 Cor. 1:23).
  - c) God made oaths and swore by His own name (Gen. 26:3; Heb. 6:13-18).

**Therefore, Scripture is not calling us to never make an oath, but it is stating that we must tell the truth at all times no matter what oath precedes it!**



### 3. THE REASON NOT TO SWEAR (V.12C)

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James 5:12c — so that you may not fall under judgment.

What is meant here by falling under judgment?

- **Option 1:** Eternal judgment is in view. Scripture states that all liars will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). James is stating that those who lie do not have genuine faith.
  - **Option 2:** The coming judgment is a warning for both unbelievers and believers. Though there are two different judgments, all people should live aware that they will stand before the Judge one day.
- ⇒ This second option is more likely James' intent since he has often warned of judgment for both believers and unbelievers in this book. In addition, verse 12 comes very close after verse 9 which was a warning to believers of the coming Judge.



## What this passage is not saying . . .

- A. **Speaking the truth does not mean** to say all that you know, to everyone you know, at any time.
  - **Proverbs 17:27–28** — He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.
- B. **Speaking truth does not mean** you can speak harshly or cruelly toward others.
  - **Ephesians 4:29** — Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

# APPLICATION

1. Put off dishonest speech (Prov. 19:5).
2. Ask the Lord to renew your thinking.
3. Commit to unwavering honesty.