

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to How to Be A Grown Up, part two. This is an expository study through the book of James — which means we're going paragraph by paragraph through the whole book.
- B. Do this little mental exercise with me, some of you might remember this. Here are two facts, our mental exercise is to see how we can put them together.
 1. Fact one: in the Bible, King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived.
 2. Fact two: Solomon had over a thousand wives and concubines (mistresses).
- C. Let it sink in. On what planet can both of these facts possibly be true? What does this tell us?
 1. It tells us you can be very mature in certain areas of your life, and very immature in others.
- D. I am saying this because the argument of the book of James recognizes this. You can't partition God into some parts of your life, and partition him out of others, and call it good.
- E. Solomon partitioned God out of his sexuality, and even though he was incredibly wise and ridiculously successful and rich in a million other ways, he still, shall we say, suffered a lot of stress.
- F. So James talks to rich people who have it all together financially, and religious people who have it all together "churchially", and teachers who have it all together theologically, and business people who have it all together professionally, and leaders who are successful in leadership and says — you look very put together in so many areas, but in things that matter most, you're a mess.
 1. And what matters most is that your heart is filled with the truth and grace of God.
 - a) We need to push away from the kiddie table, take our seat at the grown up table, and enjoy a feast of grace and the fellowship of the King.
 - b) James is all about How to Be A Grown Up.
- G. So, a note about our procedure. This series will have nine parts, today is part two. Message by message, we will collect important principles about living as a mature person before God in the world.
 1. This is the Royal Family Honor Code.
- H. Our statement from last week was this:
 1. *EMOTIONAL OWNERSHIP: I take full ownership of my emotional state by the grace and power of God.*
 - a) That is what a mature human being does. That is what a mature Christian does. You count it all joy even in troubles. Your troubles don't yank you around and control your life.
 2. We will add another deep truth to the RFHC today. So that's our procedure.
- I. Another word on procedure: our weekly memory verse.
 1. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (James 1:2, 3, NKJV)* We will add another verse at the end today.
- J. Okay, here is our Scripture passage for today. I will read it, and then we'll break it down.

II. Scripture

- A. *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:13-18, NKJV)*
- B. You look at that and scratch your head, and ask what is this about? The Bible can be confusing.
- C. But I promise you what you see here is one of the most liberating and empowering statements you've ever heard in your life.
- D. Let's break it down line by line.

III. Exposition

- A. *Let no one say when he is tempted...*
 1. This is about moral temptation. Right and wrong. Good and evil. When there is a pull in your heart toward what is morally wrong, then there is something you should not say or even think about that temptation. So, when you are...
 - a) Tempted sexually. Tempted financially. Tempted in your choices. Tempted to unleash on somebody. Tempted to lie, cheat, steal, hate, exploit, discriminate, use, abuse, judge, condemn...Tempted to feel sorry for yourself...
 - (1) Basically, every time you feel a pull in your soul to do anything that your conscience knows is wrong... where does that come from? It does not come from God.
- B. *"I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*
 1. Don't. Blame. God...for your moral failures.
 2. God is holy. God is pure. God is good. That bad stuff can't come from him. He is un-temptable, and he is un-tempting.
 3. He doesn't tempt anybody. So where does temptation come from?
- C. *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*
 1. Well, doesn't this sound true! See those two little words "his own"? That word means "particular to you."
 2. There are certain temptations that will tempt me, but not you. Others will tempt you and not me.
 - a) Some are tempted to alcohol, some are not. Some are tempted to drugs, some are not. Some are tempted to porn, some are not. Some are tempted to religious self-righteousness and condemning people and proving why you're better, some are not. You have to know yourself. You need to know your triggers.
 3. Okay, so first I want to get grammatical on you, and then I want to get theological on you. Good with that?
 4. First grammatical... and this is where I really geek out.
 - a) Is drawn away...
 - b) And enticed...
 5. These words are a grammatical form called a participle. The first one is a passive voice participle — where you sit back and passively allow yourself to be drawn away into temptation.

6. But the second one is something called a middle voice participle. That's where you hop on board and actively promote the temptation into sin.
 - a) In the first one, you're a passive recipient. In the second one, you're an active participant.
7. All of which is to say that even the fine points of Greek grammar are pointing to a *progression* where sin starts as a temptation "out there" that you had nothing to do with, but then you hop on board, and fan the flames, and meet it with unchecked desire "in here."
8. So much for the grammar nerds. Now, let's show some love to the theology nerds, which I hope is everybody.

IV. Theology

A. Theology means this:

1. *Theology is how we organize our thoughts about God.*
2. *Theology is how we organize everything the Bible teaches on a certain topic.*
 - a) So there are a bunch of big topics.
 - (1) Who is God, what is he like? (Theology Proper)
 - (2) What will happen in the future when Jesus returns? (Eschatology)?
 - (3) What is salvation and how did Jesus bring it about? (Soteriology)
 - (4) Who am I? What is a human? What is our origin? What is our destiny? (Anthropology)

B. And that is the one we want right now. *Biblical Anthropology*. How does a human work?

C. So let me set this up, and then bring it home:

1. As a human, you are a body, soul, and spirit, created in the image of God. Because you are created in the image of God, you are sacred. You have something no other creature has, and therefore belong to God, are created for him, and one day are going back to him.
2. Your body is made of matter — it is called your material essence. With your body, you relate to the world around you through your five senses.
3. Your soul is not made of matter, though it interacts with your body. This is called your immaterial essence. Your soul has...
 - a) Mind, Will, Emotions. So you are body, soul, and spirit.
4. Your spirit is not made of matter either. Your soul and your spirit are both immaterial. In fact, when your body dies, your soul and spirit will live forever, either with God or without him.
 - a) Your soul is the part of you that interacts with the world and people and culture.
 - b) But your spirit is the part of you that interacts with God. With transcendence. With ultimate reality.

D. Now, more biblical anthropology: when God created Adam and Eve, they had were perfect in body, soul, and spirit.

E. But when sin entered the world, everything got splattered with the devil's acid spit.

1. The body got sick and started to die.
2. The soul got corrupted, so that our minds are broken, our will are prone to evil, and our emotions are dysfunctional.
3. The spirit shriveled up and died, so that they became spiritually dead — numb and unresponsive to God.
 - a) In other words, human nature became radically corrupted. We see it in the headlines every single day.
 - (1) You are a sinner from a long line of sinners. It's in your DNA, and not just your literal, physical DNA, but in your spiritual and emotional DNA too.

F. This corruption of our human nature pushes us away from God. There is something inside of us that pulls us away from God, something that wants bad stuff that God doesn't want.

G. The Bible gives this dark side of us a name. It is called "the flesh." I call it your inner mess. CS Lewis called in the shadowy zoo with in. It is your dark side. The part of you that wants things God doesn't want you to want.

H. There is a dark side in you. I don't care how churchy you are. There is a dark side in you.

I. *The flesh is the part of your being that is morally broken beyond human repair.*

1. *Romans 7:18 says "in my flesh dwells no good thing." (Not a reference to your body, but to the corrupt part of your nature).*
2. *Romans 8:8 says "those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*
3. *Galatians 5:7 says that "the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to one another..."*
4. *[Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like... (Galatians 5:19-21)]*
 - a) Your moral DNA is broken, your spiritual DNA is broken, your relational DNA is broken, your sexual DNA is broken. Sin has mutated your being, both materially and immaterially.
 - b) You're a moral mess inside, even if you're the wisest king who ever lived on the outside.

J. Biblical anthropology teaches us one of the most important things you can ever know yourself, and it teaches us to set up the liberating truth I promised at the beginning:

1. *When temptation hits you from the outside, it finds a self-sabotaging ally on the inside called your flesh.*

K. And the outward temptation meshes perfectly with a twisted inward desire. It locks in. It stimulates an already-existing desire. It scratches where you itch. Temptation makes you salivate more for something you already crave... and above all else, *temptation makes your mind irrational enough to justify giving in*. All of this is your flesh, and until you can handle it, you will always be a victim of forces outside your control such as, um, temptations.

L. We already know that the fallen world is a morally broken pain machine.

1. Now, we can add this...
 - a) *The unredeemed heart is a morally twisted sin machine.*
 - (1) You are responsible. There is no impersonal agent here. No "one thing led to another." No I don't know, "it just happened." What do you mean "It." No. It was you! There is No, "I couldn't help myself."
 - (2) Never say couldn't or can't when you ought to say wouldn't or won't. Don't pretend to be morally disabled.

- M. So James is pointing out how the sin machine works:
- N. *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*
 - 1. When your dark side is turned on, you're giving birth to sin. And when sin is full grown — when sin grows mature — it gives birth to death. And the death here is not physical death — it is wishing for physical death because you are so sad, and so hopeless, and so trapped you can't take it any more.
 - a) This is why King Solomon, the wisest, stupidest man who ever lived could say:
 - (1) *Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. (Ecclesiastes 2:17)*
 - (a) He hated his life. He had so much going on that was great, but he couldn't crack the code of rising about his fleshly lusts. Do you know anybody who ever ever ever feels that way? Meet the flesh. And any one of us can be in this condition on the inside, but look so put together on the outside.
- O. Then he adds...
- V. *Do not be deceived my beloved brethren. (James 1:16)*
 - A. Which means, do not allow your pursuit of life wander off the path of reality.
 - B. Biblical Anthropology is the only way to really understand the machinery that spinning inside you all the time.
 - C. AND... it's the only way to really understand how to rise above it... which is what comes next:
- VI. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17)*
 - A. There is an unchanging provision in your Father in Heaven that, if you will turn to him, will meet the cravings, the needs, the lusts, the desires, the hopes, and the dreams in your heart in ways so satisfying that your flesh can only crawl away like the sniveling coward it is. The way to rise above the flesh is to understand that the flesh makes a promise it never can fulfill.
 - B. What is temptation? Temptation is the enticement to sin. Wait, that's too religious.
 - C. What is temptation?
 - 1. *All temptation is a suggested shortcut to the realization of a good goal.*
 - a) Good goal: money in the bank. Shortcut: steal it, beg it, contrive live off the sweat of another person's brow.
 - b) Good goal: sexual satisfaction: Shortcut: take it by force, find it artificially through porn, indulge in sex outside of the commitment of marriage.
 - c) Good goal: a sense of peace and relaxation. Shortcut: chemicals that will ultimately damage your brain and break your family.
 - (1) When you are tempted, you are actually looking for something GOOD. That's what makes temptation so tempting!!! There's something so *good* at the end of that fishing line.
 - 2. So here you are, trying to gain something good over and over again, but you're being led around by the flesh, so you take shortcuts.
 - a) Hey King Solomon, what good goal are you after?
 - (1) Love and sexual gratification.
 - b) How are you chasing that?
 - (1) A thousand wives and concubines.
 - c) How's that working out for you?
 - (1) I hate my life.
 - 3. Because you're looking for love in all the wrong places... AND you're looking for good in all the wrong places. Temptation is a suggested — but fake — shortcut to the realization of a good goal. So along comes James to remind you of something you already know. EVERY GOOD comes *from God*. Every good goal,. Every good gift. Turn. To. Him. Because these good things drop down *from above*. Every single one of them.
 - 4. I don't know what good you seek today, but I know its actually fulfillment comes from above. Love. Friendship. A job. Guidance. Freedom from addiction. Freedom from depression (BTW... as I'm grieving the fire, I'd say I'm in the depression stage of grief right now). Whatever good you seek...
 - 5. If you want to find the good stuff in your life, you have to look above. Look to your Father. Because when you acquire your good things his way, on his terms, as specified in the Bible, those good things never leave you with regrets.
 - D. And James says you can count on him. He is the father of lights, a reference to the stars. And there is no sunrise or sunset or shadows or lengthening days and nights with him. He is a steady-state giver, and provider, and father, and friend. No variableness at all. I have followed God for many years, and though I can say I have let him down more times than I can count, he has never let me down even once. That is the grace of God in James. But it gets better:
- VII. *Of His own will He brought us forth [gave us birth] by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:18)*
 - A. How do you rise above the craziness of the flesh?
 - B. This verse drove me crazy until it made sense. Then it blew me away. I kept wondering, how does it all fit together? It's so random.
 - C. No. It's ridiculously coherent and powerful.
 - D. Let's break it down.
 - 1. *Of his own will...* God's free choice. We didn't earn this. Work for it. Deserve it or make it happen. His love, his mercy, his will, his grace.
 - 2. *He brought us forth...* He gave birth to us. This is salvation. This is being saved, being born again by the power of grace. This is regeneration. I was spiritually dead, but now I am spiritually alive.
 - 3. There are two births in this paragraph. We give birth to sin. He gave birth to us. When did he give birth to us? When we were saved. When we believed the truth called the gospel... That's the next phrase —

4. *By the word of his truth...* By means of the precise communication that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose again to bring us to God and to forgive us and to make us God's children forever. The moment you believe in Jesus, God born you again. Why?
5. *That we might be a kind of firstfruits...* This is the thing that I couldn't figure out. I know what first fruits means. It's a kind of offering in the Old Testament. If you're a farmer, and you have a field, you give the first of your harvest as an offering to God. If you're a rancher, you give the first of your round up as an offering to God. You give God the first and the best. So far, so good. But what does first fruits have to do with anything in this paragraph? It was driving me nuts, so I kept studying till I found this magical verse:
 - a) *For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. (Romans 11:16)*
6. Makes everything clear, right? No?
7. If you have a lump of dough, and give the first bit of it to God as firstfruits, it makes the whole lump holy. That's how God operates.
8. What in the world does this mean?
9. This is about metaphorical DNA.
10. It means that the DNA of the first fruits is seen by God as the DNA of the whole thing.
11. Meaning?
12. When you came into this world, you were messed up by sin, and under the dominion of the flesh. Your moral, relational, sexual DNA was twisted and warped into a hot mess.
13. But now what has God done? He has made you born again... which means that you now have NEW SPIRITUAL DNA. And this defines everything about you. In fact it is going to define everything about the whole creation and cosmos that has entered the covenant of God's redeeming work in Christ.
- E. What does this mean? James is saying that...
 1. *In salvation, God creates in you a new spiritual DNA.*
 - a) What defines the lifestyle of an unbeliever — the flesh, the old broken DNA.
 - b) What defines the lifestyle of an immature believer in Jesus — the flesh, the old broken DNA. You're still walking in the flesh.
 - c) What defines the lifestyle of a mature believer in Jesus? Your new DNA as a born again child of God.
 - d) The has been deposed. Its power is broken. You are no longer defined by the flesh, but by the Spirit and by your new birth in Christ. That is who you are. That is what you have.
 2. *Because you have new DNA, you have new empowerment to no longer be yanked around by your flesh.*
 3. The day you became a Christian, you received power over the flesh that you never had before. Sin has no dominion over you. Satan has no dominion over you. The flesh has no dominion over you. Temptation has no dominion over you.
 4. S if you really want to sit at the grown up table, you have to stop making excuses.
 5. Which lead is to RFHC #2: (for grown ups only, or those who want to grow)
 - a) *MORAL RESPONSIBILITY: I take full responsibility for my moral choices and their consequences, because I have been empowered by God to live in victory over every single temptation.*
 - (1) You don't have to stay stuck in addiction and defeat.
 - (2) You don't have to give in to the same temptations over and over again.
 - (3) You don't have say the devil made me do it.
 - (4) You don't have to take it out on God any more.
 - (5) No more excuses.
 - (6) No more blaming others.
 - (7) No more victimhood.
 - (8) The devil didn't make you do it.
 - (9) You could help yourself and you always can.
 - (a) If you sin, own it. Because until you own it, you're stuck.
 - (10) Your hormones aren't in charge of your life, you are.
 6. What God has done is to move the locus of control from your lusts back to you. He has taken power from your drives, and given you the scepter, never lay it down. You have moral responsibility BECAUSE you have moral power.
 7. The day you take full responsibility for your moral choices is the day you will take your seat with the mature, growing, noble, family of faith seated at a table set for royalty.
- F. Memory verse:
 1. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (James 1:2, 3, NKJV)*
 2. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17, NKJV)*