

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

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Study Guide

# Deceived or Devoted? | James 1:16-18 | Thomas Slager

Unknown Speaker  
February 9, 2026

## Major Points

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- 1 Do not be deceived by the world — Satan uses deception through half-truths to lead us into sin, which ultimately produces death in physical, spiritual, or experiential forms.**  
*James 1:16*
- 2 Every good gift is common grace extended to all people, while every perfect gift is specifically designed to sanctify believers and make them more like Christ.**  
*James 1:17*
- 3 God is the unchanging Father of lights — unlike His shifting creation, God's character and goodness never change, giving us assurance in every season.**  
*James 1:17*
- 4 Remember who you are — God's firstfruits, brought forth by His own will through the word of truth, called to live as devoted children of the Most High God.**  
*James 1:18*

## Key Quotes

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- “We receive good gifts for the purpose of being reminded there's a good and perfect giver.”*  
at 22:13
- “You experience healing in your life. What a beautiful gift, but don't forget that healing came from a healer. Worship the healer, not the healing.”*  
at 23:17
- “God is the same as he was yesterday. He is who he always has been and he will continue to be who he is forever. God is good and what he does is good. That will not change.”*  
at 26:41
- “God, thank you that you don't waste our pain. You don't waste our suffering. God, you continue to perfect us. You continue to complete us.”*  
at 38:56
- “You are God's firstfruits, the one who created all things, the one who created all good, the one who created all perfect, the one who created everything for us to enjoy and experience in this life. He loves you. He's for you. He's good. He's perfect. Remember who you are.”*  
at 35:42

## Discussion Questions

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1. Pastor Slager talked about three different ways we can be deceived — deceived into sinning, deceived into thinking God tempts us, and deceived into thinking good things come from somewhere other than God. Which of these three do you find most relevant to your own life right now, and why?  
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2. The sermon drew a distinction between 'good gifts' (God's common grace available to all people) and 'perfect gifts' (things that move us toward Christlikeness). How does understanding this distinction change the way you think about everyday blessings versus spiritual growth?  
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3. Pastor Slager emphasized that God doesn't change — unlike the shifting stars and moon He created. When you're going through a difficult season, how does the unchanging nature of God practically bring you comfort, or is that something you struggle to feel?  
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4. The Lion King illustration was used to make the point 'remember who you are.' James was reminding persecuted believers of their identity as God's firstfruits. In what ways do guilt, shame, or hard circumstances cause you to forget your identity as a child of God, and what helps you remember?  
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5. Pastor Slager said the gifts we receive are meant to point us back to the Giver — 'worship the Healer, not the healing.' Can you think of a time when you got so focused on a blessing or provision that you forgot to give thanks to the One who provided it? How can we guard against that?  
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## Word Studies

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## **teleios**

*Greek*

Complete, mature, having reached its intended end or purpose — not merely moral flawlessness but the state of being brought to full fruition.

## **aparch 0**

*Greek*

The firstfruits or first portion of a harvest, set apart as sacred and offered to God, signifying consecration and priority among a larger group.

## **parallag 0**

*Greek*

Variation, change, or shifting — used astronomically of the apparent movement of celestial bodies, here emphasizing God's absolute immutability.

## **Cross References**

### **Malachi 3:6**

God declares 'I, Yahweh, don't change,' directly paralleling James's assertion that there is no variation or shadow of turning in God — grounding the NT teaching of divine immutability in an OT prophetic declaration.

### **Deuteronomy 26:1-4**

The OT firstfruits offering required Israel to bring the first of their harvest to God as an act of consecration; James draws on this imagery to describe believers as God's firstfruits among His creatures, showing they are set apart and precious to Him.

### **Hebrews 13:8**

Declares that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever — reinforcing James's point that the Father of lights has no shifting shadow, extending divine unchangeableness to the Son as well.

### **Isaiah 45:7**

God claims sovereignty over light and darkness, prosperity and calamity; this OT passage provides a broader theological backdrop for understanding God as the Father of lights who is the ultimate source of all good.

### **1 John 1:5**

John declares that 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' echoing James's 'Father of lights' language and reinforcing that God's nature contains no deception, evil, or shadow.

## Further Reading

- **The Epistle of James (Pillar New Testament Commentary)**  
*by Douglas J. Moo*
- **Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work**  
*by Timothy Keller*
- **None Like Him: 10 Ways God Is Different from Us (and Why That's a Good Thing)**  
*by Jen Wilkin*

## Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
James 1:16-18	Read Aloud	6:18	<i>Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every goo...</i>
Matthew 5:43-45	Read Aloud	15:51	<i>"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love ...</i>
James 1:13	Read Aloud	13:13	<i>Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tem...</i>
Genesis 3:1-13	Referenced	10:55	<i>Now the serpent was more subtle than any animal of...</i>
Genesis 1:26	Referenced	11:56	<i>God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our...</i>
John 1:1-2	Read Aloud	28:15	<i>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was wi...</i>
John 3:3-6	Referenced	29:15	<i>Jesus answered him, "Most certainly, I tell you, u...</i>
1 Corinthians 15:7	Referenced	2:52	<i>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostle...</i>
Numbers 23:19	Read Aloud	27:14	<i>God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of ma...</i>
Romans 1:16	Referenced	32:20	<i>For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Christ, b...</i>
Psalms 145:9	Referenced	15:31	<i>Yahweh is good to all. His tender mercies are over...</i>
James 1:1	Referenced	0:42	<i>James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Chri...</i>
James 1:2-3	Referenced	1:00	<i>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into ...</i>
Matthew 4:5	Referenced	3:38	<i>Then the devil took him into the holy city. He set...</i>
1 Peter 5:8	Referenced	11:07	<i>Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your ad...</i>
John 3:27	Referenced	15:20	<i>John answered, "A man can receive nothing, unless ...</i>
Colossians 1:16-17	Referenced	17:08	<i>For by him all things were created, in the heavens...</i>
Matthew 5:46-48	Read Aloud	18:26	<i>For if you love those who love you, what reward do...</i>
Romans 3:10-12	Referenced	19:02	<i>As it is written, "There is no one righteous:</i>
Romans 3:23	Referenced	19:08	<i>for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory o...</i>
Romans 7:25	Referenced	19:18	<i>I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So the...</i>
James 1:4	Referenced	19:35	
Romans 5:3-4	Referenced	20:57	

John 1:14	Referenced	28:30
James 1:15	Referenced	28:55
John 14:6	Referenced	30:25
2 Corinthians 5:17	Referenced	30:52
Romans 8:28	Referenced	36:54
John 3:16	Referenced	36:25
John 1:12	Referenced	37:09
Ephesians 2:2	Referenced	8:28
John 10:10	Referenced	11:00
Romans 6:23	Referenced	10:10