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**PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT** 2

*Mike Braun
Governor of Indiana*

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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

Don't Derail God's Spiritual Growth Plan



The book of James,¹ which was written A.D. 44–49, was the earliest book written in the New Testament (NT). In this little book—it's only five chapters—James addresses how we are to inculcate wisdom into our lives. Or, better, he reveals the basis and means by which God instills His wisdom. Think of wisdom as the skill of living life for His glory.

This week we take a look at how becoming spiritually mature leads to wisdom.

I. INTRODUCTION

God not only wants you to grow in the knowledge of His Word, but He desires you to apply that knowledge as well—to gain skill in living your life to God's glory. Take note from this passage that

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The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served

Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served



PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT

Mike Braun

Governor of Indiana



“What is really special about Capitol Ministries is that it really is a deep dive into Scripture. It’s not just a session for everybody to get together and talk shop. Some Bible studies that I’ve been a part of really lack structure. This one absolutely does not. It’s challenging. It’s intellectually in-depth, and it’s very serious. I mean, it’s a group of born-again believers who believe the purpose of life is to bring glory to God and to share the good news with the world within our sphere of influence. And that sphere of influence for us is something that’s been given to us by God. We have a great responsibility to act and to obey and to walk the walk—not just talk the talk. So it is a fantastic study with some deeply committed Christians.”

God has a definite strategy—and means—to appropriate the knowledge gained from Scripture. Chapter 1 of this epistle reveals God’s way of doing exactly that!

How many followers of Christ do you know who are knowledgeable, but not very wise? Some who are biblically literate lack spiritual maturity and the application of knowledge to daily living gained from God’s Word. James 1 presents the means by which God intends to foster growth in the life of the believer. It only follows that this passage is of great importance to a believer’s understanding of God’s intention to sanctify him. Keep in mind that for God to be about growing-up His called-out ones is normative. The Apostle Paul states to the church at Philippi in this regard: *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus* (Philippians 1:6).

Working through this passage will reveal how God intends to achieve spiritual growth in the life of the believer.

II. PRESUPPOSITIONS FOR OBTAINING GOD’S WISDOM (vv. 1-5)

What James is attempting to convey in this passage is the normalcy and means of a believer’s growth in Christlikeness. What follows are three preliminary thoughts in the first five verses that pertain to this God-ordained purpose and objective. To be ignorant of or misunderstand any of the following three preliminary points is to hinder the development of God’s wisdom (applied knowledge and spiritual growth) in your life.

A. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE IN NEED OF HIS WISDOM (v. 1)

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

James was the half-brother of Jesus Christ and the brother of the NT author Jude who were, among others, sons of Mary and Joseph² (see Mark 6:3; Matthew 12:46). Although not an apostle, James was an associate of the apostles (Galatians 1:19). James was a very prominent early leader in the church at Jerusalem; therefore, it follows that he would refer to himself as *a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He wrote this epistle with the authority of having personally seen the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 15:7).

James is writing to fellow followers of Christ regarding their need to embrace *trials* for the sake of spiritual growth. The *twelve tribes* refer to various believers who had been *dispersed* due to persecution under Herod Agrippa (cf. Acts 12; ca. A.D. 44). We know that James is addressing a Christian audience—a key factor in the proper interpretation of the epistle—because James will soon call the recipients of his letter *my brethren* in verses 2 and 19. *Tribes*, therefore, is a descriptor for fellow brethren or believers. Accordingly, the instruction that follows regarding how God grows someone in godliness is instruction intended for believers—an all-important premise for proper understanding of what the Word of God is teaching in this passage.

B. GOD HAS A WAY OF IMPARTING HIS WISDOM (vv. 2-4)

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

In the Greek, *trials*, (*peripepto*) means “to fall into the midst of.” The word speaks of God’s sovereign orchestration. The word *when* in this text indicates the surety that the believer will encounter *various trials*. *When* indicates the normative



nature of God-orchestrated events that are intended by Him for your betterment in the long-run. Notice the progression in this portion of James 1: *Trials* and *the testing of your faith* bring about the need for perseverance, or *endurance*, which is language synonymous with the end result of spiritual maturation, or heading toward becoming *perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*. James has this ultimate objective of the spiritual maturation process in mind as he writes to persecuted and dispersed *brethren*.

One means God uses to grow His children is trials.

It is important to add here that *trials* and *the testing of your faith* always have a view toward, in the mind of God, your maturation, your becoming more useful to God and bearing more fruit.³ Additionally, keep in mind God's bigger purposes for your maturation: He is preparing a spotless bride to give to His Son at the future marriage supper of the Lamb. At that eschatological future event, God the Father rewards God the Son by giving Him the saints, the Church, in all her perfection (cf. Revelations 19:7–14).

Your spiritual maturation is a very important matter in the eyes of God—and it has as much to do with God's honoring the second Member of the Trinity for paying the price for sin and enduring the agony of the cross, as it does your personal benefit.

The Greek word for *testing* (*dokimion*) is used in the Septuagint⁴ when translating Proverbs 27:21: *The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and each is tested by the praise accorded him*. The contextual usage reveals that the meaning of the word

testing is the process by which God refines our *faith*. God intends for our lives to be refined by the crucible of *testing*, persecution, and suffering so that the dross and impurities of the old sin-laden nature (the pre-Christ nature) might be stripped away by the process. As a result, we become increasingly pure and valuable as we progress toward Christlikeness. This divine formula is worth underscoring: James is revealing to the *brethren* God's way of purifying His chosen vessels, His called-out ones, to *let* this process have its intended *perfect result*!

In a similar sense the author of Hebrews also speaks about God's purpose for *trials*, expressed as being a form of discipline in His quest to mature His saints—to achieve His *perfect result*:

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (12:5–7).

If God's intended purpose for *trials* and *discipline* is to mature His children to achieve His *perfect result*, then it should come as no surprise that those who are saved by God's grace should *consider various trials* as *all joy*. Why? They indicate God's love for you and His fatherly desire to grow you up into spiritual adulthood—becoming buff, spiritually speaking—to sanctify you.

Genesis 50:20 reveals Joseph's deep understanding of this heavenly economy for achieving spiritual growth; his godly reaction to those (his biological brothers) who brought all kinds of pain into his life is indicated by his response: *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result.”* What profound insight! Joseph

VERSE OF THE WEEK



James 1:2–4

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.



God not only wants you to grow in the knowledge of His Word, but to apply it as well, to gain skill in living your life to God's glory.



MINISTRY UPDATE

Planting Bible Studies Across a Growing Movement of Faith in Africa



Africa is now recognized as the fastest-growing center of Christianity in the world, with over 600 million professing faith in Christ, fueled by a rapidly growing young generation.

In the midst of this spiritual vitality, Capitol Ministries remains committed to its long-standing mission on the continent—bringing verse-by-verse, discipleship Bible studies to political leaders and helping shape them through the truth of God’s Word.

For over a decade, Capitol Ministries has faithfully invested in Africa, and today that work is bearing increasing fruit.

Under the leadership of Steve Flandorp, Capitol Ministries’

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Don’t Derail God’s Spiritual Growth Plan

gets what the first chapter of James teaches! Genesis 50:20 packs this principle in a personality! Adopt the reason Joseph embraced *trials* in your own life! Here is a proper, *joyous* response to *trials*—*trials* allowed by God in the lives of all His children.

In chapter 1, verse 12, James provides further motivation for the believer to respond in a godly fashion to *trials*:

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

The *crown* spoken of in this verse relates to the Bema Seat Judgment (cf. Romans 14:10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10) where in the eschatological future,

Jesus will reward the believer for his faithfulness; in this case victoriously overcoming trials in his life.

What a great promise and motivation! James is coaxing us to succeed in our *trials* with a reward in view! Conversely, failing to learn and apply what God intends to teach us in a *trial* becomes tantamount to asking for the same testing all over again! Why go through an unpleasant experience three or four times before you learn your lessons? God will orchestrate similar situations in His continuing attempts to grow His called-out ones in a particular area where they are failing to grow.

You may know some folks like this who continually face the same situations over and over because of their mule-like recalcitrance. Don’t stunt your growth; understand and embrace what James, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is saying to you! Verses 2–4 have served to explain God’s means of imparting His wisdom in your life. Notice next in the passage that

God desires to accurately impart His wisdom in your life.

C. GOD DESIRES TO ACCURATELY IMPART HIS WISDOM (v. 5)

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

The third and last presupposition to spiritual growth that James states in this passage is that God wants to make sure you know exactly what He is attempting to get you to change in your life. The Greek word James is using for *wisdom* is *sophias*, which means “applied knowledge.” The promise of this great passage is that if you ask God (and He expects you to ask), He will show you specifically how to apply His Word to what you need to change. If you are unsure about what God is attempting to apply in your life, rest assured He will let you know! And it will be given to him is an unconditional promise!

States Proverbs 2:6 in parallel fashion, *For the Lord gives wisdom.* Further, Jesus said, *“Ask, and it will be given to you”* (Matthew 7:7). Some may think these passages are meant to underscore a kind of a mystical encounter with God through modern-day dreams or visions. However, in keeping with the whole counsel of God on the matter including the closing of the canon in the books of Jude and Revelation, His illumination of His Word to your heart via your personal study, or through a biblically based sermon, or perhaps the counsel of a godly friend sharing Scriptures with you pertinent to your *trial*, He will show your inner spirit the purpose of the *trial*. *It will be given to him* is a promise of God via the context and conduit of His revealed Word!

Illumination is a wonderful biblical doctrine as expressed in Psalm 119:33–34; Luke 24:45; Ephesians 1:17, 18; Colos-



sians 1:9–11; 1 John 2:20, 27, and James 1:21. Illumination is the foundational basis of how God imparts or gives His wisdom to you. Illumination is directly and categorically connected to the great doctrines of inspiration and revelation without violating them, i.e., God inspired His Word, He revealed His Word, and He is faithful to illumine His Word to our hearts. One of the ministries of God the Holy Spirit is to lead you into all truth (cf. Psalm 43:3).

Any other interpretation of *it will be given to him* leads to subjective mysticism—the opposite of empirical revelation, which is finding out through principles revealed in the Word of God what it is that God is attempting to impart to you.

What God is attempting to teach you through your trials must be founded in and by biblical truth!

Note further the importance of this understanding via the distinctiveness of the word James uses for *wisdom* (*sophias*), which is in contrast to other words common in NT usage. For instance, *sumesis* means “theoretical knowledge,” while *oida* means “intuitive knowledge.” In using the word *sophias*, James is communicating that God is very personable with His children and will *give*, i.e., illuminate in an objective sense (in concert with Scripture) the correct and practical application of biblical knowledge to a person’s *trial* and *testing*. How is this to be understood from God’s perspective? God will let you know because this passage says He desires to accurately impart His *wisdom*.

The aforementioned are the three presuppositions for a believer’s obtaining wisdom in his life. In the progression of the chapter, James now lists three hindrances—ways to derail—personal maturation through God’s economy of *trials*.

III. THREE WAYS TO DERAIL SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A. DERAILMENT VIA DOUBT (vv. 6–8)

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Keep in mind that these following verses in James 1 relate directly to the revealed thesis and objective of the passage: *letting the trial have its perfect result*. The first hindrance James lists relative to gaining the desired *result* of spiritual maturity is to be a *doubter*, or *double-minded* about the way in which God wants to accomplish His plan in a believer’s life: *doubting* the very economy of *trials* being orchestrated by God in order to grow His child.

Many Christians in our country and in our capital community are in a headlong pursuit for personal satisfaction, significance, and importance with little regard, room, or consideration for God’s formula for growth.

May we never be among them! In their idolatry⁵ of self-pursuit, they hunger for various other desires such as fame and power, money, and personal glory, etc. They desire those fulfillments above God’s *wisdom* in order to crowd out the still, small voice of God via His Word in their hearts. In their *doubt* and *double mindedness*, they disregard all that is being taught by James.

Doubting, double-minded Christians are those who aren’t really sure what their highest priorities are in life. They are like *wind-driven waves* that regularly change direction. They have one foot in and one foot out. As a result, they tend to view God’s onslaught of *trials* with a questionable or jaded perspective, never quite

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Director for Africa, the ministry continues to expand across the continent, with growing teams of national and local leaders working together to establish Bible studies among those in positions of authority.



“Africa is a continent full of opportunity and challenge. Few individuals consider Africa from the perspective of its potential, as the prevailing narrative of poverty, aid, and conflict is widely recognized and often prevents a renewed outlook on the continent. Our viewpoint diverges from this common perception. We believe that Africa possesses significant capacity to contribute positively to the global Christian community in the coming decades,” Steve shares. “What we are seeing now is not just expansion, but the strengthening of leaders who are committed to teaching God’s Word faithfully in their spheres of influence.”

From established ministries in countries like Zambia and

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Nigeria to new developments in places such as Madagascar, Rwanda, and Seychelles, doors are opening at both national and local levels. Leaders are gathering regularly for Bible study, and in many cases, government officials themselves are helping invite others to attend.

A vital area of growth has been through Local Government Ministries, led by Emmanuel "Manu" Makolo.



Manu's own journey reflects the transforming power of the Gospel. He openly shares that he once resisted the idea of ministering to political leaders, struggling with deep frustration toward those in authority. But through Scripture and training, the Lord changed his heart and gave him a burden to serve them faithfully.

"God had to change my perspective," Manu explains. "We are called to love and reach leaders, and when that happens, it impacts entire communities."

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learning from them, nor are they sure they want to. Subsequently,

By discounting God's plan for personal growth, a believer remains spiritually immature, unwise.

As a result, like newborns (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1) they are *unstable in all their ways*. The first major derailment then of God's growth formula is this: *doubting* or being *double-minded* that *trials* are from God. Don't *doubt* for a second that God's superintended *trials* are His way of achieving growth in your life!

B. DERAILMENT VIA DODGING (VV. 9-11)

But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

What is James communicating in this specific part of the passage? How does this antithesis relate to the previously established context of spiritual maturation? In Hebraic writing fashion, James is segueing into a further elaboration of the primary truth of verses 2 and 3 by relating the truths about *trials* first to a *humble* man, who possesses very little if any self-means, in contrast secondly to the *rich man* who possesses ready resources such as wealth, power, and connections. Keep in mind that both the *rich man* and the *humble* man are believers;⁶ this Scripture passage is not a contrast between a *rich* unbeliever and a *humble* believer.

Why is James forging this contrast? A *brother of humble circumstances* is by

definition and contextual intention, one who is without the personal ability to dodge a *trial*. Such circumstances, as they relate to gaining from a *trial*, is termed a *high position* because this person is in the best *position* to learn from a *trial*! He should, according to this passage, *glory in his high position* for which he finds himself in this life!

Conversely, it is much easier for a wealthy, powerful believer to avoid the manifest purposes that God has sovereignly ordained through His orchestration of a *trial*. Obviously, the rich man is in a better *position* to avoid the *trial* via his own resources; he can defuse the intent of the *trial* much more easily than a believer who has few material or influential resources. The *rich man* can more easily dodge the lessons and growth desired by God in and by His origination and orchestration of the attention-grabbing event. The following statement helps explain why in a practical sense:

Wealthy and powerful Christians are more apt to remain spiritually immature because they have the wherewithal to circumvent God's growth mechanisms.

As a Christian legislator or a cabinet member you are a powerful, *rich* person. So, mark this word of caution: in trying times, turn first to God for direction and application of biblical precepts, rather than attempting to skirt problems with no reflection or regard for what God may be trying to teach you! Devising a way out of a matter in and by one's own power, resources, and resourcefulness is to miss out on God's gift of a growth opportunity! Note Jeremiah 9:23-24 in regard to harboring thoughts of self-sufficiency:

Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty



man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me.”

Face God’s *trials* head on and be honest with Him! Ask, “God, what are You attempting to teach me through this?” Then be alert for His response. Don’t hinder God’s *trials* by dodging them with the use of personal resources. You’ll be more mature and Christ-like when you stand before Him as a result. Don’t buy God off and short circuit your spiritual growth!

C. DERAILMENT VIA DISPUTING (vv. 19–21)

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

James continues on the same subject with yet another way we tend to derail God from having His perfect results in our lives. In this particular passage, the believer is disputing a *trial*. Again, the verbiage of verses 19–21 is not disjointed to the earlier subject of *trials*. James now makes this point: reacting angrily to *trials* is common but doing so is antithetical to *considering* a *trial* as *joyful* in a believer’s attitudinal response. Thus, the oft-quoted passage (James 1:19):

Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger in its intended context and tightest definition is speaking of a proper and mature response to trials.

Accordingly, this glibly used passage takes on a heightened, more specific meaning! Likened to Joseph, we need to learn to first

be contemplative relative to the onslaught of various *trials* in our lives! We need to be *quick to hear* from God; we need to be *slow to speak* in terms of disputing the relevance of the *trial* to our life; and we need to see the *trial* for what it is through the lens of God’s sovereignty, versus becoming *angry* relative to what has befallen us. Again, listen with the attitude, “God, what are You trying to teach me through this?” rather than reacting harshly and complaining about perpetrators with others who are uninvolved or lashing out in some other form of outward *anger*.

How spiritually childish implies James! *Put* such responses *aside* and receive the *word*, i.e., the principles from Scripture that God wants to *implant* in your life. To *receive the word implanted* is a beautiful synonym that underscores and contextually bookends the meaning of becoming spiritual mature as a result of the *trial*. All is opposite to disputing the significance of a *trial*. Be contemplative versus reactive to *trials*, friend.

You may note that verses 12–18 were skipped. Among other related matters, James speaks to the ancillary, parenthetical subject of whether the temptation in a *trial* is from God, which represents a different subject—a study in itself for another day.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Apostle Paul provides much by way of additional insight into the internal thought processes and disciplines that the believer need cultivate to become spiritually mature in times of *trials*. He states in Philippians 4:6–9:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever

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Today, Manu oversees the growth of Local Government Ministries across Africa, where teams are engaging mayors, council members, and regional leaders with consistent Bible teaching. In countries like Zambia and Cameroon, Bible studies are taking root—often beginning with just a few individuals and growing through relationships and trust.

Despite challenges such as political instability and logistical barriers, the ministry continues to move forward with perseverance and faith.

“We are seeing God open doors,” Manu adds. “Even in difficult environments, He is making a way for His Word to reach leaders.”

As Capitol Ministries continues its work across Africa, the focus remains clear: to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the political arena—leaders who will govern with wisdom, integrity, and a biblical foundation.





is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

sovereign control over the affairs of His called-out ones.

**In times of trials,
don't doubt, dodge,
or dispute.**

Our natural immature response to *trials* is to be *slow* to *hear* from God, *quick* to *speak* to others about the injustice besieging us, and *quick* to *anger* in our emotions. Notice how the above Pauline passage from the book of Philippians contrasts with our all-too-human, fleshly, default responses. Paul's inner thoughts are to put off anxiety, knowing God is in

Turn first to God in prayer and give thanks. Look for God's protection in your heart and mind, and then force yourself to dwell on what is *true, honorable, right, pure, lovely and of good repute*. He modeled this response for us, and we need to discipline our minds to respond maturely—increasingly so—in all of life's *trials* to achieve spiritual growth in our lives.



*Making Disciples
of Jesus Christ
in the Political Arena
Throughout the World*



Capitol Ministries provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

Capitol Ministries

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1. James is the earliest book written in the New Testament, circa AD 44–49.
2. Joseph and Mary had daughters as well.
3. Cf. the parable of the sower; Matthew 13:23.
4. The Septuagint is an early Greek translation of the Old Testament.
5. Idolatry is anything elevated in one's heart above the quest of God's revealed purposes.
6. There are four reasons to believe this passage (James 1:9–11) is referring to wealthy believers versus unbelievers as it is sometimes interpreted to mean.
 - a. In verses 2 and 9, Paul is addressing this letter to believers.
 - b. He resumes his thesis of trials in verse 12 immediately following the conclusion of this section.
 - c. The conjunctions throughout chapter one connect all the thoughts and homogenize the context.
 - d. Theologically, Scripture elsewhere does not teach that wealth versus poverty is the determining factor in a person's salvation (a faulty dualism); accordingly, just because James labels someone rich and another humble is not synonymous with stating someone is not saved or saved.

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Bangui CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC • San Jose COSTA RICA • Yamoussoukro COTE D'IVOIRE • Kinshasa DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
Quito ECUADOR • Malabo EQUATORIAL GUINEA • Mbabane ESWATINI • Addis Ababa ETHIOPIA • Brussels EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
Helsinki FINLAND • Suva FIJI • Libreville GABON • Strasbourg GERMANY • Accra GHANA • Conakry GUINEA • Port-au-Prince HAITI
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