

A REFLECTIVE JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF JAMES



THE BOOK OF JAMES



Overview of the book of James

The book of James is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter). James the half-brother of Jesus wrote it approximately 48-49 A.D. It was likely the first New Testament book (letter) to be written. The key personalities of this book are James and Persecuted Christians. James wrote this book to Jewish believers to encourage them to endure and live bold Christian lives. James is a book about practical Christian living that reflects a genuine faith that transforms lives. In many ways, it is similar to the OT book of Proverbs.

For James, faith was no abstract proposition but had effects in the real world. James offered numerous practical examples to illustrate his point: faith endures in the midst of trials, calls on God for wisdom, bridles the tongue, sets aside wickedness, visits orphans and widows, and does not play favorites. He stressed that the life of faith is comprehensive, impacting every area of our lives and driving us to truly engage in the lives of other people in the world.



The Bible tells us what God is like and offers us wisdom. You might not understand everything you read in the Bible, but don't let that discourage you.

#1 Remember that the Bible is God's Word

Whenever you pick up the Bible, remember that it is God's voice speaking directly into your life. Acknowledge this truth, and thank God that He speaks to you through His Word.

#2 Expect God to move when you read

Be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your heart as you read the Bible.

#3 Pray as you read

Take a moment when you sit down to read it to pray that God will minister to your spirit as you read.

#4 Read with your heart open

Open up your heart to what God is telling you through His Word, and you can discover the riches of His love and His will for you.

#5 Understand the context

It is very easy to take a single verse out of context, and give it a meaning that is far from what is actually intended.



Meeting God through the Bible

There are many ways to meditate upon and study Scripture, but we have suggested a Head–Heart–Hands format to use in reflecting on the daily Scripture passages.

Preparing to Listen:

It is important that we prepare ourselves to encounter God in His Word. Find a place free from distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend a few seconds in silence before you begin.

HEAD (Think)

As we come to each time of reading we ask the question: What do I learn in this passage? Consider: What does the passage teach about God? The Human Condition? Our Purpose? How to live (or not live)? What are the promises made, commands given, or warnings to be heeded? As you read, be alert for words or phrases that grab your attention and talk with God about why He highlighted them to you.

HEART (Feel)

Read through the passage slowly and pay attention to your affective response to what you read. What are your emotional responses to the various phrases you read? Do you feel encouraged? Convicted? Guilty? Sorrowful? Anxious? Comforted? Confused? As you acknowledge your emotional responses, talk with God about WHY you feel this way. Why did you feel encouraged by the passage? Why did you feel anxious in response to the words? Allow God to use your emotions to reveal the issues in your heart in a deeper way.

HANDS (Act)

Lastly, we read again, and consider the question: What might I do in response to the passage? More importantly, what is God inviting you to do in response? Is there an action to take? A truth to meditate on? A confession to make? If how we are living is not in alignment with what we read, we ask for God's help as we begin the process of change.

Conclude your time by thanking God for meeting with you! You may find it helpful to reflect upon your time with God and summarize your conversation into a short phrase to carry with you through the day.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

JAMES CHAPTER ONE

HEAD (*Think*)

HEART (*Feel*)

HANDS (*Act*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

v 2-4 Do you find you experience the most growth in times of ease or times of trial? Share one time in your life that you have seen growth through a trial. What might it look like to be able to ‘consider it pure joy’ when you face trials? Share about someone you know who embodies this.

v 5-8 When is a time that you have asked God for wisdom and He has given it to you? Why is it hard to believe that He will give us wisdom when we ask for it?

v 9-11 What things does the world consider valuable? What does God say about those things? What does God consider valuable?

v 19 “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” Which of these is hardest for you? At work? In your marriage? In your parenting? In your neighborhood? In your car?

v 22-25 Are you taking responsibility for what you hear in God’s Word? Are you allowing it to change how you live? What has changed in your life as a result of reading God’s Word?



JAMES CHAPTER TWO

HEAD (*Think*)

HEART (*Feel*)

HANDS (*Act*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

v 1-9 James is challenging the believers of his day on this point of favoritism. That said, favoritism is something we all struggle with! Who do you have a hard time loving well? How do we see people with God's eyes rather than our own? Have you ever been judged because of something in your outward appearance? Name a time that you benefited by stepping out in a place where it was hard or not your instinct with somebody.

v 12 "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom." We often feel like the law restricts us rather than giving us freedom. What could it mean to follow a law that gives freedom?

v 14-26 Faith is an action word - we often think of it as a *thinking* word, but it is a *doing* word. Faith is acting on what we believe in - therefore, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead". Is there something God is calling you to 'do' based on what you believe about who God is and/or who He says you are? What often stops us from acting on our beliefs?

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:17,18

JAMES CHAPTER THREE

HEAD (*Think*)

HEART (*Feel*)

HANDS (*Act*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

v 3-6 James uses the examples of a bit in a horse's mouth and a rudder on a ship to describe the impact our tongue can have on our lives. How have you seen someone's life affected by their speech? Has there been a time that your life (work, a relationship, etc) has been affected by your speech? Whether spoken or written?

v 9-12 Have you paid attention lately to your speech? Is there a disconnect between your praise to God and how you interact with others? What aspect of your speech is God inviting you to change? How are you representing your faith through your speech to your spouse, your children, your coworkers, or on social media?

v 13-18 When/where do you find yourself being drawn into the 'wisdom' of this world?

Pray together:

God, give us the wisdom that comes from heaven! Your wisdom that is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. God may we be peacemakers who sow in peace that we may raise a harvest of righteousness. Amen



JAMES CHAPTER FOUR

HEAD (*Think*)

HEART (*Feel*)

HANDS (*Act*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

v 1-2 It is commonly acknowledged that our behavior usually stems from deeper heart issues. 'What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?' When you notice more anger or frustration or have less patience, do you know where that is coming from? How do you do the work of tracing it back to a root desire? How has that helped you in your relationships? What is true humility versus setting yourself up to be taken advantage of?

v 3 As you look back at some asks you've made of God, what has been your attitude in the ask? What wrong motives have you seen in yourself as you ask of God?

v 4-5 How could being a friend to the world make you an enemy of God? What areas of your life are you living as an enemy of God rather than a friend of God?

v 6-10 As you read these verses, identify the things that are hard for you to do. What benefits do you see from living a life of humility and purity?

v 12 We all sometimes struggle not to judge others. Who is the 'neighbor' you are struggling with? If you are in a small group or cohort take a moment and pray together for these relationships.

v 13-17 Why is it so hard for us not to be in control? How do you feel when you have a 'next week, next month, next year, next 10 years' plan in place? How do you feel when that plan gets changed by things outside of your control? What area of your life do you tend to start trusting your own plans, rather than

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James 5:16

JAMES CHAPTER FIVE

HEAD (*Think*)

HEART (*Feel*)

HANDS (*Act*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

v 1-6 Just as we talked about holding our plans and time with open hands, we need also to hold our money with open hands. What is the hardest about this for you? Is God talking to you about a specific area of your finances that He wants you to change?

v 7-11 'Be patient...stand firm...be patient in suffering.' We are living in a time when being a follower of Jesus may bring suffering. James is encouraging the church to stand firm and be patient, trusting that God is moving and working in it all. Is there a way that you feel as if you are suffering because of being a Jesus follower right now? What does it look like to stand firm? (reference James 4: 6-12)

v 12 Is your yes, yes? Is your no, no? At work? At home? In your relationships? What do you need to do to shift to a place of deeper integrity with your yes and no?

Pray:

God, You know that I carry judgment in my heart for _____. Please give me Your eyes to see them rather than my own. Help me to remember that we are all equal in Your sight, You love each of us the same, and You died for all of us. Help me to keep my eyes on You rather than on others. Give me a deep desire to align with you in how I see others!

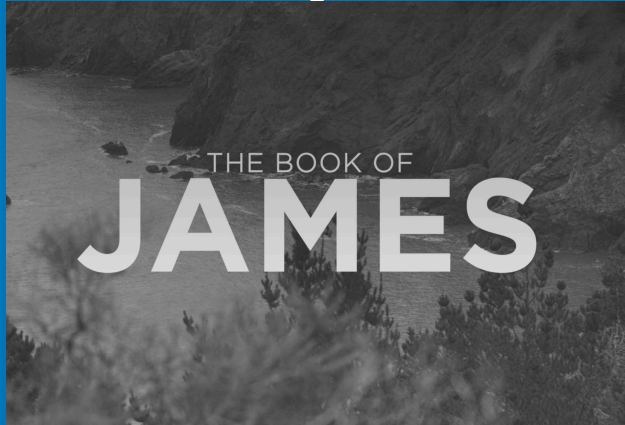
Thank You for not judging me, but instead for giving Your life for me! Amen!



OVERALL SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. Are you in the midst of a trial today? What is the trial and how can you find joy in the middle of the testing of your faith?
2. How do you not only hear and read God's Word but also put it into action in your day-to-day life?
3. Christians should not show favoritism based on someone's wealth or nice clothing. In what ways do you struggle with showing favoritism and loving everyone, as God would have you love them?
4. We are reminded that we must show both faith and works throughout our Christian walk. In what ways can we do this today?
5. The tongue is capable of both blessing God and cursing people. James says this should not be so. Is your tongue out of control? In what areas do you need to confess your sin to God and make changes?
6. Wisdom is a gift from God and reflects the character of God. It leads to godliness. Are you living wisely? In what areas of your life do you need more wisdom?
7. Do you have a strained relationship with someone close to you in your life? Why is there tension between you two? In what ways can you safeguard yourself from confusing your own personal desires with God's desires?
8. Is there an area in your life where you know what to do but are not doing it? What changes do you need to make today to avoid sin in your life?
9. A Christian should be trustworthy and a person of their word. Do you struggle with keeping your word? Is there a promise you need to follow through on or someone you need to apologize to for a broken promise?
10. James tells us there is great power in the prayers of a righteous person. Have you neglected your prayer life? How have you seen the power of God displayed through your prayers?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



True faith produces fruit. A faith without action and without life change is ultimately a dead faith. The book of James speaks to the realities of a living faith in Jesus—the kind of roll-up-your-sleeves and get-your-hands-dirty discipleship that is borne out of an authentic relationship with the risen Lord. James writes to believers who know suffering, who've faced trials, and who ultimately desire a deep relationship with God.

Francis Chan unpacks the dense truth contained in the book of James in front of the iconic backdrop of San Francisco, the city where he lives and ministers. Through 12 sessions, Francis works through James verse-by-verse, challenging followers of Christ to move beyond a private, intellectual knowledge of God and His Word, to a vibrant faith that impacts every square inch of life.

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PRECEPT AUSTIN

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preceptaustin.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



James combines the wisdom of Jesus with the book of Proverbs in his own challenging call to live a life of devotion to God.

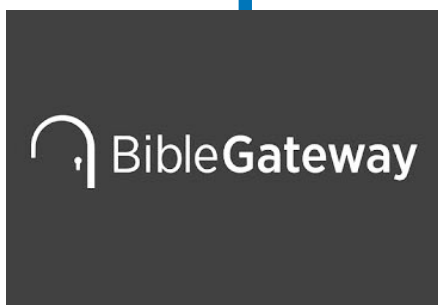
The introduction to the book of James summarizes the words and themes found throughout the book, which is filled with short, challenging wisdom speeches that are full of metaphors and easily memorized one-liners.

While James doesn't teach new theology, it does challenge believers on how they should live. When believers listen to and obey God's word, they show their love for him and others. Their actions match their words, and their lives are made whole and perfect.

Wisdom For the Ages

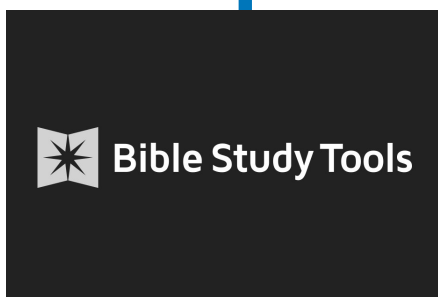
Written by Jesus' half brother Jacob (often translated as James), the book of James shares sage wisdom for all followers of Jesus. The book is heavily influenced by Proverbs and frequently quotes Jesus' famous teaching the Sermon on the Mount.

bibleproject.com/explore/video/james



Bible Gateway is a website that lets you read, search, and interact with the Bible. We offer many tools and resources to support you in those activities--things like Bible reading plans, devotionals, Bible reference works, and more--but at its core, Bible Gateway is about engaging with the text of the Bible. Specifically, we make the Bible available in a variety of different languages and translations for you to read and study

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