

THE BOOK OF  
**JAMES**  
*FAITH AND WORKS*

study guide



# **JAMES: A FAITH THAT WORKS**

A 10-WEEK STUDY OF JAMES

STONES CROSSING CHURCH  
WRITTEN BY DUSTIN CROWE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON JAMES

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

WEEK 1	1:1—Introduction to James
WEEK 2	1:2-18—Trials and Temptation
WEEK 3	1:19-27—Hearing and Doing
WEEK 4	2:1-13—Love and Law
WEEK 5	2:14-26—Faith and Works
WEEK 6	3:1-12—The Tongue and Temptation
WEEK 7	3:13-18—Wisdom and Humility
WEEK 8	4:1-10—Pride and Worldliness
WEEK 9	4:11-5:6—Boasting and Riches
WEEK 10	5:7-20—Patience and Prayer

REVIEW

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON JAMES

## Commentaries and Books

- [\*The Letter of James\*](#) by Douglas Moo (Pillar series)
- [\*James\*](#) by Craig Blomberg and Mariam Kamell (Exegetical Commentary series)
- [\*Exalting Jesus in James\*](#) by David Platt (Christ-Centered Exposition series)
- [\*James for You\*](#) by Sam Alberry (God's Word for You series)
- [\*James\*](#) by Daniel Doriani (Reformed Expository Commentary series)
- [\*James: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture\*](#) by Kurt Richardson (The New American Commentary series)
- [\*James: Faith that Works\*](#) by R. Kent Hughes (Preaching the Word series)
- [\*A Theology of James: Wisdom for God's People\*](#) by Christopher Morgan
- [\*A Theology of James, Peter, and Jude\*](#) by Peter Davids

## Bible Studies

- [\*James: A 12-Week Study\*](#) by Greg Gilbert
- [\*The Implanted Word: James\*](#) by Kirsten Birkett & Phillip Jensen
- [\*James: Faith Works\*](#) by Matt Chandler
- [\*James: Faith that Works\*](#) by Anrew Le Peau & Phyllis Le Peau
- [\*James\*](#) by The Navigators
- [\*James: Genuine Faith\*](#) by Sam Alberry
- [\*James: Walking in Wisdom\*](#) by Lydia Brownback
- [\*Steadfast: A Devotional Bible Study on the book of James\*](#) by Courtney Doctor

## Videos, Messages, & Podcasts

- The Bible Project [overview of James](#) at youtube.com or bibleproject.com
- ["Introduction to James: Fast Facts"](#) video at youtube.com
- ["Paul vs James?: Justified by Faith Alone"](#) video from Ligonier Ministries
- ["Introduction to James"](#) message by R. C. Sproul

## Articles

- ["Introduction to James"](#) at esv.org
- ["Introduction to James"](#) at thegospelcoalition.org
- ["The Gospel in James"](#) at esv.org, taken from [\*Gospel Transformation Study Bible\*](#)
- ["Do Paul and James Disagree on Justification by Faith Alone?"](#) at thegospelcoalition.org
- ["Justification: Paul vs James?"](#) at tabletalkmagazine.com
- ["Is the Book of James Really Christian?"](#) by Michael Kruger
- ["Don't Underestimate the New Testament's Earliest Letter"](#) by Courtney Doctor
- ["Echoes of the Sermon on the Mount in the book of James"](#) by Justin Taylor and [this ESV.org chart](#) on parallels.

# HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

A key part of understanding and applying the Bible is to read attentively and reflectively. The questions below aren't exhaustive, but they provide the framework of *Look*, *Understand*, *Apply*, and *Pray* to guide your study of Scripture. Protect yourself from distractions as much as you can by putting away your phone or devices. If possible, get alone in a semi-quiet place. Pray for God's Spirit to give you understanding of what you are reading, to help you know and love God more, and to change you through it.

## LOOK (What do I see?)

*Note what you see without trying to answer why it's there or what it means. Slow down and thoughtfully read the Bible to avoid skimming over a passage or missing key details.*

- Look for repeated words/ideas/themes, key words, images or metaphors that are most significant to the passage's meaning, and references or allusions rooted in the OT.
- Notice connecting words, transitional statements, purpose statements, structural connections, contrasts, or parallels that help phrases or sections fit together.
- What metaphors, word pictures, or allusions does the author use?
- Ask: who, what, where, when, and why to see the key parts of the passage.
- Write down questions that come up—but don't try to answer them yet.
- What are the indicative statements (this is true) and what are the imperative commands (do this)?
- Observe how God is at work or what is said about God (explicitly or implicitly).
- Note what stood out to you right away, what strikes you, or stands out.

## UNDERSTAND (What does it mean?)

*The goal is to interpret or draw out the author's intended meaning in the passage (not read into a text or force our view into it) by making sense of our observations. It's piecing together what we see to determine what it means.*

- Factor in the context (historical, cultural, redemptive, grammatical) in which this passage, story, or letter is situated so it's understood in light of the whole.
  - *Historical*: is there key historical backdrop information that might inform this text?
  - *Cultural*: are there cultural norms, behaviors, and practices that inform this text?
  - *Redemptive-historical*: where does it take place in the Bible's redemptive story? How does it build on what came before and lead to what follows? How does it point to Jesus?
  - *Literary*: what is the immediate context of where this fits in a given piece of literature that helps us understand the words and line of logic? What are the preceding sentences and paragraphs? Where does this fit in the book as a whole? How does the author use these terms in other places?
- What is the structure of this passage? How do the phrases, sentences, and paragraphs fit together? How would you outline this passage in 3-5 points? Note how the writer is telling or building a story or how his logic and argument flows.
- Look up cross-references or related verses to any words, themes, or ideas that are unclear to you or that seem important enough to require deeper understanding.
- Answer "What is the fallen condition of humanity being addressed here?" Then consider God's response, provision, or redemption for us in that condition.

- Does this section contain commands, promises, warnings, theological truths, ethical imperatives, habits to develop, or indicative statements about who we are?
- What does this tell us about God or how He's at work?
- What is the main point or main ideas of the author (summarize in a sentence)?

### **APPLY (What do I need to do, believe, delight in, or change?)**

*Studying the Bible isn't merely for information; it's for transformation. The goal is to understand Scripture so we can then respond to God and apply His Word. Our response, obedience, or application can be in the form of something we need to believe (God will be faithful, Jesus paid for my sins, or men and women are equal but different) or something we need to do (repent of a sin, trust in God, seek reconciliation, pray, etc.).*

- How does it apply to my circumstances? Is there:
  - a command to obey or live out?
  - a truth to understand and believe?
  - a promise to cling to and act on?
  - a sin or idol to confess, turn from, and replace?
- Was there anything God impressed on my heart I need to respond to?
- How can I praise, thank, trust in, pray to, confess to, or rest in God because of this?
- What attributes or actions of God do I need to believe or respond to?
- How might my life look different because of these verses? Where do I need to depend on the Spirit for help?
- What do I need to pray about or meditate on in response to this?
- What idols of the heart are revealed through this text that I need to turn from?
- Do my beliefs, theology, or understanding of God and the Bible need to change because of what I've learned?
- How can I better serve, love, and encourage those around me as I apply this?
- How should this part of the Bible send me into the world with greater compassion, seek justice, love others in word and deed, make disciples, or share the gospel?

### **PRAY (What should I pray in light of this?)**

Seal these truths in your heart through prayer that is a direct response to what you've read and seen. Pray for the things on your mind but also pray God's Word back to Him. Ask God for help to obey Him and walk in the Spirit. Thank God for who He is and all He's done. Pray for opportunities to show Christ and share Christ to those around you today.

# INTRO TO THE BOOK OF JAMES

James is a practical book. James doesn't deny foundational truths emphasized in other letters, but he has a different focus. He aims to show what it means to walk in wisdom as followers of Jesus. James spends less time on what saving faith *is* and more time on what saving faith *looks like*. Genuine faith in Christ is a fruitful faith. It's a faith that works.

James calls us to walk the walk and not just talk the talk when it comes to discipleship. He offers us both warning and wisdom.

James warns against the unwise life of a faith without works (2:14-26), of hearing the Word but not doing it (1:22), and of an empty religion that doesn't lead to love (1:26-27). The book also warns us against things like pride (1:9-11; 4:6-10, 16), trusting in our earthly riches and resources (2:1-7; 5:1-6), anger (1:19-20), friendship with the fallen world (4:1-4), or settling for a head knowledge of Jesus that doesn't lead to a heart changed by Jesus (2:18-19).

But James also paints a picture of walking in wisdom. Like the book of Proverbs, James is wisdom literature showing us the difference between the wise, blessed life of obedience to Jesus and the foolish, unfruitful ways of walking in sin. This leads to James being a topic-heavy letter.

If you're seeking wisdom from God on how to approach wealth, fight temptation, control anger or the tongue, endure trials, seek contentment, or walk with other believers through sin or sickness, then James is a great place to start. James calls us to cultivate the fruit that comes from abiding in Christ (John 15:6-8) and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). Saving faith in Christ leads a life being transformed by Christ.

## THE GOSPEL AND JAMES

So how does the gospel of grace, the saving message about the person and work of Jesus Christ for sinners, fit into this book that talks a lot about Christian obedience?

First, we read the whole Bible together. James is one letter that speaks into some issues but does not address others. While James doesn't talk much about things like the work of Jesus, the nature of sin, salvation by grace, or the work of the Holy Spirit, James agreed with these core teachings of his fellow apostles found elsewhere in Scripture. James doesn't advocate that we walk in obedience and cultivate good works to be forgiven or to receive God's favor, but James writes to believers already forgiven and favored because of Christ's work for them.

The good works he wants to see in their lives aren't to accomplish their own salvation but to demonstrate their salvation in Christ.

This letter also reminds us that even as we pursue righteousness and walking in wisdom, we don't do this in our own power or strength. There is still much ongoing sin that needs rooted out and put to death by the Spirit's power, and it's only by walking in and receiving God's grace



that we can bear fruit. Sin affects us both with the visible fruit we see in words and deeds but also at the root level with our desires and thoughts (4:1). James knows we can be double-minded (1:7), easily deceived (1:16, 22), and that there is filthiness and wickedness deep in our hearts (1:21). Our sins need confessed (5:16) and should lead to humility and brokenness (4:8-10) that pushes us to the grace in Christ.

James makes it clear that none of us can keep God's Law but all of us have broken it (2:10-13). Our good works do not erase our sin, and if we fail to keep one point in the Law, we've failed altogether (2:10). Therefore, James is not calling us to good works to outweigh or erase our sins, but he's calling us as forgiven sinners through the blood of Jesus (James' brother) to walk in Jesus, putting on the good works characteristic of our new life in Him.

James not only repeatedly points to why we should not trust in or find strength by looking to ourselves—since our sinful hearts and foolish pride are the problem—but he also reminds us that this fruit comes through God's gracious work in us. Wisdom for how to live comes from God (1:5; 3:17). This is primarily the wisdom of applying our beliefs by walking in obedience to Jesus so we reflect Jesus.

All good things, including any fruit in our lives, comes from God (1:17). James sees he and his audience, those born again by God's work through the gospel as the firstfruits of the great harvest to come in the Church (1:18). If we stand and live in our own power, God resists us (4:6), but if we submit to God, draw near to God, and humble ourselves before God, He gives us the grace we need (4:6-10).

## **WISDOM AS THE FRUIT OF FAITH**

Like Paul, John, and Peter, James sees the Christian life as one of us growing in holiness as we fight sin and put on righteousness by God's grace and help. We are broken, but through the beauty of the gospel and the power of God, the Spirit is working in us and through us to produce a harvest of righteousness. James longs to see the Church of Jesus look more and more like Jesus, reflecting who Jesus is as we set our eyes on Him and follow Him. He wants us to have the kind of faith in God that leads to humble wisdom and good works. In other words, James is about the fruit of faith, or a faith that works.

# WEEK 1: JAMES 1:1 AND INTRODUCTION

*Before getting to the questions, ask God to speak to you through His Word and then read the passage in its entirety. Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the “How to Study the Bible” section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

## JAMES 1:1 (ESV)

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:

Greetings.”

## NOTES

## FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- See the articles and videos recommended in the “recommended resources” section that provide an overview of the book of James.
- “[How to Find Joy During Trials](#)” by Greg Palys

## INTRODUCTION & JAMES 1:1

*As we prepare for our study, read through all of James before week one to get an overview of the letter.*

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Read Matt. 13:55; John 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:8-9. What are some of the details you notice about James, his life, relationships, and roles?
2. As you read through James, what are some of the major themes, ideas, and lessons that stand out to you? What are some of the topics you notice James addressing?
3. What verses, issues, or truths from James stand out after reading the whole book?
4. In 1:1, how does James describe himself?
5. James identifies himself as a “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1). Why is it tempting to desire to be our own master and ruler rather than a servant of God? How is being a servant of God ultimately for our good?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are there any things you remember about the book of James or James himself?
2. As you read through James, what major theme(s) are you most interested in learning more about or do you feel the greatest need to learn more about? Why?
3. The word for “servant” (ESV; CSB; NIV) or “bond-servant” (NASB) shows up over 120 times in the NT. For a few examples, read Acts 4:29; Romans 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:7; 1 Peter 2:16; James 1:1. If we are servants of God, how should that affect the way we live?
4. Some have classified James as New Testament wisdom literature (similar to Proverbs) in that it gives us wisdom to apply in daily life. Why do we need practical wisdom on how to live as followers of Jesus?
5. If you want to grow in applying God’s Word, what role can others (such as those around you right now) play in encouraging you, praying for you, and reminding you of what is true? What are ways this group can walk side by side in both understanding and applying James?

## WEEK 2: JAMES 1:2-18

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 1:2-18 (ESV)

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

<sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup>he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

<sup>9</sup>Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup>and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup>For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

<sup>12</sup>Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup>Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup>But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup>Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

<sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. <sup>17</sup>Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup>Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

### NOTES

## FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- [“Wisdom by Faith”](#) at Ligonier.org
- [“Suffering According to James”](#) by Christopher Morgan

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In 1:2-18, what are some of the blessings that can come in and through trials?
2. Read James 1:2-4, 12-15; 1 Peter 1:7; Romans 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Deuteronomy 8:2-5. What are some of the reasons God allows our faith to be tested? How do we know God's purposes are good in these tests and trials?
3. Looking at 1:2-18 again, list some of the things this passage tells us (explicitly or implicitly) about who God is or what He does?
4. Read Mark 4:19; James 1:13-15; Gen. 3:6; Prov. 19:3; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 5:16; 1 Tim. 6:9. While desire itself isn't wrong, because of our sin we often desire the wrong things—or the right things in the wrong way. How does understanding the role of our desires help us in our fight against sin?
5. How can this passage help me think and respond different to trials?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it might look like to have joy in trials?
2. How do we ask God for wisdom while also seeking Him for wisdom (see Prov. 2:3-6)?
3. What are some things that help us remain “steadfast under trial” (1:12)? In other words, during trials, if you want to endure and rejoice, what are things you can do?
4. In 1:13-15, what are wrong ways to think about God and His purposes? In 1:16-18, how does James want us to see God? Why is thinking about God rightly so important?
5. In 1:17-18, how is God the source of the good works and fruit in our life?
6. What is one thing you can apply from this passage in your life? Are there specific ideas for how you can live that out or ways others can pray for or encourage you?

## WEEK 3: JAMES 1:19-27

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 1:19-27 (ESV)

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup>Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup>But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup>For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. <sup>25</sup>But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

<sup>26</sup>If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ["4 Ways to be Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak"](#) by Rob Hurtgen
- ["How Can We Be Quick to Listen?"](#) by Jeff Robinson

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. From reading James 1:19-27, list below what you see as some characteristics of righteousness/Christlikeness versus characteristics of unrighteousness/sin.  
Christlike Virtues Vices or Sins
2. In what circumstances do you find it most difficult to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19)? Take a minute to confess these things to God.
3. Read James 1:21-25. What are some things you observe about how we should and shouldn’t respond to God’s Word (the Bible)?
4. In 1:26-27, James gives specific instances for how we can be doers of the Word. What examples does he give? How might we live these out in our own day?
5. Of all the vices/sins and virtues from 1:19-27, which one or two are you most in need of God’s help to put off and put on? What are ways God has and will equip you to fight these specific sins and to obey Him in these specific areas of Christlike behavior?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are potential negative effects of speaking too quickly or not listening well?
2. How is our anger often connected to wanting our will, agenda, and plan to happen? How might a focus on God’s agenda being lived out help us respond in temptation toward anger?
3. James connects our receiving the Word (1:21) with part of how we put off sins of the flesh (1:19-20). Why is abiding with Christ through the Word of God an essential aspect of “putting away” (1:21) sin and growing in Christ?
4. What are specific, intentional things we (individually, as a family, in the church) can do to take steps in being *doers* and not just *hearers* of the Word?
5. We could summarize “the gospel” as the saving news that God sent Jesus to die for our sin so we can be reconciled to God through Jesus and given new life, not because of anything we deserve but freely as a gift we receive by faith. What role does the gospel play in helping us live the life described in 1:19-27?
6. Where do you need encouragement, accountability, or prayer to live out 1:19-27?

## WEEK 4: JAMES 2:1-13

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 2:1-13 (ESV)

"My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. <sup>2</sup>For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>3</sup>and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," <sup>4</sup>have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup>Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? <sup>8</sup>If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup>But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. <sup>11</sup>For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup>So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup>For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ["3 Reasons God Condemns Favoritism"](#) by Mike Livingston
- ["God's Law in the Gospel Age"](#) by Tony Reinke
- ["The Law of God"](#) Stephen Wellum



## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How might 2:1-13 relate to 1:26-27?
2. What are ways today we might be tempted to show partiality or favoritism?
3. What are a few reasons given in James 2:5-8 for why we shouldn't show favoritism?
4. Read Matt. 5:2-12. James refers a few times to the poor and lowly, which could be financial but could also (partly) be a posture of the heart. How does Jesus' beatitudes in Matthew 5—alongside the book of James—give us a different view of the kind of people and character Jesus desires for His kingdom?
5. What are ways God has been merciful, gracious, and compassionate to you?
6. What are ways you can reflect God's mercy, grace, and compassion to others?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read James 1:9-11; 2:1-7; 5:1-6. What are some of James's warnings against earthly riches? What encouragements does he offer to those who aren't wealthy?
2. Read Mark 12:28-31. Why are both commands Jesus gives essential to our discipleship? Are there ways we might prioritize the first command (love God) but ignore the second (love others)?
3. James offers us a lot of instruction for how to live and the importance of a faith that works. How does this section in 2:8-13 assure us that our obedience can never be perfect enough to save us or give us a right standing before God? Why should this be a reminder of our need for the grace and salvation only Jesus can provide?
4. Why should a life of showing mercy, grace, and compassion mark a believer in Christ (2:13)? How does this call to be merciful—as those who have received mercy—relate to what was written in 1:26-2:12?
5. Where do you need encouragement, accountability, or prayer to live out 2:1-13?

## WEEK 5: JAMES 2:14-26

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 2:14-26 (ESV)

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup>So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

<sup>18</sup>But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! <sup>20</sup>Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; <sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup>For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ["Do Paul and James Disagree on Justification?"](#) by Thomas Schreiner
- ["Justification: Paul vs James?"](#) at [tabletalkmagazine.com](#)
- ["Is the Book of James Really Christian?"](#) by Michael Kruger
- ["Paul vs James?: Justified by Faith Alone"](#) video from Ligonier Ministries

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. While James uses the word “justified” in the sense of shown to be genuine or in the right, Paul uses “justify” or “justification” in reference to our right standing before God through Christ. Read. Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16-17; Eph. 2:8-9. How do we know that God saves us by His grace alone through faith in Christ alone (rather than through our works)?
2. Though we continue to struggle with sin and remain imperfect, what are ways you’ve seen God at work in your life and producing good fruit in you since becoming a follower of Jesus?
3. How does this passage fit with James’ overall emphasis of seeking to help believers practically and wisely live out their faith in everyday life?
4. Read Gen. 15:1-6. Why did God declare Abraham righteous before Him (15:6)? Now read Gen. 22:1-14. How did Abraham demonstrate that His faith in God was real?
5. How would you summarize James 2:14-26 in one sentence?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Eph. 2:10; Matt. 12:33-37; Rom. 6:1-4; 8:9-13. Though we are saved by faith alone, why should our faith lead to works or be demonstrated or shown to be true through good works (as James says)?
2. How would you explain the difference between saying that good works will grow out of genuine faith in Christ versus saying good works must be added to faith in Christ?
3. What is the difference between the kind of belief demons or unbelievers might have (1:19) and the kind of belief that leads to salvation and transformation through Jesus?
4. Read James 1:22-25 and 2:15-16. Why should these passages warn us against complacency with hearing truth but not responding in faith and action?
5. What are intentional things we can do to not have a “dead faith” or to see the Word we hear lead to real fruit in our lives?
6. What is one way this group can pray for you to either genuinely trust in the Lord in a specific area of your life or to see more fruit in a specific area in your life?

## WEEK 6: JAMES 3:1-12

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 3:1-12 (ESV)

"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup>For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. <sup>3</sup>If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. <sup>4</sup>Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup>but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup>Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ["Using Your Words Wisely \(Part 3\)"](#) by Sam Bierig
- ["The Power of Words"](#) and ["Be Silent"](#) by Paul Tripp
- ["Your Words Will Outlive You"](#) by Dustin Crowe

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How might this passage (3:1-12) naturally connect to what came before (2:14-26)?
2. What are ways James illustrates the power of the tongue in 3:1-12? What are some of the ways our tongue can be used for good or bad?
3. Read Prov. 10:19; 13:3; 17:27; Ps. 39:1. Why is restraining our tongue so difficult? Why is it a necessary discipline? How do we do this by God's grace?
4. When has another person encouraged and built you up through their words?
5. Pause and reflect on ways you might be guilty of gossip, discouragement, lying, stretching the truth, self-defense or self-justification, sarcasm, tearing people down, boasting, seeking to control others, immoral joking, being judgmental, or expressing anger or pride in how you use your tongue.
6. To grow by God's grace in using your tongue to build up rather than tear down, what habits, practices, or acts do you need to put off and put on?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think would be "good fruit" for Christians when it comes to our words?
2. What are some other struggles, sins, or temptations that are often present when we are sinning with our tongue (for example, anger and inability to listen show up in James 1:19-20 or judgmentalism shows up in our words in 4:11-12)?
3. Read Proverbs 21:23; Eph. 4:29; 1 Peter 3:10; Col. 4:6. Why are our words such a powerful tool, both to tear down and sin but also to build up and give life?
4. Why is controlling our tongue or our words such a hard thing?
5. What are ways the Spirit might help us or that the Bible equips us to use our words for good and not for evil? In other words, how do we battle the tongue in God's power?
6. What are some specific, realistic ways you can fight sinning with your words but also start using your words to build up others and glorify God more?

## WEEK 7: JAMES 3:13-18

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 3:13-18 (ESV)

"Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup>This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup>And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ["The Fear of the Lord is Humility"](#) by David McLemore
- ["Refresh Your Soul with Humility"](#) by Jon Bloom
- ["Three Components of Wisdom"](#) by Mark Evans

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How might the way we use our tongues (3:1-12) be an issue of wisdom (3:13-18)?
2. Read Prov. 3:13; 4:6-7; 19:8. Why do you think the Bible speaks so highly about wisdom for God's people?
3. From James 3:13-18, what are marks of a lack of biblical wisdom vs marks of biblical wisdom?
4. How might wisdom lead to the good fruits described in James 3:17-18?
5. What are sources in your life of wisdom and sources of foolishness (or sources that just lack wisdom)? How can you lean more into the sources of wisdom?
6. What is one personal takeaway or application from 3:13-18?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How might our lives or works be evidence of wisdom (3:13)? How might a life that lacks good fruit—even if a person has a lot of head knowledge—indicate a lack of wisdom?
2. How might knowledge and wisdom relate and differ? How might you know if someone is wise?
3. What are some things today that might make wisdom even more difficult (for examples, the amount of information we face every day or the lack of thinking deeply on any one topic)? How do we resist the pull toward “thin thinking” in our day and seek wisdom?
4. Read James 1:5; Prov. 1:7; 2:6. How is wisdom from above (from God)? Why do you think Proverbs connects the “fear of God” with wisdom?
5. Read James 3:13; Prov. 1:7; 3:7; 11:2. Why do you think the Bible connects humility and wisdom with one another and then pride and foolishness?
6. What is one way this week you can grow in the kind of wisdom James describes?

## WEEK 8: JAMES 4:1-10

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 4:1-10 (ESV)

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup>You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup>Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? <sup>6</sup>But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- "[A Theology of the Heart from James](#)" by Peyton Hill at ftc.co
- "[What Stops Our Fighting?](#)" by Tony Reinke at desiringgod.org



## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are commands, imperatives, or actions believers are called to do in 4:1-10?
2. What are at least five ways God might relate to us or actions of God in 4:1-10?
3. Read James 1:14-15; 4:1-5; Mark 4:19; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 5:16-17. Why are our inner desires, passions, or wants central to the temptations and sin we struggle with?
4. If you had to describe a healthy walk with God or the Christian life just from 4:1-10, what would be some key characteristics?
5. Read 1 Peter 5:5-9 and James 4:6-10. What are commands or phrases similar in both passages and what commands or encouragements are distinct to each passage?
6. In James 4:4, he warns us against friendship with the world rather than friendship with God. How might the words and phrases of 4:6-10 call us to confession and repentance from sin and into nearness to God? What role does Jesus play in providing our cleansing, bringing us near to God, and giving us the grace we need to follow Him?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does James point the finger at when it comes to the sin and fighting in the Church (4:1)? How might we better examine and fight sin at the level of our desires and wants?
2. Read John 15:19; 1 John 2:15-16; Matt. 6:24. What might be some characteristics or symptoms of this “friendship with the world” that James talks about?
3. What are ways we can be in the world and for the world without being of the world (or a friend of the world rather than God)? How do you seek to do this in your own life?
4. Read 1 Peter 5:8-9; Eph. 4:27; 6:11; 2 Cor. 10:3-5. What are ways the Devil tempts, accuses, or discourages you? What are ways you can resist him and stand firm?
5. James calls on us to resist the devil in part (4:7) by submitting to God (4:7), drawing near to God (4:8), and humbling ourselves before God (4:10). What are specific, practical ways we can do these things in our lives?
6. What is one way others can pray for you as you seek to apply James 4:1-10?

## WEEK 9: JAMES 4:11-5:6

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 4:11-5:6 (ESV)

"Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup>There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

<sup>13</sup>Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— <sup>14</sup>yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup>Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.' <sup>16</sup>As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

<sup>5</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you."

### NOTES

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ["If the Lord Wills"](#) by John Piper
- ["Trusting in Riches"](#) at Ligonier.org

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. James warns against pride and exhorts us to humility in James 4:6-10. What are ways you see pride at work in 4:11-5:6?
2. Looking at 4:11-12, 4:13-17, and 5:1-6, how might humility before God be a proper application to each of these scenarios?
3. Read Ps. 90:12; 102:3; 144:4; Job 7:7; 1 Peter 1:24. Why is it important for us to remember how short life is and how fragile we are?
4. Read Matt. 6:19-21 and Luke 12:13-21. What are ways Jesus' words help us understand some of the concerns James has with treasuring or trusting in our wealth and resources?
5. In each of the sins from this section, how do we put something or someone else in the place of God (in becoming judge over others, boasting about tomorrow, and trusting in riches)?
6. While these passages throughout James help paint a picture of a wise, godly life to pursue, we are mindful of how often we fail and fall short. How do we rest in the work of Jesus and grow through the power of the gospel, both when we fail and as we mature?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are ways we might act as lawgiver, judge, or as God in how we judge others? What's the difference between humbly discerning sin and fruit in a person's life vs judging others?
2. What might be a couple attitudes or beliefs James wants us to avoid in 4:13-17? What are a couple of attitudes or beliefs we need to have in 4:13-17?
3. Read Prov. 27:1 and James 4:13-17. What are reasons the Bible calls us to live one day at a time (while not ignoring wise planning)? How does this relate to the commands in 4:17 and 2:15-16 about doing good while you can?
4. What are some of the misuses of wealth and worldly materialism evident in James 5:1-6? What are ways we might notice materialism and trusting in wealth show up in our own hearts and lives?
5. If you had to identify which you struggle with the most from this section—judgmentalism, pride and boasting, or treasuring and trusting in earthly resources—which would it be? Why?

## WEEK 10: JAMES 5:7-20

*Grab a pen or pencil and make notes of what you see or what stands out to you. Or use the "How to Study the Bible" section at the beginning to help you make observations of the text.*

### JAMES 5:7-20 (ESV)

"Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

<sup>8</sup>You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. <sup>9</sup>Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. <sup>10</sup>As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

<sup>12</sup>But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

<sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup>Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

<sup>19</sup>My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, <sup>20</sup>let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

### NOTES

## FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- [“Confessing Our Sins Together”](#) by Ryan Griffith
- [“Should the Sick Be Anointed with Oil”](#) by Robert Plummer

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are commands, imperatives, or things to do or not do in 5:7-12?
2. In what ways does a farmer wait with patience while still being active? How might this be a good illustration for what it looks like for us to be faithful while waiting on God?
3. Read James 5:14-18. What do you notice or observe about prayer from this section?
4. What are specific ways you can pray for others and with others?
5. What is one personal application or takeaway for you from 5:7-20?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is James encouraging his suffering readers to be patient? What are they being patient for, and what enables them to be patient?
2. How is praying together and for one another an example of active waiting (5:7-11)?
3. What are some things from 5:14-16 we see about how to pray together as believers?
4. While our sin is against God and we confess to Him (Ps. 51:4), we often also need to confess our sins to fellow believers close to us (James 5:16). What are reasons we might need to do this and blessings that can come from it?
5. Read James 5:19-20; Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1. Why do we need other believers for encouragement and accountability? What are ways we can better engage in giving and receiving this kind of encouragement and accountability from one another?
6. As those who confess sins (5:16) and walk in grace and truth rather than sin (5:19-20), how do we continually return to and root ourselves in the work of Jesus for us?

## REVIEW

### PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you summarize James' main point in one to two sentences?
2. What do you think was James' goal or heart behind writing this letter?
3. What are two or three main themes that stood out to you from this book?
4. Of all the topics, issues, and sins that James addressed, which most personally applied to you? What were you most encouraged, challenged, or helped by?
5. Was there a favorite verse or two from James that you want to memorize or meditate on more? Why did you choose that passage?
6. What might it look like to try to live out James in our own power versus living out what James puts before us in God's power and through the help of the gospel?





[www.stonescrossingchurch.com](http://www.stonescrossingchurch.com)

© Stones Crossing Church. All rights reserved.