



# MOVE

A SUMMER STUDY IN JAMES

An Introduction to James & Full Series Talking Points

# The Book of James: At a Glance

**Author:** James, half-brother of Jesus

**Audience:** First Century Jewish Christians living in the Gentile communities outside of Palestine, and all Christians everywhere.

**Type of Literature:** A wisdom letter

**Purpose:** To expose hypocritical practices and to teach right Christian behaviour.

**Date written:** AD 45-47 - making it likely the first written New Testament book.

## Who were the recipients?

“Greetings to the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (James 1:1). The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem scattered when the ruling council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, started persecuting them after the stoning of Stephen. They scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (cf. Acts 8:2) and perhaps to areas beyond. Wherever they had scattered to, James wrote this general letter to them from Jerusalem as their pastor to instruct and encourage them in their Christian faith and life.

## Who wrote the book?

While James did not specifically identify himself as to which “James” he was (James 1:1), the author is widely thought to be James the half-brother of Jesus. James was not a follower of Jesus during Jesus’ time on earth (Mark 3:21–35; John 7:5) but eventually became an apostle in the vein of Paul, as one who had seen and believed the Lord post-resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19). After witnessing the Lord’s resurrected body, James became one of the leaders of the church at Jerusalem. Peter singled him out among the other Christians there following Peter’s miraculous release from prison (Acts 12:17). James made the deciding speech at the Jerusalem Council (15:13–22), and Paul called James one of the pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9).

## What was the purpose of the letter?

James is considered a book of wisdom and reads like a collection of pithy proverbs. While James doesn’t spend time expanding subpoints, he writes with a “punch” - straightforward and clear to make his point. This letter addresses a number of crucial topics relevant to Jewish Christians. It offers the same comfort and hope to us today who like the early church face “trials of many kinds.” It encourages faithful obedience to God, provides spiritual instruction and encouragement on important matters relating to the unity and life of the church.

### **What's the Big Idea of James?**

In the opening of his letter, James called himself a 'bond-servant' or 'slave of God', an appropriate name given the practical, servant-oriented emphasis of the book. Throughout the book, James contended that faith produces authentic deeds. In other words, if those who call themselves God's people truly belong to Him, their lives will produce deeds or fruit. In language and themes that sound similar to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, James rails against the hypocritical believer who says one thing but does another.

For James, faith was no abstract proposition but had effects in the real world. James offered numerous practical examples to illustrate his point that 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. While James recognized that even believers stumble, he also knew that faith should not coexist with people who roll their eyes at the less fortunate, ignore the plight of others, or curse those in their paths.

# Faith in the Fire

July 4, 2021 - James 1:1-18

## CONNECT

1. "Getting in shape is simple. Just eat right and exercise regularly." Why do we find that easier said than done?
2. Think about when you have been in great shape physically. How does this compare and contrast to being in good shape spiritually?
3. Think of a recent problem or difficulty in your life. In what ways did God give you strength to face that situation?

## THRIVE

4. How do you respond to the idea that we should, "Consider it pure joy whenever we face trials of many kinds"? (James 1:2).
5. Read James 1:3-4 and 1 Peter 1:5-7. Explain the progression of the Christian life as described in the verses. How has this been true in your life?
6. In the middle of discussing trials, James mentions wisdom (James 1:5). What does wisdom have to do with facing trials? Why should we pray for wisdom? Contrast asking for wisdom by faith (James 1:5-6) with asking with doubt (James 1:6-8).
7. What does James 1:9-12 teach us about enduring the trials that come as a result of money?
8. According to James 1:13-15, who is the real culprit we are to blame for our sins? Why are we tempted to sin? What is the chain of events that happen when we act on our temptations? (See Psalm 7:14).

9. Read James 1:16-18. What do these verses tell us about God? How can these truths encourage us as we fight against temptation?

### **COMMIT**

10. How can you grow closer to God through the trials you are facing right now? What role can prayer play in these situations?
11. How has the testimony of others helped you in your struggle against sin? How can you encourage others to resist temptation?
12. Make a list of all the 'good gifts' God has given you in this season of life and spend time thanking him for being so gracious.

### **PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

James 1:17

# Faith in Our Obedience

July 11, 2021 - James 1:19-27

## CONNECT

1. Imagine looking at yourself in a mirror. How would you describe yourself?
2. Think of one person who truly exemplifies godliness. How has that person's life been an example to you?
3. Share about a time when you failed to listen carefully to someone that resulted in a physical injury or a damaged relationship.

## THRIVE

4. How can being 'quick to listen' and 'slow to speak' help us be slow to becoming angry? (James 1:19).
5. Read Luke 6:46-49 and James 1:22-25. In your own words, explain how the person who merely listens is different from the one who puts God's Word into practice?
6. What is the 'law' that James refers to in verse 25 and why is it perfect? (See Psalm 19:7-11).
7. Read Isaiah 1:16-17; 1 John 3:17-19 and James 1:26-27. According to these passages how do people who think they are religious differ from those who are truly religious?

## COMMIT

8. If the commands James 1:19 were followed how would it impact your small group, the church, your homelife?

9. What tendency do you have: Listening but not doing, or doing without listening? What are some practical ways that you can begin to improve in listening and doing?

10. How could your religion become more “pure and faultless” in the sense James has in mind in James 1:27?

**PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

James 1:22

# Faith in The Church

July 18, 2021 - James 2:1-13

## CONNECT

1. Sometimes children think or feel their parents had a “favourite child” and often debate that between siblings. Was this ever the case for you or someone you know? If so, describe your experience/story.
2. What causes you to favor one person over another?
3. When people visit our church how do you make them feel welcome?

## THRIVE

4. What are the negative results of showing favoritism expressed in James 2:1-7?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 and Psalm 146:6-9. How does God treat the poor and powerless? How does God tell us to treat the poor and powerless? (See Zechariah 7:9-10).
6. Read Mark 12:31-33 and Galatians 5:14. How does the “royal law” in James 2:8 guide our treatment of both the poor and the rich?
7. How does James 2:9-11 emphasize the seriousness of treating people unequally? Explain how partiality makes us unjust judges.

## COMMIT

8. Who are your ‘neighbors’? How can you better love your neighbor as yourself this week?



9. How can you help others change their attitudes toward the poor and vulnerable?

10. Mercy triumphs over judgment. How have you seen that play out in your life when it comes to your relationship with God? In what area(s) of your life do you need to have mercy triumph over judgment? Be honest with yourself.

**PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great but judge your neighbour fairly.”

Leviticus 19:15

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Matthew 5:7

# Faith in our Works

July 25, 2021 - James 2:14-26

## CONNECT

1. Think of a time when you saw a group of people rally around someone in need. What motivated the group to help that person?
2. Share about a time when you set out to do something and then realized it was, "easier said than done." Discuss why people's words and ideas are often inconsistent with their deeds and actions.
3. Have you ever struggled to find balance between faith and works? On which end of the spectrum do you tend to lean?

## THRIVE

4. In your own words, tell the story found in James 2:15-17 and determine the point James is making.
5. What does Jesus say about faith and works in Matthew 7:26-27?
6. Why is mere intellectual agreement to truth not enough? (See James 2:19).
7. James refers to Abraham and Rahab as examples of people who merged their faith with their actions (James 2:21-25). Read the story of Abraham in Genesis 22. How was Abraham's faith made complete by what he did? Read the story of Rahab in Joshua 6:17-25. How was Rahab's faith seen in her actions?
8. How does James' closing analogy in verse 26 summarize his teaching on faith and actions?

## **COMMIT**

9. What kinds of things might keep us from putting our faith into action in our workplaces, our neighbourhoods, and other parts of our lives outside of the church?
  
10. How do your actions demonstrate the reality of your faith, like Abraham or Rahab?
  
11. What are some ways you can obey God more specifically to show that you really do trust and believe him?

## **PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.”

2 Thessalonians 1:11

# Faith in our Words

August 1, 2021 - James 3:1-12

## CONNECT

1. There's an old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Is it true? What has been your experience?
2. A small spark can start a fire that destroys someone's home or thousands of acres. If you were having an outdoor fire, what precautions would you take to make sure the fire didn't cause damage to others?
3. Why does a compliment give someone confidence?

## THRIVE

4. Why does James begin the section on the tongue by focusing on those who teach? (James 3:1).
5. How does a person's tongue compare to a horse's bit or a ship's rudder? Why does the tongue have such disproportionate power?
6. James' focus is on the dangers of the tongue. In what ways can the tongue be used for bringing life and hope to one another?
7. Read the following passages and talk about the positive power of the tongue: Proverbs 15:4; Proverbs 18:21; I Thessalonians 5:11; Ephesians 4:15, 29; 5:19; Hebrews 13:15.

## COMMIT

8. What practical advice would you give someone who wanted to have better control of their tongue? Does this advice apply to you too?

9. What can you do to use only encouraging words? Where can you speak words of blessing into someone's life this week? Commit to doing that.
  
10. Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to change your words and the motivation behind your words? Would you be willing to do that? Share with someone your desire to be more kind with your words so they can help you be accountable to it.

**PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

“Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.”

Proverbs 21:23

“The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.”

Proverbs 18:21 (NLT)

# Faith in our Character

August 8, 2021 - James 3:13-18

## CONNECT

1. If you were looking for wisdom or advice, where would you look?
2. What is the wisest thing you have ever done? What is the most foolish thing you have ever done?
3. Think of a time when you saw someone bring peace to a volatile situation. How did that person bring peace?

## THRIVE

4. How would you describe “worldly” and “heavenly” wisdom? What are the characteristics of earthly and heavenly wisdom found in James 3:13-18? Consider 1 Corinthians 1:20-25.
5. Read Psalm 1:1-6. How does the Psalmist acquire godly wisdom? How else can we acquire godly wisdom?
6. Read James 3:14-16. What effect can bitter jealousy and selfish ambition have on a person’s life? See Galatians 5:15, 21, 26.
7. According to James 3:18, sowing in peace produces a harvest of righteousness. Why do you think peacemaking and righteousness are connected like this? Refer to Isaiah 32:17; Matthew 5:9; Galatians 6:8.
8. In light of James 3:13-18, what do you think it means to be a “peacemaker”? How can we be peacemakers? See Colossians 3:12-15; Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 3:8.

## **COMMIT**

9. How does this passage challenge you to deal with conflicts in your relationships?

10. What are the things and habits that make you feel jealous? How can you submit your life to God in a way to get rid of the stronghold of jealousy?

11. What are practical ways we can sow seeds of peace?

## **PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

James 1:5

# Faith Through Our Example

August 15, 2021 - James 4:1-12

## CONNECT

1. Would you change the way you were living if you could see your future? Why or why not?
2. What are the top one or two things you want more than anything in your life?
3. What do you and your family tend to argue about most often? What motivates you and your family to argue about these things?

## THRIVE

4. Read James 4:1-5. What does James identify as the major cause/source of conflict with others?
5. In verse 4, James uses strong language when he accuses his hearers of spiritual adultery. What does he want them to recognize about their behavior? See Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 3:20 and 1 John 2:15-17.
6. What two things are necessary to thwart the efforts of the devil? (James 4:7). What can we learn about these two things from Jesus' example in Matthew 4?
7. What is involved in "drawing near to God" according to James 4:7-10? How do you put these into action in your life?
8. Why do you think James returns to the issue of the tongue in verse 11 and 12 after his call to repentance in verse 7-10?



9. How can a proper attitude toward God (James 4:12) enable us to have a proper attitude toward others?

### **COMMIT**

10. In what areas of your life are you most prone to selfish pride? What is one step you could take this week to acknowledge your insufficiency and Christ's sufficiency in that area of your life?
11. How might your family/friend or your small group help you pursue humility?
12. Who is someone in your life with whom you are having conflict or an uneasy relationship? How can God's grace help with that relationship?

### **PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble."

James 4:6

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

James 4:10

# Faith and the Future

August 22, 2021 - James 4:13-17

## CONNECT

1. Are you the type of person who loves to make plans, or are you generally more spontaneous and non-committal? Give an example that illustrates your preference.
2. What is one of your long-term goals? How would you feel if you could not accomplish it?
3. Do you know what will happen tomorrow? Does having no control of the future frighten you or give you comfort? Explain.

## THRIVE

4. Read James 4:13-17. Describe and distinguish the two attitudes toward the future found in this passage.
5. What do the following passages compare life to? James 4:14; Psalm 39:5; Psalm 78:39; Psalm 102:3 How does a sudden death of someone we know or someone famous help us to realize this? How do you feel about your life being like this?
6. Read James 4:14. Is James saying it is wrong to plan for the future? Explain.
7. Consider the following verses about planning and harmonize them with James 4:13-17: Proverbs 6:6-8; 13:16; 14:15; 15:22; 16:3,9; 19:21; 20:18; 21:5; Jeremiah 1:5; 29:11. What do we learn about God's view of planning for the future from these passages?

8. Read James 4:15. What does James mean when he tells us to make our plans based on the statement, "If the Lord wills"? How do we live in the tension of making plans according to the Lord's will?
  
9. How does James 4:13-17 provide you with a Kingdom mindset on how to spend your time?

### **COMMIT**

10. If you could change some things about your life to live more Christ centered, what would you change?
  
11. As you plan for the future, what kinds of things motivate you? When it comes to making plans for the future, have you been mindful about God's involvement and are you willing to surrender those plans to his will?
  
12. What would it look like in your life to give more dependence on God with your plans and future? How can you practice dependency on God?

### **PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

"Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom."  
Psalm 90:12 (NLT)

"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."  
Proverbs 19:21

# Faith in Our Finances

*August 29, 2021 - James 5:1-12*

## CONNECT

1. Think of a time when you were blessed by the generosity of someone. How did that affect your life?
2. When it comes to finances, what are some of the ways that the culture sets your expectations and determine your lifestyle?
3. How do you think Christians should view wealth?

## THRIVE

4. James declares that misery awaits rich people. What crimes have they committed according to James 5:1-6? Is James condemning all rich people? Why or why not?
5. Are you ever tempted to hoard or to want more than you need at the neglect of others? (See James 5:5.)
6. Compare the descriptions of the rich in James with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. How is this an encouragement to you?
7. Read James 5:7-11. James gives three examples of patient people: a farmer, the prophets and Job. How is each an example of patience? How does God use others to build patience in our lives?
8. How does Christ's return affect practical matters such as our use of wealth and emotional matters such as our response to suffering?

9. What is the difference between patience and perseverance? Which is more difficult for you?
  
10. James refers to Job in James 5:11. Describe Job's experience of perseverance (See Job 1:1-2:11, 29:1-30, 42:1-17). How is his example an encouragement for us?

### **COMMIT**

11. In what ways do you need to change your attitudes about money? How can you use your financial resources for God's glory?
  
12. In what areas of your life do you struggle with patience? In what areas of your life do you need to apply James 5:9?
  
13. Share about a time when you persevered in spite of difficult circumstances. What were the rewards of your perseverance?

### **PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Matthew 6:19-20

# Faith in Our Prayers

*September 5, 2021 - James 5:13-20*

## CONNECT

1. Share about a time when God answered a specific prayer for you. How did that answered prayer change your life?
2. Do you pray more when you are in trouble or when things are going well? Why?
3. What hinders Christians from confessing sins and praying for each other?

## THRIVE

4. Considering Matthew 5:33-37 and James 5:12, what is the most basic principle you can apply concerning your speech?
5. Read James 5:13-15. What kind of situations in this passage call for prayer? In which of these types of prayers have you participated? Give an example.
6. What does Elijah's experience teach us about prayer? See 1 Kings 19.
7. How does James link the confession of sin to others with the answered prayer of the righteous?
8. According to James 5:19, 20 how are we responsible for one another and what is the outcome?

## COMMIT

9. Write a prayer to God about a situation that is troubling you and speak it out to God this week.

10. What great things would you like to see God do in your life or the lives of others?  
What commitment are you willing to make to pray for those things?

11. Consider keeping a prayer journal to write down the prayer requests that others make, and to journal things that you pray for on your own. This might help spur you to more consistent prayer, and it will help you keep track of when God answers your prayers.

**PAUSE, PONDER & PRAY**

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7