

A dynamic splash of blue water, rendered in various shades from light to deep blue, with white highlights and bubbles, creating a sense of movement and freshness. The splash is centered horizontally and occupies the upper half of the page.

JAMES

Welcome to the book of James!

To begin your study of James, meditate upon the content of the book reflected in the overview chart below. As you consider the five major sections we have outlined, what do you notice about the author’s purpose in writing this book? We have chosen James 1:12 as a key verse that reflects the overall them of a “working faith.” As you meditate upon this verse, what insights do you receive? Note the chapter titles. How does 1:19 apply to these titles?

JAMES		Faith Works	
DOERS & NOT MERELY HEARERS 1:22-25	FRUITS OF FAITH 2:26	NOT DOUBLE TONGUED 3:1,2	
1	2	3	
DRAW NEAR 4:7-8		BE PATIENT 5:7	
4		5	

"Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" 1:19

James was a practical man with hard-hitting insights into a life of true faith. He understood that “discipline is a way of life” and that only “fools despise wisdom and instruction.” James is concerned that our walk be consistent with our talk, and that our spiritual experience be rich and full!

Open Your Heart as You Read!

Are you comfortable requesting wisdom from God when faced with decisions or difficult situations? Are you careful to first listen and then speak? Are you currently quarreling with anyone? Are you a quarrelsome person? Why or why not? Are you patiently waiting for the coming of the Lord with prayer and perseverance? Is your tongue controlled and subjected in the service of God? These are all key questions presented by James - brother of the Lord!

JAMES...PRACTICAL INSIGHTS ABOUT WALKING WITH GOD

Author

There are three men called James in the New Testament - two of them were apostles. Two of our Lord's original apostles had the same name and this man is neither. This is James the Just, the same James you find listed in Matthew 13:55. He is one of the boys whom Mary and Joseph gave birth to after Jesus was born. He was reticent to believe in Jesus as God's Son (John 7:5) until after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). This is the James that became one of the key leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Galatians 1:19). His familiarity with Jesus' teaching makes Him a probable long-time companion of Christ, which also favors him being His brother by Joseph.

Date

The most probable date of writing was around 44-45 A.D. This places the book of James first in chronology with the "letters" written in the New Testament, including the four Gospels.

Purpose

James wanted these first Christ-followers to take a no nonsense approach to honoring Christ. There are over 50 imperatives in only twice as many verses. James simply wanted believers to live fruitful lives of **faith**. He didn't want anything to distract Jesus' followers from the pure devotion of subjecting their will to Christ. And He didn't want us to be deluded in any way about what it meant to serve God in pure and straightforward devotion.

Why Study the book of James?

1. To understand that **testing** is designed for our maturity and growth - and can just as easily become an opportunity for Satan if we allow it.
2. To encourage us to **endure trials** by faith and not to doubt that God is producing His will even when things are difficult.
3. To admonish us to be careful with our **tongues** and to take great care in what we say and teach others.
4. To encourage believers to be quick to **hear** the Word of God, slow to **speak** inflammatory words, and slow to be an **angry** responder.

READING ONE “Faith, Trials, and Temptations” Read 1:1-18

1. To whom was this letter addressed?
2. What are we to request? How are we to ask?
3. Why are verses 9-11 included in a discussion of wisdom (1:2) and persevering under trial (1:12)?
4. How do verses 13-17 comment on any teaching that Satan makes us sin?
5. What is verse 16 referring to?
6. What does the context teach you that helps to determine the meaning of 1:18?

What about today?

A person who does not live according to wisdom is double-minded and unstable. Being double-minded is like being two-faced: saying one thing to a person's face and doing something else behind their back. Do you actively request wisdom from God? In what ways do you say one thing and do another when it comes to your obedience as a Christ-follower? Whom do you blame for your sin?

READING TWO “Faith and the Word” Read 1:19-27

1. Why does James choose the focus found in verse 19? What are the three elements of this teaching?
2. How would you specifically define the "anger of man" in your own life?
3. In what ways would a "mere hearer" of the Word delude themselves?
4. Think about the word-picture of a mirror. Why does James use it? What are the elements of teaching that emerge from this mirror analogy?
5. How does James describe profitable religion? Worthless religion?
6. What is the goal of true religion?

What about today?

In what ways do you wrestle with soul-wounding anger? How would you apply the concept of "pure religion" in your own life? In what ways do you feel you are hearing AND doing? Hearing but NOT doing?

READING THREE “Faith and Impartiality” Read 2:1-13

1. What is the hypocrisy in the situation described in 2:1?
2. How has a person being "partial" become a "judge with evil motives"?
3. Where have we seen the "perfect law" previously? How does this royal law differ from the law that is perfect?
4. What is James referring to when he talks about "committing murder"?
5. Why does he again refer to the law of liberty?

What about today?

Do you have a tendency to favor certain people at home, work, or in the church? Do you have the same view of riches as James did? Doesn't he seem partial in his view of the rich? In what ways have you committed murder on the basis of this passage?

READING FOUR “Faith and Works” Read 2”14-26

1. How is the statement ‘can that faith save him?’ consistent with what is found in Ephesians 2:8-10?
2. How would you paraphrase 2:15,16 in your own everyday language?
3. Isn’t verse 18 arguing for justification by works?
4. How does verse 19 clarify this discussion of faith and works?
5. Why do you think James uses the two examples that he does?

What about today?

Focus the verse 2:22. How is your faith being perfected and what are the specific works of faith being evidenced in your life? Our works give us no special standing before God...this is explained in Ephesians 2:8-10. Yet pursuit of good deeds should be the occupation of every Christ-follower!

READING FIVE “Faith and the Tongue” Read 3:1-12

1. Why will teachers incur a stricter judgment?
2. Can any tongue be tamed?
3. Meditate upon the three examples James uses to illustrate the tongue. Why does he choose these particular images and what is unique about each?
4. What makes the tongue so powerful?
5. What practical point is James trying to make in 3:9-12?

What about today?

You will want to study the attachment "Tongue-Lashing" as you consider further the proper use of this deadly weapon! Do you have a controlled tongue? Does the use of your tongue coincide with what you believe? With what God teaches?

READING SIX “Faith, Wisdom and Conflicts” Read 3:13 - 4:17

1. Note a return to the discussion of wisdom. Also observe it occurs after a consideration of the tongue and precedes a discussion on quarrels and conflicts. What does this tell you about the flow of this section?
2. What is one of the main characteristics of applied wisdom?
3. What are the two things that cause disorder and evil?
4. Again, we see the phrase "commit murder." What does it mean?
5. How are preferred pleasures the source of problems?
6. What is James’ solution to the problem of lack of wisdom in loving one another?
7. In what ways is 4:11-12 a summary statement?
8. Why is 4:13-17 included in this argument?

What about today?

Someone once commented that Satan keeps the saints so wrapped up in ourselves (differences, problems) that there is no time for God or His works of faith through us! Are you "speaking against" anyone? Are you humbled before the Lord when it comes to loving others, or do you assert yourself and your own "rights?" What are some pleasures that cause you to commit murder?

READING SEVEN "Faith and Patience" Read 5:1-20

1. Why does James need to single out those who are rich? Who are "the rich" to James?
2. Be careful! What do riches, pleasures, and committing murder have to do with each other?
3. What is the goal of patience?
4. What are we to endure?
5. In what circumstances should 5:13-18 be applied?
6. How does 5:19-20 relate to the remainder of the book?

What about today?

Patience with one another is difficult. It is easier to tolerate than it is to learn to love one another! Are you an example in suffering and patience toward your brothers and sisters in Christ?

CONCLUSION

James is a very practical book. How does your "religion" measure up? In what ways would change in your life be desirable or profitable?

God has promised that He will test our faith. Just as Israel was led into the wilderness for her testing, so we will be purified of all that remains of falling short of the glory of our King!

EVALUATION

Meditate upon and review what you have learned in James.

1. Recite from memory the major movements of the book. What prominent lessons do you remember from each section? What prominent principles?
2. What would you conclude is the central teaching God has for you in this book?
3. Reflect upon the concept of Quick to Hear, Slow to Speak, Slow to Anger. What principles did you glean from your study of James that can help you to practice this verse more fully?
4. Review the highlights of the "What about today?" sections and the prominent concepts you encountered. What have you discovered or rediscovered about yourself? About God?

PROJECTS

These projects are listed to provide direction for deeper investigation of James in your life!

1. Complete the insert 'A Tongue-Lashing' for a further consideration about controlling your tongue.
2. Examine each chapter of James looking for key words, recurring phrases and prominent ideas. Use these to choose key verses for each chapter. You may wish to give brief summary titles that reflect the content of each chapter. Highlight these in your electronic or printed personal copy of the scriptures.
3. *Share your understanding.* Take one or two of the prominent lessons you have encountered in James and share them with someone else. Use these truths to provoke and encourage yourself and others as you seek to pursue a life filled with rich works of faith!

COMMIT TO MEMORY!

1:12 reflecting the overall theme of wisdom: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials."

1:19 which views a central exhortation fundamental to the book purpose: "This you know, my beloved brothers. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."

 **TONGUE-LASHING**

What principles does James teach us about the tongue in James 3?

What else do we learn about the tongue from these passages?

Psalms 45:1 _____

Psalms 51:14 _____

Psalms 139:4 _____

Proverbs 6:17 _____

10:20 _____

12:18 _____

12:19 _____

15:2 _____

15:4 _____

16:1 _____

17:4 _____

18:21 _____

21:25 _____

26:28 _____

28:25 _____

Isaiah 50:4 _____

Matthew 15:11 _____

Luke 6:45 _____

1 John 3:18 _____

What additional passages you would add?

In what ways is your tongue under control? Out of control?

How can you help someone who will not control his or her tongue?