James

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SCRIPTURE STUDY CLASS
APRIL 7—JUNE 9, 2024

Introduction

In this class, we will study the Epistle of James, a short letter filled with profound and practical instruction for Christian life.

Our hope and prayer are that this class will provide you with a better knowledge of the Bible and a deeper love for Christ and his people. Please attempt to answer the week's questions before the class. Being prepared will allow you and others to participate more effectively in the discussions, bringing everyone to a greater level of understanding of God's word and a deepened fellowship.

Optional Commentaries

Moo, Dougas J., *The Letter of James* (Second Edition), Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2021

Motyer, J. Alec, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of James* (Revised Edition), Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

Free Online Resources

Dan Doriani (TGC Commentary)
www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/james/

Recommendations for Table Discussion

There will be some who are more eager to share around the table than others. Please be respectful and kind as the discussion unfolds, recognizing there are varying levels of biblical proficiency and levels of comfort in sharing. Your table hosts are wonderful brothers and sisters who are there to love and support you and will do their best to foster a safe, welcoming environment that is profitable and edifying for everyone present.

Thank you for spending the time to take this class and for contributing to the fellowship and mutual learning around your table. Our hope is that the effort you put into this class will be rewarded many times over in your daily Christian walk and in the years to come.

Scripture Study Class—James
April 7—June 9, 2024

Week	Date	Title	Scripture
Week 1	7-Apr	Faith and Wisdom, Poverty and Riches	James 1:1-11
Week 2	14-Apr	Trial and Temptation	James 1:12-18
Week 3	21-Apr	Hearing and Doing the Word	James 1:19-27
Week 4	28-Apr	Warning Against Partiality	James 2:1-13
Week 5	5-May	Faith Without Works is Dead	James 2:14-26
Week 6	12-May	Taming the Tongue, and Two Kinds of Wisdom	James 3:1-18
Week 7	19-May	Friendship with the World and Judging One Another	James 4:1-12
Week 8	26-May	Boasting about Tomorrow and a Warning to Rich Oppressors	James 4:13-5:6
Week 9	2-Jun	Patience in Suffering	James 5:7-12
Week 10	9-Jun	The Prayer of Faith	James 5:13-20

WEEK 1: JAMES 1:1-11 **APRIL 7, 2024**

FAITH AND WISDOM, POVERTY AND RICHES

1. In verses 2-3, James writes, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." What does it mean to "count it all joy," and how is one supposed to do that in the midst of suffering?

2. What does it mean to speak of "the testing of our faith"? How is our faith tested?

3. In verses 3-4, James writes, "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." What does steadfastness look like in your own life? (Hint: what does it mean to say that God is steadfast, and how does that help us better understand steadfastness in ourselves?)

4. What does it mean to “ask in faith”? Is James saying that if we ask for anything from God, if we just believe it enough, we'll get it? (Hint: no!) What then? What does it look like in your life, to not be double-minded?

5. “Let the lowly brother boast in his exultation, and the rich in his humiliation,” James writes in verses 9-10. Why would the “lowly brother” be rejoicing, and why would the rich man boast in his humiliation?

6. ***Extra credit***: What do we know about the author of this epistle from other portions of Scripture? (See vs. 1; Matt. 13:53-58; Mark 3:20-21, 31-35; Acts 12:13-17; 15:13-21; 21:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; Gal. 1:18-19; 2:7-12; Jude 1:1.) Based on these various verses, what do we learn about James' relationship with Jesus, his brother, both before and after the resurrection? What do we learn of his role in Jerusalem in the early years of the church?

WEEK 2: JAMES 1:12-18 **APRIL 14, 2024**
TRIAL AND TEMPTATION

1. "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial" (vs. 12). What does it mean to remain steadfast under trial look like in our lives? Why do you think God lets us be tested in this way?

2. What is the "crown of life" that God has promised to those who love him (vs. 12)? (See 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11-12. For additional insights, see Matt. 25:34; Rom. 2:7-10; and 1 Cor. 9:25.) How does the prospect of your receiving the crown of life upon the completion of your race impact you today?

3. Describe in your own words the picture of temptation that James gives us in verses 14-15. How is sin conceived and what is its inevitable consequence?

4. What does James warn us not to be deceived about (see verses 15-16)? Why do you think we need to be warned about this?

5. In verse 18, James writes that "of his own will [God] brought us forth by the word of truth." What does this mean? (See John 1:12-13; 3:3-5; and 1 Pet. 1:3, 23.) How ought we be greatly comforted in the contemplation of this truth?

WEEK 3: JAMES 1:19-27 **APRIL 21, 2024**
HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

1. "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (vs. 19). What does Jesus say about our careless words (see Matt. 12:35-37)? What does he say about our anger (see Matt. 5:21-22)?

2. In verse 20, James adds, "for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires." What does this mean? Is it always wrong to be angry? How can you be angry and not sin (see Psalm 4:4)?

3. What is the "implanted word" which is able to save our souls (vs. 21; see also vs. 18)? How was it implanted, and how does it save us? Why do you think James says that we must receive this word with meekness?

4. In verse 22, James states an important principle, i.e., that we are to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only." Explain in your own words the meaning of James' illustration in verses 23-24. In what way are we deceiving ourselves if we are hearers only of the word (see vs. 26).

5. In verses 26-27, James connects the worthiness of one's "religion" with bridling one's tongue. Using your own life and experience, how would you understand and explain James' point here? Also, how can one keep oneself unstained by the world?

6. ***Extra credit***: In verse 25, James promises blessing for the "doer who acts." What does he mean when he speaks of our looking "into the perfect law, the law of liberty" and persevering? (See James 2:12; Rom 7:12; 8:15; John 8:32; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 5:1; and 1 Pet. 2:16.)

WEEK 4: JAMES 2:1-10 **APRIL 28, 2024**
WARNING AGAINST PARTIATLITY

1. What does it mean when James describes Jesus as "the Lord of glory"? (See Ps. 24:7-10; 1 Cor. 2:8; and Heb. 1:3.)

2. In verses 2-4, James gives an example of the sin of partiality. What's so bad about partiality in the church? (See vs. 9; Deut. 16:19; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:9-13; 1 and Tim. 5:21.)

3. Read verses 5-7. What does it mean to be "rich in faith" (see Rev. 2:9 and 3:17)? Connected to this, what does it mean to say that we are "heirs of the kingdom" (see 1 Pet. 1:3-5)?

4. Read verses 8-9, where James describes "the royal law according to the Scripture" as being the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. What is his point here as it concerns partiality in the church?

5. What does James mean in verse 10 when he writes that "whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." (See Deut. 27:26; Matt. 5:18-19; and Gal. 3:10.) If this is so – if indeed we have all fallen short of God's glory – then, to quote the Heidelberg Catechism, "what is your only comfort in life and in death"?

6. ***Extra credit***: In verse 4, the phrase "made distinctions" is an English rendering of the same Greek word that James used back in 1:6, where it was translated as "doubts" and "doubting." It conveys the sense of "being at variance with one's own self." Thus, for James, to doubt is in this sense to be divided against oneself. Interesting! How does this understanding of the word deepen our understanding of the sin of partiality in the church?

WEEK 5: JAMES 2:11-26 **MAY 5, 2024**
FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

1. In verse 11, James writes that "if you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law." What is his point here? Why does it matter?

2. Read verse 13 and explain the meaning of James' warning to those who fail to show mercy. What does he mean when he says that "mercy triumphs over judgment? (See Matt. 9:13 and 12:7, and Hosea 6:6) How should this principle inform our way of dealing with one another as Christians?

3. Read verses 15-20. What does it mean to say that "faith without works" is "dead" (vs. 17) and "useless" (vs. 20)? Why is it important that the genuineness of saving faith be shown in works flowing from it (vs. 18)?

4. James makes an interesting point in verse 19 about the faith of demons. Explain it in your own words. What is different about the faith of a demon and genuine, saving faith in Christ?

5. James uses the example of Abraham offering Isaac on the altar to make his case that Abraham was "justified by works and not by faith alone." But… we know that Abraham was justified by faith! (See Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:5-9.) How do we align what James is saying with the rest of Scripture? (Hint: see vs. 22, 25-26.)

WEEK 6: JAMES 3:1-18 **MAY 12, 2024**

TAMING THE TONGUE, AND TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

1. "For we all stumble in many ways," James writes in verse 2, "and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body." Explain in your own words what he is saying here. What is the connection between not stumbling in what one says with being "perfect" and "able to bridle [one's] whole body"?

2. James uses the examples of bits in the mouths of horses and of rudders guiding ships (vs. 2-4). What is his point in these examples? How does the tongue exercise such power in our lives?

3. In verses 5-8, James goes on to speak in very strong terms about the dangers of the tongue, comparing it to a "fire, a world of unrighteousness," as "staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life," and as "set on fire by hell." Why does he use such strong language here? What is so dangerous about the tongue?

4. In verses 9-12, James shows how we use our tongues both to bless God and to curse those made in God's image, and says, "my brothers, these things ought not to be so." What examples does he show to establish how the tongue that both blesses and curses is not right? Are you convicted in this regard? How ought we use our tongues?

5. "Who is wise and understanding among you?" James writes in verse 13. "By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom." What is "the meekness of wisdom," and how is it to be shown in our works?

6. ***Extra credit***: What does James mean when he writes that "a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

WEEK 7: JAMES 4:1-12 **MAY 19, 2024**
FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD & JUDGING ONE ANOTHER

1. In verses 1-2, James suggests that what causes quarrels and what causes fights in the church are "your passions are at war within you," i.e., frustrated desires that lead to fighting and quarreling. How do misplaced desires lie at the root of dissensions and divisions in the church?

2. What is James' solution to frustrated desire (vs. 2-3)? For what are we to ask, and of whom? And what do you think he means when he says that we ask wrongly?

3. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" (vs. 4) What does James mean here by "the world"? What does friendship with the world look like?

4. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (vs. 7) How are we to resist the devil? In our own power? What does submission and drawing near to God have to do with it (vs. 7-8)?

5. In verses 8-10, we are given a picture of repentance and mourning leading to God’s exalting us. What is the connection between repentance, humility, and restoration?

6. **Extra credit**: Read verse 6. Why do you think grace is given to the humble? What does Christian humility look like?

WEEK 8: JAMES 4:13-5:6 **MAY 26, 2024**
BOASTING ABOUT TOMORROW AND A WARNING TO RICH OPPRESSORS

1. In verses 13-15, James reproves those who orient their lives around the pursuit of future profits without consideration of the fact that "you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." What is the value of living in the light of this knowledge?

2. Do we really need to say, "If the Lord wills," every time we make plans (vs. 15)? What is James' point here? And connected with this, what seems to be the nature of the boasting that James has in mind, when he writes that "such boasting evil" (vs. 16)?

3. "Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it," James writes in vs. 17, "for him it is sin." What are the implications of this truth for your life? How do you discern what the right thing is in any given situation?

4. In verses 5:1-3, James' words echo those of Jesus from Matthew 6:19-21 and Luke 6:24-26. His language of warning is very strong here. How will the corrosion of one's riches "be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire"? What does it mean to say that they "have laid up treasure in the last days"?

5. Verse 4 is a powerful statement against injustice. What does it mean to say that wages withheld from laborers are crying out against you? How do the cries of the harvesters reach the ears of the Lord of hosts? Read Matthew 25:41-46 and explain in your own words what it means to "do justice" (see Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24)?

WEEK 9: JAMES 5:7-12 **JUNE 2, 2024**
PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

1. How is waiting for the Lord with patience like the farmer who waits for the precious fruit of the earth (vs. 7)? Why is patience such a Christian virtue? How can you cultivate patience amidst the suffering and trials of our own lives?

2. What does it mean to "establish your hearts" (vs. 2; see also Psalm 27:1-4, 13-14)? How does living in remembrance of the fact that "the coming of the Lord is at hand" help establish our hearts? What does it mean to say that the coming of the Lord is at hand?

3. God is not pleased or honored by the grumbling of his people, against him or against one another (see Ex. 16:6-8; Num. 14:28-30). Why will we be judged if we grumble against one another? What does James mean when he writes in verse 9 that "the Judge is standing at the door"?

4. In verses 10-11, James puts forward the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as examples of suffering and patience for us to emulate. How is this so? What is it about the prophets that we should emulate?

5. "But above all, my brothers, do not swear," James writes in verse 12, "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." This teaching echoes Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:33-37). What are James and Jesus getting at here?

WEEK 10: JAMES 5:13-20 **JUNE 9, 2024**
THE PRAYER OF FAITH

1. "Is anyone among you suffering?" James asks in verse 13. "Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise." What is the nature and value of prayer in the life of the believer? Praise?

2. "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" (vs. 14). What is the purpose of calling elders for prayer and anointing with oil? What is the significance of anointing with oil? (See Ex. 28:41; 29:5-7; Isa. 61:1, John 3:34, 1 John 2:27; and 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.)

3. "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" (vs. 15). What is "the prayer of faith"? What has been the effectiveness, benefit, and fruitfulness of prayer in your own life?

4. “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (vs. 16). What is the value of confessing sins to one another? Do you? Ought you? What might confessing your sins to one another look like in practice?

5. James ends with a wonderful promise, that “whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (vs. 19-20). What do you think he means here, in your own words? What might it look like to bring back a sinner from wandering? What does it mean to “cover a multitude of sins”? (See 1 Pet. 4:8.)

6. ***Extra credit***: What does James mean when he says that “the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (vs. 16-18)? Why is it significant that James notes that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours”? What things ought we be praying about, and … are there things we ought not pray for?

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