

# Small Group Study Guide

For the Book of

James

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## Introduction to James

### Author, Date, and Recipients

James, the brother of Jesus, wrote this letter to Christian Jews who had been scattered among the nations. James can be found in Acts 15 where he is seen taking a leading role in the church council dealing with the acceptance of the gospel by gentiles. The Apostle Paul refers to James as a “pillar” of the church in Galatians 1:19. James is well known enough that Jude identifies himself as a brother of James. It is interesting that the brothers of Jesus initially did not believe in him (John 7:2-5). But after the resurrection James and Jude, in particular, would have significant influence.

The recipients of the book of James were likely Christians who had fled Jerusalem following the martyrdom of Stephen (See Acts 8).

There are indications that the book was written probably before 50 AD.

- The book is by nature distinctively Jewish, probably written when the church was predominantly Jewish.
- It reflects a very simple organization, mentioning elders and teachers and avoiding many of the church structure issues that Paul would address later. (3:1, 5:14)
- There is no reference to the controversies discussed at the council in Acts 15.
- It still uses the Greek word for synagogue when referencing the meeting place of the church. (2:2)
- If this is the case, then the book of James is one of the earliest New testament writings along with the book of Galatians.

### Theme and Structure

The theme of James is faith. Particularly, the approach that James takes is looking at what the results of having faith should look like in Jesus’ followers. Rather than looking at saving faith or justifying faith, which the Apostle Paul masterfully does, James explores the lifestyle that faith produces.

James’ style is much like the Old Testament book of Proverbs. He presents a series of short observations, exhortations or instructions and moves through a variety of subjects, that are important to the life of an individual Christian or to church collectively, rather quickly.

### Purpose

The purpose of James is to provide 1) encouragement to a church that is suffering persecution and trials as a result of having to flee from their city to places where they don’t know what to expect, 2) practical instruction in faith and conduct in order to grow in their everyday walk with Christ, 3) practical guidance for understanding the range of relationships that exist in the church and how to behave toward one another. Overall, James is an intensely practical manual for Christian living.

## Study 1- The Testing of Your Faith

Text: James 1:1-4 (NET)

**1** From James, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. Greetings!  
**2** My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but **joy** when you fall into all sorts of **trials**, **3** because you know that the **testing of your faith** produces endurance. **4** And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be **perfect and complete**, not deficient in anything.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “joy”, “trials”, “testing of your faith”, “perfect and complete”.

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- Questions of Context

What was the cause of all sorts of trials? (See Acts 8:1-3)

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

What perspective does James provide in relation to suffering?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What is the world’s attitude toward suffering? Do you think Christians generally have a mature understanding of the role of suffering in their lives?

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- Personal Application

Do you have an example of “the testing of your faith” resulting in your growth in Christ?

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## Study 2 – Acquiring Wisdom

Text: James 1:5-8 (NET)

**5** But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him. **6** But he must ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind. **7** For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord,**8** since he is a double-minded individual, unstable in all his ways.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “wisdom”, “without reprimand”, “faith without doubting”, “double-minded”.

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- Questions of Context

What might asking for wisdom have to do with enduring trials and the testing of your faith?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

Why do you think James is telling his readers that God will provide wisdom without reprimand or finding fault with them?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What do you think is the world’s understanding of wisdom? Is this different than a Christian understanding of wisdom?

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- Personal Application

Have you ever experienced doubt? How did you resolve this? How would you help someone else deal with their doubts?

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### Study 3 – The High Position of the Humble Believer

Text: James 1:9-11 (NET)

**9** Now the believer of humble means should take pride in his high position. **10** But the rich person's pride should be in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a wildflower in the meadow. **11** For the sun rises with its heat and dries up the meadow; the petal of the flower falls off and its beauty is lost forever. So also the rich person in the midst of his pursuits will wither away.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: "humble means", "pride", "high position", "humiliation", "rich".

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- Questions of Context

What might have been the circumstances that necessitated this text?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

What perspective is James trying to give those who are of humble means and those who rich?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think the church today has a healthy view of wealth or the lack of wealth?

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- Personal Application

How do you view those who are wealthy? Are you content with your economic status? Do your views line-up with this text?

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## Study 4 – The Truth Concerning Temptation

Text: James 1:12-15 (NET)

**12** Happy is the one who endures **testing**, because when he has proven to be **genuine**, he will receive the **crown of life** that God promised to those who love him. **13** Let no one say when he is **tempted**, “I am **tempted** by God,” for God cannot be **tempted** by evil, and he himself **tempts** no one. **14** But each one is **tempted** when he is **lured and enticed** by his own desires. **15** Then when **desire conceives**, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to death.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “testing”, “genuine”, “crown of life”, “tempted”, “lured and enticed”, “desire conceives”.

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- Questions of Context

How might this text relate to the issues of “humble means” and “rich” covered in verses 9-11?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

Why do think James found it necessary to emphasize that God does not tempt anyone?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What are the implications of the concept that temptation is rooted in one’s own desires?

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- Personal Application

How is it that testing and temptation can help prove our faith? Do you have an example of this?

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## Study 5 – The Unchanging God

Text: James 1:16-18 (NET)

**16** Do not be led astray, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change. **18** By his sovereign plan he gave us birth through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “led astray”, “perfect gift”, “no variation”, “birth through the message of truth”, “firstfruits of all he created”.

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- Questions of Context

How does this text tie in to verses 12-15?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

How does this description of God help the readers to “not be led astray”?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think this description of God reflects what today’s church understands God to be like?

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- Personal Application

What difference does it make to you that God never changes?

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## Study 6 – The Danger of Not Dealing With Anger

Text: James 1:19-21 (NET)

**19** Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. **20** For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness. **21** So put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the message implanted within you, which is able to save your souls.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: "quick to listen", "slow to speak", "slow to anger", "filth and evil excess", "message implanted within you".

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- Questions of Context

What might have been the circumstances that necessitated this text?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

What is James saying about the importance of listening?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think people today are encouraged to listen more or to speak or express themselves more? How might this affect the quality of relationships?

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- Personal Application

What are your strategies for dealing with anger? How does listening and being slow to speak help with anger issues?

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## Study 7 – Hearing Plus Doing Equals Blessing

Text: James 1:22-25 (NET)

**22** But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves. **23** For if someone merely listens to the message and does not live it out, he is like someone who gazes at his own face in a mirror. **24** For he gazes at himself and then goes out and immediately forgets what sort of person he was. **25** But the one who peers into the perfect law of liberty and fixes his attention there, and does not become a forgetful listener but one who lives it out – he will be blessed in what he does.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “merely listen”, “live it out”, “peers into the perfect law”, “blessed in what he does”.

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- Questions of Context

For James’ audience, what was being referenced by the “message” or “perfect law of liberty”?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

What is James saying about the congruence between learning and doing?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think there is enough emphasis on obedience and doing in our times of teaching? Do Christians today seem to be balanced when it comes to learning and doing?

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- Personal Application

Are you satisfied with your Bible study habits? Do you feel you are growing as a result of your Bible study and the teaching you hear? In what ways is your learning reflected in your doing?

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## Study 8 – Unstained by the World

Text: James 1:26-27 (NET)

**26** If someone thinks he is **religious** yet does not **bridle his tongue**, and so deceives his heart, his **religion** is **futile**. **27** **Pure and undefiled religion** before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their misfortune and to keep oneself **unstained by the world**.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “religious”, “bridle his tongue”, “futile”, “pure and undefiled”, “unstained by the world”.

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- Questions of Context

What do you think were the circumstances that motivated James to make such a strong connection between “pure and undefiled religion” and caring for “orphans and widows in their misfortune”?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

In what way is this text an illustration of 1:22-25?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What is the role of the church in society in taking care of the “orphans and widows in their misfortune”?

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- Personal Application

What strategies do you have for “bridling your tongue”? How do you participate in caring for the less fortunate? Why are these important for keeping “unstained by the world”?

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## Study 9 – Prejudice verses the Law of Love (Part 1)

Text: James 2:1-7 (NET)

**1** My brothers and sisters, do not show **prejudice** if you possess faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. **2** For if someone comes into your **assembly** wearing a gold ring and fine clothing, and a poor person enters in filthy clothes, **3** do you pay attention to the one who is finely dressed and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and to the poor person, “You stand over there,” or “Sit on the floor”? **4** If so, have you not **made distinctions** among yourselves and become judges with evil motives? **5** Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! Did not God choose the **poor in the world** to be **rich in faith** and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor! Are not the rich oppressing you and dragging you into the courts? **7** Do they not **blaspheme** the good name of the one you belong to?

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “prejudice”, “assembly”, “made distinctions”, “poor in the world”, “rich in faith”, “blaspheme”.

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- Questions of Context

Is it possible that those who were making distinction between the rich and the poor may have been ignorant of judging with “evil motives”?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

- Author’s Intentions

What was James teaching his readers regarding God’s view of what it means to be rich?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think today’s church has a godly view of the poor? Does the church favor the rich?

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- Personal Application

How do you define rich and poor? How does this influence the way you view people?

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## Study 10 – Prejudice verses the Law of Love (Part 2)

Text: James 2:8-13 (NET)

**8** But if you fulfill the **royal law** as expressed in this scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” you are doing well. **9** But if you show prejudice, you are committing sin and are **convicted** by the law as **violators.** **10** For the one who obeys the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. **11** For he who said, “*Do not commit adultery,*” also said, “*Do not murder.*” Now if you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a violator of the law. **12** Speak and act as those who will be judged by a **law that gives freedom.** **13** For judgment is merciless for the one who has shown no **mercy.** But **mercy** triumphs over **judgment.**

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “royal law”, “convicted”, “violators”, “law that gives freedom”, “mercy”, “freedom”.

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- Questions of Context

Why does James use the context of the law to address issues of prejudice, sin and judgement?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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• Author’s Intentions

What was James teaching his readers regarding the importance of the relationship between mercy and judgement?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think today’s church has an accurate view of sin? Does the church understand mercy and how to be merciful?

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- Personal Application

How does the law provide freedom? How does this help you understand sin, mercy and judgement?

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## Study 11 – Faith and Works (Part 1)

Text: James 2:14-19 (NET)

**14** What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacks daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,” but you do not give them what the body needs, what good is it? **17** So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead being by itself. **18** But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works. **19** You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that – and tremble with fear.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “claims to have faith”, “not have works”, “”, “believe”.

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- Questions of Context

What may have been that circumstances that motivated James to write this passage?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

What was James trying to achieve by making a deep connection between faith and action?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think the faith of the modern church is seen in its works? Is it possible to do works without faith?

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- Personal Application

Does the presence of the Gospel in your life compel you to action? What are some examples of works that would be consistent with genuine faith?

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## Study 12 – Faith and Works (Part 2)

Text: James 2:20-26 (NET)

**20** But would you like **evidence**, you empty fellow, that faith without works is useless? **21** Was not Abraham our father **justified** by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? **22** You see that his faith was working together with his works and his faith was **perfected by works**. **23** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “*Now Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness,*” and *he was called God’s friend*. **24** You see that a person is **justified** by works and not by faith alone. **25** And similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also **justified** by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another way? **26** For just as the **body without the spirit is dead**, so also faith without works is dead.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “evidence”, “justified”, “perfected by works”, “body without the spirit is dead”.

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- Questions of Context

What does this passage reveal about the unified, continuous nature of the Old and New Testaments?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

What did James achieve by using Old Testament examples?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Why do you think that some people today view the church as something that is dead?

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- Personal Application

Do you think your knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament helps you understand the New Testament? If so, what would be an example? If not, what do you think is missing in your understanding?

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## Study 13 – The Power of the Tongue (Part 1)

Text: James 3:1-6 (NET)

**1** Not many of you should become **teachers**, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we will be **judged more strictly**. **2** For we all **stumble** in many ways. If someone does not **stumble** in what he says, he is a **perfect individual**, able to control the entire body as well. **3** And if we put bits into the mouths of horses to get them to obey us, then we guide their entire bodies. **4** Look at ships too: Though they are so large and driven by harsh winds, they are steered by a tiny rudder wherever the pilot's inclination directs. **5** So too the tongue is a small part of the body, yet it has **great pretensions**. Think how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. **6** And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents the **world of wrongdoing** among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence – and is set on fire by hell.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “teachers”, “judged more strictly”, “stumble”, “perfect individual”, “great pretensions”, “world of wrongdoing”.

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- Questions of Context

Why do you think James issued this warning about becoming teachers? How does this relate to the teaching regarding the power of the tongue?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

Why do you think James uses such extreme language regarding the tongue?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What do you think are the qualifications for someone who should be allowed to teach in the church? Can you think of other scriptures that address this issue?

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- Personal Application

What does this passage teach us about not only what we say but about how we say it?

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## Study 14 – The Power of the Tongue (Part 2)

Text: James 3:7-12 (NET)

**7** For every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature is **subdued** and has been **subdued** by humankind. **8** But no human being can **subdue** the tongue; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With it we **bless** the Lord and Father, and with it we **curse** people made in God's image. **10** From the same mouth come **blessing** and **cursing**. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters. **11** A spring does not pour out fresh water and bitter water from the same opening, does it? **12** Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a vine produce figs? Neither can a salt water spring produce fresh water.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: "subdued", "bless/blessing", "curse/cursing".

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- Questions of Context

What does this passage reveal about the importance of words in first century Jewish culture?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

Why do you think James is suggesting in his illustrations in verses 11 and 12?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think Christians in our context consider speaking negatively or gossiping about others to be a serious problem?

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- Personal Application

Can we grow to a point of maturity that we are able to subdue the tongue? What are some ideas that can help us in this?

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## Study 15 – Two Kinds of Wisdom

Text: James 3:13-18 (NET)

**13** Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct he should show his works done in the gentleness that wisdom brings. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfishness in your hearts, do not boast and tell lies against the truth. **15** Such wisdom does not come from above but is earthly, natural, demonic. **16** For where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is disorder and every evil practice. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and not hypocritical. **18** And the fruit that consists of righteousness is planted in peace among those who make peace.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “wise and understanding”, “good conduct”, “gentleness”, “earthly, natural, demonic”, “the list in verse 17”.

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- Questions of Context

Why do you think James begins this section with the question “Who is wise and understanding among you”?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

What is James conveying to his readers through contrasting two kinds of wisdom?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

How does the world define wisdom? Why is it important for the church, that wisdom from above is connected specifically to behavioral qualities?

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- Personal Application

Why do you think we may sometimes be tempted to participate in the wisdom that does not come from above? What does verse 18 teach us about how to grow in wisdom?

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## Study 16 – The Source of Relational Conflict

Text: James 4:1-3 (NET)

**1** Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from your passions that battle inside you? **2** You desire and you do not have; you murder and envy and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask; **3** you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “conflicts”, “quarrels”, “passions”, “desire”, “ask wrongly”.

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- Questions of Context

What kinds of things do you think James’ readers would have been conflicting or quarreling over?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

Where are James’ readers supposed to start when looking for the source of their conflicts?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What are some things that we commonly conflict or quarrel about in today’s world? What about in the church?

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- Personal Application

When you find yourself in a conflict, do you normally first check your own motivations or understanding of the situation? What should your motivations be when asking for something in prayer?

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## Study 17 – The Problem of Pride

Text: James 4:4-6 (NET)

**4 Adulterers**, do you not know that **friendship with the world** means hostility toward God? So whoever decides to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy. **5** Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says, "The spirit that God caused to live within us has an **envious yearning**"? **6** But he gives **greater grace**. Therefore it says, "**God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.**"

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: "Adulterers", "friendship with the world", "envious yearning", "greater grace", "proud", "humble".

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- Questions of Context

What behaviours might the people have been involved with that put them in friendship with the world? How might this be connected to the sin of pride?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

Why do you think James had to address this issue of his reader's level of commitment to God? James connects "pride" with being "friends with the worlds". Explain this connection.

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

How do we tell the difference between being "in the world, not of the world" and "friendship with the world"?

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- Personal Application

How do you think God feels when we choose to pursue the things of this world? How do we resist being proud and endeavor to be humble before God and in our life?

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## Study 18 – Submitting to God

Text: James 4:7-10 (NET)

**7** So **submit** to God. But **resist** the devil and he will flee from you. **8** **Draw near** to God and he will **draw near** to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and make your hearts **pure**, you **double-minded**. **9** Grieve, mourn, and weep. Turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into despair. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will **exalt you**.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “submit”, “resist”, “draw near”, “pure”, “double-minded”, “exalt you”.

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- Questions of Context

In what way is this passage a continuation of verses 4 - 6?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

How does this text serve as a solution to the problems of conflict and pride (4:4–6)? In what way is verse 9 a description of repentance?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

How do Christians today view the devil? Do you think we understand God's power in relation to the activity of the devil?

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- Personal Application

How do you draw near to God? Compare the last sentence of verse 8 with Matthew 5:8. What does it mean to “see God”?

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## Study 19 – Who Can Judge?

Text: James 4:11-12 (NET)

**11** Do not **speak against** one another, **brothers and sisters**. He who speaks against a fellow believer or judges a fellow believer speaks against **the law** and **judges** the law. But if you **judge the law**, you are not a **doer of the law** but its judge. **12** But there is only one who is **lawgiver and judge** – the one who is able to save and destroy. On the other hand, who are you to judge your neighbor?

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “speak against”, “brothers and sisters”, “the law”, “judges”, “judge the law”, “doer of the law”, “lawgiver and judge”.

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- Questions of Context

What was Jesus’ statement that summarized the whole law? See Matthew 22:36-40.

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

Why is speaking against a brother or sister speaking against the law? (refer back to Questions of Context)

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

How can we understand this passage in light of Matthew 18:15-17?

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- Personal Application

How does an accurate understanding of ourselves help us govern how we speak of others? (See verse 12)

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## Study 20 – Who is in Charge?

Text: James 4:13-17 (NET)

**13** Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that town and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” **14** You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like? For you are a **puff of smoke** that appears for a short time and then vanishes. **15** You ought to say instead, “**If the Lord is willing**, then we will live and do this or that.” **16** But as it is, you **boast in your arrogance**. All such boasting is evil. **17** So whoever **knows what is good to do and does not do** it is guilty of sin.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “puff of smoke”, “if the Lord is willing”, “boast in your arrogance”, “knows what is good and does not do it”.

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- Questions of Context

In what way is this text a continuation of James’ discussion of pride in previous verses?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

Why do you think James had to address this issue of the pretentiousness of people?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

How can we go about making plans while at the same time prioritizing the Lord’s will?

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- Personal Application

How does trusting God shape our view of the future? Verse 17 describes sins of omission. How do we avoid such sins?

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## Study 21 – The Dangers of Earthly Riches

Text: James 5:1-6 (NET)

**1** Come now, you rich! Weep and cry aloud over the miseries that are coming on you. **2** Your riches have rotted and your clothing has become moth-eaten.**3** Your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you. It will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have hoarded treasure! **4** Look, the pay you have held back from the workers who mowed your fields cries out against you, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. **5** You have lived indulgently and luxuriously on the earth. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. **6** You have condemned and murdered the righteous person, although he does not resist you.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “rich”, “miseries”, “witness against you”, “last days”, “lived indulgently and luxuriously”, fattened your hearts”, condemned and murdered the righteous person”.

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- Questions of Context

How is it that having riches is an issue to James’ readers who are “the twelve tribes dispersed abroad” and have experienced “all sorts of trials”? (See chapter 1)

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

- Author’s Intentions

In verse 4 what is James teaching regarding how God sees people?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Can believers be wealthy and at the same time live a life pleasing to God?

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- Personal Application

What practices have you put in place that help you manage your resources in a way that pleases God and enables you to avoid the traps that James warns against?

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## Study 22 – Patiently Wait for the Lord’s Return

Text: James 5:7-9 (NET)

**7** So be patient, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s return. Think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for it until it receives the early and late rains. **8** You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord’s return is near. **9** Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates!

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “patient”, “strengthen your hearts”, “the Lord’s return is near”, “grumble against one another”, “not be judged”.

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- Questions of Context

In what way is the example of the farmer an encouragement to the first century readers?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author’s Intentions

In verse 9 James instructs them to not grumble against one another. What does anticipating the return of the Lord have to do with how Christians relate to one another?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Do you think the church today views the return of the Lord as being near? If the return of the Lord is near, how might this influence the church?

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- Personal Application

How do you view the return of the Lord? Do you ever feel impatient when anticipating His coming?

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## Study 23 – Examples of Suffering and Patience

Text: James 5:10-12 (NET)

**10** As an example of **suffering and patience**, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name. **11** Think of how we **regard as blessed** those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and you have seen **the Lord's purpose**, that *the Lord is full of compassion and mercy*. **12** And above all, my brothers and sisters, **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 into judgment.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: "suffering and patience", "regard as blessed", "the Lord's purpose", "compassion and mercy", "do not swear, either by heaven or earth".

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- Questions of Context

In what way is this text a continuation of verses 7 – 9?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

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- Author's Intentions

Why was it so important for James to remind them of their history when it comes to suffering and patience? How does being decisive (V. 12) help with being patient?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

What are examples that today's church looks to as models of patience and enduring suffering? Is the church aware of important historical influences?

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- Personal Application

Where do you get inspiration during times of suffering? How does being sure of your commitment (v. 12) help in these times?

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## Study 24 – Prayer, Healing and Forgiveness

Text: James 5:13-18 (NET)

**13** Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises. **14** Is anyone among you ill? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. **15** 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. **16** So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness. **17** Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and there was no rain on the land for three years and six months! **18** Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land sprouted with a harvest.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “summon the elders”, “anoint him with oil”, “prayer of faith”, “confess your sins to one another”, “prayer of a righteous person”.

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- Questions of Context

How is this teaching on prayer and confession the logical continuation of the previous themes of suffering and patience?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

- Author’s Intentions

What is the importance of prayer, singing praise and the prayer of faith being the first response to human circumstances? What is the connection between confession, forgiveness and healing?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

Does the church today believe in the effectiveness of prayer or has prayer become a religious ritual?

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- Personal Application

Do you pray with a great expectation of God’s answer? How can we grow in effective prayer?

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## Study 25 –Direct One Another to the Saviour

Text: James 5:19-20 (NET)

**19** My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, **20** he should know that the one who turns a sinner back from his wandering path will save that person's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- Key Words and Phrases

Discuss the meaning and significance of the following: “wanders from the truth”, “turns him back”, “save that person’s soul from death”, “cover a multitude of sins”.

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- Questions of Context

Why do you think James finishes this epistle with this particular encouragement?

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- Does this passage teach anything about God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mankind, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church or End Times?

- Author’s Intentions

How might this passage serve as a warning and an encouragement?

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- How this text applies to the World and the Church Today

How does the church of today treat people who have wandered from the faith? Should the church see “backsliders” as people to especially reach out to?

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- Personal Application

Have you ever wandered from relationship with Jesus? How were you able to turn back? What would you say to someone who is currently wandering from the truth?

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## Summary:

- What are the most important things you have learned from this study of the book of James?

- How has your knowledge of the book of James expanded?

- As a result of this study, what are some changes you would like to see in your life?