



The Book of James

Faith Covenant Church
Westerville, Ohio

James

“Come Near to God and He will come near to you.” (James 4:8)

Lesson Plan

Lesson	Subject	Verses
1	Introduction. Trials, Temptations and God's Good Gifts	James 1:1-18
2	Listen, Obey and Love	James 1:1:19-2:13
3	Faith and Deeds	James 2:14-26
4	The Tongue and Wisdom	James 3:1-18
5	Worldly or Godly?	James 4:1-17
6	Final Encouragements	James 5:1-20

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Introduction

Author

The author is identified as “James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” There are four different men with the name James in the Bible. James the brother of John, the sons of Zebedee and both Apostles, were called by Jesus (Matthew 10:2). James, the son of Alphaeus was another of the 12 Apostles (Matthew 10:3). Jesus had several siblings including His brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (Matthew 13:55). At the crucifixion Mary, the mother of James and Joses was present (Matthew 27:56). Since this Mary is not Jesus’ mother, her son James is a different James than Jesus’ brother also named James.

James the son of Zebedee was put to the sword soon after Jesus’s resurrection (Acts 12:2) so he is likely not the author. Most agree that James the brother of Jesus is the author since the other two had less stature and influence.

James the brother of Jesus did not believe Jesus initially according to John 7:1-5. However, he became very prominent in the church. Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). Paul meet with him and described him as a pillar of the church (Galatians 1:19, 2:9). James was also a leader at the Jerusalem council as described in Acts 15. James was also so well known that Jude mentions him as his “brother” in Jude 1.

Eusebius, an early church historian notes that James was martyred in 62 BC. Most likely, the letter was written before 50 AD, although some indicate its writing in about 60 AD.

Audience

In James 1:1, the letter is addressed to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.” Some would say that these are early Jewish believers who were scattered from the Jerusalem church after Saul’s, later named Paul, participation in the stoning of Stephen and persecution of the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1 and 11:19). The letter has a definite Jewish tone.

Theme

James emphasizes good deeds and faith that works. It seems to be a call to action for Christians. For example, James 4:8 tells us to “Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” In James 2:17, he says “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” Some would say that James contradicts the teaching of Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, where people are saved by faith alone and not by works. Of course, Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:10 believers “are created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” As James and Paul knew each other quite well, and we study their writings, we will find no contradiction in God’s Word.

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Lesson 1

Trials, Temptations and God’s Good Gifts

*In this first lesson, James writes to Jewish Christians persecuted and scattered among the nations. He encourages them to have **Joy in Trials**, reminds them to remember the **Temptation Source**, and to remember **God’s Good Gifts**.*

Joy in Trials

Read James 1:1-12, Acts 8:1-8 and Acts 11:19-21.

1. Describe the recipients of James’s letter.
2. James tells his persecuted Jews that they should have pure joy in their trials of many kinds. How can they have joy in their trials? See Matthew 5:11-12, Acts 5:41 and Romans 5:1-5.
3. What is wisdom and how does that help us to have pure joy? See James 3:17-18.
4. How do you get wisdom? See Proverbs 1:1-7.
5. From verses 9-12, how does James encourage both poor and rich believers?
6. How have you experienced pure joy during the trials you have faced?

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Lesson 1

Trials, Temptations and God’s Good Gifts

Temptation Source

Read James 1:13-15.

7. What is the difference between testing and tempting? See Genesis 22:1 and Matthew 4:1.

8. How are you tempted?

9. How do you resist temptation? See Ephesians 6:10-18.

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God’s Good Gifts

Read James 1:16-18.

10. Why does James tell his brothers not to be deceived?

11. What does James mean that “we might be a kind of first fruits of all He created?”

12. What are good and perfect gifts that you have received from God? How will you thank him for those gifts? See John 16:33 and Romans 8:28-39.

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Challenge: Remember that in all trials and temptations, God works for the good of those who love Him.

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Lesson 2

Listen, Obey and Love

*Last week, we studied James writing to Jewish Christians persecuted and scattered among the nations. He encouraged them to have **Joy in Trials**, reminded them to remember the **Temptation Source**, and to remember **God’s Good Gifts**. This week, he tells them to **Listen Quickly-Speak Slowly, Obey God’s Word, and Love without Favoritism**.*

Listen Quickly-Speak Slowly

Read James 1:19-21, 26.

1. Notice that James is addressing his “dear brothers” in Christ. What does each of the phrases below mean?
 - a. “Take note of this.”
 - b. “Everyone should be quick to listen”
 - c. “Slow to speak”
 - d. “Slow to become angry”
 - e. “Humbly accept the words that is planted in you, which can save you.”
2. Why should believers be slow to anger with their brothers and sisters? See Matthew 5:21-26, 18:21-22, and Hebrews 12:14-15.
3. When have you seen the benefit of listening to someone without anger?

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Obey God’s Word

Read James 1:22-27.

4. What is the call to action for believers?
5. What is the perfect law that gives freedom? See Matthew 5:17 and Romans 10:4.
6. Describe the two examples of a religion. How would you apply those examples to yourself, today?

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Lesson 2
Listen, Obey and Love

Love without Favoritism

Read James 2:1-13.

7. Again, James is talking to believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. How does he command them?

8. What is the royal law? See Leviticus 19:18. Are you able to keep it?

9. What did Jesus say about the law? See Matthew 5:17-20 and 22:37-39.

10. Have you committed murder or adultery? If so, are you forgiven? See Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28.

11. What does James mean in verses 12 and 13? See 2 Corinthians 5:10-12.

12. How will you love your neighbor as yourself this week?

Challenge: How will you think of others before yourself this week?

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Lesson 3

Faith and Deeds

*Last time, James tells believers to **Listen Quickly-Speak Slowly, Obey God’s Word, and Love without Favoritism.** This time we will study **Saving Faith Definition, Dead Faith Evidence and Saving Faith Evidence.***

Saving Faith Definition

Read Genesis 15:6 and Hebrews 11:1.

1. What is faith?
2. Where is your faith and how did you get it? See Romans 10:9-11, Ephesians 1:11-14, 2:8-9.

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Dead Faith Evidence

Read James 2:14-19.

3. Describe the type of faith James is referring to in these verses as well as verse 24 and 26.
4. How does 1 John 3:17 help you to understand what James is saying?
5. How does the example of the demons help you understand a dead faith?

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Lesson 3
Faith and Deeds

Saving Faith Evidence

Read James 2:20-26 and Ephesians 2:8-10.

6. Explain Abraham’s faith and deeds. See Genesis 15:6 and Genesis 22:9-18.

7. How do you reconcile James 2:24 with Ephesians 2:8-10? Are Paul and James in disagreement? Feel free to use any other Bible verses to reconcile your point.

8. Give examples of good deeds that you could do for others. See Ephesians 4:11-13.

9. In order to accomplish good deeds, God gifts spiritual gifts described in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. List them below.

10. How does Ephesians 2:10 encourage you to do good works (deeds)?

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Challenge: Will you accept the good deeds that God has prepared in advance for you to do this week?

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Lesson 4

The Tongue and Wisdom

*Last week we studied James, we saw **Saving Faith Definition**, **Dead Faith Evidence** and **Saving Faith Evidence**. This week we will learn about the **Tongue’s Influences**, the **Tongue’s Inconsistencies** and **God’s Wisdom**, rather than the Devil’s wisdom.*

Tongue’s Influences

Read James 3:1-6.

1. Why would teachers be judged more strictly?

2. Is James suggesting that teachers can be perfect? Explain your answer. Has there ever been a perfect teacher?

3. What illustrations does James give about the tongue’s influence on a person?

4. How does Matthew 15:18-19 help you understand the evil influence of the tongue?

5. How are believers encouraged to control their tongue in each of the verses below?
 - a. Ephesians 4:29-5:4.

 - b. Colossians 3:8-9.

 - c. 1 Peter 3:10.

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Lesson 4
The Tongue and Wisdom

Tongue’s Inconsistencies

Read James 3:7-12.

6. Explain the inconsistencies of your tongue. How can those inconsistencies exist?
See Romans 3:23 and 10:9.

7. How are you able to tame your tongue? What are some verses that encourage you?

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God’s Wisdom

Read James 3:13-18.

8. What do the following verses tell you about the source of wisdom?

a. Proverbs 2:6

b. 1 Corinthians 12:8

c. Proverbs 9:10

d. Proverbs 4:1-11

e. Ecclesiastes 1:13

f. Proverbs 29:15

g. Colossians 3:16

9. Describe the two types of wisdom.

10. Do you have God’s wisdom? If so, how do you show it to others?

11. Do you have the Devil’s wisdom? If so, how can you get rid of it.

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Challenge: How will you allow godly wisdom to tame your tongue this week?

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Lesson 5

Worldly or Godly?

*Last week we learned about the **Tongue’s Influences**, the **Tongue’s Inconsistencies** and **God’s Wisdom**, rather than the *Devil’s wisdom*. This week believers are challenged about **Loving the World**, **Finding Fault** with others, and **Relying on Yourself** rather than God.*

Loving the World

Read James 4:1-10.

1. What does James say causes fights and quarrels among Christian brothers? What has caused fights and quarrels among you? Matthew 15:16-20 and Romans 7:14-25.

2. Why do James’ brothers “not have?” What is your motive for asking God?

3. Why does James call his brothers adulterous? See Revelation 19:7, 21:2.

4. Verse 5 is difficult to interpret. How do you understand it?

5. What is the remedy for James’ brothers condition? What is your remedy? See 1 John 1:9.

6. How will you immediately follow the commands that James gives us? Each verb in the command is in the imperative voice calling for an immediate response.
 - a. “Submit yourselves to God.”
 - b. “Resist the Devil and he will flee...”
 - c. “Come near to God and he will come near to you.”
 - d. “Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts.”
 - e. Grieve, mourn, and wail.”
 - f. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.” See Matthew 23:12.

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Lesson 5
Worldly or Godly?

Finding Fault

Read James 4:11-12.

7. The Greek word use in this verse may be translated “don’t speak against each other” and may be a broader term than just slander. What are some ways you could speak against a fellow believer?

8. What law is James referring to and how does speaking against a Christian violate it?

9. Knowing that God is the only Lawgiver and Judge, how should you speak to a fellow believer? See Matthew 7:3 and 18:15-17.

Lesson: _____

Relying on Yourself

Read James 4:13-17.

10. Who is James addressing and what does he say to them?

11. In America today, people are told that through hard work and their own effort, they can achieve the American dream. How does that square with James?

12. On Whom do you rely?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you come closer to God this week?

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Lesson 6

Final Encouragements

*Last time believers were challenged about **Loving the World, Finding Fault** with others, and **Relying on Yourself** rather than God. As we finish James in this last lesson, we will study a **Warning for the Rich, Waiting Patiently for the Lord’s Coming, Swearing by Heaven or Earth, Praying and Confessing and Restoring a Wanderer.***

Warning for the Rich

Read James 5:1-6.

1. For most of the book, James is addressing “brothers” or Christians. Do you think “you rich people” addressed here are believers or unbelievers? Give reasons for your answers. See Acts 7:59-8:3.
2. Virtually everyone in American is wealthy by world standards. Is James condemning material wealth?
3. What is the danger of being wealthy? See James 1:10-11.
4. What should you do with the material wealth God has given you?

Lesson: _____

Waiting Patiently for Lord’s Coming

Read James 5:7-11.

5. Praise God that Jesus is coming back. What do the following verses tell you about the Lord’s Coming?
 - a. Acts 1:9-11 _____
 - b. Zechariah 14:1-5 _____
 - c. Revelation 19:11-16 _____
 - d. Matthew 24:30-31 _____
 - e. Revelation 1:7 _____
 - f. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 _____
 - g. John 14:1-3 _____
 - h. Matthew 24:36 _____
 - i. 2 Peter 3:8-11 _____

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Lesson 6

Final Encouragements

6. During the time of James, believers were suffering under persecution. Jesus' return would fix all of that. Why should they wait patiently for His return? Why should you wait patiently? See 2 Peter 3:8-9.

Lesson: _____

Swearing by Heaven or Earth

Read James 5:12 and Matthew 5:33-37.

7. James seems to be summarizing Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5. What do you learn from this and how can you put this teaching into practice?

Praying and Confessing

Read James 5:13-18.

8. When should believers pray according to James? Are those the only times believers should pray? See 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

9. How should you pray?

Lesson: _____

Restoring a Wanderer

Read James 5:19-20, Hebrews 6:4-6, and John 10:25-30.

10. Can a believer lose his salvation? If yes, can they be saved again? Explain your answer.

11. Are you one of Jesus' sheep?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you more fully listen to Jesus' voice and more follow Him this week?