

# SDG

## SOLI DEO GLORIA

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:31



## The Book of JAMES

"Know what you believe and why you believe it"  
Zion Reformed Church  
Bible Study

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SDG – Lesson #1  
The Book of JAMES

An Introduction:

Author: James

1. Knowing that author is James is very helpful in helping us to understand this book. The question is, “which James wrote this book?” Look up the following verses that speak of James. Who is the James of each verse?

Matthew 4:21...

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Matthew 10:3 and Acts 1:13...

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Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13...

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Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55; Acts 15:13; 1 Corinthians 15:7;  
Galatians 2:9...

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We have seen that there are four men that bear the name of James spoken of in the New Testament. So, we now ask, “Which James wrote this book?” When we look to the scriptures we see that James the Less or Younger is only mentioned in the two verses listed. Since he is not

known for anything else the probability of him writing a letter with authority is highly doubtful. Likewise, James the father of Judas was not an apostle nor is he listed as a person who had witnessed the risen Christ. This would certainly limit his ability to write with authority or be accepted as an authority. This leaves us with James the son of Zebedee and brother of John and James the half brother of Jesus.

2. Read James 1:1. Who was James writing to? What does the Dispersion refer to? (For additional help you may want to go to [www.pbs.org/wab/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/diaspora.html](http://www.pbs.org/wab/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/diaspora.html) )

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3. Read Acts 12:1-2. Taking what you learned in the previous question and combining it with what you read in Acts 12, which James is ruled out? Why?

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4. Which James wrote the book of James?

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5. Finally, we have similarity in writing and vocabulary. As we have seen before, there are some very distinct words in the Greek language. By comparing the letter written by James in Acts 15 with the book of James we find a common usage of some distinct words and grammar. **Compare** the following verses & **not the similarity.**

James 1:1 & Acts 15:23...

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James 1:16, 19, & 2:5; and Acts 15:25...

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6. Finally, read John 7:5. What do we learn about James from this verse?

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7. What changed James' opinion? (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:7)

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Some final notes:

James the half – brother of Jesus is also known as “James the Just.” There is ample written evidence that validates James as a historical figure, the leader of the Church in Jerusalem after Peter went to Rome and as the half – brother of Jesus. As for the three other individuals who bore the name James;

- 1) James the Son of Zebedee was the second Christian martyr. Acts 12:2
- 2) James the Son of Alphacus or James the Lesser is said to have been thrown from a pinnacle of the temple and then stoned and clubbed to death in A.D. 63.
- 3) There is nothing more known about James the father of Judas (not Iscariot).

Date of Writing:

Since we know that James became the Bishop of Jerusalem in A.D. 44 it is doubtful that he wrote this book prior to that time. Josephus records his death by stoning occurring in A.D. 62. This would put the date of the writing of this book somewhere in the 18 years in between. However, some contend that it must have been written prior to A.D. 49 when the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) took place. The thought is that James would have referred to it or included the message of the letter that came from it.

Recipients:

We have already seen that James was writing to the 12 tribes in the Dispersion. Some contend that the letter was written to all Jewish people living outside of Palestine. Others contend that it was written

only to the Jewish Christians. Carefully read the following verses from James.

8. What can we learn about James' audience in each?

James 1:18...

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James 2:1...

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James 2:7...

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What name were they called by?

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James 5:7...

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Purpose:

Every letter is written with a purpose.

9. What did James see or hear that led him to write this letter?

James 1:1&2...

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James:1:9...

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James 1:19-21...

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James 1:22...

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James 1:26...

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James 2:1...

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James 4:13...

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James 5:1...

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James 5:19...

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Like Hebrews, we need to keep our Hebrew thinking cap on as we go through James. Like our study of Hebrews we will surely be blessed.

SDG – Lesson #2 – James  
Chapter 1

1. How does James describe himself? (vs. 1)

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**WORD STUDY:** Greek-doulos/English-servant; bondservant  
Paul identifies himself as a servant of Christ Jesus. The Greek word “doulos,” translated in the ESV as servant, literally means “bondservant.” Bond servants in the first century were much different than the slaves found throughout history. A bond servant chose to work for a master. As a result, they were often highly trusted. The servants of Matthew 25:14-30 were bond servants. Their master entrusted to them His wealth.

2. What is James inferring when he tells us to “Count it all joy... When you meet trials of various kinds?”

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3. What is the purpose of trials/testings of the faith?

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**WORD STUDY:** Greek-hupomone/English-steadfastness  
Hupomone (hoop-om-on-ay’) literally means; hupo (hypo) – under; mone (meno) – to abide. What does it mean to abide under? Usually this Greek word is translated as patience. However, steadfastness is probably better. The NASB uses endurance to catch the deeper meaning. What James is saying is that the Christian is to resolutely continue in their faith throughout the time of testing and after it is over.

4. What is produced by steadfastness? What does this mean?

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5. What is wisdom? (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10 & Proverbs 29:15)  
Where does it come from? (1:5)

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6. What is required for a prayer to be successful? (vs. 6-7)

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7. Why is a person who prays without this double-minded and unstable?

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8. What is meant by a lowly brother? (vs. 9)

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9. Why would such a person boast?

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10. Why would a rich person boast?

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11. What becomes of the person who chases after worldly wealth?

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12. What is meant by the “Imperishable Wreath” or “Crown of Life?” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:25; Revelation 2:10)

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13. Verse 13 introduces us to a very important teaching. In verse 2, James spoke of the trials that Christians will face. In verse 13, he speaks of being tempted. The Greek word for tempted is the verb form of the Greek noun that was translated “trial” in verse 2. What was the purpose of the trial? Where did it come from?

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14. I guess we could say that this answer is one of the possible outcomes of the trial. Now consider verses 13 & 14. What is another possible outcome of the trial? Where does it come from? What does that lead to?

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15. Let’s make a flow chart of the two paths of a trial of faith.

Strong Christian – vss. 2-12

Trial from God – Tests faith -- \_\_\_\_\_ -- Wisdom –

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Weak Christian – vss. 13-15

Trial from God – \_\_\_\_\_ – Temptation – \_\_\_\_\_ –  
Death

16. Where does every good thing come from?

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17. Where does every bad thing come from?

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18. This is what James wants the recipients of his letter to understand. He doesn't want them to be deceived. Consider who he is writing to; the Christian Jews who were chased out of their homeland. Why did this dispersion happen? Sinful man caused it to happen. Read Romans 8:28. What do we know can happen, even in a terrible event like the dispersion?

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In allowing it, God made the dispersion a trial. In their sinfulness, the people could reject God and turn from Him. Put another way, they could be angry/sin and suffer eternal condemnation. On the other hand, they could trust God and see that as a result of the dispersion they were being sent into all the world to carry the Gospel message to the Gentiles. God had deemed them worthy to suffer so others might be saved and be joined with them in heaven. These Jewish Christians were the first fruits. As a result, the Gentiles weren't far behind.

19. Verses 19-27 pick up on this idea of his audience being the first fruits with a purpose. What does James advise them to do? (Vs. 19) Why?

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20. Read Ephesians 4:17-27. Pay close attention to the mood of the passage and the use of the word anger. Is there a good type of anger? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

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21. Was Jesus ever angry?

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22. What is able to save our souls? (vs. 21; Psalm 19:7; Galatians 3:24; Acts 16:31)

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23. James' second piece of advice is found in verse 22. What is it?

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24. What is/are a mark(s) of worthless faith/religion?

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25. What are some marks of true faith/religion?

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SDG – Lesson #3  
James Chapter – 2

We begin this week with a very important word study

Word Study: Greek – me en prosopolempsiis / English – show no partiality

Chapter Two begins with James saying, “show no partiality.” This phrase is comprised of a string of Greek words including a compound word. The literal translation would read something like, “do not accept or judge according to looks, rank or position.” We have an English phrase that is very similar, “Do not judge a book by its cover.”

1. Why does faith in our Lord Jesus Christ have no place for partiality? (John 3:16)

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2. Based on what James has written, what was being used as a means for showing partiality?

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Word Study: Greek – synagogen / English – assembly

One look at this Greek word probably leads you to think that it means synagogue. You would be correct. Yet, it is a compound word that literally means “together to bring.” However, at the time of the first century it was viewed as both an assembly of people and the building in which they assembled. We could easily translate this Greek word as “church.” The church is both the body of believers and the building they meet in.

3. By speaking of people coming into their assembly, what does James tell us the people were doing? (Warning! Don't jump ahead and don't look back for this answer. Consider Luke 4:16)

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4. When did the early Christians assemble together? (Acts 20:7; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:2)

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5. What was this day called? (Revelation 1:10)

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6. Why was it called this? (Mark 16:9; John 20:19)

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7. What is meant by the phrase, "You sit here in a good place?"

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8. What about the phrases, "You stand over there" or "sit down at my feet?"

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9. How can such distinctions be seen as judging with evil thoughts? (Matthew 7:1-5)

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10. How has God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith?  
(Consider the disciples. Also consider 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:26-28)

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11. To whom does the promise of being an heir of the kingdom apply?

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12. How had/do the rich dishonor the poor? What do these mean?

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13. How can a person really fulfill the royal Law (Ten Commandments)?

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14. With verse nine James begins to bring his discussion on partiality to a close. What does he say will come to those who practice partiality? Why? How can this be?

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15. What is the Law of Liberty?

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16. What is mercy? How does it relate to the Law of Liberty?

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17. How does mercy triumph or justice?

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18. With verse 14, James begins a new discussion concerning faith and works. What is the message of verses 14-17? Why is this true?

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19. How does James propose to validate his faith? (vs. 18)

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20. Many people say, "I believe in God!" What does James say about such a statement?

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21. How did Abraham show his faith? Rahab?  
Abraham

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Rahab

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22. What does it mean, “counted to him as righteousness?”

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23. What does it mean to be justified?

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24. How did this apply to Rahab?

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25. To what does James compare the relationship of faith and works?  
Why?

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SDG – Lesson #4  
James Chapter 3

“Not many of you should become teachers,” is how James begins this chapter. To better understand what James is saying we need to go back in time and consider how teachers were viewed by first century Christians.

1. Read Romans 12:6 - 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:28, and Ephesians 4:11. What do these verses tell us about teachers?

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2. To understand how serious people were in their regard for teachers, read Acts 2:42. How did the people react to teachers and their teaching?

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**Word Study:** Greek – proskarterountes / English – devoted  
One look at the size of this Greek word tells us that it is made up of two or more Greek words. That being the case, it is difficult to translate it into one English word. It literally means, “to be intensively strong toward.” The Greek dictionary defines it this way - “to be earnest toward, to persevere, be constantly diligent or to attend assiduously all the exercises or to adhere closely to. Consider what is really being said when Luke writes, “They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching.” May we follow in their footsteps and be equally devoted.

3. The second clue to understanding what James is addressing can be found in Acts 8:1-25; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:1-5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:1-15. What was happening in the first century church?

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4. Why does James warn that, “not many of you should become teachers?”

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**Word Study:** Greek – krima lempsometha / English – judged  
When James says, “that we who teach will be judged...” he is being very assertive and expressive! This Greek phrase literally means, “to receive a decision of condemnation or damnation.” It is not referring to an act of being judged to determine guilt or innocence. It is a reference to a very negative judgment being rendered.

5. Continuing with verse two, why should people think twice before becoming a teacher?

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6. What is the significance of James mentioning the “whole body?”

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7. Beginning with verse three, James focuses on just one part of the body. What is this part? What is it compared to? Why? What does it do? (vss. 3-5)

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8. Again, James uses imagery to help us understand the severity of what he is speaking about. What starts small and become big?

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9. How is the tongue a world of unrighteousness?

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10. What is meant by the entire course of life?

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11. Notice the progression James has made:

- Small fire (spark) in forest leads to an all-consuming forest fire.
- Tongue in body leads to entire course of life being consumed.

Now, notice where the fire of the tongue got its start. Where is this start? What does this mean?

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12. Mankind can tame any animal. What can't we tame?

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13. How does James describe the tongue? Why? (vs. 8)

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14. According to verse 9 what good thing can the tongue do? What evil thing?

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**Society Study: Bless our Lord and Father**

It was a Jewish tradition to say, "Blessed be He," "Blessed be the Lord," or "Blessed be God" at every mention of God's name. (See Psalm 68:19 & 35) As you can imagine, there was a lot of blessing God as the Apostles spread the Gospel. Every time they mentioned God these phrases would have been spoken. Perhaps it is a tradition that should come back. It certainly helped people to focus on the greatness of God.

**Language Study: Cuss, Curse and Swear**

James speaks of cursing. Oftentimes we forget what this means. There are three different types of language that often are confused.

- 1) Cussing is the use of foul or offensive language. In Ephesians 4:29 Paul tells us, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths."
- 2) Cursing is calling on God to condemn something to hell. Since God is the only Judge and the only One who can send someone to hell anytime a person uses the word damn as an expression he is cursing.
- 3) Swearing is calling on God to be your witness.

15. What does James say about blessing and cursing coming from the same mouth? What is this compared to?

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James begins the final section of this chapter by asking, “who is wise and understanding among you?” To the Greeks, wisdom was speculative knowledge and philosophy. To the Hebrew, wisdom is the skillful application of knowledge to a person’s life. Meekness of wisdom is a very deep concept. Meekness is often seen as weakness in the present age. True meekness is a total well-being of mind and body. Biblically, it is a total trust in God. Such a person does not waiver during bad times. They trust God to see them through. They “Bless God” in both good and bad.

16. How should this meekness of wisdom be displayed? (vs. 13)

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17. What will appear if there is a lacking of meekness of wisdom? Why? (vss. 14-15)

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18. What is the result of the absence of meekness of wisdom or heavenly wisdom? (vs. 16)

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19. What will appear if there is meekness of wisdom? (vs. 17)

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20. What is the result of meekness of wisdom? (vs. 18)

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SDG – Lesson #5  
James Chapter 4

1. Chapter 3 ended with words of peace, “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” With chapter 4, James begins to contrast those who make peace with those who do not. What two actions are contrasted with peace? What is the relationship between them?

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2. What causes these two un-peaceful conditions?

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**Word Study:** Greek – hedonon / English – passions

The term hedonism, which is the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life, comes from this Greek word. Hedonon literally means, “The gratification of the natural desire.” This term is also translated as lusts or pleasures. James uses this term to focus on the self-centered and self-gratifying heart of some of the people within the church.

3. How far were some individuals willing to go to satisfy their wants and desires?

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4. What is James’ first explanation for why people didn’t have what they wanted? (vs. 2)

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5. What is James' second explanation for why people didn't have what they wanted? (vs. 3)

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6. This leads us to take a brief look at how we are to pray. What guidelines do the following verses give us?

Matthew 6:10

John 15:16

1 Corinthians 10:31

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7. In verse 4 James uses very strong languages to highlight the problem and graphically explain why the people were praying/asking incorrectly. How does he describe this problem? Why?

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8. What is friendship with the world?

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9. What is meant by enmity with God?

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10. Where does the Scripture tell us that God yearns jealously over the spirit He has made to dwell in us?

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11. Who does God give grace to? What does this mean?

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12. Who does God oppose or not extend grace to? Why?

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13. What does it mean to submit to God?

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14. How do we resist the devil?

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15. Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts. What is James calling the people to do?

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16. What is meant by the phrase, "Be wretched and mourn and weep?"

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17. What was the present attitude of James' audience? (vs. 4b)

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18. How does God exalt the humble? What does this mean?

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19. What sin in particular does James address in verse 11?

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20. How is speaking against a brother or judging a brother speaking evil against the Law? (Consider James 2:8)

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21. What four characteristics of God does James reveal in verse 12?

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22. Verse 13 – 16 speak of another form of arrogant, prideful sin. What is this sin? Why is it sin?

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23. What does James compare mankind to? Why?

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24. How does James recommend that we avoid this sin?

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25. What kind of sin does James speak of in verse 17?

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SDG – Lesson #6  
James Chapter 5

In chapter 5 James presents his audience with three short lessons. The first lesson, found in verses 1-6 deals with the rich.

1. What does James call on the rich to do? Why?

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2. This is very interesting language to use. Read Isaiah 13:6; 15:3; Hosea 7:14 and Amos 8:3. What kind of language is this?

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3. We have just seen that James has used severe, prophetic language of judgment when addressing the rich recipients of his letter. Yet, as we go on to verse two, we can sense that he doesn't expect the rich to take this warning seriously. How does James try to appeal to the rich?

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4. Not only does James try to appeal to the rich with the temporal nature of these things he also points out that God would use these things. How would He do this? What does this mean?

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5. Is it a sin to be rich? Some people would say, "yes!" While others would say, "no!" In verses 4-6 James identifies what one of the major problems with riches is. What is it?

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6. How far were some of the rich willing to go to attain their riches?  
(vs.6)

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7. Why didn't the righteous resist the rich?

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8. The second lesson found in verses 7-12 deals with patience. What in particular were the people to be patient about?

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9. What is the point of making a reference to the farmer?

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10. Obviously, James felt Christ would return very soon. What does he warn the people about? Why?

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11. Many people refer to Jesus as if He were simply a form of life enhancement and a source of blessing. What does James indicate the people could look forward to in verse 10? Who had dealt with this before? Why?

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12. What righteous quality does James equate patience to?

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13. At times, during a period of patient endurance, we want others to believe in what we say. If our words don't seem to be accepted we may be tempted to try to make our message sound more important by saying, "I swear..." What does James say about swearing? Who did he probably hear this from? (Matthew 5:33-37)

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14. The third lesson deals with prayer. When does James call on the people to pray?

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15. What special provision is given for praying for the sick?

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16. What can the prayer of faith do? Why?

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17. What example does James use to show the power of prayer? Why?

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18. Through the course of his book James has spoken of a variety of problem within the early church. It could easily be said that many had fallen away from the truth. What is James' final appeal? Why?

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**SDG – The Book of James  
Dates and Times**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Lesson#</u></b>
4/21 & 4/22	Lesson #1
4/28 & 4/29	Lesson #2
5/5 & 5/6	Lesson #3
5/12 & 5/13	Lesson #4
5/19 & 5/20	Lesson #5
5/27 & 5/28	Memorial Day
6/2 & 6/3	Pastor in Yosemite
6/9 & 6/10	Lesson #6