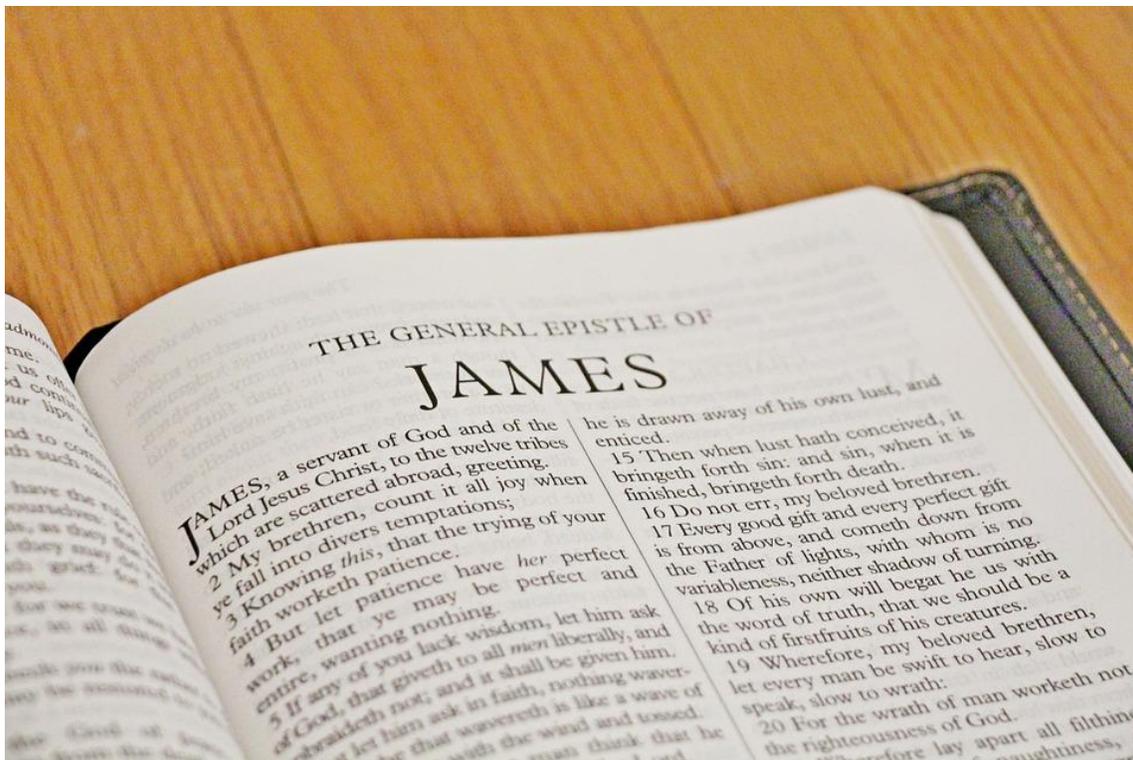


# James

## Living Out Your Faith

Five Week Small Group Series on the Book of James



Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,<sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

James 1:2-3





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## Introduction

A Bible study based on a book of the Bible is a great discipleship tool. This Bible Study has been designed to have two main components each week. We recommend that you take four weeks to complete the study (one session per week), but feel free to adapt as needed.

1. Personal Study at Home
2. Small Group Session (optional)

The Personal study at home allows the participant to reflect on the Bible passage at home and work through personal application questions on their own. Then, the person comes to the small group meeting ready to share what God has already been showing them.

The small group conversations and discussions are useful in diving deeper into the topic and seeing things from a different perspective or helping you see something that you may have missed when reading the chapter on your own.

Doing a Bible study can be very simple. Just follow the template given for each chapter and make sure that each member of your group has a copy of this booklet so they can journal their responses and come to the small group meeting ready to share. This helps the small group time stay focused and gives everyone an opportunity to think through what they would like to share, adding value to the small group time.

If you have any questions about facilitating this Bible Study, give the church office a call. Someone from Cell Ministry would be happy to speak to you.

## Session One: James 1

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: James 1 and the Session 1 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- What is the purpose of trials? Share an example of a trial you have faced. What did you learn from it?
- How does wisdom connect to the issue of trials? Share an example of when you needed wisdom? What did you do?
- Why should we be quick to listen, slow to speak?
- How does a person who is only a hearer fool himself?
- What practical ways can you become a better doer?

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

#### 6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

#### 7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read James 1 out loud with your small group.

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Two James 2

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: James 2 and the Session 2 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- What does it mean to show favoritism? Why do people normally show favoritism?
- What does verse 5 teach us about God's character?
- How can we follow God's example of impartiality in our lives?
- What does a living faith look like? What does a dead faith look like?
- How can you better put your faith into practice?

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

#### 6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

#### 7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read James 2 out loud with your small group.

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Three: James 3

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: James 3 and the Session 3 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- Why will a teacher incur greater judgement? What can you learn from this?
- What is an example of sinful speech that you sometimes struggle with?
- What are some practical ways you can use words for good?
- How would you define wisdom based on James 3:13-18?
- Compare and contrast worldly wisdom and godly wisdom.

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

#### 6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

#### 7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read James 3 out loud with your small group.

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Four: James 4

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: James 4 and the Session 4 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- In what ways can we be attached to the world? Why are friends of the world enemies of God?
- What is the main teaching in verses 8-10?
- What does it mean that God will exalt us if we humble ourselves in His presence?
- What does it mean to slander or speak evil against one another?
- What is the difference between the kind of speaking against/judging here and proper correction? What do you think a person's motivation might be in each situation?

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

#### 6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

#### 7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read James 4 out loud with your small group.

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Five: James 5

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: James 5 and the Session 5 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- What does James say about employers and how they treat their employees?
- What does verses 7-12 say about endurance?
- What does a prayerful attitude show about our heart?
- Why confess our sins to one another?
- What can we learn from the example of Elijah?

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

#### 6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

#### 7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read James 5 out loud with your small group.

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Study Notes

### Study Notes for James Chapter One

- The author of this book identifies himself as James, he was probably the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55) and leader at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).
- Instead of introducing himself as Jesus brother, he called himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was more than James brother; Jesus was his Lord (vs. 1).
- The book is written to the twelve tribes of Israel, a reference to the Jewish people as a whole who had been scattered.
- The letter begins with an encouragement to patient endurance in trials (vs. 2-4).
- **James 1: 2-3** *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.* (NIV)
- James regarded trials as inevitable and as occasions for joy. We can rejoice in trials because they are used to produce patient endurance.
- Verses 5-8 tell us how to receive wisdom from God.
- Trials bring a necessary season to seek wisdom. To receive, we simply ask God.
- The asking for wisdom is made in faith, without doubting God's ability to give us His wisdom.
- The one who doubts should not expect to receive anything from the Lord (vs. 7).
- Trust in God is our foundation, without that foundation there is instability.
- Verses 9-11 provide encouragement for those undergoing trials.
- Trials serve to remind the rich and the high that they are not to be comfortable in this life; it fades like a flower and withers away.
- Let us rather pour ourselves into things that have eternal value, things that will never fade.
- **James 1:12** *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.* (NIV)
- Verse 12 tells us that there is a blessing for those who endures under trial. After the time of testing is over, there is great reward. It is worth it to persevere, to be steadfast, to resist temptation.
- Verses 13-16 tell us how temptation comes and works. Temptation does not come from God, although He allows it.
- Rather, temptation comes when we are drawn away by our own fleshly desires and enticed. From sinful desires springs forth sin, which leads to death.
- Let us not be deceived about this progression. Let us resist the deception of temptation.
- God's goodness stands in contrast to the temptations we face (vs. 17-18).
- Every good and perfect gift comes from God, with whom there is not variation, His goodness is constant.
- Verse 18 tells us that out of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth. Salvation is a gift from God and we can see His goodness in our salvation. The Jews James is writing to will be a kind of firstfruit, showing that James expects a greater harvest of Christians.
- The next verses (vs. 19-20), teach us to stand firm against unrighteous anger. We are to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

- Must of anger comes from being self-centered therefore one way to be others-centered is to be quick to hear others. To listen, to be slow to speak.
- Human anger does not produce the righteousness of God (vs. 20).
- In light of trials, temptations and the goodness of God, we must take special care to be slow to anger. Our wrath almost always simply defends or promotes our own agenda, not God's righteousness.
- Instead, we are to stand firm against the lusts of the flesh (vs. 21), laying aside all filthiness and wickedness.
- Instead, we should receive the implanted Word of God with meekness (teachability), which is able to save us.
- Verse 22-25 tell us how to receive the Word of God. We must receive God's Word as doers, not hearers only. To take comfort in the fact that you have God's Word when you haven't done it is to deceive yourself.
- The person who studies God's Word intently to put it into practice – that is the person who will receive blessing (vs. 25).
- The example of bridling the tongue is given as a way to put into practice the Word of God (vs. 26-27).
- Real religion is shown not by hearing the Word but by doing it. One way to do God's Word is to tame the tongue.
- If your walk with god does not translate into the way you live and treat others then James calls it useless (vs. 26).
- A real walk with God shows itself in simple, practical ways – taking care of the needy and being unstained by the world.

## Study Notes for James Chapter Two

- Verse 1 establishes a biblical principle regarding partiality and discrimination in the family of God.
- **James 2:1** *My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.* (NIV)
- James is writing in a time in history filled with prejudice and hatred based on class, ethnicity, nationality, and religion. The work of Jesus was to break down these walls that divide humanity and to bring unity and oneness. But this does not come automatically.
- Verse 2-4 proved an example of favoritism that has no place among believers. To favor the rich over the poor man in shows sinfulness. Their evil thoughts are evident by their preferential actions.
- Showing more care for the outward than we do for the heart is one way to show partiality. The rich man is not more important to God or more blessed by God. Showing partiality reveals a selfishness in our own hearts because it is often about what we can get out of it.
- Instead, we are to see with God's eyes (vs. 5-7). The poor of this world often are rich in faith because they have more opportunities to trust in God, growing their faith.
- **James 2:8-9** <sup>8</sup> *If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.* (NIV).
- The commandment to love others is for all people – both the rich and the poor. Favoring one group over the other is sinful.
- James guards against selective obedience admonishing them to obey all of God's commands (vs. 10).
- We can't pick and choose which commands we like and follow those while avoiding the rest. Breaking one part of the law makes us guilty of breaking the whole law.
- We are under the law of liberty. It has liberty, yet it is still a law (vs. 12).
- As those who will be judged by the law of liberty, we should always show mercy to others by refraining from partiality. The mercy we show will be extended to us again on the day of judgment, and that mercy triumphs over judgment (vs. 13).
- **James 2:14** *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?* (NIV)
- There is a principle established in verse 14, true faith will be accompanied by action.
- In the early church the Jews had discovered that salvation was by faith and a liberation from works-based righteousness. But they went to the other extreme of thinking that works didn't matter at all.
- James corrects this by clarifying that saving faith will have works that accompany it. This does not contradict the apostle Paul in any way, but rather agrees with him (Eph. 2:10; Titus 3:8).
- Verses 15-17 give an example of dead faith. If you know the person before you has simple needs like food or clothing but offer nothing to help them except a few religious words, what good is it?
- In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead (vs. 17).
- Some might try to say that some have the "gift" of works and others have the "gift" of faith (vs. 18a).
- James does not allow this type of thinking – real living faith will be demonstrated by works.
- Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works (vs. 18b).
- The fallacy of faith without works is demonstrated by the demons, which have a "dead" faith in God.

- Abraham is given as an example of living faith (vs. 20-24).
- Abraham was justified by faith long before he offered Isaac (Gen 15:6), but his obedience in offering Isaac demonstrated that he really did trust God.
- Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect (vs. 22).
- Faith and works cooperated perfectly together in Abraham. A true, living faith will be shown by good works.
- James then uses the example of the Gentile harlot Rahab as an example of living faith (vs. 25-26).
- Rahab hide the spies and sought salvation from their God (Josh. 2:8-13). Her faith was shown to be living faith because it did something.
- The conclusion is given, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (vs. 26).

## Study Notes for James Chapter Three

- This chapter opens with a sober admonition for those who become teachers in the church.
- They must take their responsibility seriously because their accountability is greater, and they shall receive stricter judgement (vs. 1).
- The teachers in God's church are more than a matter of having natural or even spiritual gifts; there is an additional dimension of appropriate character and right living. Teachers were both tested and judged more strictly.
- The greater accountability of teachers is especially sobering in light of our common weaknesses. After all, we all stumble in many things, often in what is said (vs. 2).
- A small bit in the mouth of a horse controls the entire animal. A small rudder turns a large ship. In the same way, if we can control our tongues, it is an indication of whether we have control over our self (vs. 3-6).
- A great forest is set on fire by a small spark (vs. 5), in the same way the tongue can destroy.
- What we say to others can last a long time – for good or evil. An encouragement can inspire, a casual sarcastic comment or critical remark can inflict lasting injury.
- Taming the tongue is difficult. Every kind of bird, beast, or reptile is can be tamed by mankind. But no one can tame the tongue (vs. 7-8). Nevertheless, the tongue can be brought under the power and the control of the Holy Spirit.
- The tongue can be used for the highest calling – to bless God; and it can be used for the lowest evil – to curse men (vs. 9).
- **James 3:10** *Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing... these things ought not to be so.*
- Our speech should be consistently glorifying to God. We should have the same tone and vocabulary in the church as on the jobsite as in the home. Like a spring of water, our mouths should not send forth fresh and bitter from the same opening (vs. 11).
- Chapter three ends with verses on two kinds of wisdom.
- **James 3:13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (NIV)*
- Wisdom is not mere head knowledge. Real wisdom and understanding will show in our lives, by our good conduct.
- The character of earthly wisdom shows itself by bitter envy and self-seeking behavior. This wisdom is from the world, the flesh, demonic and leads to every evil practice.
- The character of godly wisdom is that it is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy (vs. 17). These attributes are consistent with the holiness of God.
- **James 3:18** *Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness (NIV).*

## Study Notes for James Chapter Four

- Chapter four of James begins with a section on reasons for strife in the Christian community.
- **James 4:1** *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?* (NIV).
- Conflict among believers is seen here as coming from the flesh (desires).
- The desires that lead to conflict are described in the following verses. Covetousness leads to quarrelling, fighting, and even killing.
- The reason these destructive desires exist among Christians is because they do not seek God for their needs (vs. 2b) due to prayerlessness.
- James then addresses the problem of selfish prayer. The prayers they did pray were full of selfish motives.
- We must remember that the purpose of prayer is not to persuade a reluctant God to do our bidding. The purpose of prayer is to align our will with His, and in partnership with Him, to ask Him to accomplish His will on this earth.
- A stern rebuke is given in verse 4 – “You adulterous people”. As James saw it, their covetousness was idolatry and friendship with the world.
- We cannot be both friends with this world and friends with God at the same time.
- God is jealously yearning for the full devotion of our hearts (vs. 5).
- The same Holy Spirit that convicts us of our compromise also grants us the grace to serve God as we should. The humble see their need of God and accept the grace offered to them.
- In light of the grace offered, the response is to submit to God (vs. 7). This means to surrender yourself to Him.
- To solve the problem of the flesh – resist the devil (vs. 7). This means to stand against devil’s deceptions and his efforts to intimidate. As we resist the devil, we are *promised* that he will flee from you.
- The call to draw near to God is both an invitation and a promise. It is no good to submit to God’s authority and to resist the devil’s attack and then fail to draw near to God. We have it as a promise: God will draw near to us as we draw near to Him.
- As we draw near to God, we will be convicted of our sin. So, we lament and mourn and weep as appropriate under the conviction of sin, and we are compelled to find cleansing at the cross.
- As we come as sinners before the holy God, we appropriately humble ourselves before Him. Then He will lift us up, because *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*, and grace – the unmerited favor of God – always lifts us up.
- Verses 11-12 give us the solutions for strife – get right with other people.
- **James 4:11a** *Do not slander one another* (NIV).
- The ESV interprets verse 11 as “do not speak evil against each other”.
- When we are right with other people, it will show in the way we talk about them.
- “Speak evil” translates the ancient Greek word *katalalia* which is the sin of those who meet in corners and gather in little groups and pass on confidential information which destroy the good name of those who are not there to defend themselves.
- **James 4:11b** *Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister[d] or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.* (NIV)

- When we judge our brother, we put ourselves in the same place as the law, in effect judging the law. This is something that we have no authority to do.
- When we have proper humility before God, it just isn't within us to arrogantly judge our brother.
- The judgment that is spoken of here is to root out the harsh, unkind, critical spirit that continually finds fault with others.
- The chapter concludes with a caution against an attitude of independence from God and a challenge to live according to what we know in the Lord.
- **James 4:13** *Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."* (NIV)
- James rebuked the kind of heart that lives and makes its plans apart from a constant awareness of the hand of God, and with an underestimation of our own limitations.
- Consider the fragility of human life, like a vapour or a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (vs. 14).
- This does not condemn planning and doing, only planning and doing apart from reliance on God.
- It is nothing but sheer arrogance that makes us think that we can live and move and have our being independent of God.
- **James 4:17** *If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.* (NIV)
- James knows that it is far easier to think about and talk about humility and dependence on God than it is to live it. Yet he makes the mind of God plain: as we know these things, we are accountable to do them.
- The uncertainty of life should make us ready to recognize what is good and then do it.

## Study Notes for James Chapter Five

- Verses 1-6 are a rebuke of the ungodly rich.
- Jesus counted some rich persons among His followers (such as Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabas), so we know that it is not a sin to be wealthy.
- This passage seems to imply that riches can present obstacles to the kingdom.
- James has developed the idea of the need for complete dependence on God.
- There is a warning for the rich to not live independently from God.
- Wealth on earth is not permanent, it can rot or corrode (vs. 2).
- In verse 4, James mentions failing to pay workers as an injustice of which God had heard the prayers of the laborers.
- The rich were living in luxury and self-indulgence (vs. 5), exploiting others to be able to do so.
- James is pointing out their error as a loving rebuke, warning them that God sees their conduct.
- Verses 7-12 are a call for patient endurance in light of the coming judgement.
- The example of the farmer who endures is given in verses 7-8.
- A farmer does not give up when his crop does not produce fruit immediately. He keeps on working when the harvest can't be seen at all.
- **James 5:8** *You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.* (NIV)
- The soon return of Jesus requires that we endure, as we are firmly rooted in Him.
- Times of hardship can cause us to be less loving towards others so in verse 9 James reminds us that we are not to grumble or complain towards each other (even in our hardship).
- Instead, we are to be an example of patience in the face of suffering (vs. 10).
- The prophets were a good example of this in the Old Testament, for example, Jeremiah.
- Job is also an excellent example of perseverance (vs. 11), showing us that God is compassionate and merciful.
- In verse 12 James gives an exhortation regarding oaths.
- **James 1:12** *Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.* (NIV)
- The Bible does not forbid the swearing of all oaths, only against the swearing of deceptive, unwise, or flippant oaths. On occasion God Himself swears oaths (such as in Luke 1:73, Hebrews 3:11, and Hebrews 6:13).
- The need to swear or make oaths, beyond a simple and clear yes or no betrays the weakness of one's word. It demonstrates that there is not enough weight in one's own character to confirm their words.
- The chapter concludes with an appeal for Christians to care for one another (vs. 13-20).
- The suffering need to pray, the cheerful should sing psalms of praise to God, and the sick should call for the elders of the church, asking them to pray for their need (vs. 13-14).
- The same advice is given to the suffering and the cheerful one – take it all to the Lord.
- We are also to pray for the sick (vs. 14-15).
- James reminds us that mutual confession and prayer brings healing, both physically and spiritually (vs. 16). Confession can free us from the heavy burdens (physically and spiritually) of unresolved sin, and removes hindrances to the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **James 5:16b** *The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.* (NKJV)

- James points to the effective nature of prayer – when it is fervent and offered by a righteous man.
- Much of our prayer is not effective simply because it is not fervent. It is offered with a lukewarm attitude that virtually asks God to care about something that we care little about. Effective prayer must be fervent, not because we must emotionally persuade a reluctant God, but because we must gain God’s heart by being fervent for the things He is fervent for.
- Additionally, effective prayer is offered by a righteous man. This is someone who recognizes the grounds of his righteousness reside in Jesus, and whose personal walk is generally consistent with the righteousness that he has in Jesus.
- Elijah is given as an example of answered prayer (vs. 17-18).
- Elijah is a model of earnest prayer that was answered by God. His effectiveness in prayer extended even to the weather! Yet this shows that Elijah’s heart was in tune with God’s. He prayed for the rain to stop and start only because he sensed it was in the heart of God in His dealings with Israel.
- **James 5:19-20** *My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup>remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.* (NIV)
- Having introduced the topics of sin and confession, James reminds us of the need to confront those who have wandered from the truth.
- This speaks powerfully of the restoration that is possible for those who have sinned. This is possibly James intent in writing this letter to his intended audience. He does so with love, longing for them to be in a right relationship with God.
- With this, the letter ends abruptly, without any closing or farewell to the readers.

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