



Life Group Study Guide

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Welcome!

We're thrilled that you are studying the Book of James. This timely, little book has been called "the Proverbs of the New Testament." That's because the author has a way of speaking truth that is short, sweet—and to the point!

Making the most of this study guide

To get the most out of this study we encourage you to go through James with a Life Group (small group), a few friends or even just one other person - perhaps your spouse. That's because there's nothing like insight from others to sharpen our thinking and deepen our understanding.

Whether together ... or alone

We've designed this handy-dandy little booklet for either group or personal use, knowing that our crazy-busy schedules often keep us running. To help make the most of your limited time we've divided the study into four parts:

Memorize – Each chapter begins with a key verse(s) for memorization. In most cases, the verses we've recommended are short and easy to learn. Try it! There's nothing like hiding God's Word in our hearts to help keep us on the "straight and narrow" (Psalm 119:11, NIV)

Read & discuss – Whether studying in a Life Group or on your own, use the questions to stimulate your thinking. Don't feel pressure to talk about—or answer—every question, instead, go with ones that get your group talking ... or you thinking!

Do you consider yourself to be patient or not? Give reasons for your answer.

read & discuss: 13-20

What do you think this passage teaches us about prayer in a general, "big picture" sense?

What other Scriptures come to mind that say something about the role and nature of prayer?

Share something about your prayer life, such as how you approach prayer, how often you pray, and the types of things you pray about.

The last two verses of James seem strange (vv. 19-20) and unrelated to what's gone before. What do you think he's talking about here?

reflect:.

act:.

POWERLIFT
James 5

memorize:. James 5:8, NIV

You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

read & discuss: 1-12

Why do you think James was so hard on the wealthy of his day? Is he being too harsh?

What do these verses teach about the true nature of worldly wealth? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Do you think God opposes the accumulation of earthly wealth? What have you found to be the greatest dangers posed by affluence? Explain.

List some of the benefits of generosity.

One author suggests that the tools God most often uses to shape his people are “waiting” and “suffering.” Has this been your experience? If not one of these, what tool(s) has God typically used to mold you?

Reflect – There’s much to be gained spiritually by spending time in quiet reflection, contemplating the implication of any passage you’re considering.

Act – After you’ve thought about a biblical teaching or concept for a while, jot down one or two action steps to move you toward applying a given truth(s) to your daily life. What you’ve written will serve a helpful reminder in the days ahead.

Biblical faith involves daily decisions...and actions

One of James’ best pieces of advice is for us to “be doers of the Word, not hearers only.” There’s the rub, huh? It’s never enough just to know the Word—*though that’s important*—we need to be ready to APPLY it right away...with God’s help. Enjoy!

NO PAIN, NO GAIN
James 1

memorize:. James 1:12, NIV

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

read & discuss: 1-18

How do you explain difficulties in your life? Do you see life's challenges as normal or unnatural?

How would you describe James' theology of Christian suffering?

Based on the passage you just read, what counsel might you offer a fellow believer going through tough times?

Can you recall a time you got to the other side of a difficult situation, and looking back, saw God's hand in it? Talk about it.

How would you explain the concept of "sin" to a person who had never heard the word?

read & discuss: 13-17

What's the core issue James is going after in the final verses of this chapter?

Do you think James is against planning ahead? Why or why not? What does the Bible teach about planning in general?

Few of us enjoy reflecting on our mortality. How do you handle the fact that there are no "guarantees" in life?

What's the major takeaway from this passage for you?

reflect:.

act:.

BIGGEST LOSER
James 4

memorize:. James 4:10, NIV

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

read & discuss: 1-12

What do you think James means when he speaks of “asking with wrong motives?” What are right motives?

What does the author mean when he calls his first readers an “adulterous people?” Does this sound familiar? (Pssst, like in the Old Testament!)

What might it look like in practical terms to live a life fully devoted to God? Is this even possible?

Can you recall a moment in time when you felt the full weight of your sin? What was it like?

What is it that prompts people to talk about others in negative, critical terms?

In what ways does sin affect your everyday life?

If God is sovereign and over all, how can He not be responsible in some way for the temptations that come our way?

read & discuss: 19-27

Which phrase best describes your temper:
Short fuse, big bomb? Long fuse, little fizz?
Or something else?

Why do you think James gives the tongue so much attention?

Has an inability to control your tongue ever gotten you in trouble? Can you think of an example?

What are some possible dangers of “hearing” God’s Word and not obeying it?

Why do you suppose James says “real religion” requires caring for the needs of widows and orphans? Is that the extent of real religion—or just part of it?
Explain your answer.

reflect:.

How do you distinguish between “humble” wisdom and “earthly” wisdom?

Jesus often pointed out that people, like trees, are eventually known by the kind and quality of “fruit” they produce. What does this mean to you?

reflect:.

act:.

act:.

TONGUE MASTER
James 3

memorize:. James 3:7-8, NIV

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

read & discuss: 1-12

Why do you suppose teachers will be judged more strictly than other people? Is this fair? Why or why not?

James appears to be pretty down on the tongue. Is he being unreasonable or realistic? In what ways can our words “make” or “break” another person’s spirit?

Have you gotten better or worse at controlling your tongue in recent years? What would others say is your biggest challenge?

read & discuss: 13-18

Scripture often compares and contrasts in two ways. Can you think of any other passages in Scripture that make similar comparisons?

CROSSFIT TRAINING
James 2

memorize:. James 2:18, NIV

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

read & discuss: 1-13

What do you think James means by “favoritism” in light of his example? Have you ever seen this happen?

What social views regarding the rich and poor were in play in James’ day (around 50 AD)?

Name some ways we wittingly—or *unwittingly*—insult or offend the poor.

Based on his letter, do you think James is “anti-rich”? Why or why not?

read & discuss: 14-26

What main idea do you think the author is trying to get across in his “faith vs. works” discussion?

What is the role of “saving grace” in a person’s life? What about “good works”?

Were you aware that even devils believe in God? What, then, does it mean to truly believe?

In what sense did Abraham’s deeds validate his faith?

What do you think James is getting at when he calls the prostitute Rahab righteous? How is that possible?

What lessons or insights do you personally take away from this discussion of the relationship between “faith” and “works”?

reflect:

act: