

SPRING 2024

THE BOOK OF  
**JAMES**

*Living God's Way in God's World*



Alliance Bible Fellowship  
College Connection

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# James 1:1

Theme: Greeting & James's Bio

## Helpful Background Information (Since this is a shorter study, read the background info together)

- The book of James bears the name of its author, James, the half-brother of Jesus the Messiah. Although there were several notable men named James in the NT, scholars are confident that this letter was penned by James, the half-brother of Jesus, due to its style, content, and timing.
- An interesting omission in James's letter is the specific mention of Gentiles, Gentile churches, or any issue related to Gentiles joining the Jewish church.<sup>1</sup> Also absent is any mention of the Jerusalem Council (approx. A.D. 49), which dealt with the issue of the necessity of circumcision for salvation. These factors would seem to indicate that the church at that time was still very Jewish in its participation and flavor, not having encountered Gentile concerns. If James had written this letter before the influx of Gentiles in the church and before the Council in Jerusalem, *it would have been written in the mid-40s*. This would make James's letter the first book written in the NT.<sup>2</sup>
- James played a critical role in steering the early church away from adding law-keeping (specifically circumcision) to the gospel message. Having become convinced of Jesus' Messiahship and His gospel message, James would eventually give up his life as a martyr in the year 62 A.D.
- James's letter has a very Jewish flavor. He begins by addressing "the twelve tribes in the dispersion" (1:1). As Doerksen points out, the phrase "twelve tribes" is intended to include the entire Jewish nation.<sup>3</sup> James's mention of their "assembly" (lit. synagogue), along with references to the Royal Law (2:8)<sup>4</sup>, indicates that ethnic Jews who have trusted in Jesus as Messiah and Savior are James's intended audience. James's audience was *Christian Jews*.<sup>5</sup> But who are these ethnic, believing Jews living in the dispersion? And what is the dispersion?
- To be dispersed is to be spread out over a great distance. This took place in the OT Exile, in Acts 8 with the martyrdom of Stephen, and the Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD). Many were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, earning them the label "the

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: James* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1998), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Vernon Doerksen, *Everyman's Bible Commentary: James* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1983), 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 849.

Dispersion.”<sup>6</sup> These Jewish Christians were mistreated by Gentiles and often looked down upon by fellow ethnic Jews. According to some sources, they were even considered lower than a Roman slave in some locations.<sup>7</sup> Facing trials that required wisdom and faith was part of daily life for these folks. In a culture that is increasingly hostile to Christianity, we face many of the same challenges today. James was written to Jewish believers living in the 1st century, but it is also for us today.

## Warm Up

Discuss the following question with your group:

- What might it have been like to grow up under the same roof as Jesus? To eat your meals with the Messiah; to choose teams on the kickball field; to go to worship together at the local synagogue? Share your thoughts...

## Read the Passage

- According to one article,<sup>8</sup> it takes just 16 minutes to read the letter of James. As a group, read the letter of James in its entirety. This week’s study will be shorter, but this one-sitting reading will give you a feel for the overall flow of the letter.

## Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

After reading James’s letter, what stands out to you? List two or three key observations of the book as a whole.

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<sup>6</sup> Doerksen, 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> The Jeremiah Study Bible, NIV (Franklin, TN: Worthy Publishing, 2016), 1767.

<sup>8</sup> [DesiringGod.org/articles/three-tips-for-better-bible-reading](http://DesiringGod.org/articles/three-tips-for-better-bible-reading).

What title does James give to himself in v. 1? What does this phrase bring to mind? Is it normally positive or negative?

If you have the ESV translation, it includes a footnote that details the meaning of James's self-designation of a servant. Jot down any helpful insights you gain from exploring this theologically-laden self-title.

What shift had to take place in James's mind and heart to self-identify as his brother's servant? What significant events might've played a role in James's transformation?

Compare James 1:1 and Acts 4:12. What do these two verses have in common?

## **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

After reading James's letter, what questions do you have? What do you hope to learn more about throughout this study?

If you were to write a letter to a friend, what sort of self-designation would you apply to yourself? Why did you choose the one you did?

What key takeaways can be gleaned from James's greeting in v. 1?

## **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Ask the Lord to help you see yourself more clearly – in light of who He is. Confess any attitudes of arrogance, resistance, or unbelief that are in your heart. Pray for a heart that is ready to bear the title of *servant*.

## **MEMORIZE**

*James 1:1 – “James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...”*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 1:1 | Greeting & Biography*



# James 1:2-18

*Theme: Facing Times of Testing & Trials*

## Catch Up

In the last section, we studied the greeting in James's letter. James underwent a major life transformation to go from not believing in his brother to describing himself as his brother's servant – and calling Him Lord! He moved from a skeptical sibling to a bought-in believer and committed church leader. As a Jewish man, his heart throbbed for his own people to come to know Jesus as Lord, too! Knowing of their struggles, James addressed this general epistle to Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. This week's study focuses on the many different trials we all go through in life. James's goal is for believers to get God's perspective on the trials we face.

## Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- What is the hardest test you have ever taken? Your answer might be in education, at work, family, etc. Share your response with the group.
- Who do you turn to when you go through difficult times in your life? Why do you reach out to that person?

## Read James 1:2-18

## Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

What do we learn about trials from James's opening section? (Hint: There are probably many more observations present here than we realize! Take your time on this one).

What should be the attitude of a believer when he/she faces trials in life? Why should believers endure trials this way – i.e., what good are they to us?

What connection do you see between vv. 2-4 and what he says in vv. 5-8? (What relationship exists between facing trials and wisdom?)

Is developing endurance or perseverance the end goal of facing trials? Support your answer from the passage.

The word for trials is a broad term. It can include adversities that come from within the heart of sinful man or from outside of us. In James 1, these terms stem from external pressures believers face. List the benefits of bearing up under trials with a godly perspective. Support your answer with specific verses from the section.

What do we learn about God from this passage?

Describe the direction of our lives when we give into temptations to sin. Note the stages James lists in vv. 14-15.

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

How does this passage encourage you? Challenge your thinking? Where does it directly speak to a situation in your life?

What attitudes does James confront in this section? Are any of these attitudes present in your life? Take a moment and confess them to the Lord in prayer.

What promise(s) are present in this passage? How might you use those to encourage another brother/sister in Christ this week?

What hope does this passage offer to someone who is new to God and His Word? How might this passage be used to point a lost person to Christ?

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Consider briefly sharing with one another about any trials or struggles you're facing right now. Pray over one another, asking for God's help to: face the trial with joy; be patient as God develops maturity in us; trust Him for wisdom in the face of the trial.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 1:2-3 – "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 1:2-18 | Facing Times of Testing & Trials*

## James 1:19-27

*Theme: Being Obedient to God's Word*

### Catch Up

Last week, we learned about God's perspective on our trials. God is at work in our lives during times of testing and trial. We can know and believe that He is maturing us as His children through these difficult seasons of life. This week we'll turn our attention to the importance of being DOERS of the Word, and not HEARERS only. As God sows the Word in our hearts, we must be diligent, with the help of the Spirit, to practice the kind of righteous living that pleases God.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- Share about a time in your life when you wish you'd been quicker to listen and slower to speak. What was the outcome?
- Outside the four walls of a church service, how does Scripture influence the way you think and live? Share a time when you intentionally made efforts to be a DOER of the Word.

### Read James 1:19-27

*Since this week's passage is shorter, try to read it out loud together in three different translations. Note the different emphases placed on the section based on the variety of translations.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

Make a list of repeated words or phrases in this passage. What do these words/phrases suggest to you as a reader?

How would you paraphrase this passage in your own words? Try to whittle your paraphrase down to a single succinct sentence.

James uses a number of strong commands (imperatives) in this passage. List these below.

Compare this passage with Psalm 139:23-34. What connections do you see between the two?

The last two verses almost have the feel of a proverb. How do these two verses, different as they are, relate to James's theme of being a doer of the Word?



## Wrap Up

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

The Greek word for moral filth is sometimes used to describe *ear wax*.<sup>9</sup> This makes sense since sin often clogs our “spiritual ears” from hearing God clearly. Are there any areas of your life where your sin is stopping up your hearing and inhibiting spiritual growth? Make note of these and take a moment to confess them to the Lord.

Davey writes, “Part of Satan’s vaccination strategy is to influence the believer to conclude that learning the Bible is the end of the process. He won’t (always) try to get the believer to discard the Bible but to disregard it, to learn it but not live it.”<sup>10</sup> Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

Try to write a brief profile of a church that is serious about obeying/doing God’s Word. (Ex: How do they handle finances? Work through church discipline? Care for the elderly and sick among them? Minister to the less fortunate in their community?)

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<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah Study Bible, 1770.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Davey, Wisdom Commentary Series: *James*. (Cary, NC: Charity House Publishers, 2018), 67.

## **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Confess any areas of your life where you have been a “hearer” only (not obeying the Word). Ask the Lord for clarity of mind and heart to see these places and the courage to repent and change.

## **MEMORIZE**

*James 1:22-25 – “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he looks like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” (At minimum, work on v. 22 and v. 25).*

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

**SERMON NOTES**

*James 1:19-27 | Being Obedient to God's Word*

## James 2:1-13

*Theme: Avoiding Partiality and Prejudice*

### Catch Up

Last week, we learned about the importance of obeying the Word of God in the practical matters of life. Studying the Bible or theology for the sake of amassing knowledge is not God's desire for His people. His desire is for our learning to translate into holy living; for our lives to align with His Word, because His Word reveals His nature and character. This week we'll turn our attention to the critical issues of partiality and prejudice within the church. These tendencies of our sinful flesh can tear at the fabric of the unity God desires to be present in His body, the Church.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- For what event would you pay money for the best seats in the house: The World Series? Your favorite Broadway show? The Super Bowl? The Olympics? Your favorite music artist's private tour show? The Thanksgiving Day Dog Show (kidding?)<sup>11</sup>
- Have you ever spent time in a developing country (formerly called "third world")? If so, where? What was that experience like?

### Read James 2:1-13

*Read the passage out loud together.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

What is the main imperative (command) in this section? Jot down the command and the corresponding verse number.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from *Serendipity Bible for Groups, 4th ed.* (Littleton, CO: Serendipity House, 1998), 1684.

According to this passage, what is the problem with partiality and prejudice? Support your answer from Scripture.

Turn to Acts 10:9-29. Scan that passage quickly. What does Peter's experience in Acts 10 have in common with James's instruction in this week's passage?

Are there any words, phrases, or expressions that do not make sense? Make a note of these. Compare notes with others in your group – can you help each other to understand what these might mean?

What is James referring to when he mentions the "royal law" in v. 8? What is he referring to when he speaks of the "law of liberty" in v. 12?

## **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

In general, what are some common ways people show favoritism? How might it appear in the church?

According to the passage, why is this issue important to God? From your own experience, why should it be important to every follower of Christ?

What is one practical way you can love your neighbor as yourself this week?

As Christians, the gospel should be at the center of everything we do. Even though gospel-centric words/phrases don't show up in this section, how does the gospel message (Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection, return) relate to this topic?

How might an unbeliever read and relate to this passage? How could you use it to share the gospel with an unbeliever?

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray for your group to be one that compassionately cares for everyone, not just those who are in certain friend circles or are well-off or well-liked. Ask for a sweet welcoming spirit toward all.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 2:5 – “Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”*



## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 2:1-13 | Avoiding Partiality and Prejudice*

## James 2:14-26

*Theme: The Intersection of Faith and Works*

### Catch Up

Last week, we studied the divisive issues of partiality and prejudice within the church. This week, James turns his focus to the intersection of faith and works. This passage has often been misunderstood, leading some to dismiss James's letter as somehow sub-gospel. As we will see, this is not the case, and the point James makes here is solidly supported by other authors from Scripture.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- For what event would you pay money for the best seats in the house: The World Series? Your favorite Broadway show? The Super Bowl? The Olympics? Your favorite music artist's private tour show? The Thanksgiving Day Dog Show (kidding?)<sup>12</sup>
- Have you ever spent time in a developing country (formerly called "third world)? If so, where? What was that experience like?

### Read James 2:14-26

*Read the passage out loud together.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

What is the mood of the passage?

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<sup>12</sup> Adapted from *Serendipity Bible for Groups, 4th ed.* (Littleton, CO: Serendipity House, 1998), 1684.

What is the plain, simple meaning of v. 17?

James anticipates a response from an imaginary discussion partner in v. 18. Why is he employing this type of argumentation?

Why does James mention Abraham and Isaac to support his main point?

What is James getting at in v. 24? Does this verse contradict Ephesians 2:8-9, when Paul says we are saved by grace through faith?

Note any significant theological themes or doctrines present in this passage.

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

How does this passage illuminate or expand your understanding of the gospel?

What ministries of the church might be significantly motivated by a passage like this?

How might this passage inform a church's view of mission work?

Where does this passage challenge you personally? In what ways does it motivate you?

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray for those in your group to be ready and willing to put their faith into action this week. Maybe that means sharing the gospel when an opportunity arises; maybe it's picking up the lunch tab for another brother/sister as an act of encouragement; maybe it looks like listening to someone going through a difficult time.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 2:26 – “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 2:14-26 | Intersection of Faith and Works*



## James 3:1-12

*Theme: Taming the Terrible Tongue*

### Catch Up

Last week, we studied James's teaching on the intersection of faith and works. These two are not opposites! In fact, they fit together seamlessly because real faith shows up in the real-world ways that we live (i.e., our works). This week, we'll dive into the tough issue of taming the terrible tongue! We all know the wonderful ways our tongues can be used to bless others; and the trouble it can cause just a few minutes later!

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- Has there ever been a time where you've "put your foot in your mouth?" (Of course there has!) Share your story, if you're brave enough :)
- Who is someone you love to see coming your way because of how they encourage others?

### Read James 3:1-12

*Read the passage out loud together.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

James begins with a pretty stiff warning in 3:1. What does he say? Why does he say this?

Consider the various metaphors/images James uses when speaking of the tongue. Get a count of the metaphors you see in vv. 1-12. List those out below. What lesson is he stressing through these comparisons?

Make a list of any key words/phrases in vv. 1-12. List them below. What do these suggest to you as a reader?

Are there any logical progressions you see in this section (i.e., ways the author connects an idea to build to a main point)?

Are there any surprising statements in this section? Anything you do not understand? Make a list of surprising statements and/or questions you still have about this passage below.

Note any significant theological themes or doctrines present in this passage.

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

How might this passage inform your praying this week?

What is one thing you learned about yourself in this passage? What did you learn about God? Why did these observations catch your attention?

How does this passage speak to the life/health of a church congregation?

When do you find it the hardest to keep a tight rein on your tongue? Be specific! Try to pinpoint the times, situations, and issues that challenge you most. Pray about these and ask for the Spirit's help to use your tongue wisely and well.

How is God speaking to you personally through this passage? Consider sharing this with someone in your group and seeking help to apply what you're learning.

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray for the Spirit's help this week to use our tongues in ways that are honoring and glorifying to God. Confess that this isn't always the case, as it should be.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 3:8-10 – “but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.”*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 3:1-12 | Taming the Terrible Tongue*

## James 3:13-18

*Theme: Wisdom from Above*

### Catch Up

Last week, we studied James’s teaching on the tongue. Scripture clearly speaks to the importance of how we use our words. God desires our speech to be consistently honoring and pleasing to Him. This is an area where we all need extra measures of grace, “for we all stumble in many ways” (3:2) – but especially in the area of our speech. This week in our study, James spotlights the contrast between worldly wisdom and the wisdom from above. It is imperative that we are discerning as to where our wisdom comes from.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- What people, groups, organizations, platforms, etc. are the influencers/shapers of the world’s kind of wisdom?
- In your life, who gets the “Wisdom of Solomon” Award?<sup>13</sup>

### Read James 3:13-18

*Stand together as you read aloud from God’s Word.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

What other passages in Scripture speak to this section’s theme of wisdom? Make a brief list of helpful cross-references below. Feel free to use a Bible with cross-references in the margin or center column.

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<sup>13</sup> Serendipity Bible, 1685.

What logical progressions are present in this passage? Make note of those and how they build James's argument.

The section is an obvious contrast between worldly and godly wisdom. How do they contrast with one another? Be sure to support your answer with verses from this passage.

What sinful attitudes and actions are associated with worldly wisdom? What godly actions are associated with godly wisdom?

How does this NT wisdom passage connect to the gospel? (Hint: First, be clear on how your group defines *the gospel*; then determine this section's relationship to the gospel message).



What stands out to you the most in this passage? Why? Share your answer with others in the group.

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

List two or three key areas in your life where this passage might apply. How might it apply in the corporate life of the church (i.e., churchwide)?

What is one thing you learned about yourself in this passage? What did you learn about God? Why did these observations catch your attention?

What sources of worldly wisdom do you need to stop listening to?

What are the fruits of godly wisdom? Who do you know that fits those descriptors? Consider handwriting that person a note to thank them for their example in your life.

List and share one big takeaway from this week's passage. What will you do with that lesson this week?

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray for discernment in distinguishing between worldly and godly wisdom. Ask the Lord for His wisdom in the lives of your group members, that everyone would think, do, and say things that are marked by godly wisdom.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 3:17-18 – “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 3:13-18 | Wisdom from Above*

## James 4:1-12

*Theme: Warning against Worldliness*

### Catch Up

Last week, we learned about the contrast between worldly wisdom and the wisdom from above. It is imperative that we are discerning as to where our wisdom comes from. In this week's study, we'll turn our attention to James's warnings against living like the world. Fights and arguments naturally result when we do life this way. So how do we make a u-turn and begin doing life God's way? Let's dive in to find out.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- Who did you argue with the most growing up? What usually caused your arguments?
- Create a "Top 5" list of things in life worth arguing about. Why did those things make the list?

### Read James 4:1-12

*Take a few minutes to quietly read this week's passage. Now take turns reading it out loud together (read two verses and pass it to the next person to read two verses until finished).*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

James frequently used questions to set up his argument. List the question in this section that sets up his main point – then note the other verses where this is also James's strategy.

What key words are present in 4:1? What might be the significance of each of these words?

How would you describe the mood/tone of this section? What words or phrases support your answer?

What sinful motivation(s) does James say lies behind our sinful/fleshly arguments?

Can you find the point in the passage where it “turns the corner” and moves toward a solution? What grammatical indicator signaled a change in direction?

What are the solutions for the worldly fights and arguments we get into? What other passages in Scripture agree with James's teaching in 4:6-10?

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

Remembering that the Holy Spirit inspired all Scripture for our edification, why do you think God put this passage in the Bible? What is His goal for His people according to these verses?

If you turned this teaching around and *actually did the opposite* of what it says, what might be the result in your life? (Think of specific places it might apply: a friend circle, family relationships, at work, etc.)

If this section were a lab and you were running an experiment, what part of this section would you test out to see its results?

Verse 6 states that God gives more grace instead of leaving us in the mudhole of our sin. Write a short prayer to Him giving thanks for His extra doses of grace in your life.

What kind of attitude is needed to apply vv. 6-12? What is one step you can take this week with the help of the Spirit to grow in this type of attitude?

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray for wisdom and clarity to see where you are too much in love with the world and its ways. Confess any mindsets, values, or decisions that are more in line with the world than with God's Word.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 4:6-8a – “But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...”*



## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 4:1-12 | Warning against Worldliness*

## James 4:13-17

*Theme: Planning God out of the Picture!*

### Catch Up

Last week, we studied James's warnings against living like the world. These attitudes are destructive in any setting we're in. God would have us humble ourselves and repent of living those ways, drawing near to Him in faith. This week, we'll learn about the brevity of life and how to think about making plans for the future from God's perspective.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- What is one goal you have for this semester? Why did you decide on that as a goal for your life?
- Do you prefer to plan things out in advance or take life a day at a time? Why?

### Read James 4:13-17

*Since this week's passage is shorter in length, read the passage in the ESV, then read it again in a different translation (ex: NLT, NIV, NCV). Bible Gateway has a load of translation options available.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

In v. 13, James employs a unique strategy to build his argument. Make note of that strategy. How does this approach help him build his argument to make his point?

What kind of attitude is James seeking to correct in vv. 13-17?

Cross-reference vv. 13-17 with Psalm 90. What message do these passages have in common?

Come up with one word or phrase to describe/summarize this section. Compare your answer with others in the group.

Are there any important doctrines found in this passage? Make a note of these below.

What is the significance of v. 15 when James teaches us to say 'If the Lord will...'?

## **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

How would you explain this passage to a 5th grader so as to help him/her apply the concepts on his/her level? How would this passage apply to the life of a retired person in the church?

How would this passage impact the way a church plans its yearly calendar of events and programs?

How could you use the key concept(s) in this passage to point a lost person to the gospel?

How did this verse challenge you personally? How did it encourage you?

List one big takeaway from your study this week. How will you apply what you've learned in the next few days?

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Spend a couple of minutes praying about what you've got planned for this week. Ask for a tender heart to orient your days, hours, and minutes around what matters most to God.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 4:14-15 – “yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 4:13-17 | Planning God out of the Picture!*



## James 5:1-6

*Theme: Stern Words to the Wealthy*

### Catch Up

Last week, we focused on learning to make plans for the future based on God's perspective. This week, our study turns to the subject of trusting in our wealth rather than trusting in God. James doesn't pull any punches when it comes to attitudes of pride and arrogance! It appears that the ones James was writing to were distracted by worldly pursuits and hurting others through their selfish choices. This week's section is tough, but so applicable to our lives today.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- What was your first job? What do you hope your career job will be?
- Based on how you spend your money now, what would an outsider discover about your priorities?

### Read James 5:1-6

*Since this week's passage is shorter in length, read the passage in the ESV, then read it again in a different translation (ex: NLT, NIV, NCV). Bible Gateway has a load of translation options available.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

James begins this section in the same way as the last section – “*Come now, you rich....*”  
What do you think he's trying to accomplish by starting this section this way?

Make a list of key words or key phrases in 5:1-6. What do these suggest about the main point in this section?

What accusations does James make against the wealthy believers in this passage? Include verse references with your answers.

Observe the key verbs in the passage. Are they written in the active or passive voice? What does this say about the main point of the passage?

Make a note of any words/phrases you don't understand. Consult with others in your group to help one another understand the passage.

What do we learn about God in this passage? What verse(s) supports your answer?

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

Interact with this quote: “God’s concern is not with actual wealth, which is neutral, but with our attitudes toward wealth.”<sup>14</sup> Based on 1 Timothy 6:8-10, do you think the Apostle Paul would agree?

How might a passage like this shape the way a church budgets and spends its money?

What attitudes surfaced in your own heart as you engaged with this text? Jot those down and confess those to the Lord in prayer.

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<sup>14</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1&2 Peter* (Carol Stream: IL, Tyndale House Publishers, 2014), 110.

What might a brand-new believer learn about God if this passage if this text was preached at his/her first experience in church? How might you use this text in a follow-up conversation (post-sermon) with that new believer?

How can you pray through this passage this coming week?

- What can you praise God for?
- What should you confess?
- Who has modeled the truth in this passage for you? Thank God for their example.
- What needs come to mind after working through this passage? Take those to God in prayer.

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray for godly wisdom on how you can use your resources in the best way possible this week. Ask God for eyes to see others around you in need, and the desire/ability to act.

### **MEMORIZE**

*1 Timothy 6:10 – “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 5:1-6 | Stern Words to the Wealthy*

## James 5:7-12

*Theme: Being Patient in Suffering*

### Catch Up

Last week, we heard strong words of warning when it comes to trusting in our wealth rather than trusting in God. The Lord is clearly concerned with how we use the resources and material blessings He has entrusted to us. This week, we'll turn to James's teaching on being patient and steadfast as we await Christ's return. These are timely words for believers to consider. The Day is drawing nearer and the pressures of the world can be discouraging to endure. Be encouraged as you study this week's text.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- What kind of experience do you have with gardening or farming? Did you enjoy that type of work?
- What is something you are waiting for right now? How patient have you been as you've waited?

### Read James 5:7-12

*Select a reader from the group to read the passage aloud. After reading once through, have everyone in the group read the passage silently on their own.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

James uses the conjunction 'therefore' in v. 7. What connection might this suggest between vv. 1-6 and this vv. 7-12?

Note the change in audience (v. 1 and v. 7). What does this teach us about the early church demographics/makeup? What challenges might present themselves based on the answer to the first part of this question?

What image does James employ in v. 7 to make his point about patience? What characteristics or values can modern readers (who may not get their hands dirty in the garden!) learn from James's chosen image?

In v. 8, James provides a strong motivator for believers to remain patient when they are unjustly mistreated. What motivator does he point us to? What significant doctrine is present here?

In vv. 10-11, James points to other biblical characters as examples of patience in suffering. Why do those individuals/categories of people resonate so much with followers of Christ?



Make a note of any words/phrases you don't understand. What is confusing about those particular words/images/phrases, etc.?

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

Is your typical response to frustration to bottle up or blow up? What seems to be James's guidance from this passage?

Is there a promise to hold onto in this passage? A word of encouragement to hold onto?

If you were a missionary serving in another culture, how might this passage hit home? (Try to think about applying this teaching in a different setting)

Is there a command to obey? Take a moment to ask the Spirit's help to obey this teaching this week.

Be patient. Don't grumble. Don't swear. Why would James need to address a group of Christians on matters such as these? (The answer to this question helps identify the fallen condition focus of this text).

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Ask the Lord for gracious speech as you endure the trials you are facing. Grumbling begets more grumbling, but grateful, gracious speech is winsome in every way. Ask for the Spirit to guard your lips (Ps. 141:3) and for help to use your words to bless and build others up (Eph. 4:32).

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 5:8 – "You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 5:7-12 | Being Patient in Suffering*

## James 5:13-20

*Theme: Praying in Faith*

### Catch Up

Last week, we studied James's exhortation on being patient and steadfast as we await Christ's return. These are encouraging reminders for us as we deal with the difficulties and disappointments in life – as well as those times when we find ourselves on the losing end of other's unfair actions. In this last study, James focuses on the essential topic of prayer. In this section on prayer, James spotlights some unique and challenging situations that require intense devotion and faith to persevere. Let's dive into this final passage of James's letter as he pastors our hearts toward holy and faithful living.

### Warm Up

*Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your group:*

- When you are sick, what are your favorite comfort food/snacks? Do you have any peculiar habits/things you do when you're sick?
- If you were given a nickname based on your prayer life, what would it be? (According to some, James's was "Old Camel Knees" because he evidently prayed so much that his knees were covered in resulting callouses).

### Read James 5:13-20

*Take turns reading the passage as a group. Break up the verses in whatever way best suits your group.*

### Word Up

*This is the portion of the study where you will use these questions to help you investigate the passage and glean as many observations as possible. This may be done silently over a period of a few minutes and responses may be shared; or you may collectively discuss these questions and record your observations as a group.*

James uses one of his favorite well-worn strategies to introduce the subject of the new section. What is the strategy?

What do you think is the significance of the church's elders anointing the sick person with oil?

In v. 15, what kind of sickness is in view? How would you support your response from Scripture?

Pay close attention to the depth of relationships present in this section. What relationships are present in this passage? How is James envisioning these relationships to function?

What key theological themes are present in this passage? How do they fit into the letter as a whole? To the NT? The entire Bible?

Try to write a concise, freighted one-sentence summary of James's teaching in vv. 13-20. (Imagine you're reading this in the Student Union one day and a friend asks what it's about – *How would you respond?*)

What questions do you still have about this passage?

### **Wrap Up**

*Use this time to help students consider how the passage might apply to their lives.*

How has this passage ministered to you? How has it challenged your thinking?

Jot down any new thoughts or ideas that have come to mind through studying vv. 13-20. Why did these stand out?

How might a pastor apply this passage to his congregation in a Sunday morning sermon?

How does this passage offer hope and help in the face of the problem it's addressing?

Spend a couple minutes praying over a friend, classmate, or family member who is wandering away from the truth (v. 19). You don't have to necessarily write the person's name, but maybe jot down their initials as a reminder to pray for them this week.

### **PRAYER SUGGESTION**

Pray over those you know who are sick – be it physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual sicknesses. Ask God for healing for those individuals. Ask God to prompt them to seek out the elders of their church(es) for anointing and faith-filled prayer over their needs.

### **MEMORIZE**

*James 5:16 – “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*



## PRAYER REQUESTS

## **SERMON NOTES**

*James 5:13-20 | Praying in Faith*





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