



Be Mature

An 8 week study through
the book of James



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DIGGING DEEPER

In the middle of a trial, would you ever say, “I am joyful”? Not many of us would, but this is how James starts his letter: Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, James 1:2

1. How is it possible to rejoice in difficult circumstances?

A. Can you identify a specific time where you experienced a hard time and you felt God’s blessings on the other side of it? Describe some of the things you learned from this trial that led you to feeling joy?

B. Referencing verse 1:12, what is the result of a trial and how does that help you when you are in the middle of one?

2. We all want that “quick-fix” when we are in the middle of a challenge. Why might God not want to just instantly provide a solution to your problems?

3. Who or what do we sometimes blame when things go wrong? Reference verses 1:13–14.

4. Verses 1:1–12 focus on trials. Verses 1:13–15 moves into temptations. How do trials lead into temptations? When we go through trials, what specific temptations can we experience?

5. What is the difference between a trial and a temptation? In your opinion, which is “easier” to go through and why?

6. Verse 13 says God does not tempt us. God will test us, but He will not tempt us. In Genesis 22, he tests Abraham to see if he will obey God and sacrifice his son Isaac.

A. If God does not tempt us, where do temptations come from?

B. Can you describe a time where it felt like God was testing you, and share how that turned out?



—THINK ABOUT IT

James describes a path of trials that if we follow them, if we allow God to do His work in us through them, then these difficulties will lead us into becoming mature and complete. Think about a trial you have had in your life, and how it impacted you, how you grew from it. Then reflect on changes you can make during the next trial you have in your life – you know it's coming! How can that test you, help you develop perseverance, and then mature you specifically in your faith walk? Ask that God would help you see your trial in the way that He sees them – a tool for growth.



DIGGING DEEPER

This short passage contains just 8 verses but packs a mighty big punch. These instructions from James may seem random, but they point to the importance of turning our words into action.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says.

JAMES 1:22

1. Let's start by looking at the first sentence of verse 19, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak."
 - A. Many of us tend to start thinking about what we will say next rather than listening fully to the person speaking. What harm can come from that?
 - B. The latter part of verse 19 is, "...and slow to become angry". How is listening and being slow to speak connected to becoming angry?
2. Verse 21 says we must accept the word "planted" in us. What is the word that God wants planted in us? And how does that word get planted?
3. Jesus was often critical of the Jewish leaders for their demands of strict adherence to the letter of the Law of Moses.
 - A. How is James different in his quest for Christians to act in a moral way?
 - B. What resource does Galatians 5:16-18 say we are provided to help us? And how does that resource help?

“The bottom line of true spiritual life is not a momentary feeling of compliance or commitment, but long-term obedience to Scripture.”

JOHN MACARTHUR

4. In verses 23–24, James tells a story about looking in a mirror and then forgetting what you look like. When you hear a sermon on Sunday morning, how long does it take for you to forget the points that were made? James gives us a hint at how we can prevent this in verse 25.

Discuss what he means and practical ways we can make sure the message is not forgotten.

5. Your life should be transformed by the word. Hearing it or reading it means nothing until it is actually put into action. Name three things that you can do that will show others that you are a believer.

6. When we get to Chapter 3, James goes into detail regarding the taming of the tongue. But here in verse 26 he makes what seems to be a harsh statement about this. How can our words make our religion “worthless”?



—THINK ABOUT IT

What happens when we listen to the sermon on Sunday but treat people rudely in the shop that afternoon? Or what do people think when you attend church on Sunday and tell a raunchy joke on Monday? James wants us to know that we should not “merely listen to the word”.

This week spend some time thinking of new ways you can put your “money where your mouth is” ...or in Christian terms, how you can put your “faith where your mouth is”!



DIGGING DEEPER

In our world, we sometimes base our view of worth on financial and social status. And people can sometimes assume that the wealthier you are, the harder you have worked. But is that always the truth—that hard work always leads to financial wealth? And does that wealth = worth? Let's dig into the next passage in James where he addresses something that may hit close to home for some of us.

1. James was prompted to confront the behaviour of the early church toward those that were poor because it was so appalling. There was such a high level of social ostracism and the wealthy were given many special privileges not extended to others. Some would say church is not much different today, and others would say we have changed greatly.

Discuss what you think about that, and then discuss the atmosphere you have observed specifically at Brisbane City Temple.

2. Read John 13:1-17. What impact does the story have on you and how does it apply to what we have been discussing?

3. Have you ever been snubbed by someone who looked down on you by the way you were dressed? How did that make you feel, and how did you react?

A. Why is it so hard to not judge someone by the clothes they wear?

We all make assumptions by the way someone looks; it is part of human nature. Read the following verses for guidance of what we should do:

i. John 7:24

ii. 1 Samuel 16:7

iii. 1 Corinthians 1:26-28

4. Does it seem that God spends more time expressing love and concern for the poor than He does others in the Bible? The flip side would be, is wealth a sign of God's blessings? Discuss your answers.

5. In verse 2:8, James refers to the "royal" law (Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39).

A. Why do you think he calls it the "royal" law?

B. How can obeying these commands change the way you look at others that are less fortunate than you are?

C. How can you reconcile the command to love your neighbour as yourself to the verses in 2 Timothy 3:1-5?

• ...Mercy triumphs over judgement.
JAMES 2:13b



THINK ABOUT IT

Anytime we talk about money and wealth or social status, it can be uncomfortable. These are not topics that are easy to discuss. Spend some time praying over the earthly class system we humans have set up, and if needed, ask God for guidance to help you look at all people with the same value and worth that God does. Confess to God any judgements you may have towards those that are not like you. Ask God to show you ways to express kindness to them. Ask God to teach us all how to truly love our neighbour as ourselves.



DIGGING DEEPER

This passage is the core of the book of James. He explains the concept of how good deeds are the evidence of your faith in Christ, and not a path to salvation.

1. This section begins with a question, “What good is it if someone claims to have faith but no deeds?”

A. Is it possible to be filled with faith in Jesus, but live a willfully sinful life? If yes, what do you think the effects of seeing that person live that way are on those who are not believers?

B. How do people know you are a Christian?

2. Imagine you are homeless, living on the streets, and are very hungry. You haven’t eaten in days or maybe even a week or more. Now picture someone walking up to you with a kind face and a smile. Imagine that person saying, “I’ll pray for you,” and then they walk away. Now read verses 2:15–16 and read 1 John 3:17–18.

A. Discuss these verses against the backdrop of this story. In our world today, is it practical to help someone on the street as an individual? If yes, what would you do? If no, what other options do you have?

B. Is praying for someone who is in dire physical need enough? Why or why not?

C. Read Matthew 25:31–46 for further guidance.

3. What type of action is James talking about in verse 17?

4. James mentions the faith of Abraham, “the Father of Many Nations” and Rahab, a prostitute.

Read the following passages and describe how each of them displayed their faith.

i. Abraham: Genesis 22:1-18

ii. Rahab: Joshua 2

5. Let’s talk some more about Rahab. Rahab is honoured for her faithful actions although she lived a life as a prostitute. James is critical specifically of those whose lives do not match their faith, so how do you reconcile these two things?

In your opinion, who is more admirable to God – Rahab, the prostitute who took action that saved the Israelites or a dedicated church going member who does nothing outside of going to church?

What do you base your opinion on?

6. James tells us that faith requires action, that faith should not be simply a passive feeling.

Companies often use famous people to pitch their products in advertisements. They understand that if people see this celebrity or athlete driving this car or using this mascara, then it must be good for them as well. In the same way, we are walking advertisements for faith in God. In all that we do as Christians, like a famous person using a product, we are showing others what is good for them. What kind of “product” are you advertising right now by your life?

Once I was asked by a co-worker what I did over the Easter holiday. I replied that I served downtown at a homeless ministry and provided Easter baskets to kids. Her response was ‘wow you are sure earning your way to Heaven!’

Unfortunately, this is the thought process for many people.

MARCY KENNY

7. The point James is trying to make in verse 18 is that faith and deeds are completely interlocked. The Christian cannot have faith without deeds and their deeds are useless without faith.

8. Are all “good works/deeds” reflective of faith in God? Why or why not?

9. How does it benefit others to share the things we do for our faith publicly?



THINK ABOUT IT

Imagine you are on trial for not being Christian. What would the prosecution use against you to convict you? What would your defense lawyer use to show that you are a Christian? Which side would have conclusive evidence? If it is the Prosecutor, pray that God shows you ways to change that; that He leads you into a life that is more evident of the love you have for Him. If it is the Defense, pray that God continues to grow you in the life that you lead, and that you have the boldness to share your faith with others.



DIGGING DEEPER

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

MATTHEW 12:36-37

1. In every chapter of this book, James mentions the power of the tongue. This demonstrates the important role it plays when it comes to living the Christian life. The sin of harsh words is the easiest sin to commit, but one that also has such big and sometimes long-lasting consequences.

We can apologise for our words, but are they really ever forgotten?

A. Begin this discussion with recalling times in your past where someone said something to you that caused you pain. Does the passage of time diminish the hurt from those words?

B. Continue the discussion by being bold enough to describe a time you said something you regretted. Do you think the recipient of your words has forgotten them?

2. Read James 3:9. The same mouth that shouts praises to God can curse other humans who have, just like you, been made in God's image.

A. What makes us speak so ill to each other, whether it is behind someone's back, on social media, or even to their face?

B. How does it harm our relationship with God when we speak badly to others?

3. Simple question, but maybe hard to answer: Why is the tongue so hard to control?

4. Think of an example of someone in your life now, or in the past, who is always kind in how they speak of and to others. What do you think gives them that power of self-control over their tongue?

“Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as have fallen by the tongue.”

JESUS BEN SIRACH

5. Many other books of the Bible discuss the damage our words can have.

Read each of these Scriptures for further insight:

i. Matthew 12:36–37

ii. Matthew 15:18–19

iii. Proverbs 15:2

iv. 1 Peter 3:10

6. Discuss ways you can guard against speaking hurtful words when you are angry, hurt, or have the need to express a differing opinion in a not so nice way.

“The Holy Spirit will give us increasing power to monitor and control what we say so that when we are offended, the Spirit will remind us of God’s love, and we won’t react in a hurtful manner.”

LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE STUDY



—THINK ABOUT IT

The power of the tongue is stronger than we realize. How many relationships have been damaged forever due to hurtful words? As humans we have a need to express our thoughts and opinions on every subject, even when it is not welcomed. Knowing when to speak up, as well as the appropriate tone and words to use is uniquely a work of the Holy Spirit in us. This week spend some time praying over your words. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you power over your tongue!



DIGGING DEEPER

In the next few studies, James covers a number of subjects. But they all point to one thing – self. If you are self-focused, then you are not God-focused. And by not being God-focused, you are living by the wisdom of the world and not His wisdom. Get ready for some soul-searching teaching by James!

1. Pride is the key to the first few verses in chapter 4. James writes that pride is the cause of many fights. Think about just one person that you are constantly fighting with – maybe someone at work, maybe someone in your family, then answer the following questions.

A. What could you do right now to end the fighting and bring about reconciliation in that relationship?

B. Now think about someone you no longer have a relationship with due to a past conflict. If you still feel you were right, what steps could you take to restore the relationship?

- Have you ever noticed....
 - When someone ignores you, they are rude. When you ignore them, it's because you are preoccupied with something more important.
 - When someone says what they think, they are opinionated. When you say what you think, you are being frank.
 - When someone dresses extravagantly, they are being ostentatious. When you dress in your finest, you have style.
 - When someone receives an abundance of provision, they are lucky. When you receive an abundance, you are blessed.
 - When someone speaks to you about your pride, they are being arrogant or unkind. When you speak to someone about their pride, you are being helpful.

ADAPTED FROM ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD
BY HENRY BLACKABY

2. In verse 3, James refers to not hearing answers to prayers because we “ask with wrong motives.”

A. What are some examples of both right and wrong motives in prayer?

3. James is not referring to those having an affair, but what does he mean in verse 4 when he calls his readers “adulterous people”?

A. Describe what “friendship with the world” means to you.

B. What parts of worldly living is impeding your own spiritual growth?

4. In verses 4:7-10, James lists many things we should do to rid ourselves of pride. How can you implement them in your life.

A. Submit yourselves to God.

B. Resist the devil.

C. Wash your hands.

D. Grieve, mourn and wail.

E. Change your laughter to mourning.

F. Change your joy to gloom.

G. Humble yourselves.

5. In verses 4:11–12, James warns us not to judge others. What is the difference between judging someone and holding them accountable for their actions?

Reference these verses for additional discussion:

i. Matthew 7:1

ii. Romans 14:12

iii. John 7:24

iv. Romans 2:1–3



—THINK ABOUT IT

In your quiet time with God this week, look back over the words in the box at the beginning of this lesson, in the section, “Have you ever noticed.” As you move through life in the coming days, take notice of words you say and thoughts you have that might be treating others more harshly than you treat yourself.



DIGGING DEEPER

We all make plans. We have to or things would be a mess. I had to plan to lead this study today. You had to plan to be here. You have to plan to do a presentation for work or study to pass an exam. You have to plan to have someone pick up your kids from school activities if you can't do it. Making plans is not the problem James is talking about here. The problem is our attitude about the plans we make.

1. What attitude about our plans is James targeting in v13-17?

A. James talks about "arrogant schemes". How would you define arrogance?

B. What value do we get from reminding ourselves that our plans ultimately depend on God? Does that change what we do, or how we do it?

Learn more about planning for tomorrow in the following Bible verses.

Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 29:11-13;

Luke 12:22-26; Matthew 6:33-34

What do these verses say about our plans and God's plans?

Next time your plans fall through, how might these verses help you?

C. Is there a way for us to make our plans more in line with God's plans for us? How would you do that?

D. Is James saying we shouldn't make plans for the future?

What's the point of making long-range plans if you don't know what tomorrow will bring?

2. How would you describe the tone of 5:1-6? Who is James addressing in this section? What is he predicting for them? Why will this happen?

Do you think this is written to all “rich” people ever, to rich people in that time and place, or just to the rich people who were guilty of exploitation?

3. In James 5:1, what’s the first thing James wants the “rich” people to do?

A. How do you think this compares with their current attitude? (Do they spend a lot of time “weeping and howling”?)

B. What can we do to make sure that poor workers are not exploited, that they get a fair wage for their work?

C. Where are we storing our treasure? How can we break free from the idolatry of money and all the things it buys? How can we seek first God’s kingdom?



DIGGING DEEPER

“Be patient”. Are there any words more challenging? Being patient while you are waiting on your food in a restaurant is one thing. But James says being patient in waiting for the Lord to return is not a passive event. Let’s see what James would like us to do while we are waiting.

1. Do you consider yourself a patient person?

A. If yes, were you always this way or did you have to learn to be patient? If you are not a patient person, describe ways you can learn to be patient.

B. Describe some ways our culture encourages impatience.

2. In verses 5:10–11, James describes patience in three steps: suffering, which leads to perseverance, which leads to a blessing.

A. How can you encourage someone to be patient who is suffering?

B. How do you encourage them to persevere through daily life?

C. How do you explain that these things lead to a blessing? What is the blessing that suffering and perseverance leads to?

3. Which of the following situations do you pray most about: when you are in trouble, when you are happy, or when you are sick? Which one of these do you think is the time that should occupy the bulk of your prayers? Why do you think that?

4. Anointing with oil is mentioned often in the Bible, but for different reasons. Read the verses below and discuss use of oil for each one.

A. Leviticus 8:30

B. Exodus 40:15

C. Psalm 23:5

D. Psalm 89:20

E. Mark 6:13

F. Was James 5:14 referring to the anointing of oil for physical sickness or spiritual sickness?

5. What does James say we must do before we pray (verse 5:16)? Why is that?

6. James tells the story of Elijah praying about rain. Read this story about Elijah as well: 1 Kings 18:16–39.

A. What does this story teach us about prayer, especially verse 39?

B. Do you believe that the intensity of your prayer makes a difference?

Why or why not?

7. We all know someone who has wandered from the truth (verse 19), someone who may be spiritually discouraged, whether that is a family member or a friend, or just a co-worker. What steps can you take to try and bring that person back?



—THINK ABOUT IT

The Bible is consistent in the message that prayer is powerful and effective. God hears every prayer, and He answers them, even if it is not in the matter we wanted. Make a one-week commitment to pray every morning when you wake up and every evening before you go to sleep. Then evaluate how that week was compared to other weeks. Do not look for all that went right or wrong but look for those moments when you felt God's presence in a stronger way. Spending more time with God will grow that relationship and make it easier to know when He is near.

Conclusion



THINK ABOUT IT

The Book of James is rich with Scriptural truths, many of which may have sounded familiar, yet others you may have encountered for the first time. Our prayer for you in participating in this study was that you would gain fresh new insights from this amazing book of the Bible, and that they would in turn lead you to take steps to grow in your faith. This in turn leads to our final question:

How has this study prompted you to begin putting your faith in action?

List three primary takeaways from this study that you will begin to integrate into your life:

1.

2.

3.



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