



James • March - June 2021

Overview

James is a book about real faith for real people. A book that shows it's not good simply holding to a set of theoretical beliefs - James demands that faith must be put to work. Drawing from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount and driving the same themes home with vivid pictures, the challenge of James is not understanding what it says but putting it into practice.

Outline

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3. Pure Religion - 1:19-27
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6. Watch Your Mouth - 3:1-12
7. Making Peace - 3:13-18
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FAITH THAT WORKS

THE BOOK OF JAMES

Week 1 • 14 March 2021 • James 1:1-11

Persevering through trials

1. Imagine if every time you faced a challenging situation you could choose joy.
 - a. What would that be like?
 - b. What would you be believing about God if you could choose joy?
 - c. How does understanding the purpose of trials help you choose joy?

2. Read Proverbs 4:1-9 and consider the following:
 - a. What is wisdom and where does it come from?
 - b. What are its benefits?
 - c. Why do you think God considers it to be so important? (Prov 4:7)

3. Are the situations right now in which you need wisdom? Why not share together and then pray with James 1:6-7 in mind?

4. James' comments on wealth and poverty can seem hard to understand. One way to understand them is to remember that Jesus' teaching would have been fresh in his mind. Have a look at Luke 11:13-21.
 - a. How are poverty and wealth seen in our world?

 - b. How does Jesus give a different perspective?

 - c. Does this affect your view of financial success? Why?



Week 2 • 21 March 2021 • James 1:12-18

Persevering Through Temptation

1. James 1 has a lot to say about temptation and trials/tests.
 - a. What differences are there between temptation and trials on the basis of James 1:2-18? For example, where do they come from or what is their effect?
 - b. Can you think of examples of each?

2. How do people in your world look at temptation and desire?
 - a. What's the same? What's different?
 - b. How does this affect the challenge of resisting temptation in everyday life?



Week 3 • 28 March 2021 • James 1:19-27

Pure Religion

1. Have a look at James 1:19-20.
 - a. How does this compare to Ephesians 4:26?
 - b. Can anger ever be a good thing?

2. How is religion defined in our culture? How much is James' definition different (v27)?

3. A core focus of James is putting God's Word into practice and he gives three examples of this: control of your words (v26); care for the vulnerable (v27a); and avoid worldliness (v27b).
 - a. Which one of these is most challenging for you and why?
 - b. What is the first step you can take towards progress in this area?

4. James clearly saw the need for groups of believers caring for the vulnerable? What needs can you see around you? In what ways do you think God might want you to respond?



Week 4 • 11 April 2021 • James 2:1-13

Don't Play Favourites

1. James was clearly concerned about favouritism for rich people.
 - a. Who might we show favouritism to today?
 - b. In what ways might we show favouritism?

2. James reminds us of Jesus' teaching by showing that people who are poor in finances are rich in faith!
 - a. To what extent might this account for the level of unbelief in our society?
 - b. What are some other causes?

3. James saw favouritism as a failure to love your neighbour as yourself.
 - a. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 together. Then, sit quietly for a few minutes and ponder those words. Ask God who you can love like this today and how that might look.
 - b. Then share how you're going to respond and pray together about this.

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 5 • 18 April 2021 • James 2:14-26

Show Me Your Faith

1. Have a look at the following verses on faith - James 2:14-26, Ephesians 2:8-10 and Hebrews 11:1. Imagine that a friend unfamiliar with the Bible asked you to define faith, how would you answer in one sentence?
2. Read the following quote from Douglas Moo's commentary on James.

*“James is not arguing that works must be **added** to faith. His point, rather, is that genuine biblical faith will inevitably be characterised by works.”*

- a. How are these two points different?
- b. Can you give an example of each?

3. One example that James gives is of Abraham, a man who trusted God to the most significant degree (Hebrews 11:17-19).
 - a. Where, or with what, do you sense God asking you to trust Him right now?
 - b. If you really did trust God in that, what practical steps would you be able to take?

4. James keeps referring to brothers and sisters which reminds us we're a family of faith who will inevitably care for one another - not just for ourselves. What would it look like to show care for one another as a group?

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 6 • 25 April 2021 • James 3:1-12

Watch Your Mouth

1. What is it about words, do you think, that makes it such an important issue?

2. James uses three vivid images to illustrate our tongues (v3-6).
 - a. Which one stands out to you most and why?

 - b. Do any of them communicate an aspect of speech that you hadn't thought about before?

3. James' words are similar to those that he probably heard from Jesus - see Matthew 12:33-35.
 - a. Why does the heart (thoughts, desires, decisions) have such a bearing on what we say?

 - b. Take a few moments to think about the words you have said throughout today. What do they suggest about what's going on in your heart?

4. The solution is not to focus primarily on our words but our hearts. What are some things we could do that would store up good in our hearts?

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 7 • 2 May 2021 • James 3:13-18

Make Peace

1. How would you define wisdom?
2. Then have a look at James definition in v13. Was it the same or different to your definition?

James is applying wisdom to dealing with conflict.

3. Have you ever had to help bring reconciliation to a situation. What worked and what didn't? What did you learn?
4. Have a look at James' attributes of heavenly wisdom (v17).
 - a. Which one stands out to you and why?
 - b. Are there any that are especially important in terms of making peace?

5. Are there areas of conflict around you at the moment?
 - a. Why not pray together for this sort of wisdom from heaven?
 - b. What steps could you take to help bring peace?

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 8 • 9 May 2021 • James 4:1-12

The Power of Humility

1. James continues with the theme of conflict. What are some causes of conflict in your world and the people around you? What do you think are the main causes?

2. Have a look at the reasons for conflict James gives in v1-2. How much can you identify with these?

3. James has two big responses for conflict - prayer and humility. Humility unleashes God's grace - the way God works in our lives as a free gift. Grace is a powerful agent of change!
 - a. Have a look at the ways we can humble ourselves in v7-10. Which one stands out to you the most and why?

4. James finishes this section with some words on being judgmental - another issue of conflict and humility. Have a look at Jesus' teaching in this area (Matthew 7:1-5).
 - a. What do you notice?
 - b. What would it look like if you adopted Jesus' teaching next time you faced a conflict?

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 9 • 16 May 2021 • James 4:13-17

Doing Good Today, Trusting for Tomorrow

1. In 2020, many of us had plans that had to be cancelled or changed. How was that experience for you? Did your reaction surprise you?

2. James shows that while tomorrow is out of our control, we can entrust it to God. Have a look at Matthew 6:25-33.
 - a. What reasons are given for not worrying?

 - b. Which one would be most helpful for you to hang on to?

3. How is our expectation about tomorrow different to someone who does not follow Jesus? How might that affect how we pray for them?

4. Instead of worrying about tomorrow, James encourages us to take advantage of what we can - doing good (See Proverbs 3:27-28, Matthew 5:14-16 & James 4:17).
- a. What opportunities can you see for doing good to others at the moment?
 - b. Is there anything that would get in the way or hold you back? Talk and pray about these things together.

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 10 • 23 May 2021 • James 5:1-6

Money Matters

1. *“I hope everybody could get rich and famous and have everything they ever dreamed of, so they will know that it’s not the answer.”*
Jim Carrey
 - a. What do you think he means by this?
 - b. Do you agree? Can you identify with this in any ways?
2. This passage is pretty scathing and the images that James uses are similar to Jesus in Matthew 6:19-24. What do you think his concerns are?
3. What are some things that you can see people around you trusting in instead of God? What could you say or ask that might help them think differently?

4. One of the major themes in Scripture is how we care for the poor and marginalised in our communities.
 - a. What practical examples does Isaiah give around this in Isaiah 58:6-9?
 - b. What is one step you could take to use the resources God has given you to care for the needs you see?

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 11 • 30 May 2021 • James 5:7-12

Patience in Suffering

1. James points to a farmer awaiting a harvest as an example of how we should wait for the Lord's return.
 - a. What are the things that make you long for Jesus to return quickly?
 - b. What does it look like to wait patiently for it?

2. James seems to suggest that as we struggle to wait patiently, it can cause conflict with others (v9).
 - a. How do you react when you're under pressure? What are the signs you're not handling it well?
 - b. What is helpful for you here? Why not pray about this together.

3. James uses the example of Job where the whole book named after him is a journey of patience in suffering.
 - a. What do you notice about Job's reaction at the end of his journey? (Job 42:1-16)
 - b. What are some things you've learned of God that you could have only discovered in stressful and difficult moments?

4. The final verse seems to stand alone like a pithy proverb. Again, James echoes words he probably heard Jesus say (Matthew 5:33-37).
 - a. To what extent does your yes mean yes and no mean no? Why or why not?
 - b. What might be the impact and what might need to change?

FAITH THAT WORKS

— THE BOOK OF JAMES —

Week 12 • 6 June 2021 • James 5:13-20

The Occasional Prayer

1. This passage gives us a wide range of situations - from troubling to happy, from sin to droughts - that are all reasons to pray. We're told that our prayers are powerful and effective even though, like Elijah, we're just ordinary people.

One way of drawing these out is to use the acrostic, ACTS.

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (requests).

- a. Take a few minutes to each think of something you can pray about under each of these headings.

- b. Then talk about them together.

2. When it comes to confession, James encourages us to also share these things with one another.
 - a. Why do you think confession is something that is often missing in church community (or even in our wider world)?
 - b. What benefit is there in confession? What difference does it make to share with some safe people rather than just keeping it private? (See Ps 32:1-7 for more).

3. James closes with an encouragement to bring people back who wander from the truth (v19-20). Who do you know for whom this is true? Why not share their names and pray together for them.