

# JAMES

FAITH IN ACTION



**GRACE**  
BIBLE CHURCH

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# WELCOME

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The 10 lessons in this packet are designed to walk us through this challenging book of the Bible. In the Survey, we will look at the overall message of the book of James. The next lessons will focus on studying key passages in detail. Then, in the Synthesis we will summarize what we have learned for future reference.

In studying each passage in detail, we will be learning and using a number of basic Bible study methods. These methods fit under three fundamental skills that are meant to be practiced in order each week.



## OBSERVE

*What do I see?*



## INTERPRET

*What does it mean?*



## APPLY

*How does it work?*

These skills are summarized in the “Bible Study Tools Overview” that you can flip back through during your study. You can find it along with other advanced Bible study skills in the Appendix for those who want to go deeper in their study.

P R A Y

Surveying a book like *James* allows you to grasp the big picture and the overall storyline of the book before getting caught up in the details. This survey provides a helpful road map to guide your study during the coming weeks. **Begin this crucial first step by taking the next twenty minutes to read straight through *James* without stopping.** Then, answer the questions below *before* moving on to the next page.

1. What are the major themes or big ideas in this book? (Hint: Look for repeated words and ideas.)
2. Now that you have read through the entire book, what are James' purposes in writing it? Be as specific as you can.
3. What do you notice about the style, language, and structure of this book? What other books of Scripture does James remind you of? Why?

# BACKGROUND

Once you have completed the introductory questions on the previous page, read this background article on the book of James (portions compiled from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, *The New Bible Commentary*, and *Notes on James* by Thomas Constable).

Few books of the Bible have been more maligned than the little book of James. Martin Luther called it a “right strawy epistle.” But on closer inspection, it proves to be a “right stirring epistle,” designed to exhort and encourage, to challenge and convict, to rebuke and revive, to describe practical holiness, and drive believers toward the goal of a faith that works. James is severely ethical and refreshingly practical.

## AUTHORSHIP

The author identifies himself as “James,” a name used by at least four men mentioned in the NT: (1) the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Mark 1:19), (2) the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), (3) the father of Judas (not Iscariot; Luke 6:16), and (4) the half brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:19). Upon studying the evidence, the final option seems most reasonable. The author is James, the half brother of the Lord, who became the recognized leader in the Jerusalem church. This conclusion is supported by the authoritative tone of the letter and by the marked similarities in Greek between this epistle and the speech by James recorded in Acts 15. Though James was reared in the same home with the Lord Jesus, he apparently did not become a believer until after Christ’s resurrection (John 7:5; 1 Corinthians 15:7). Paul later listed James, Peter, and John as “those reputed to be pillars” of the church (Galatians 2:9). Flavius Josephus, first-century historian, records that James was martyred in A.D. 62, so the epistle must have been written prior to that date. Since no mention is made of the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 49) in which James took so active a role, it is likely that the letter was written between A.D. 45 and 48, making James perhaps the earliest of the writings of the New Testament.

## RECIPIENTS

The greeting “to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations” (James 1:1) tells us that this letter was written to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora, who had been scattered from Palestine and had come to faith in Christ (1:1). Several Jewish references in the book support the claim that a Jew wrote it to other Jews (e.g., 1:18; 2:2, 21; 3:6; 5:4, 7). In fact, the letter as a whole possesses a marked Jewish flavor. The book has the substance and authority of the Prophets and the style and beauty of the Psalms and Proverbs. Considered one of the General Epistles, James, like the epistles of Peter, John, and Jude, is a letter addressed not to individual churches or persons but to a larger sphere of believers.

## STYLE

The Book of James is as much a lecture as it is a letter. Though it opens with the customary salutation of an epistle, it lacks personal references common in a letter and it has no concluding benediction. It was obviously prepared for public reading as a sermon to the congregations addressed. James included 54 commands in his 108 verses—an average of one call for action in every other verse!

The Book of James probably has more figures of speech, analogies, and imagery from nature than all Paul’s epistles together. Exhortations, rhetorical questions, and illustrations from everyday life give spice to this little book.

In addition to his unique and innovative style, James furnishes an unusual number of references or parallels to other writings. He makes reference to Abraham, Rahab, Job, Elijah, to the Law and the Ten Commandments, and includes allusions to passages in 21 Old Testament books: Genesis through Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings,



Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and 7 of the 12 Minor Prophets. Amazing parallelisms exist between James' letter and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. James did not actually quote the Lord's words, but he obviously had internalized His teachings. No other letter of the New Testament has as many references to the teaching of Jesus per page as does James.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this powerful letter is to exhort early believers to spiritual maturity and holiness of life. James told his readers how to achieve spiritual maturity through perseverance in trial, compassionate service to those in need, careful speech with one another, and contrite submission to the Lord. He dealt with every area of a Christian's life: what he is, what he does, what he says, what he feels, and what he has.

With his somewhat stern teaching on practical holiness, James showed how Christian faith and Christian love should be expressed in a variety of actual situations. The seemingly unrelated parts of the book can be harmonized in light of this unified theme.

## OUTLINE THE BOOK

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Having read the background article on the book of James, now skim through James one more time and create your own title for each of the major sections below (you can divide these into smaller sections, each with its own title, if you wish). Do not use the titles in this packet or in your Bible. Create your own titles that capture your understanding of the main idea of each section.

## MY JAMES OUTLINE...

➤ 1:1-12

➤ 3:1-12

➤ 1:13-18

➤ 3:13-4:3

➤ 1:19-27

➤ 4:4-17

➤ 2:1-13

➤ 5:1-12

➤ 2:14-26

➤ 5:13-20

## PRAY

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End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.

# LESSON 1

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## Rejoice in Trials

J A M E S 1 : 1 - 1 2

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

### W H Y D O E S T H I S M A T T E R ?

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Leah had never known pain quite like this: intense cramping in her stomach, throbbing in her forehead, and worst of all, insatiable burning throughout her legs. How could her body ache so badly only 14 miles into this marathon? If it hurt this badly half way through, how bad would it be by the end? Yet while her body screamed for her to stop, her will drove her on. Too much was riding on this race. If she could just make it to the end she would enjoy the praise of her family and friends out in droves to support her, she would raise a whopping \$1200 for her favorite charity, and best of all, she would finally accomplish one of her great goals in life – to run the Boston Marathon. Despite overwhelming fatigue, she kept placing one foot in front of the other, ticking off yard after yard, mile after mile, battling pain by imagining the ecstasy of finishing this grueling race. That vision kept her going over the hills and propelled her through the wall at the 20-mile-mark until finally, rounding the last bend, the finish-line came into view.

☞ Can you think of other examples where endurance in a trial brings reward?

☞ What trials have you had to endure in life? How did you respond?

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 1:1-12

<sup>1</sup>James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings, <sup>2</sup>Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup>But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup>But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup>being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. <sup>9</sup>But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; <sup>10</sup>and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup>For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. <sup>12</sup>Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

## OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What key words do you notice in this passage? These are words that are either theologically significant or that set the theme or big idea for the passage.

2. List themes or big ideas you find in each of these sections of this passage:

1:1-4

1:5-8

1:9-11

1:12

3. James is filled with vivid figurative language, especially metaphors that compare spiritual realities to earthly events and objects. What figurative language do you notice in this passage?

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

*vv 1*

- James calls himself a bond-servant
- James' readers are Jewish (twelve tribes)
- 

*vv 2-4*

*vv 5-7*

*vv 8-10*

*vv 11-12*

# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. From your reading of the whole book, how would you describe James' audience? What is his most often used familial term for them? (1:2, 16, 19, 2:1) What issues are they facing?

2. What are the two ways that James instructs his readers to respond to trials? (hint: look for the key verbs in 1:2-4)

What does James indicate will be the result of these responses?

What does James mean by "perfect and complete" in verse 4? (perfect = *teleios* in Greek; see 1 Corinthians 14:20, Ephesians 4:13 translated "mature")

3. What is the connection between "wisdom" in verse 5 and enduring trials? Why do we need wisdom? How do we get it?

4. In verses 6-8 what does it mean to ask God for wisdom “in faith?” What characterizes someone who is NOT asking in faith? Why?

5. How do verses 9-11 relate to the inevitability of trials as seen in verses 2-8?

6. What is the “crown” (*stephanos* in Greek) of life in verse 12? What are the qualifications for receiving it?

For further study on crowns see:

BELIEVERS' CROWNS		
TITLE	REASON	REFERENCE
An Imperishable Crown	For leading a disciplined life	1 Cor. 9:25
A Crown of Rejoicing	For evangelism and discipleship	1 Thess. 2:19
A Crown of Righteousness	For loving the Lord's appearing	2 Tim. 4:8
A Crown of Life	For enduring trials	James 1:12; Rev. 2:10
A Crown of Glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Pet. 5:4



# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ Why is it so difficult for us to respond to trials with joy?

➤ Are you experiencing trials right now? How could your response to them reflect the truths you are learning?

➤ Are there people in your life who are experiencing trials now? How can you encourage them this week?

**M E M O R I Z E** **James 1:2-3** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 2

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## Escape Sin's Deception

J A M E S 1 : 1 3 - 1 8

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

### W H Y D O E S T H I S M A T T E R ?

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Tom had never been so humiliated in his entire life. Every person in his company watched in silent shock as security guards escorted him hurriedly from the building. Yet he had no one but himself to blame. After years of faithful, often unrewarded service to his company, Tom had discovered a “full-proof” way to make a few extra bucks each month: exaggerate his expense reports. At first it was just a few extra miles added to his monthly gas reimbursement, resulting in a few extra bucks in his pocket. When that went unnoticed, he began to expense business lunches he never actually attended. Still, no one called him on it. So he went for the gold: he began to expense out-of-town trips to visit clients, trips he never actually went on. Since his boss and the company accountant never compared notes, no one was any the wiser. Or so Tom believed. Unfortunately for him, new accounting software flagged these unexpected expenses and Tom’s boss was alerted. After calling clients and discovering Tom’s deception, security was called and Tom was not only fired but told that prosecution would follow. The company simply couldn’t tolerate the theft of thousands of dollars. Not only had Tom’s sin cost him his job, it had cost him his reputation, his financial security, and potentially his freedom. How could a little exaggeration have turned into this?

➤ Can you think of a time when a seemingly small sin turned into something much bigger?

➤ Can you think of examples in your own life where sin or foolishness resulted in surprisingly painful consequences?

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 1:13-18

<sup>13</sup>Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup>But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. <sup>15</sup>Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. <sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup>Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. <sup>18</sup>In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What key words do you notice in this passage? These are words that are either theologically significant or that set the theme or big idea for the passage. Remember to especially look for frequently repeated words.

2. List everything James says about God in this passage.

3. What human experience does James metaphorically use to describe the progress from temptation to death?

# OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

vv 13-14

vv 15

vv 16-17

vv 18



# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. How does 1:13-18 relate to 1:1-12?

2. Note that the word “trial” in verses 2 and 12 is the same basic Greek word translated “tempted” in verses 13 and 14 (noun *peirasmos* in verses 2, 12; verb *peirazo* in verses 13, 14). So even though “trial” and “tempted” seem very different in English, they are actually translations of the same Greek word.

What does this teach us about the relationship of trials and temptations in our lives?

How are they similar and how are they different?

Why does James stress the fact that God is not the author of temptation?

**A Matter of Perspective:**

Simply encountering the inevitable trials and temptations of life is not in itself a reason for joy. Rather, James calls us to rejoice in the potential result of our testing: endurance and maturity. We find joy not in the suffering itself, but rather in the results that can be accomplished as we properly respond to the trial or temptation.

To see this perspective elsewhere in Scripture see: Genesis 50:20, John 13:1, Hebrews 12:1-2.

3. Describe in your own words the chain of events James describes in verses 14-16. Identify each component of the progression. Who is responsible for this progression?

4. In light of what you've learned about trials and temptation in James chapter 1, what do verses 16-18 reveal about God's character and will?

What does this section reveal about believers?

*"Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay."*

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ Spend a few minutes thinking back through the details of the last time you gave into a sinful temptation. Do you recall a similar progression to what James describes in verses 14-15? How was your experience similar or different?

➤ Based on your study of this scripture, practically speaking, what should you do the next time you face temptation?

MEMORIZE **1 Corinthians 10:13** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 3

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## Obey the Law of Liberty

J A M E S 1 : 1 9 - 2 7

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# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 1:19-27

<sup>19</sup>This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup>for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. <sup>25</sup>But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. <sup>26</sup>If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What key words do you notice in this passage?

2. James contrasts two ways of “hearing” in this passage. What are they?

3. List themes and big ideas for each section of this week’s passage:

1:19-21

1:22-25

1:26-27

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

*vv 19-20*

*vv 21-22*

*vv 23-24*

*vv 25-27*

# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. How do verses 19-27 connect to previous section? Hint: look for the contrasts in verses 19-20. What are they referring to?

2. What does it mean to “receive the word implanted” in verse 21? See also Colossians 3:16 and keep in mind that James is writing to believers (verse 19).

3. A key term in the book of James is “save” as seen in 1:21, 2:14, 4:12, 5:15 (restore), 5:20. To see how it is used throughout scripture, look up the following:

1 Samuel 19:11

Psalms 86:1-2

Ezekiel 18:27

James 5:19-20

Based on this overall context, what does James mean by “save your souls” in verse 21?

4. Using verses 19-27, fill in the two columns below by listing out the consequences of each choice – either to “hear and do” God’s Word or to “hear without doing” His Word.

HEAR AND DO GOD’S WORD	HEAR WITHOUT DOING GOD’S WORD

5. Read verses 22-25 again. Why is James so adamant that his readers ACT on the word they have received?

What are the consequences to themselves and to others when they don’t?

6. How do verses 26-27 relate to the rest of the passage and to the book as a whole? How do these specific acts of obedience prevent one’s religion from being worthless?

7. What does it mean to “visit orphans and widows” in verse 27? What is their likely social and economic status?

How does the example of paying attention to widows and orphans illustrate James’ overall point in this section?

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ Why do we struggle to practice what we hear in God's word?

➤ What types of people in our society today suffer in similar ways as widows and orphans?

➤ What will you do this week to pay attention to the vulnerable and needy?

**M E M O R I Z E** **James 1:25** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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## RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

### P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.





# LESSON 4

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## Embrace Equality

J A M E S 2 : 1 - 1 3

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 2:1-13

<sup>1</sup>My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. <sup>2</sup>For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, <sup>3</sup>and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” <sup>4</sup>have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? <sup>7</sup>Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? <sup>8</sup>If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well. <sup>9</sup>But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. <sup>11</sup>For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT COMMIT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup>So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup>For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

## OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What key words do you notice in this passage?

2. What big ideas or themes do you observe in 2:1-13 that were also present in chapter 1?

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

vv 1-3

vv 4-6

vv 7-9

vv 10-13

# BACKGROUND INFO

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## Background Article on Wealth and Poverty in the Ancient World

*Excerpted from Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels by Intervarsity Press*

In the first-century Palestinian world there were essentially two major groups of people, the rich and the poor. The rich included especially the wealthy high-priestly clans. Consisting of four extended families, they must be distinguished from the lower clergy (e.g., Zachariah of Luke's birth narrative) who were in general poor and felt oppressed by the high-priestly group. It was the chief priests who not only profited from the sacrifices offered in the Temple (the lower clerk officiated for only two weeks a year, while the high-priestly clans were always present) but also controlled the considerable commerce associated with that sacrifice and other religious activities (e.g., the activity noted in Mk 11:15-19).

Another wealthy group was the Herodian family and retinue, whose political power was easily translated into wealth. It has been estimated that Herod and later his family may have owned more than half the land in his dominions. Gifts of land to faithful followers were not unusual.

The third group of wealthy people were the remnants of the older Jewish aristocracy (although much of their land was confiscated by Herod and his sons) and individuals who had become rich through trade, tax farming or the like. To be considered truly rich one had to own land, so a person would purchase landholdings as he became wealthy, but such a person would not farm his own land. Instead, he rented it to tenant farmers and spent much of his time on civic and religious affairs in the city (principally, Jerusalem). This system led to the abuse of tenants and hired laborers. This mistreatment was seen by wealthy as perfectly legal, but was viewed by the poor as totally unjust (cf. Jas 5:1-6).

A final group of wealthy people were the prosperous merchants who had not yet joined the land-owning aristocracy, although like them they controlled much of the economic life of the country. Both the land-owning and non-land-owning groups were deeply resented by the people of the land. It was no accident that during the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-70, when the common people got the upper hand in Jerusalem, one of their first acts was the burning of the debt records and the slaughter of many of the aristocrats.

...[All four wealthy] groups at times used their power to oppress the lower classes. The less religious group[s] did it through sheer abuse of power. The observant group[s] justified their oppression through legal interpretation, which in the eyes of Jesus was viewed as more culpable, for it appeared to put God on the side of injustice.

Although there was a small middle class of some of the skilled artisans, land-owning farmers and merchants (and socially, although not economically, the lower clergy), the second major social group was the poor, the peasants, the "people of the land." This group included several sub-groups.

The best-off were the small landowners, who tended to lead a precarious life which depended on the harvest. A bad year or two could spell the loss of their land to the wealthy neighbor who lent them seed after the first crop failure. It could also mean the starvation of their family. The tenant farmers were next best-off, although they had to pay their landlord his due before providing for their own families. Worst off were those without land (and without the skills of artisans), the hired laborers and the beggars. They were the truly poor. Their hand-to-mouth existence was considered hardly worth living. Mixed in among these various levels of poorer people were such trades as fishermen and carpenters, whose social level depended on their relative prosperity, even though they were landless. Zebedee, for example, appears to have been relatively prosperous, for he had hired men on his boats, not simply family. Jesus' family, on the other hand, offered the sacrifice of the poor when he was born (Lk 2:24), but it is possible that when established back in Galilee they may have had a higher (if still modest) standard of living, which skilled work could at times command.

...However defined, the poor lived on the edge of existence even in the best of times, for to be in an agricultural economy without owning sufficient productive land to provide security is to be economically marginal. Yet the first century was not the best of times. Even if they managed to scrape by in normal years, the first century included years of famine, especially in the 40's. This threat could never be far from any of the poorer people. Then there were Roman (or Herodian) taxes to pay and on top of that the Law prescribed a tithe (which could amount to from seventeen to twenty-three per cent of one's gross income).

...Judaism in general did not have any problem with wealth. Possessions were not viewed as evil. Indeed, because of the OT stories of Abraham, Solomon and Job, there was a tendency to connect wealth with the blessing of God (the piety-prosperity equation), but while for the most part this attitude continued in the first century, it was modified in two directions. On the one hand, the empirical observation was made that wealth tended to beget greed and the abuse of power. And in a society in which the supply of wealth was believed to be limited, any gathering of wealth which was not clearly from God was suspected of being done through such abuse. In fact, in the light of the experience of the righteous under the Seleucid rulers and later the Hasmoneans and Herods, it even appeared that most wealth was gained by injustice and that righteousness tended to make one poor. Some intertestamental writers questioned if there were any wealthy people who were righteous (Sir 31:3-10). On the other hand, the same authors made it clear that a wealthy person could be righteous or honorable (especially if the wealth had been inherited) and the way that he or she could demonstrate this righteousness was through charity. Thus in Jewish tradition Abraham and Job were singled out as being wealthy persons who were righteous because they excelled in generosity.

After reading the background article on the rich and poor in NT Judea, answer the following:

- How were the divisions between the rich and poor different than they are in America today?
  
- What were some of the reasons why people were poor in the NT era?
  
- How did people become rich in the NT era?
  
- Why would church leaders in James' day have been tempted to give preferential treatment to the rich?

# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage. For instructions, see page 96

a.

b.

2. What is the relational problem that James is addressing in 2:1-4? How does he describe it?

At the root, why is this happening among these believers?

3. James addresses the rich and poor in his culture in verses 5-7, what principles can we learn from his instruction?

How does this differ from a typical view of wealth and poverty?

See 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 for additional insight into the things God values.

4. James introduces the “royal law” in verse 8 as the law given by the true King, Jesus. It is expressed here as “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” and is also seen in Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:34-40 and Galatians 5:14. It is “royal” in that it is primary, governing all other laws dealing with human relationships.  
*(concept from Thomas Constable study notes of James at Soniclight.com)*

How then is a person judged by this law in the case of showing partiality?

How does James help us to understand how all laws fit under the royal law?

5. In verses 9-13, why is it important to recognize ourselves as transgressors of the law?

What are we commanded to do? Why?



# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ In your personal life, who have you been tempted to dismiss or look down upon (could be a specific person or a group)? On the other hand, are you guilty of favoring any social group or class above another? What are the reasons behind this partiality (past experiences, personal motives, upbringing, comfort level, etc.)?

➤ What specific thing will you do this week to demonstrate mercy to someone you would normally avoid, exclude, or dismiss?

➤ What are some stereotypes that are placed on both the poor and the rich today?

What are some ways you could begin to understand the truth about this subject?

MEMORIZE **James 2:10** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 5

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## Faith on the Move

J A M E S 2 : 1 4 - 2 6

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# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 2:14-26

<sup>14</sup>What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? <sup>17</sup>Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. <sup>18</sup>But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. <sup>20</sup>But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; <sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup>For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What key words do you notice in this passage?
2. What question does this passage seek to answer?

3. What do you notice about the context before and after this passage? Do you see any similar words or ideas that appear both immediately before this passage and immediately after it?

4. What themes or ideas from earlier in the book do you see repeated here?

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

vv 14-16

vv 17-19

vv 20-22

vv 23-26

# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

**NOTE: This section in James is one of the most difficult and controversial passages in all of Scripture to interpret.** One reason is that this section does not contain quotation marks in the original language making verses 17-19 especially challenging. Also, these verses contain a type of argument called diatribe (the insertion of an objector's argument) commonly used at the time James was writing (also seen in 1 Corinthians 15:35-37).

Give yourself time to chew on these verses and grace to be in the process of understanding. **Start with identifying the question that James is addressing in verse 14, which is the key subject of the section.** Also remember that the book is written to believers/brethren.

## Outline of section:

2:14	Introduction of key subject
2:15-16	Case study to illustrate
2:17	Restatement of subject
2:18	Objection
2:19	Rebuttal to objection
2:20	Restatement of the subject
2:21-26	Two biblical examples

1. In this passage, James is making a distinction between faith alone, without good works, and faith joined with good works. Verse 14 clearly implies that faith without works cannot “save” us. But save us from what? Here are some hints to help you answer this question:

The Greek word *sozo* (translated “save”) simply means “to rescue, to deliver.”

James actually gives us the answer in the verses that immediately precede and immediately follow this passage (2:12-13 and 3:1).

Paul speaks about a similar works-based judgment in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10. Look up these passages to see what good works will “save” us from.

2. What does James mean in verse 17 when he says that “faith without works is dead”? Use the following steps to help you answer this question:

What does James mean by “dead” in verse 17? See James 1:15

Compare verse 17 with verse 20. How does this help you understand what he means by “dead”?

Consider the imagery of verse 26. How is faith without works similar to a body without a spirit?

3. When James says that Abraham and Rahab were justified by their obedient actions, what exactly does he mean? Think through the following:

What were the results of Abraham’s obedience as seen in verses 21-24?

What were the results of Rahab’s obedience as seen in verses 25-26?

### **For Further Study:**

Did Paul and James preach the same gospel or were they at war with one another? They sure seem to disagree when you compare Romans 3:28 and 4:1-25 with James 2:21-24. How do you explain the apparent contradiction in these passages? Hint: discover the range of meaning for the word “justified” (dikaioo in Greek) by following the instructions for Interpretation Method 3: looking up key words on page ?????

Also see Grace Bible Church teaching notes on this topic found here: [http://audio.grace-bible.org/Undivided\\_A\\_Study\\_of\\_James/12119S1BJ\\_Faith\\_and\\_Works.pdf](http://audio.grace-bible.org/Undivided_A_Study_of_James/12119S1BJ_Faith_and_Works.pdf)



# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ From your study of this section, what is James calling us to do?

➤ James illustrates his point with the example of those who are in desperate need. How does this apply to you and your current circumstances?

**M E M O R I Z E** **James 2:22** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 6

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## Tame the Tongue

J A M E S 3 : 1 - 1 2

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## SKILL

As every writer knows, one of the most powerful ways to emotionally engage an audience with your words is to use figurative language. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** uses words and phrases in an unexpected way to create a vivid image in the mind of a listener. This image adds color to the author's message, holds the listener's attention, forces the listener to slow down and reflect on the idea being communicated, makes the abstract more concrete, and aids in retention of the author's point. While there are many types of figurative language, here are the eight major types you should be looking for as you study the Bible:

**1) Simile:** compares two things by using the explicit formula "like" or "as"

*He will be **like** a tree firmly planted. Psalm 1:3*

**2) Metaphor:** compares two things but omits "like" or "as" and instead simply equates them (A is B)

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Matthew 5:14*

**3) Metonymy:** one word is substituted for another word closely associated with it, such as referring to military officers as "brass." A biblical example would be James' use of "tongue" to refer to one's speech (e.g. James 3:5).

**4) Hyperbole:** conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect or emphasis

*"I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you" 2 Corinthians 11:8*

**5) Personification:** treating something non-human (and frequently inanimate) as though it were a human

*And their **tongue struts** through the earth. Psalm 73:9*

*"Then the **moon will be abashed** and the **sun ashamed**" Isaiah 24:23*

**6) Anthropomorphism:** attributing human characteristics, even body parts, to God

*"Behold, the Lord's **hand** is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His **ear** so dull that it cannot hear." Isaiah 59:1*

**7) Apostrophe:** addressing a thing as if it were a person or an imaginary person as if he were present

*"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 1 Corinthians 15:55*

**8) Symbol:** a concrete image that points to or embodies other meanings. Examples include "light" used to represent God, goodness, truth, or blessing (such as in Psalm 27:1) and "throne" to represent power and authority (such as in Psalm 89:4 and 14).



## JAMES 3:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup>For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. <sup>3</sup>Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. <sup>4</sup>Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. <sup>8</sup>But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; <sup>10</sup>from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. <sup>11</sup>Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What key words do you notice in this passage?
2. List themes or big ideas from earlier in the book of James that you see repeated here.

3. List all the types of figurative imagery that you can find in this passage.

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See Bible Study Tools Overview for instruction.*

vv 1-3

vv 4-6

vv 7-9

vv 10-12



# What Does it Mean?

## INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage:

a.

b.

2. How does the idea of speech fit into the flow of the book of James? In other words, how does this passage relate to what comes before and after?

3. This passage begins with a sober warning. Why do our words incur judgment? Why do teachers receive an even stricter judgment?

4. Review your list of figurative imagery in Observation question 3, why does James use each of these? What is the point of each comparison?

FIGURE	COMPARISON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bit/bridle</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Direction, control</i></li> </ul>

5. Look carefully at each phrase of verse 6.

How is the tongue like a fire? See Proverbs 16:27-28 and 26:18-22.

How does the tongue defile the rest of the body? See Matthew 15:17-20.

What does James mean when he says that the tongue is set on fire by hell itself? Is this true of believers and/or unbelievers?

6. What irony does James describe in verses 8-12? How does it illustrate the struggle we have to control the tongue?

*Note: the solution to the struggle is found in the next section of scripture which we look at in the next lesson!*

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ What are some ways you use words to harm others? Think of specific examples. Can you identify any situations or patterns in which you are prone to hurt others with your speech (particular emotions, times, people, or environments)?

➤ This week, ask a close friend to give you some honest feedback about your speech. Then determine some practical steps you can take to allow the Spirit to have greater influence over the words you use.

MEMORIZE **James 3:8-10** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 7

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## Heal the Divide

J A M E S 3 : 1 3 - 4 : 3

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 3:13-4:3

<sup>13</sup>Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

<sup>1</sup>What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup>You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What repeated words or ideas do you notice in this passage?
2. What themes, ideas, or key words from earlier in the book of James do you see repeated here?

3. List all that James says about:

"WISDOM FROM ABOVE"	
"WISDOM NOT FROM ABOVE"	

OBSERVATIONS

*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

vv 13-14

vv 15-16

vv 17-18

vv 4:1-3



# What Does it Mean?

## INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage:

a.

b.

2. How does this passage relate to the previous section? How does it relate to the big ideas and overall purpose of the book of James?

3. Review the meaning you discovered for the word “wisdom” in Lesson 1. What is the connection between wisdom and action seen in verse 13?

4. In verses 14-18, how does behavior (speech and actions) reveal the type of wisdom a person is relying upon? What are the results or fruit of each?

5. What ideas link verses 13-18 with 4:1-3?

6. The biblical concept of “peace” is one of completion, wholeness, fullness, soundness and integrity. Look up the following verses to see the scope of this concept throughout scripture: Numbers 6:24-26; Isaiah 26:3; Romans 5:1, Philippians 4:6-7; James 2:16.

How does this help you understand the three uses of this word in verses 17-18?

7. According to the passage, what creates quarrels and conflicts? What promotes peace between believers?

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ How can you begin to identify the source of wisdom you are relying upon in everyday life?

➤ Think of a recent example when you acted out of jealousy or selfishness and it created conflict with another person. What did you do? What have you done to bring about healing? What can you do?

MEMORIZE **James 3:17** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 8

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## Pledge your Devotion

J A M E S 4 : 4 - 1 7

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# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 4:4-17

<sup>4</sup>You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup>Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup>But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” <sup>7</sup>Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. <sup>11</sup>Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. <sup>12</sup>There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? <sup>13</sup>Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” <sup>14</sup>Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup>Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” <sup>16</sup>But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

## OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. In this passage James rebukes his readers using surprising, even shocking language. List a few examples.

2. List all of the commands found in this passage (or simply underline them in the text).

3. Divide this passage into three or four sections and state the big idea for each.

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

*vv 4-6*

*vv 7-10*

*vv 11-13*

*vv 14-17*



# What Does it Mean?

## INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage:

a.

b.

2. The previous section (3:13-4:3) discusses relational turmoil among believers. James 4:1 asks a question regarding the source of this turmoil. How does this section (4:4-17) help answer this question?

3. There is no evidence in the book of James that his audience has committed marital infidelity. So why does James call them “adulteresses” in verse 4? What similarities connect their specific sins with adultery? What does this tell us about the spiritual state of James’ audience?

4. What does it mean to be a “friend” of the world (verse 4)? Is James calling us to separate ourselves from this world or does he have something else in mind? See James 1:27, John 17:14-18, 1 John 2:15-17.

5. In verses 6-10, James calls his readers to repentance and reconciliation.  
What is significant about the contrast between pride and humility (verse 6)?

Identify each command and its result (verses 7-10):

Command

Result

6. How do the final two sections of this passage relate to 4:4-10?  
James' comments on judging a brother (verses 11-12)

The folly of making self-directed plans (verses 13-17)

7. How does verse 17 summarize this whole section?

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ In which relationships or areas of your life do you most struggle with pride?

➤ Meditate on 4:7-10. Use these verses as a guide to confessing and repenting of the pride you've identified in your life?

➤ How might you apply the instruction of 4:13-16 in your planning of future endeavors?

MEMORIZE **James 4:6-7** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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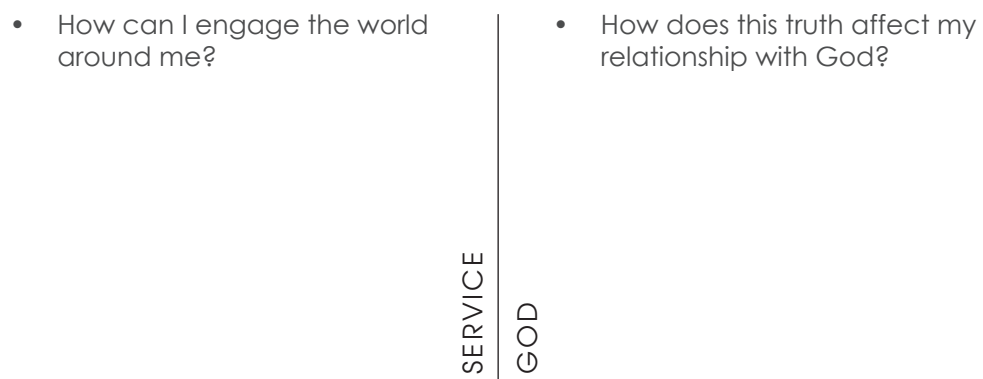
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## RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

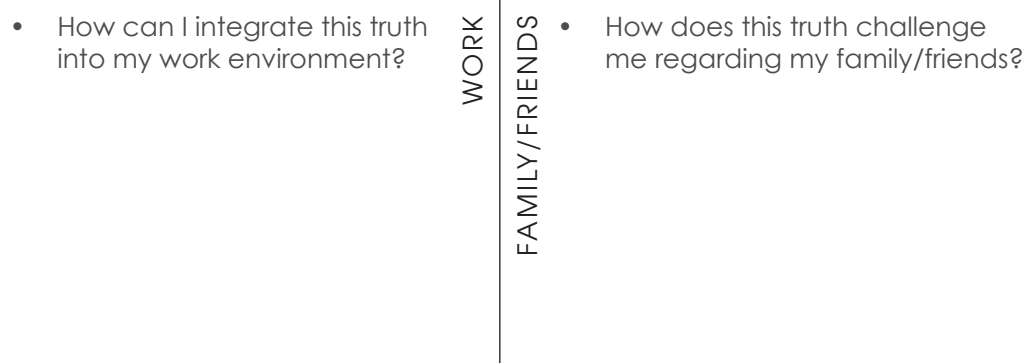
Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?



MAIN TRUTH:

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### P R A Y

.....

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 9

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## Invest in Eternity

J A M E S 5 : 1 - 1 2

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 5:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! <sup>4</sup>Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup>You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you. <sup>7</sup>Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup>You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. <sup>10</sup>As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup>We count those blessed who endured You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. <sup>12</sup>But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

## OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What themes, ideas, or key words from earlier in the book of James do you see repeated here?

3. List themes or big ideas you find in each of these sections of this passage:

5:1-6

5:7-12

## OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

vv 1-3

vv 4-6

vv 7-9

vv 10-12



# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage:

a.

b.

2. How does this passage relate to 4:4-17? What similarities do you see?

3. What errors regarding the use of wealth does James address in 5:1-6? Why are these sins so destructive to our relationships with God and others?

4. In verses 7-11, James is prescribing patience for BOTH the rich and the poor. Specifically, why does each type of person need patience?

5. Describe how a proper perspective on patience can be informed by the following:

A correct view of time (verse 7)

The Lord's return (verses 7-9)

The example of the prophets (verse 10)

The example of Job (verse 11)

How does this perspective help us expand our capacity for patience?

6. What is the point of verse 12? What does swearing an oath indicate about the person's attitude and source of trust? How does this verse summarize the teaching of the entire previous section (5:1-12)?

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ What principles have you learned from the book of James that guide how you could grow and use your wealth in a way that honors God?

➤ What areas of your life tend to bring out impatience in you?

MEMORIZE **James 5:7** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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# RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

## P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# LESSON 10

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## Strengthen One Another

J A M E S 5 : 1 3 - 2 0

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

# What Do I See?

OBSERVE *Refer to Appendix*

## JAMES 5:13-20

<sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup>and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. <sup>16</sup>Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. <sup>18</sup>Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. <sup>19</sup>My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, <sup>20</sup>let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What repeated words or ideas do you notice in this passage?
2. What themes, ideas, or key words from earlier in the book of James do you see repeated here?

# OBSERVATIONS

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*list at least 1 observation per verse. See [Bible Study Tools Overview](#) for instruction.*

vv 13-14

vv 15-16

vv 17-18

vv 19-20



# What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET *Refer to Appendix*

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage:

a.

b.

2. What circumstances are described in verse 13? What do the commands in this verse reveal about a proper perspective toward of all life circumstances?

3. The subjects of verses 14-16 are prayer and personal confession.

What is significant about praying and anointing with oil in the name of the Lord (verse 14)?  
Also see: Mark 6:13, Luke 10:34, John 14:12-14 and 1 John 5:13-15.

Verses 15- 16 show that these prayers can result in one or more outcomes.  
What do each of the following results mean?

Restore

Raise up

Forgiven

Healed

In light of the relational issues addressed throughout the book James, what is the significance of the command to confess sin and pray “for one another” in verse 16?

4. Why would James direct the elders to pray for the sick? Why do they have this special responsibility? See 1 Peter 5:1-3 and Hebrews 13:17.

5. How do verses 19-20 relate to the overall purpose and theme of the book?

6. What does “save his soul from death” mean in verse 20? Is this physical death or spiritual death? How do you know? Review Lesson 3, Interpretation question 3.

# How Does it Work?

## APPLY

### REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

➤ List the principles about prayer that you learned from this section of James.

➤ How does your prayer life compare to what James describes? What will you do this week to deepen your prayer life?

MEMORIZE **James 5:19-20** Write it out to get your memorization started.

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## RELATIONAL APPLICATION *Refer to Appendix*

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

- How can I engage the world around me?

- How does this truth affect my relationship with God?

SERVICE  
GOD

MAIN TRUTH:

- How can I integrate this truth into my work environment?

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- How does this truth challenge me regarding my family/friends?

### P R A Y

End your study by returning to the Lord in Prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principle you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow small group members.



# SYNTHESIS

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## James Synthesis

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### P R A Y

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Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to guide your study.

### M E M O R I Z E

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- |               |          |           |
|---------------|----------|-----------|
| • 1:2-3       | • 2:10   | • 3:17    |
| • 1 Cor 10:13 | • 2:22   | • 4:6-7   |
| • 1:25        | • 3:8-10 | • 5:7     |
|               |          | • 5:19-20 |

### W H Y D O E S T H I S M A T T E R ?

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- Summarize what James teaches us about the value of good works in the life of a believer. List all of his reasons for doing good.

- According to James, what specific actions and attitudes should characterize the life of a believer? List them below.

The previous lessons have led us to observe, to interpret, and to apply the entire book of James. That is no small task! Now it is time to draw our detailed study to a useful conclusion, a process known as synthesis. Our goal is to create an overall summary of the book of James that we can quickly review any time in the future to remind us of the flow and content of the book.

## OUTLINE THE BOOK

The first step of the synthesis is to create your own outline of the book. Review the work you completed each week. Then, create your own brief outline on the next page. Feel free to use any outlining style, but here is an example of how you might start:

*1. Greetings from James to the dispersed twelve tribes (1:1)*

*2. Rejoice in Trials (1:2-12)*

*a. Attitude in Trials (1:2)*

*b. Advantage of Trials (1:3-4)*

*b Assistance in Trials (1:5-8)*

*c. Award from Trials (1:9-12)*

## MY JAMES OUTLINE

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## MY JAMES OUTLINE

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The second step of the synthesis is to record what you learned or were reminded of. This is more personal than your outline. Create a list of the theological truths and life lessons you have either learned for the first time or been reminded of from your study of James. As an example of a theological truth, you might write *“I was taught that God generously gives wisdom to me when I ask in faith (1:5-6).”* As an example of a life lesson, you might write *“This book reminded me that spiritual growth is a community project pursued not just individually but also corporately.”* List at least ten theological truths and ten life lessons on this page that you learned from your study of James, and record the verses where each one is addressed.

## THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS I’VE LEARNED

## LIFE LESSONS I’VE LEARNED

The final step of the synthesis is to prayerfully choose two applications to practice. These can be applications that you developed and began to practice during previous lessons, or you can create entirely new applications. Whatever your choice, two things must be true about them:

1. Both applications should relate to areas of your life where you are currently in need of growth. Do not choose “be kind to others” if this is already something you do very well.
2. Both applications should be specific with a clear plan for growth and the name of someone who will hold you accountable. “Study the Word more” is not specific enough. Instead, develop a specific plan, such as, “I will read through Romans this month and write down my observations, interpretive questions, and applications in a journal. Steve will hold me accountable on a weekly basis.”

## APPLICATION #1

- Principle from James:
- Verses where it’s discussed:
- Plan of Action: I will...
- Who will hold me accountable:

## APPLICATION #2

- Principle from James:
- Verses where it’s discussed:
- Plan of Action: I will...
- Who will hold me accountable:

End your study by returning to the Lord in prayer. Thank Him for what you have learned this week, ask Him to help you apply the principles you have chosen, and lay before Him the needs of your fellow group members.

# My Notes...



# APPENDIX

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## A. BIBLE STUDY TOOLS OVERVIEW

### OBSERVE:

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. Here are four tasks involved in observation which should be performed in the order below:

#### Observation Task 1: Mark up the passage by visually identifying the following specific elements:

- **Underline** all verbs. A verb is a word or group of words used to indicate either that an action is taking place (“we will reign with Him”) or that a state or condition exists (“we are faithless”). Verbs are often the most significant indicators of the author’s flow of thought.
- Circle key words or phrases. These are words or short phrases that are important theologically or thematically (they set the theme or main idea for the passage).
- Highlight repeated words or phrases. Also, include words and phrases that are closely related even if not exact duplicates (such as “suffer hardship” and “endure suffering”). You’ll also want to highlight things that are repeated from previous passages.
- Box connecting words. These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:
  1. **Comparison** either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so.
  2. **Contrast** points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however.
  3. **Purpose** indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that.
  4. **Result** is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that.
  5. **Cause** expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for.
  6. **Explanation** is what follows and further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word “for.”
  7. **Inference** provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason.
  8. **Condition** presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can take place. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is “if.”

## Observation Task 2: List 2-3 primary themes you see in the passage each week

A primary theme is the big idea, the central truth, or command that the passage focuses on. After reading the passage, write your themes as single words or short phrases. Identifying these themes at the beginning of your study will help you develop a good overall grasp of the passage.

## Observation Task 3: Write two or more observations per verse

Our observations might identify people, places, or events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences, or even point out something missing that we expected to see.

## Observation Task 4: Record your own interpretive questions

Here are a few examples:

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID THE AUTHOR	HOW
....James talking about?	....meaning of this word?	....choose this word?	....was this action accomplished?
....accomplishing the action?	....significance of this phrase?	....include this phrase, statement or command?	....will this situation occur?
....benefiting from the action?	....implication of this statement?	....not say _____?	
....relationship between these phrases?			

## INTERPRET:

Our observation of a passage should stir interesting yet challenging questions, leading us to the second stage of our Bible study: interpretation. Fortunately, we do not have to run to a commentary or study Bible for answers (though these are helpful tools to check our conclusions). Use the following six methods, as needed, to tackle a variety of questions.

### Interpretation Method 1: Use the context.

Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author's flow of thought through the whole chapter. This may take you to the previous lesson, so have it handy as a review. You may need to read ahead for clues.

### Interpretation Method 2: Study cross-references.

Cross references are simply other passages in any book of the Bible that are somehow related to the verses you are studying. They often prove incredibly helpful as you seek to understand your passage. A few such cross references can be found in the margins of most English Bibles, but more can be found by visiting the online reference [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com). Simply type in the book and chapter in the box to the left of the "Search" button and then click "Search." All of the chapter will appear on the screen. Be sure that "New American Standard" is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then click the box next to "Cross References" so that numbers appear throughout the passage. Clicking any of these will move your screen to the bottom of the page where you will find a series of cross references for specific verses within the passage. This is a great tool for answering tough questions!

### Interpretation Method 3: Look up key words.

While looking up a key word in English is helpful, doing so in Greek is far better and is surprisingly easy, thanks to the internet. Simply log onto [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com), and as an example, type in the book and chapter in the box to the left of the "Search" button and then click "Search." All of the chapter will appear on the screen. Be sure that "New American Standard" is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then click the box next to "Strong Numbers" so that most of the words will be highlighted in blue. Clicking on any of these will bring up a new screen that will tell you the Greek word used here, its possible definitions, and the total number of times it is used in each book of the New Testament (NT). Click on any of the other NT books (under the title "NAS Verse Count"), and get a list of every verse in that book that uses this Greek word. What used to take hours now takes seconds!

#### **Interpretation Method 4: Look up background information**

You can find helpful insights by looking up confusing names or words in a Bible dictionary or by looking up the particular verses you are studying in a background commentary. One of the best dictionaries is *The New Bible Dictionary* by Wood & Marshall. The *IVP Bible Background Commentary* by Craig Keener is another excellent example of a verse-by-verse background commentary.

#### **Interpretation Method 5: Tackle tough questions step-by-step**

When trying to answer the most challenging questions, follow this four-step process:

1. List all the options. Always start by brainstorming every possible answer to your question.
2. List pros and cons for each option. See all the evidence you can find that either argues for or against a particular option. This evidence comes from your study of key words, the grammar of the sentence, the context of surrounding verses and the book as a whole, cross references to other books, and comparison with your overall understanding of Christian theology.
3. Choose the most likely option. Look at your evidence for each option. Typically, evidence from the immediate context is most important, followed closely by evidence from the book as a whole. Evidence from other books of the Bible, or from Christian theology as a whole, does not carry quite as much weight unless the solution contradicts a clear passage elsewhere or a major tenant of Christian doctrine. In that case, since Scripture never lies and God cannot contradict Himself, you must eliminate that option.
4. Decide on your certainty level. Once you have chosen the best solution, step back for a second and humbly gauge how certain you are of its accuracy (90% = I am very sure this is correct ... 60% = This solution is just a bit more likely than the others!). Finally, talk with others and check commentaries or reference books to see what solutions they have chosen and why.

#### **Interpretation Method 6: Compare multiple translations**

This packet uses the New American Standard (NASB) translation. You can often find helpful interpretive clues by comparing this translation with other translations. The New King James Version (NKJV), like the NASB, is a fairly word-for-word translation of the Greek text. The New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are excellent phrase-to-phrase translations of the Greek and thus often easier to read. Another excellent phrase-to-phrase Bible, which includes extensive translation notes, is the New English Translation (NET) available online for free at [net.bible.org](http://net.bible.org). You can find and compare numerous translations of any Bible passage at [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com).

# APPLY:

Our Bible Study is not over until we practically apply what we have learned to our everyday lives. And, we know that because we are relational by nature, our learning and growth can and should impact other people in our lives.

The Relational Application section in this study provides an opportunity to **connect the personal application** of God's word **with the relational spheres** we live in.

## Application Task 1:

1. Prayerfully determine the **main biblical truth or principle** that God revealed to you during your study. A principle is a fact stated or implied in a passage that is relevant to our lives and not specific to a particular person or time. A few questions to ask are:

- Is there a promise for me to claim?
- Is there a truth for me to believe?
- Is there a command for me to obey?

## Application Task 2:

2. Determine how this truth impacts the **four main relational areas** in your life.

### God

- How does this truth stretch me in my relationship with God?
- Is there something from which I need to confess and repent?
- Are there some characteristics of God of which I am reminded to praise or worship Him?

### Family/Friends

- How does this truth impact my relationship with my family or friends?
- How could I share this truth with these loved ones?
- Is there something or someone specific I can pray for?

### Work

- Is there an opportunity to integrate this truth in my work environment?
- Is there a next step of ministry I can take based on this truth?
- How does this truth impact my attitude, decision-making and conversations at work?

### Service

- How does this truth change my view of the people in the world around me?
- Is there a way to care for, serve or reach out to the others based on this truth?
- Is there a next step of ministry I can take based on this truth?

*(Example on next page)*



Here is an example from Psalm 1:

- Pray that Bible translation ministries will make significant progress in unreached areas of the world.

SERVICE

GOD

- Praise God each morning this week for the gift of His Word.
- Meditate on each lesson's memory verse during each week of this study.

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MAIN TRUTH: **A healthy, righteous life is rooted in God's word**

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- Look for ways to winsomely speak truth into the conversations I have at work.

WORK

FAMILY/FRIENDS

- Ask my spouse what God is showing him/her through the Word this week.

## B. ADDITIONAL STUDY RESOURCES

### ONLINE RESOURCES

[biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com) - online word studies

[blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) - online word studies

[soniclight.com](http://soniclight.com) - online commentary

[bestcommentaries.com](http://bestcommentaries.com) - online commentary database

### DISCIPLESHIP/BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

***Living By the Book*** by Howard Hendricks and Charles Swindoll

A more in-depth book on how to study the Bible using the tools discussed in this packet.

***The Master Plan of Evangelism*** by Robert Coleman

A highly motivational analysis of Jesus' own principles of evangelism and discipleship.

***The Lost Art of Disciple Making*** by Leroy Eims

This practical resource will give you a detailed structure to follow and great content to cover as you begin to disciple a new believer.

***A Survey of Bible Doctrine*** by Charles Ryrie

An easy-to-read, relatively short systematic theology primer that you can walk a new believer through to ground them in the faith.

***Essentials of the Faith*** by Grace Bible Church, College Station, TX

This small group Bible study packet walks a new believer through the fundamental trusts and practices of the Christian faith in ten self-paced lessons.

*\* Note: Grace Bible Church does not always agree with the views of these commentaries. These are good tools to help understand hard passages, but the particular theological views reflect the author, of the commentary and not those of Grace Bible Church.*

# C. NEW TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY

EVENT	DATE
Crucifixion of Jesus	April 3, 33
Pentecost (Acts 2)	May 24, 33
Paul's conversion (Acts 9)	Summer 35
Paul in Jerusalem, 1st visit (Acts 9:26-29; Gal. 1:18-20)	35-43
Paul to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)	Spring 43
Epistle of James written	45
Paul in Jerusalem, relief visit (Acts 11:30; Gal. 2:1-10)	Autumn 47
Paul to Antioch (Acts 12:25-13:1)	Autumn 47 – Spring 48
Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)	April 48 – September 49
Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-16)	Autumn 49
Galatians written from Antioch	Autumn 49
Paul in Jerusalem, Jerusalem council (Acts 15)	Autumn 49
Paul in Antioch (Acts 15:30-35)	Winter 49/50
Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)	April 50 – September 52
1 & 2 Thessalonians written	Spring – Summer 51
Paul in Jerusalem and Antioch	End of September 52; Winter 52/53
Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)	Spring 53 – May 57
1 & 2 Corinthians written	Spring – Fall 56
Romans written	Winter 56/57
Ephesian elders visit Paul at Miletus (Acts 20)	May 57
Paul in Jerusalem	Eve of Pentecost, May 27, 57
Paul's arrest and trial before Felix (Acts 21:26-24:22)	June 57
Paul's appearance before Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24-26)	June 57
Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24:27)	June 57 – Aug 59
Paul's trial before Festus (Acts 25:7-12) and Agrippa (Acts 26)	July 59; Aug 59
Paul's voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:29)	Aug 59 – Feb 60
Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30)	Feb 60 – Mar 62
Luke written	60
Acts Written	60
Ephesians written	Autumn 60
Colossians and Philemon written	Autumn 61
Philippians written	Spring 62
Paul's release	Spring 62
Mark Written	62
Paul in Ephesus and Colossae	Spring – Autumn 62
Peter in Rome	62
Paul in Macedonia	Summer 62 – Winter 62/63
1 Timothy written	Autumn 62
Paul in Asia Minor	Spring 63 – Spring 64
Peter martyred	Summer 64 (67?)
Paul in Spain and Crete	Spring 64 – Spring 66; Summer 66
Titus written	Summer 66
Paul arrested and taken to Rome	Autumn 67
2 Timothy written	Autumn 67
Paul's death	Spring 68
Matthew written	60's
Hebrews written	60's
Destruction of Jerusalem	September 2, 70
Jude written	60's or 70's
John written	80's or 90's
1,2,3 John written	80's or 90's
Revelation written	Early 90's





