

## Introduction to the Book of James



If you like references that aid learning, appreciate frank dialogue about what is expected of you, and love to know how to be tethered to the Word of God, you will love the book of James! Often compared to the book of Proverbs, James is renowned for its emphasis on works as the result of saving faith.

### Author:

There is no real dispute regarding the authorship of James. James, the half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3), is the author of this small letter. James writes from the perspective of one who first rejected Jesus (John 7:5), but later accepted him as Messiah, and became a pillar in the church at Jerusalem.

### Background & Setting:

James possesses one of the strongest “Jewish” flavors of any of the books of the New Testament. James is writing to Jewish believers who have been scattered as a result of the persecution faced by the early church.

### Themes:

James places utmost importance on practical behavior in the life of the Christian. It is not enough to know theology, if your theological views have no bearing on your actions. James emphasizes the fact that spiritual growth and action follows true repentance.

### Think about it:

As you read through the book of Mark, here are a few things to pay careful attention to:

1. Look to identify all of the allusions that James uses to aid in learning.
2. Attempt to grasp James’ expectations regarding how Christians act.
3. Look at your own life. Do you possess all faith and no works? Is your faith actually dead?

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Date: Thursday, March 28

Passage: James 1

1. It's important to understand how verse one ties into verse two. James writes to the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion," and then exhorts the audience to find joy in the midst of trials (v. 2). It's hard to have joy in trial! On the basis of what knowledge does James encourage his audience to have joy during tough times (v. 3)?

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2. What is the ultimate end of patience (v. 4)? If you endure with patience, God will make you complete!

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3. Who gives wisdom (v. 5)? How should you ask for wisdom (v. 6)? Why is it tough for you to ask for wisdom in faith?

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4. Who is never to be blamed for temptation to sin (v. 13)? Who is always responsible for temptation (v. 14)? If you are responsible for your temptation, what can you be doing this week to avoid it?

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5. What are you like when you only hear the Word, but don't do it (vv. 23-24)? How can you apply the Word to your life this week?

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There's so much practical wisdom here, and we're only in chapter one!  
Ask God today for the grace to grasp His wisdom in this book.



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Date: Friday, March 29

Passage: James 2

1. The entire first half of this chapter (vv. 1-13) is dedicated to the devastating sin of partiality in the body of Christ. There is perhaps no sin as prevalent, and no sin as damaging as this sin in the church today. Read through the verse 13 verses. Identify 5 key truths that you learned about partiality, along with the reference for the truth.

Reference	Truth about Partiality

2. James 2:14 is really the essence of this book. Faith without works is dead. James develops this thought by using the illustration of Abraham. Remember that he is writing to a Jewish audience that saw Abraham as their father. James' point? Even Abraham was justified by faith, but his faith produced works! Look at your life. Does your faith produce works?

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3. Would others know that you were a believer simply by how you act? List some works by which others could tell that you are a child of the king. Do you conduct yourself as though you have faith?

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**Date:** Saturday, March 30

**Passage:** Proverbs 24; Review Galatians 4-6

1. What does Proverbs 24:17 tell you about the way that you should react when someone that you don't agree with has a bad day? Is that easy for you to do? Why or why not?

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2. Take a look at verses 30-34. God desires people who are hard workers! Are you a hard worker? What are some ways that you can demonstrate the disciplines of a hard worker this week?

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3. Consider our study of Galatians 4 again. What position do you have now that Christ has redeemed you? How should that impact you this week?

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4. Why did Christ set you free (Gal. 5:1)? What should you not use your freedom for (Gal. 5:13)? How can you apply that this week?

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5. The conclusion of Galatians emphasizes the need for bearing the burdens of others in chapter 6. List the name of one person that you can be an encouragement to this week. How, when, and where will you encourage them?

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**Date:** Sunday, March 31

**Passage:** Proverbs 25; Review James 1-2

1. This chapter includes more proverbs from Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. How, according to verses 11-13, can your tongue be used to help others? How are you at helping others through your speech?

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2. What does verse 21 teach you about the way that you should treat your enemies? Do you treat those that you don't get along with according to the respect that God intends?

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3. Proverbs 25:28 describes the man without self-control as "a city without walls." That's deadly! You must cultivate self-control if you would be used of God. What are some areas of self-control that you know you need God's strength to improve?

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4. What does James 1 teach you about trials? How can that be a help to you this coming week?

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5. What does James 2 teach you about faith without works? How should that impact the way that you live out your faith this week?

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Date: Monday, April 1

Passage: James 3

1. James 3 is the most famous chapter on the tongue in all of Scripture. How does James describe the person who is able to tame his tongue (v. 2)? What does this logically mean regarding the realistic prospects of actually taming your tongue?

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2. James' point in the opening paragraph is to convince us that even though the tongue is small, it can be incredibly damaging (v. 5)! Remember back to the introduction of James when we learned that James loves to use word pictures. What word pictures regarding the tongue does he use in verses 1-12? List them in the blanks below.

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3. The tongue is "a world of unrighteousness (v. 6)." What are some specific areas in which you know you need God's grace to tame your tongue?

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4. How does James describe the wisdom that is from above in verse 17?

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5. Do you possess the wisdom that is from above? Or do you possess the earthly wisdom characterized in verse 14? What category does God find you in? How can you strive to cultivate God's wisdom?

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**Date:** Tuesday, April 2

**Passage:** James 4

1. Every Christian should know the principle behind James 4:1 by heart. What causes divisions and fights in the body of Christ? How have you seen that in your own life?

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2. How does James describe friendship with the world in verse 4? Can you be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time? Do you think God sees you as His friend, or the world's friend right now? Why?

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3. What is the promise that James makes in verse 8? How frequently do you really desire to draw near to God? Do you realize the power that you're missing if you're not following after him?

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4. You are never to judge your brother in Christ (vv. 11-12). Who is the only Judge, according to James (v. 12)? Why do so many Christians love to spend time judging others in the church?

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5. Verses 13-17 have to do with God's sovereign will for even the mundane tasks of your day. Do you realize that all that you do comes from the will of God? How can that frame the way that you act today?

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Date: Wednesday, April 3

Passage: James 5

1. As long as we inhabit this earth, the allure of riches will remain incredibly enticing. What does James 5:1-6 teach you about what happens when the desire for riches goes unchecked?

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2. In verses seven through twelve, James prepares the people for the coming of the Lord with a few practical exhortations. What are they? Include them in the blanks below.

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3. The power of prayer cannot be underestimated (vv. 13-18)! There is perhaps no spiritual discipline as powerful and neglected as prayer. Look at your life. How is your prayer life? Do you spend much time in prayer? How can you seek to improve your prayer life today?

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4. There is a final exhortation regarding how to relate to each other in the church as James closes the book. What are we responsible to do if we see a brother walking in sin (v. 19)? Why do we do it (v. 20)?

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As we close the book of James today, let's think about the central themes put forth by the author one more time. Are you walking in biblical wisdom? Do you confess to have faith, but really don't back up your talk with your walk? Is your faith dead? God, help us to cultivate vibrant, growing faith that produces works!



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