

Welcome
to a
study
on the
Book of James

JAMES

1:1

When was the book of James written?

Who was the author?

Who was it written to?

What was the purpose (why was it written)?

Compare James' description of himself to the ones found in Paul's letters. Both Paul and James describe themselves as servants/slaves of Jesus, but Paul also describes himself as an Apostle. Why do you think Paul's was different?

Here's an interesting thing. James' "greetings" is different than the ones we usually find Paul using. In fact, there are only two other instances in the New Testament where this Greek word "chairein" was used. See Acts 23:26 and Acts 15:23. Now, take Acts 15:23 and put it with Acts 15:13, and what conclusion might you draw?

JAMES

1: 2 - 18 Look over these verses. What themes do you see?

1: 2 - 4 What is the purpose of these trials and testings? How does this relate to the idea that a marriage is strengthened by the hardships endured in the early years? Can you relate to this idea?

Have you ever been happy because of a problem? Why or how so?

Why should we “consider it joy” when we are faced with problems?

What do you think about the progression from trials to perseverance to maturity? Can you think of any examples of this progression?

Gold and silver can be said to be tested by heating them to remove any other alloys. What imperfections would God’s testing remove from us?

1: 5 - 8 What do you think of James’ reference to winds and waves? The people living around Jerusalem didn’t live next to an ocean. Would they be able to relate to this imagery?

Many people make the mistake of thinking of James’ writings as strictly a matter of works over faith. But take a closer look at these verses. What do you think of James’ view on faith now?

Isn’t praying just a sign of weakness? (hint: you had better object).

Sometimes God answers our prayers with a “yes”, sometimes with a “no”, and sometimes with a “wait a while”. How do we maintain our “faith” in light of the “no” answers to prayer?

What do you think of the person who prays to God over which color of clothing they should wear that day? How do we relate this to the idea that we should pray over everything?

JAMES

1: 9 - 11 Two people just joined our bible study. One of them is the Governor of our state, and the other is the school janitor. Which one are we more likely to be enamored with? We tend to look at outward trappings, while God looks at the inner person.

I like what Barclay had to say here. He said “Christianity brings to the poor man a new sense of his own value.” The rich man on the other hand needs to avoid the trap of relying on his position and importance. How does James’ teaching relate to this?

1: 12 What kinds of crowns do we normally think of? What kind would a king or queen wear? A beauty pageant winner? A bride? An athlete? A Christian who has stood the test of time?

How does this relate back to 1: 3 - 4?

1: 13 - 15 How would you relate verse 15 to the story of David & Bathsheba (2 Sam 11)?

What do you think James would say about the saying “Satan made me do it”?

1: 16 - 18 What deception is James referring to?

What do you think of James’ reference to lights and shadows, and God as the Creator. Does the changing shadows reflect a changing attribute of God? God is the same _____, _____, and _____.

Which birth is James talking about? How does this birth make us belong to God?

JAMES

1: 19 - 20 What do you think James means when he says we should be quick to listen?

When he says we should be slow to speak?

When he says we should be slow to become angry?

Life Application Bible's commentary says "When we talk too much and listen too little, we communicate to others that we think our ideas are much more important than theirs."

James' advice is good, but the emphasis isn't on teaching us to be good listeners, but is on avoiding anger. Is there a transition from slow listening to quick to speak to quick to anger?

What do you think James means when he says "man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."?

1: 21 You've heard it before, whenever you see a "therefore", you need to ask "what is the "therefore there for?" What do you think James is referring to (or linking back to)?

Here's a fun little word play for you. According to Barclay "The word we have translated filthiness is ruparia (4507); and it can be used for the filth which soils clothes or soils the body. But it has one very interesting connection. It is a derivative of rupos (4509) and, when rupos is used in a medical sense, it means wax in the ear. It is just possible that it still retains that meaning here; and that James is telling his readers to get rid of everything which would stop their ears to the true word of God. When wax gathers in the ear, it can make a man deaf; and a man's sins can make him deaf to God. Further, James talks of the excrescence (perisseia, 4050) of vice. He thinks of vice as tangled undergrowth or a cancerous growth which must be cut away."

What constitutes "moral filth"?

How would "anger", "moral filth", and "evil" all be associated?

How is the "word planted in you"?

JAMES

1: 22 How can a person listen to the Word (the Sword of Truth) and yet deceive themselves?

If a person sits in church long enough, won't what is being said "rub off on them"?

What does the expression "Sunday Christian" mean to you?

What does it mean for us to "do what it says"?

1: 23 - 25 All three of these verses use the word "looks". But verse 25 adds something that changes the depth of meaning to the word "looks". What was added, and what does it mean?

Is James recommending that we all become conceited? After all, he seems to be saying that we should spend more time studying our faces in the mirror...or is he?

Compare **James 1:25** and **Revelation 1:3**.

What is the perfect law that James is referring to?

Some people like to say that James' and Paul's teachings differ. James says that the law gives us freedom. Paul says that the law makes us aware of sin and that the law can't save us (see **Romans 3: 20-22**). How can the law give us freedom by making us aware of sin? How can the law give us freedom, but not be able to save us? Do you believe that James' and Paul's teachings differ, or are they talking about different aspects of the law?

Look at **Romans 2: 7-8**, and **Romans 2:13**. How do these compare to James' teaching?

1: 26 - 27 How do we keep our tongues under control? What happens at home, at work, and at the church when tongues aren't kept under control?

Why does God seem to place such an importance on widows and orphans?

How do we keep ourselves from being polluted by the world?

JAMES

2: 1 Why should we “not show favoritism”? What difference does/should our faith in Jesus make in how we view others - both rich and poor, famous and ordinary, powerful and powerless?

Compare this to Peter’s statement in **Acts 10: 34**. What differences was Peter referring to?

How do the following verses relate to this? **Romans 2:11**, **Ephesians 6:9**, and **Colossians 3:25**.

2: 2 - 7 We still today tend to make differences that we shouldn’t. Have you ever noticed how churches can be so quick to have a famous/infamous person talk or lead, regardless of how recently they may have become believers. Why is this? and what is the problem with it?

Compare these verses to **James 1: 9 - 11**.

2: 8 - 11 What do you think James has in mind when he uses the phrase “royal law”?

Darn - there went the whole “majority rules” and the “balance sheet of right and wrong” actions. What use is Peter’s record keeping check at the gate? (No, I don’t believe we are met by St. Peter at the gate with a ledger book of our rights and wrongs).

What do you think of the idea that we must keep ALL of the law, and not just PART of the law? Does this seem fair to you?

What would Paul say about this teaching?

Some people say that the reference to the “law” is to the 10 Commandments. How does verse 9 show that view to be too restrictive? What then would the “law” encompass?

2: 12 - 13 James says that we are going to be “judged by the law”. Yet, we know that as Christians we are saved by grace because we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Before we jump to any conclusions about James being wrong, let’s take a look at **2 Corinthians 5:10**.

We need to show mercy. We don’t earn mercy by being merciful, but if we aren’t merciful we won’t be shown mercy. How does this relate to The Lord’s Prayer?

JAMES

2: 14 - 26 How do our deeds prove our faith?

Do you remember the story of Anastasia (of Russia)? Many people falsely claimed to be her. What were some of the ways that a person's story could be verified?

Read **Matthew 7: 22 - 23** and compare it to **verse 14**.

In **verse 14**, what is it that saves a man? How does their deeds relate to their being saved?

As you look at verse 15 - 16, reflect on your past. Have you ever had a well meaning person express concern, but not help.

Sometimes expressing our concern through words is the right thing to do, and sometimes expressing our concern through actions is the right thing to do.

What do you think James meant when he said "faith by itself...was dead"?

What do you think James was referring to in **verse 18**?

James deals with faith and deeds. Have you ever heard people who believe that emotions must play a central role in their faith? Our deeds reflect our faith. Can the same be said about emotions?

Review Abraham's story (**Genesis 22**).

Review Rahab's story (**Joshua 2: 1 - 21**).

JAMES

3: 1 What professions or occupations are greatly esteemed or honored today? What is it about them that causes this?

When the New Testament was written, teaching was held in high honor. Why do you think that is so?

Look at **Acts 13:1**, **1 Corinthians 12:28**, and **Ephesians 4:11**. Do these verses support the idea that teachers were held in high honor?

When the Apostles, missionaries, and evangelists finished their work in an area, the people would be turned over to teachers who would continue to instruct them. Many people liken our modern day pastors to the teachers of the early church. Why is that true? What other roles do our ministers/pastors fill in our churches today?

James tells us that teachers will be judged more strictly. Why is that?

3: 2 Do you think that this verse applied only to teachers, or does it have application for all of us?

When James talks about stumbling in many ways, do you think he is talking about what we say and teach, or is he talking about stumbling in a much broader sense?

Do you think that James has a sense of humor? Why?

This verse almost implies that the tongue is the hardest part of the body to control. What do you think?

3: 3 - 4 Have you ever ridden a horse? Did you find that the horse was easy to control? Many things contribute to how easy a horse is to control. What are some of them?

How does the bit control the horse?

How does the rudder control the boat?

JAMES

3: 5 - 6 What 3 points or thoughts are found in these 2 verses?

The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. What is James referring to here?

Under what conditions is a forest fire easily started by a single spark?

What conditions help gossip to quickly spread? How can gossip be eliminated or kept contained?

How can our tongues corrupt us?

3: 7 - 8 Why is the tongue so hard for us to tame (or control)?

Is the tongue always full of poison?

3: 9 - 12 What happens when we mix fresh water and salt water? Is the fresh water still drinkable after it has been mixed?

With these verses we see James' real concern about the tongue. What is he saying?

What affect does our bad speech have on our testimony?

3: 13 - 18 How does verse 13 compare with James' earlier statements about faith and deeds?

What do you think James is referring to when he says that "humility...comes from wisdom"?

How does envy and selfish-ambition lead to disorder and evil practices?

Compare verses 17 and 18 to the Fruit of the Spirit (**Galations 5: 22**)?

How can wisdom be pure (remember the reference to fresh and salt water), and at the same time be willing to yield (intreated or entreated are other translations that you might have)?

JAMES

4: 1 - 3 How do these verses relate to **3: 13 - 18**?

What are the differences between a “war” and a “battle”? How are they alike?

Compare verse 1 to **Romans 7**. What are the forces that are fighting within us? What are the forces that cause fighting between us and others?

James doesn't use the phrase “serve two masters” here, but I think that is another way of describing what goes on within us. Why can't we “serve two masters”?

How do we interpret these verses in light of other verses such as “seek and knock”, “pray...move mountains”, etc.?

What kind of pleasures is James referring to? Doesn't God want us to be happy?

4: 4 - 6 Why does James call his readers “adulterous people”? This is a common theme throughout the bible. See “**Jeremiah 3:20**. What New Testament examples can you name?

Is James suggesting that we should separate ourselves from the world?

What kinds of things do you do when you want to befriend someone? What kinds of things did you change when you began to court your spouse?

Verse 5 talks about “...the spirit he caused to live within us envies...”. What is James referring to?

How does this relate to other passages about God being a Jealous God? (Did you know that “Jealous” was one of God's names? see **Exodus 34:14**).

How do we reconcile the opposing forces within us? It would be impossible without the help of God, who gives us grace. But this grace isn't given to all. What does James tell us about those who receive this grace and those that don't?

If we choose to be proud and not humble, what will keep us from being saved?

JAMES

4: 7 - 10 Verse 9 reminds me of some Christians I know. Always sad, serious, dour-faced, gloomy and wondering why they don't inspire more people to come to God. But, verse 9 is an important part of what James is telling us in these verses. Let's enumerate the steps that James is recommending. What do you think James has in mind with each of these steps:

Submit to God.

Resist the devil.

Draw near to God

Cleanse yourself - outside and inside

Grieve, mourn, and wail

Humble yourselves

Keep in mind that we need to follow the above steps to bring us closer to God. As we do this, other scriptures come into play, such as "rejoice in the Lord", "sing songs of praise", and "encourage one another". There is a time for grieving, mourning, and wailing - it is when we recognize sin in our lives.

4: 11 - 12 What do you think James means when he says that if we speak against our brother we are speaking against the law? Which law is he referring to?

James also says that when we judge our brother we judge the law, and when we judge the law we are setting ourselves above it. How would this be true?

Who is the one and only Lawmaker and Judge?

God is able to judge us. Thankfully, he instead saves us. It's important for a judge to have the ability to administer justice and mercy. What do you think of the various initiatives that have appeared on the ballot in the past that restrain or limit a judge's sentencing options. Do you think they're necessary? Why do you think this has become an issue?

JAMES

4: 13 - 17 Compare this section to **Proverbs 27:1** and to **Luke 12: 16-21**.

Is James telling us that it is wrong to make plans for our future? What is he telling us?

What does James mean when he says our lives are like the mist? Is he saying that we are easy to see through? Or that our motives are clouded? Or something else entirely?

James wants us to recognize and rely upon who?

Verse 16 suggest that we are relying on who?

Does God want us to rely on Him totally? Should we do nothing but wait for Him to provide?

Take a close look at verse 17. How do the different translations begin this sentence?

Whenever we see a “therefore”, we need to ask “what is the therefore there for?” What link or reference do you think James is making here?

5: 1 - 6 Why would the rich people weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon them?

Do you think James is talking to rich believers or is he referring to rich non-believers?

James refers to wealth rotting. What kind of wealth is he referring to?

We don't normally think of clothes as a form of wealth. But refer back to Sampson's story (**Judges 13 - 16**). What references can you find there?

Gold and silver don't normally rust or corrode away. What then is James referring to?

How will the corrosion of their gold and silver testify against the rich people? How will it eat their flesh? (hint: verses 4 -6 seem to tell us that this wealth was gained dishonestly.)

JAMES

5: 7 - 11. Lest we get in a hurry for the Lord's coming to correct all the injustices, James reminds us that we need to be patient. James refers to the spring and autumn rains. Why would the farmers be waiting for each of them to come? Why didn't James mention summer rains?

What happens if the farmer gets impatient and gathers his crop early?

The early church expected the Lord's return in their day. But Jesus said no one knew the date that the Father had set. One thing is true - we will see the Lord either when we die or when He returns, which ever comes first. But, then again, maybe James knew that people were expecting the Lord's return too soon. Do you think that might be why he tells his readers to be patient and to stand firm?

Who is the judge standing at the door?

James talks about patience and perseverance. Have you ever heard the expression "if at first you don't succeed..." or "practice makes perfect"? These expressions talk about perseverance as we struggle to learn how to do something. But James is talking about a different kind of perseverance. A seeing something through kind of perseverance.

5: 12 In James time, an oath was only binding if a person swore by God. So, everyone would constantly swear by God to show their good faith. If they could get by without using God's name, then the oath was not binding and could be broken. What is James's opinion about this practice?

5: 13 - 18 Why not sing when we're sad and pray when we're happy?

Does God still heal today?

It's interesting. James seems to deal with physical problems, relational problems, and spiritual problems. What is the right approach to solving each of these?

Why do you think James includes the reference to Elijah here?

5: 19 - 20 Do you think James is talking to the "sinner" or the "restorer" here?

What other New Testament references talk about the way we should approach others?