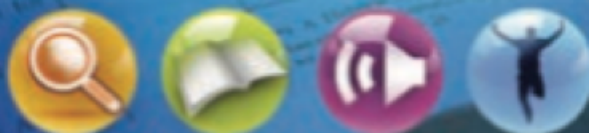


HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

James
Leaders guide

Hearing the Word James Leader's guide

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Nigel Barge, July 2017

Scripture Quotations taken from

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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP
www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise -
Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God,
(Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

Reading Letters in the Bible

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. The New Testament (from now on, 'NT') contains letters written by five Apostles of Jesus to various parts of the church of their day. They are part of the Word of God, authoritative for the church then, *and* for the church for all time.

Since 'James' is written *as a letter*, in the first instance it must be read as such. We need to take into account that letters are:

- a) *Relational*. A letter is usually addressed to a particular person or group of people and its contents apply to them. So it is in the Bible. (Here James appears to be addressing general believers in the early church.) It is only once we have grasped what was being said to *them, then* that we may generalise as to what God might be saying to *us, now*. The two will *always* be consistent.
- b) *Occasional*. Letters are one side of a 'conversation' between two people. They refer to matters in which details of situations and people are assumed to be common knowledge. A third party reading a letter needs to 'read between the lines' to work out the other side of the story. We have to understand the situation to which this Bible letter was written, so as to grasp how the writer was addressing *it*. Only then may we ask how God might apply this Word to our own circumstance.
- c) *Dated*. Letters are written at a particular time and place, and within a particular culture. So in the Bible, the letters of the first century are expressed within the habits and traditions of that day. In discerning what God might be saying to us, now, we need to separate any instructions which are 'time-bound' from principles that are *timeless*.
- d) *To be read as a whole*. When we open a letter from a friend nowadays, we read the whole thing. We recognise it as a single communication whose contents are all related. So with letters in the Bible: every part must be viewed in the context of the whole letter. Thus, it is best practice to read a Bible letter *right through*, before analysing its parts.

Reading James

The Author

There are at least four people called 'James' in the NT. This letter was most likely written by the one who was the *brother* of Jesus (Galatians 1:19). This James became leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9). (It was probably *not* by the *disciple* James, brother of John, sons of Zebedee, (Mark 1:19, 5:37) because Herod had him killed early on (Acts 12:2) in AD 44).

Date of writing

Contemporary historical records tell us James, the Lord's brother, was put to death by Ananus II, the high priest, in AD 62. So the letter must have been written before then, perhaps as even as early as the first persecution of the Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1)

To whom was it written?

This is one of the seven 'general' letters in the NT, along with 1st and 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John and Jude, *i.e.* it was written to the church at large, not just one locality or individual, as Paul did. The 'twelve tribes' was a title used by Jews to refer to the re-gathered people of the last days. James probably had Jewish Christians in mind, perhaps those in the coastal area north of Palestine, in Syria and perhaps also in southern parts of Asia Minor; who had scattered from Jerusalem after the persecution in Acts 8:1 (*see also* Acts 11:19)

Paul and James

There is often a contrast made between the teaching of Paul and James on the issue of faith and works. Several facts may be relevant:

- 1) this letter is for a purely Jewish audience, (1:1)
- 2) it may have an early date being written *before* Peter's acceptance of the gentile Cornelius (Acts 10) and *before* Paul's controversies over the gentiles and the Law, and works and faith,
- 3) it would appear to address a very poor and persecuted Jewish population perhaps that had been dispersed from Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1 – 11:19)

These facts may explain why the letter has a purely practical emphasis and doesn't address theological controversies. If this was the case, these were soon to come in the spreading early church with the inclusion of the gentiles. If this was the case then Paul's letter to the Galatians, addressing this situation, would then be written a few years later.

Why was the letter written?

The letter implies that these Jewish believers were mainly poor people who were caught up in a situation of considerable social tension, taken advantage of by wealthy landlords (5:4-6), hauled in to court by rich people (2:7) etc

James' concern, however, is with how worldly attitudes were getting into the church. That showed in a number of ways *e.g.* fawning deference to the rich and callous indifference towards the poor (2:1-4). Most of all, Christians were 'double-minded' with respect to God, short-circuiting the effectiveness of prayer (1:5-8). They were failing to put faith into practice (1:22-27; 2:14-16)

The letter has a strong emphasis on pastoral exhortation in a tone of tender concern. James calls on them to repent from this worldliness, to humble themselves before the Lord so that He might exalt them (4:7-10) and to work hard to bring other sinners back from the errors of their ways (5:19-20).

The tone of the letter is very negative and extreme; he talks of 'filthiness and rampant wickedness' (1:21) and says 'you desire and do not have so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel' (4:2). This would suggest that either James is either having a 'bad day'(!) or that he is addressing a particular, critical circumstance. Perhaps his force would not be surprising if he is addressing a church scattered from Jerusalem by persecution and under threat of dissipation and extinction?

James' exhortations may be titled as follows:

- a) Persevere in trials (1:1-18)
- b) Obey the Word (1:19-27)
- c) Be merciful to all (2:1-13)
- d) Note - Real faith works (2:14-26)
- e) 'Watch your mouth' (3:1-12)
- f) Be wise (3:13-18)
- g) Don't judge others (taking God's place!) (4:1-12)
- h) Repent of your pride and greed (4:13 -5:1-6)
- i) Be patient and stand firm (5:7-12)
- j) Save and heal the wanderer (5:13-19)

Study 1

James 1:1-18

Persevere joyfully in trials

Background

The believers were facing tough times; that's probably James' main reason for writing to them. He wants to encourage them to persevere wholeheartedly so that they will receive the 'crown of life' God has promised them (v12).

Word list

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|
| 2 | <i>my brothers</i> | NIV adds ' <i>and sisters</i> '. James & all his readers are siblings in the family of God; James uses the term 14 times. |
| | <i>pure joy</i> | Greek word <i>pas</i> emphasises the quality of the joy |
| | <i>trials</i> | Greek <i>peirasmos</i> here denotes external afflictions |
| | <i>many kinds</i> | he is also referring to difficulties common to all people as a result of sin |
| 3 | <i>testing</i> | Greek <i>dokimion</i> is rare in Bible – Ps 12:6, Prov 27:21, it refers to process by which gold & silver refined by fire |
| | <i>perseverance</i> | steadfastness, endurance, staying power with which we respond to problems |
| 4 | <i>finish, mature</i> | same Greek word <i>teleios</i> . James uses same word in 1:17; 1:25; 2:22; where it is translated <i>perfect</i> |
| 5 | <i>generously</i> | or wholeheartedly |
| 6 | <i>believe</i> | or have faith (Matt 21:21-22) |
| | <i>doubt</i> | Greek <i>diakrio</i> basically means 'to differentiate' <i>ie</i> refers not to intellectual doubt but to a conflict of loyalties <i>eg</i> God and 'the world' 4:4 |
| 10 | <i>wild flower</i> | Palestinian flowers like anemones and cyclamens bloom in the morning but die rapidly as the heat rises |
| 12 | <i>crown</i> | Gk <i>stephanos</i> the victorious athlete's laurel wreath <i>ie</i> symbolising glory and honour |
| 17 | <i>heavenly lights</i> | stars, planets, etc, including the sun and moon |

Bible Connections

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 2 | <i>Enduring trials</i> | <i>see also</i> Colossians 1:3-14; 1 Peter 3:9, 4:12 |
| 3 | <i>Producing perseverance</i> | <i>see also</i> Romans 5:3-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7 |
| | <i>God tests us to strengthen our faith</i> | <i>see</i> Genesis 22:1; Judges 2:22; 2 Chron 32:31 <i>cf</i> 2 Kings 20:12-19. |
| 18 | <i>First fruits mean Christians</i> | <i>see</i> 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 14:4 |
| | <i>of a redeemed creation</i> | <i>see</i> Romans 8:19-23 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 2 *What are the trials?*
 How do they 'know'....?
- 4 *Why must perseverance finish its work?*
 What might you be lacking?
- 5 *Why would they need wisdom?*
 What fault might He find?
- 6 *What must they believe in?*
- 8 *How is he 'double minded'?*
- 9 *What is his high position if he is a man of humble circumstances?*
- 10 *What is the rich man's low position*
- 12 *What trial is he thinking of?*
 When will he receive the crown of life?
 What is the crown of life?
 When was it promised?
- 14 *What evil desire?*
- 15 *What does it mean 'has conceived'?*
 How can you desire and not sin?
- 16 *What is the deceit?*
- 17 *What are the good and perfect gifts?*
 What are the heavenly lights
 How might he change?
- 18 *What is 'birth through the Word of Truth'?*
 What kind of first fruit?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 2 *The greeting is brief and he is straight into exhortation.*

2) The Context

surrounding passage,

individual book,

- 10 *Rich unbelievers (5:1-6)*
- 11 *Business (4:13)*
- 13 *Temptation – the role of the devil (4:7)*

whole Bible,

- 2 *Joy (Philippians 4:1 ff)*
 Trials – of an external nature cf 1 (Peter 4:12)

- Tested c.f. by fire - (1 Peter 1:7) only other NT use of word
 Perseverance- facing temptation/persecution (Luke 8:15; 2
 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 2:2:13:10)
 Trials – faith (Romans 5:3,4; 1Pet 1:6,7)
- 6 Believe you have received it and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)
- 9 The first shall be last (Mark 9:35; 10:31)‘
 ‘Filled the hungry with good things /sent the rich away empty’ (Luke 1:53)
 ‘
 double mind all your heart (Deuteronomy 6:5)
- 11 Pass away like a wild flower. (Isaiah 40:6,7; Matthew 6:28-30)
- 12 Crown of life (1 Corinthians 9:15; Revelation 2:10; c.f. Isaiah 62:3)
 Those who love him (Romans 8:28)
- 13 Blame God c.f. “...the woman **you** gave me!” (Genesis 3:12)
 Lead us not into temptation (Luke 11:4)
- 14 Desire itself may not be bad (c.f. Luke 22:15; Philippians 1:23)
- 17 Does not change – c.f. Jesus (Hebrews 13:8)
- 18 He chose (Ephesians 1:4)
 Birth (c.f. John 3:3)
 First fruits (Exodus 23:16,19; 1 Corinthians 15:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13;
 Revelation 14:4)
 Word of Truth = Gospel (2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesus 1:13; Colossians 1:5;
 2 Timothy 2:15)

Bible story

The perfect world has been marred by sin. People have been unable to keep the Law given. A saviour has come. His ‘Good News’ is received by some and rejected by others. Persecution of his people results.

LEARN

1) What kind of literature is this?

Letter

2) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 2 the trials appear to be exile. (Acts 8:1) and oppressive working conditions they ‘know’ from the Word of God and from experience.
- 4 Perseverance must finish its work to receive its promise / the benefit
 You might be lacking wisdom – (understanding, acceptance, belief, expectation?)
- 5 They would need wisdom to respond faithfully to trials.
 The fault He might they find is any sin.
- 6 They must believe God is all powerful, all loving and committed to them

- 8 He is 'double minded' – he believes in God but fears circumstances.
 9 What is his high position is the promise of God – the last shall be first
 10 The rich man's low position – the first shall be last
 12 The trial is that of any adversity
 He will receive the crown of life in Heaven.
 The crown of life is being able to reign with Him?
 In the OT cf (Isaiah 62:3)
 14 The evil desire is to disobey God / His Law.
 15 'has conceived' means that desire is the start of the process of sin
 You may desire and not sin by not letting yourself be 'dragged off'
 16 Deceit is when you allow yourself to receive a lie as the truth?
 17 the good and perfect gifts include the trials
 the heavenly lights are the sun, the moon, and the stars.
 He might change if he allowed evil things to have evil consequences for his people
 18 'birth through the Word of Truth' is being 'born again' by the spirit
 'first fruit' are the first of all those who will believe in Jesus

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

2 This is a very young church. The Apostles are at the centre. Doctrine is not disputed. Persecution has struck and James seeks to strengthen their resolve to follow Jesus whole heartedly.

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

James to the persecuted Christians of Israel (1)

Be joyful when things go 'wrong'. Persevere - you are maturing (2-4)

If you can't grasp this, ask God for wisdom and believe he gives it. (5-8)

Remember, at the end, the first will be last and vice versa. (This life is but a moment) (9-11)

*Perseverance will receive God's reward, but remember - temptation, sin and death are **not** God's doing (12-15)*

Good from all circumstance is guaranteed by God who doesn't change. He is the one who chooses us to be first to receive eternal life (16-18)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Persevere joyfully in testing, expecting to reign in life with all those who love God.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 12**

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

12 God keeps his promises.

13 God cannot be tested tempted by evil.
God never tempts anyone.

17 God sends 'all good gifts around us'.
God never changes.

b) His grace?

5 God gives generously to all who find fault.

18 God chose to give us...

a) Jesus and His salvation?

18 The Word of Truth (Jesus) brings us (new) birth.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

2 In adversity / testing / trials consider it pure joy.

3 Persevere in Jesus name when you are tested.

5 When tested, ask God for wisdom – expectantly.

9 If poor, take pride in God's calling of you.

If rich, take pride in your total dependence on God.

12 Hold on to God's promises - the best is yet to come, in Christ.

13 Always beware that evil never comes from God.

18 Remember, the unchanging totally reliable God has chosen you.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Obey the Word!

Background

v. 19-21. James gives a brief exhortation about speech and anger. This is a traditional theme in Jewish wisdom literature (c.f. Proverbs 10:19; 11:12-13; 13:3; 15:1; 17:27-28).

v. 22-27 pick up from v18 the topic of God's Word. They have to shun the kind of behaviour associated with the old life and begin living by the standard of the word that saved them. Obedience to the word, and the actions that result, are what really counts.

Re-birth (v18) must issue in pure religion (v27) which in turn is the practical expression of re-birth.

Word list

- 20 lit. '*man's anger does not 'work' the righteousness of God*' – work = reflect?
- 21 *rid means strip* The word used for stripping off clothes (c.f. Acts 7:58)
humbly accept the word planted in you = accept its precepts as binding
- 22 *listen* Gk word = serious attention and study
- 26 *religious* only time this adjective appears in NT
- 27 *look after* lit. 'visit' – same word as (Luke 1:68)

Bible Connections

- 18 '*re-birth*' This concept, if not the actual word, comes in every NT section:
 Most familiar: John's Gospel 3:3-6; and in John's letter: 1 John 3:1,9; 4:4.
 Letters *Paul*: Galatians 3:26, 4:6; 2 Cor 5:17; Death/resurrection:
 Romans 6:5-8; 8:10-17; Ephesians 2:1,4 Colossians 3:9
 Peter 1 Peter 1:23, 2:2.
 Synoptic Gospels: dying to sin, then following Jesus e.g. Matt 16: 24,25.
- 21 *the word implanted in you* see Jeremiah 31:33 cf Mark 4:3-20/22
- 22 *listening to the word & acting on it* see Romans 2:13; 6:11-14; Luke 11:28
- 27 *look after orphans and widows* see Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 1:16-17

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 19 *Why does he call them 'my dear brothers'.*
Why does he tell them to 'take note of this'!
What is he counselling against?
- 20 *What is the righteous life he desires?*
- 21 *How is it prevalent?*
How was 'the Word planted' in them?
How can the Word save?
- 22 *How do they deceive themselves?*
What does it say?
- 25 *What is the perfect Law?*
How does it give freedom?
What has he heard?
How will he be blessed?
- 26 *What does 'religious' mean?*
How does he deceive himself?
- 27 *What does 'pure and faultless' mean?*
Why orphans and widows
How do you keep yourself from being polluted by the world

What surprises or confuses you?

- 21 *How is there such scope for sin if they have just been put out from Jerusalem?*

2) The Context

surrounding passage,

- 19 *My dear brothers (1:16)*
- 22 *Don't be deceived (1:16)*
- 27 *Pure religion offered by the mature and complete (1:4)*

individual book,

- 21 *The word planted in you c.f. the chose to give us birth through the /word of truth (1:18)*
save (2:14; 4:12; 5:20)
- 25 *Act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom (2:12)*
'Perfect' same word as 'mature' (1:4)
Blessed are those who persevere (1:12; 5:11)

- 26 Tongue (destructive) (3:5ff)
 27 Friendship with the world is enmity with God (4:4 c.f. 2:5)

whole Bible,

- 19 My dear brothers (1 Corinthians 15:58) - only other place in NT this phrase used)
 When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who hold his tongue is wise. (Proverbs 10:19)
 20 Anger (sinful) (Matthew 5:22; Ephesians 4:26)
 Grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18) build yourself up (Jude 20)
 Work the righteousness of God (lit) (Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
 18/21 New birth through Word of God....put away evil behaviour c.f. (1 Peter 1:23; 2:1)
 21 Put off/rid behaviour (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22,25; Colossians 3:8; Hebrews 12:1; 1 Peter 2:1)
 Implanted c.f. sower (Luke 8:1-15)
 Jesus is the Word (John 1:1,14) Jesus is the Saviour (Acts 5:31)
 22 'Not just hearers of the Law are righteous but those who obey.' (Romans 2:13)
 22 Love (Matthew 22:37-39) forgive (Luke 6:37; 11:4)
 25 If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36; 2 Peter 1:3)
 26 Religious (Acts 17:22; Colossians 2:16; 10:11)
 27 God – a father to the fatherless and a defender of the widow (Psalm 68:5)
 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.
 (Zechariah 7:10)

Bible story

See study 1

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?
- 19 'My dear brothers' emphasises his solidarity and sympathy with them.
 'Take note of this' underlines its importance.
 He counselling against 'shooting your mouth off.'
 20 The righteous life he desires exhibits by trusting God and showing the fruit?
 21 Moral filth and evil are prevalent as that is the world's default position.
 'The Word was planted' in them when they heard, believed, received and started fruiting.
 The Word saves if you believe and trust in Jesus
 22 They deceive themselves by thinking they will receive the blessing of God.
 It says 'Love your neighbour as yourself - forgive as you have been forgiven'

- 25 *The perfect Law that gives freedom is Jesus
He heard the instruction for a godly life
How will he be blessed by being filled with the Spirit / the joy of the Lord*
- 26 *Religious' means holding to the outer form, the practices of a religion
He deceives himself by thinking that 'religion' sets us right with God*
- 27 *'Pure and faultless' means acceptable by God
Orphans and widows were the lowest / the bottom of the social heap.
You keep yourself by focusing on God and caring for the 'lowest'.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
There is such scope for sin because they are refugees – law has broken down?

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Listen family, control your tongue and sin, and accept Jesus (19-21)
Don't just listen to Jesus, obey Him and you'll know His blessing (22-25)
'Mouthiness' would indicate falseness. Loving the poor and moral integrity would
show true obedience to Jesus. (26-28)*

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Show your faith in Jesus is genuine by your gracious speech and love for the poor.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 22**

Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.)

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

22 God's word must be obeyed

27 *God's standard – care for the poor & 'unworldliness'.*

b) His grace?

20 *God is the source of all righteousness.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

27 *Through Jesus, God showed that the poor in heart / poor were blessed.
(Mathew 5:3; Luke 6:20)*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

19 Preachers address church as 'dear' - beloved, 'brothers' – members of the family....

Listen firstly. Speak / become angry slowly.

21 Get rid of moral filth and evil.

Humbly accept the word planted in you.

20 Note – man's anger does not reflect God's righteousness.

22 Don't kid yourselves / just listen to and obey the Word.

25 Obey the Word and expect God's blessing.

26 True believers in Jesus – show it and keep a tight rein on your tongue.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Be merciful to all

Background

James applies many of the key ideas from 1:19-27 to a specific situation: discrimination against poor people within the Christian community. Consistently Christian *conduct* comes only from a consistently Christian *heart* and *mind*.

The strongly marked socio-economic class distinctions here correspond closely to what we know of conditions in first century Palestine: a small group of wealthy landowners and merchants accumulated more and more power, while large numbers were forced from their land and grew even poorer.

Most of James' readers were probably poor agricultural labourers. They were also suffering religious persecution. The irony is they were showing deference to the rich who were the very ones exploiting them and taking them to court.

Word list

1	<i>favouritism</i>	Literally, 'receiving the face', <i>ie</i> making judgments based on outward matters like social status
	<i>Glory</i>	Literally 'as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, (the Lord) of Glory'
8	<i>if</i>	better translated 'however'
	<i>royal law</i>	Jesus' example & teaching as well as OT (Lev 19:18)

Bible Connections

1	<i>God does not show favouritism</i>	<i>see</i> Deuteronomy 10:17-18; Leviticus 19:15 <i>c.f. also</i> Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:11,25
6	<i>exploiting the poor</i>	<i>cf</i> Amos 4:1; Ezekiel 22:7
7	<i>rich opposing the Gospel</i>	<i>see</i> Acts 13:50; 16:19; 19:23-41
8	<i>love your neighbour as yourself</i>	<i>see</i> Leviticus 19:18
13	<i>showing mercy</i>	<i>see</i> Zechariah 7:9-10; Romans 2:5-13; Matthew 6:15; 18:23ff

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why should believing in Jesus mean you don't show favouritism?*
- 2 *What kind of meeting might it be?*
- 4 *How might they have had evil thoughts?*
- 5 *Why does he keep calling them brothers?*
How has God chosen the poor?
What is rich in faith?
Where is the kingdom they inherit?
Which comes first - God choosing or man loving Him?
- 6 *How have they insulted the poor?*
How are the rich exploiting them?
- 7 *How are they slandering the noble name?*
- 8 *What is the royal Law?*
- 9 *What is showing favouritism?*
How does the Law convict them?
- 10 *How does one infringement of the Law mean you have broken it all?*
How are these so serious crime?
What is the Law that gives freedom?
- 13 *How does mercy triumph over judgement?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 12 *How can 'brothers' be judgemental / unmerciful?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

- 1 *my brothers (2:14; 3:1)*
- 8 *The perfect law that gives freedom (1:25)*

I b) individual book,

c) whole Bible,

- 1 *Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8; c.f. Psalm 24:7,8)*
God does not show favouritism (Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:5)
The Lord your God is the God of god's and the Lord of lords who is not partial takes no bribes. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:17-18)

You shall do no injustice in judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. (Lev 19:18)

Here there cannot be Greek or Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman but Christ is all in all (Colossians 3:1)

Do nothing out of favouritism (1 Timothy 5:21)

Be like Jesus (Philippians 2:5)

2 *those who are in fine clothes are in Kings places (Matthew. 11:8)*

4 *Do not judge, or you too will be judged (Matthew 7:1)*

5 *Blessed are the poor / poor in heart for yours is the Kingdom of God / yours is the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 5:3)*

The kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21)

8 *Love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40)*

10 *No difference -All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Romans 3:23)*

The Law of the Law is perfect (Psalm 19:7)

11 *Anger = murder, looking with lust = adultery. (Matthew 5:21-27)*

12 *If the son shall set you free you shall be free indeed (John 8:36)*

13 *Be merciful as your heavenly father is merciful (Luke 6:36)*

Act justly love mercy and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8c)

d) Bible story

See study 1

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

1 *Jesus didn't / doesn't show favouritism.*

2 *The meeting might it be a church meeting c.f. a synagogue.*

4 *Evil thoughts might be judgements of others according to wealth / appearance.*

5 *He keeps calling them brothers to stress His love and that He is their equal.*

God chose the poor by revealing himself to them.

'Rich in faith' means they have much faith in Jesus.

The kingdom that they will inherit is 'among them'.

God choosing comes before man loving Him?

6 *They insulted the poor by not honouring them / paying attention to them. The rich exploited them as they worked for them (– low wages / bad conditions?)*

7 *They slandering the noble name of Jesus by not bothering to imitate him*

8 *The royal Law is love God / love your neighbour*

- 9 Showing favouritism is giving preference to one on account of your own bias.
The Law convicts them; the judge only applies the Law
- 10 One sins breaks it because it is the perfect Law
These serious crimes stand for all related ones
- 12 The Law that gives freedom is Jesus
- 13 Mercy triumphs judgement because the debt that judgement requires is paid for the undeserving.
Unmerciful servant - 'this is how your heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.' (Matthew 18:35)

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

12 Christians are capable of being tempted to most sin.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, don't show favouritism. For example - discriminating between a rich and a poor man at a meeting (1-4). God has put the poor first but you are favouring the rich who are oppressing you and slandering Jesus! (5-7) If you sin in one thing by showing favouritism and not loving your neighbour you break the whole Law. (8-11) Act impartially in mercy, as you depend in the judgement on the mercy of God. (12,13)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

As followers of our humble God, be merciful to all

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 1**

My brothers, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, don't show favouritism

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 God doesn't have favourites

5 God chooses.

8 The Lord's fulfilment of the Law demands we love our neighbour as ourselves.

b) His grace?

5 *God choses the poor to inherit the Kingdom of God.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

1 *God showed us an example of humility in Jesus.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

1 *Be like Jesus – don't show favouritism.*

4 *Do not judge others by appearances.*

5 *Listen to the Word of God.*

6 *By pandering to the rich, you insult the poor.*

8 *If you will follow the Royal Law, love your neighbour.*

10 *Acknowledge you don't keep the whole Law / are a 'law breaker'.*

12 *Remember in the light of the Judgement, your own dependence on the mercy of Jesus.*

Remember - the mercy of God always satisfies the judgement of God.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 4

James 2:14-26

Note – real faith works!

Background

Paul famously preached that ‘justification’ (sinners being put right with God) was by ‘faith alone’, not by us doing the ‘works of the Law’ (Galatians 2:16 etc). However James points out that while faith is the *root* of salvation, ‘works’ are the *fruit* of it.

When God made a covenant with Abraham, Genesis 15:6 tells us ‘Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.’ (Quoted by Paul in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6.) James points out how Abraham, some years after that, was willing to offer his son Isaac on the altar. in total obedience to God (Genesis 22:1-18). Faith must show its fruit; works are the necessary, inevitable *product* of genuine saving faith. ‘

He gives a further example by referring to Rahab. By faith, this prostitute believed God was ‘the one God’ who had given the land to the Jews. This led to her action in helping the spies when they came to check out the land.

Word list

- | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------|---|
| 14 | <i>save</i> | the final deliverance from sin, death, judgement on the last day (c.f. 1:21; 4:12; 5:20) |
| | <i>deeds</i> | anything done in obedience to or in service of God (and others) |
| 15 | <i>without clothes/food</i> | In Jewish religion - Almsgiving central to practice
In Greek religion, the Stoics believed – happy is the serene man, detached with no pity for the poor’. |
| 20 | <i>useless</i> | Gk <i>agros</i> barren (c.f. idle workers – Matthew 20:3,6) |
| 21, 25 | <i>righteous</i> | ‘declare to be right before God’, (e.g. Genesis 15:6) a law court term, when the judge pronounces a verdict, ‘Innocent’. |
| 22 | <i>made complete</i> | Gk verb means ‘to perfect’ or ‘bring to maturity’. |
| 24 | <i>faith alone</i> | the dead, fruitless faith of v18
Gk <i>mokon</i> lit. means only (c.f. 1:22) |

Bible Connections

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 21-23 | <i>Abraham and Isaac</i> | see Genesis 22:1-18 |
| 23 | <i>Abraham called ‘God’s friend’</i> | see 2 Chron 20:7; Isaiah 41:8 |
| 25 | <i>Rahab</i> | see Joshua 2:9-15; Hebrews 11:31 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 14 *What does he mean 'deeds'?*
What will it save him from?
- 16 *What does the greeting 'go I wish you well' imply?*
- 17 *What does 'dead' mean?*
- 18 *Why does he say 'show me your faith without your deeds' and not the other way round?*
- 19 *What is the mean that the demons believe there is one God and shudder?*
Why do the demons shudder?
- 20 *Why does he call him 'a foolish man'?*
- 21 *Why did God say that Abraham was righteous?*
- 22 *What does he mean that his faith was made 'complete by what he does'?*
- 23 *When was he called God's friend?*
- 24 *How much is faith and how much is works?*
Why did Rahab save the spies?
- 26 *When does a body not have the spirit?*

What surprises or confuses you?

??? *the reformation was built on 'sola fide'; faith alone?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

b) individual book,

- 24 *Do not be listeners only (lit) to the Word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (1:22)*

c) whole Bible,

- 14 *Your faith has healed /saved you (Luke 8:48; 18:42)*
- 15 *Helping the poor central to Jewish religion (c.f. Galatians 2:9)*
Is it not to you to share food with the hungry, provide the wanderer with shelter, clothe the naked—then you will call and God will answer (Is58:7-9)
Care for the imprisoned brother (Matthew 25:31-46)
- 16 *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has No pity on him, how can the love of God be in him (1 John 3:17,18)*
- 19 *The Lord our God the Lord is one. - (Deuteronomy 6:4) {The Shema recited 2x a day} c.f. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Galatians 3:20)*
- 20 *'Raca'... fool will be in danger of the fire of hell. (Matthew 5:22)*

*Shall we sin that grace may abound? By no means (i.e. impossible!)
(Romans 6:1,2)*

24 *Obedience of faith (Romans 1:5) faith working through love (Gal 5:6)
A man is justified not by works (but faith) (Romans 4:2-8; 9:10-12)*

25 *By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not
killed (Hebrews 11:31).*

*The Lord your God is He who is God in Heaven above and on earth
beneath (Joshua 2:11)*

*The Lord ...breathed into his nostrils and the man became a living being
(Genesis 2:7)*

d) Bible story

See study 1

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

14 *'Deeds' or 'works' are the things we do – our actions.*

It will save him from death following the judgement.

16 *It implies empty words – no actions.*

17 *'Dead' means inert – it cannot make anything happen.*

18 *He means show me faith without action and I will show you genuine faith
by what I do.*

19 *He means the devils believe about Jesus but do not believe / trust in Him.
The demons shudder because they know that they will have to answer to
the one supreme all powerful God.*

20 *He calls him 'a foolish man' for to believe in Jesus changes your actions*

21 *Abraham was righteous because God pronounced him so.*

22 *Complete means the overall effect (eg the Sun + heat)*

23 *He was called God's friend by the Chronicler and the prophet Isaiah.*

24 *Faith is the motor and works are the effect (e.g. clash symbols and sound)
Rahab saved the spies because she believed in / trust in their God.*

25 *Not servants ...I have called you friends. (John 15:15)*

26 *A body does not have the spirit when it is dead.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

Faith is the only operative; works are the inevitable result.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Faith that saves you is inevitably accompanied by actions (14-17)

Believing 'about' God, as devils do, is different from believing 'in' which is accompanied by good works (18,19) e.g. Abraham was justified by his faith in God and this was expressed in his willingness to obey God and sacrifice his son. Justification inevitably result in sanctification! (20-24) e.g. Rahab, the prostitute, was righteous. She believed in God and so hid his spies. (25) The body and Spirit has the same relationship as faith and deeds – without each other they are dead' useless. (26)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Faith (in Jesus), and corresponding actions are inevitably linked.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

26b

'Faith without deeds is dead.'

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

19 God is one.

26 God expects actions to correspond to faith

b) His grace?

23a We receive righteous as a gift through our faith.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

23b We are God's friends through Jesus.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

14 Look for faith to save you.

16 Beware of empty words with no deeds.

18 Beware profession of faith and no corresponding deeds.

19 Note - difference between believe 'about' (c.f. Devils & God) and believe 'in' (Jesus and His followers).

21 Note - faith in God results in ultimate obedience / self-sacrifice.

25 Note – faith in God supersedes all temporal loyalties.

26 Faith without corresponding deeds is worthless

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

‘Watch your mouth!’

Background

Some commentators think 3:1 – 4:12 is aimed mainly at teachers in the Church, but it has lessons for all of us. James uses graphic images which other authors of his day also employed, to get his message across. In the tinder-dry wood and scrub of Palestine, a forest fire was almost immediately out of control.

The problem of uncontrolled speech is a frequent theme in Proverbs and other OT and Jewish wisdom literature. James also utilises other illustrations widely popular among moralists, both Greeks and Greek-speaking Jews

Word list

1	<i>Teacher</i>	Took place of Jewish Rabbi – a revered position (Rabbi means ‘my great one)
2	<i>perfect</i> <i>the whole body</i>	<i>gk Telios</i> = end - i.e. complete <i>gk ‘olon to soma’</i> (2b,6b)
6	<i>world of evil</i>	<i>ie</i> meaning ‘opposition to God and his kingdom in this world’.
	Hell	<i>gk gehenna</i> valley south of Jerusalem where refuse / dead animals were burned,
11	<i>salt</i>	Greek word is ‘bitter’ (same word in v14)

Bible Connections

1	<i>judged more strictly</i> <i>danger of false teachers</i>	<i>see</i> Luke 12:48; Mark 12:40 <i>see</i> 1 Tim 1:6,7; 2 Tim 4:3 c.f. Mt 23:1ff
6	<i>sins of the tongue</i> <i>‘world’ as opposition to God</i> <i>destructive effect of loose words</i>	<i>see</i> Romans 3:13-14; Matt 15:11, 18-19 <i>see</i> John 15:18-19; 17:6-18 <i>see</i> Proverbs 16:27; 26:21; Is 30:27

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *What are they teachers of?*
 Why will teachers be judged more strictly?
 Who will judge them?
- 2 *Who is we?*
 What does he mean by stumble /is it possible not to stumble?
- 3 *Why 3 images?*
 What is similar / different in them?
- 8 *What is the antidote to this poison?*
- 9 *Why does James identify with them?*
- 10 *Why should this not be?*
 Why three examples?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 6 *Why is it all so negative?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

- 9 *Our Lord Jesus Christ*

b) individual book,

- 8 *Keep a tight rein on the tongue. (1:26)*

c) whole Bible,

- 1 *Teachers were very important in early church c.f. prophets (Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:8; Ephesians 4:11)*
 Do not judge and you will not be judged (Matthew 7:1)
 To whom much is given, much will be expected (Luke 12:48)
- 2 *All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Romans 3:23)*
 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8)
 Perfect (Matthew 5:48)
 By your words you shall be justified and by your words you shall be condemned. (Matthew 12:36,37)
- 3 *'Did God really say...'? (Genesis 3:1)*
- 6 *Hell (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15:33)*
- 8 *Good man brings good thing stored up – evil man brings evil (Matt 12:35)*
- 9 *Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9)*

every tongue confess Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:11)

made in God's likeness (Genesis 1:26)

10 Grumbling (Exodus 16:2; Numbers 14:2; Deuteronomy 1:27; Josh 9:18)

11 Whoever would love life must keep his tongue from evil. (1 Peter 3:10)

*12 I won't deny you—call down curses (Matthew 26:33— 26:69-75)
call down curselove one another (Luke 9:51-56; 1 John 1:4:7)*

d) Bible story

See study 1

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

1 What are they teachers of?

Why will teachers be judged more strictly?

Who will judge them?

2 Who is we?

What does he mean by stumble /is it possible not to stumble?

3 Why 3 images?

What is similar / different in them?

8 What is the antidote to this poison?

9 Why does James identify with them?

10 Why should this not be?

Why three examples?

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

6 He must have been addressing specific presenting problems.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Beware judging leaders – no one is sinless yet. (1,2) Watch your tongue – it is small but has great effect e.g. horses & bits, ships & rudders(3-5a) and it is destructive like a spark causing forest fire. It may destroy a person eternally.

(5b,6) Unlike most animals, the tongue cannot be control – it is a source of evil.

(7) To praise God and curse man is a total contradiction. It is absurd. (9-12)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Be careful not to assume a position of superiority and 'tongue lash' others – it is a contradiction to Christian profession.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v I**

Not many should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 God will judge all people.

9 God is worth of our praise.

b) His grace?

9 God makes us in His likeness.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

9 Our Lord Jesus is separate from our Father.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

1 Be careful of how you might judge others; you will be judged more severely by God.

2 Remember – nobody is perfect (yet!)

3-5a Recognise how small yet how powerful your tongue is.

5a-6 Recognise how destructively evil your tongue can be.

7 Be very careful with your tongue.

9 Note your tongue can be used for good or ill.

11,12 Do not accept the outrage of your tongue being used for evil.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Embrace Godly Wisdom

Background

The wrong kind of wisdom is characterised by envy, selfishness and disorder (v14-16) whereas the right kind is, above all, 'peace-loving' (v17).

The Greeks considered humility to be a vice or weakness.

James seems to use the term 'wisdom' in 13-17 almost as equivalent to Paul's use of the name, 'Holy Spirit'. The fruit of wisdom in vv17 and 18 has echoes of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22ff.

Word list

13	<i>humility</i>	<i>lit 'meekness'</i> (c.f. Matthew 5:5)
14	<i>selfish ambition</i>	a single Greek word. In Aristotle it refers to the narrow partisan zeal of factional, greedy politicians
16	<i>disorder</i>	a restless, unsettled state
17	<i>pure</i>	moral blamelessness
	<i>submissive</i>	<i>i.e.</i> open to reason – not argumentative?
18	<i>harvest of righteousness</i>	the harvest which consists of righteousness

Bible Connections

13	<i>humility</i>	Matthew 11:29,5:5
15	<i>true wisdom comes from God</i>	<i>see</i> Proverbs 2:6
17	<i>wisdom that comes from heaven</i>	<i>cf</i> Galatians 5:22-23
18	<i>peacemakers</i>	<i>see</i> Matthew 5:9

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 13 *Why does he ask who is wise?*
What does 'a good life' look like?
Why is humility important?
What is the relationship between humility and wisdom?
- 14 *Why 'bitter' envy?*
Who would boast
What 'truth' is it?
- 15 *What does 'heavenly wisdom' look like?*
Where is envy coming from
- 16 *Why are the two linked - envy and disorder / evil practice.*
- 17 *How does this wisdom come from Heaven?*
What does 'impure' wisdom look like?
Why the need for 'mercy'?
- 18 *Who are they making peace between?*
What is a harvest of righteousness?

What surprises or confuses you?

If wisdom comes down from Heaven, how do you get it?

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

- 13 *Who is wise and understanding i.e. a teacher? (c.f. 3:1)*
- 15 *Devil / set on fire by Hell (3:6)*
- 18 *Righteousness (1:20; 2:23)*

b) individual book,

- 13 *Wisdom (1:5)*
- 17 *Coming down from above (1:17)*
- 18 *Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. (2:23)*

c) whole Bible,

- 13 *Christ, the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24)*
Your attitude should be like that of Jesus - humble. (Phil 2:5)
- 14 *I am the way the truth and the life... What is truth? (John 14: 6; 18:38)*
Jealousy (Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:22)
- 15 *Wisdom is from above / from God (Proverbs 2:6)*
Earthly - negative use c.f. (Philippians 3:19)

Unspiritual = 'human feeling and reason supreme' (c.f. 1 Corinthians 2:14; 15:44,46)

16 God not of 'disorder' but of peace. (1 Cor 14:33)

17 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10)

Wisdom from above is a fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22)

Peaceable - i.e. gentle and meek (2 Corinthians 10:1)

Pure -c.f. virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Good gifts from Heaven (Matthew 7:11)

d) Bible story

See study 1

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

13 He asks this because people are putting themselves forward as leaders and he wants to undermine their presumption.

'A good life' acts wisely and humbly.

Humility is important because it is like Jesus.

It is wise to be humble.

14 Envy is bitter because it always is directed towards another.

Potential leaders might boast (?)

The 'truth' is Jesus.

15 'Heavenly wisdom' is the wisdom of God, Himself.

Envy comes from Hell.

Envy and disorder are linked in Hell.

17 Wisdom comes from Heaven as a gracious gift.

'Impure' wisdom is divisive, aggressive, selfish, vindictive, unattractive, judgemental.

All of us need 'mercy' from one another / from God.

18 Peacemakers making peace between individuals and between individuals and God.

A harvest of righteousness is brought about by the Spirit with His fruit the accompanying harvest.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

You get wisdom from heaven through faith.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Wise teachers are humble (13) Don't be proud, ambitious and boastful, unlike Jesus (14) This comes from the devil and sows evil disorder. (15,16) Rather show

heavenly wisdom showing fruit of the Spirit. (17) Exhibiting peace will show faith in Jesus. (18)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Bringing peace through faith in Jesus will be rewarded by God

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

v 18

Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

17 God is the author of all good things.

18 God loves righteousness

b) His grace?

17 Good gifts are given by heaven.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

14 The Truth (Jesus) is reflected in grace (not envy and spiritual ambition).

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

13 Let God's wisdom be shown by your humility

14 Do not let your mouth be boastful.

15 Discern the source of pride / selfish ambition - the devil.

16 Expect envy & selfish ambition to give rise to disorder and every evil practice.

17 Look in faith to heaven for good fruit.

18 Be faithful – those seeking peace will find a righteousness that comes through faith.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 7

James 4:1-12

Don't judge others (and take God's place!)

Background

James is speaking very directly to the church here, using 2nd person instead of 3rd person as he looks at wrong attitudes and actions in the church fellowship which are leading to conflict. The conflicts could be verbal, physical or both. He is dealing with believers who have at one time been in fellowship with God and who by their worldliness have since drifted away from him.

Their prayers were not answered because they were asking from wrong motives *c.f.* Matthew 7:7; 6:9-10

The OT uses the metaphor of Marriage to show the relationship between God (the husband) and his people, the church (the wife). When they are unfaithful to him it is like 'adultery'. James uses this image to name the people's 'friendship with the world' as 'spiritual adultery' and urges them to repent.

Word list

2 Greek has no punctuation. Better: 'You want don't get it; (so) you kill. You covet but can't have what you want; (so) you quarrel & fight.

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 4 | <i>desires</i> | sinful, self-indulgent pleasures |
| | <i>adulterous</i> | metaphorical: In OT people described as being unfaithful to God (e.g. Hosea 1:2) |
| | <i>world</i> | <i>ie</i> culture, structures and procedures organised without reference to God |
| 7 | <i>devil</i> | Satan, the tempter (Matt 4:3; 1 Thess 3:5) |
| 8 | <i>wash your hands, you sinners</i> | Ritual prior to worship in OT (Exodus 30:19-21. Became a symbol for moral purity (Isaiah 1:16-17) |
| | <i>double-minded</i> | one who has divided motives |
| 11 | <i>the law</i> | the OT law <i>e.g.</i> <i>Leviticus 19:16</i> |

Bible Connections

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| 4 | <i>desires</i> | <i>see</i> Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:13 |
| 5 | <i>God's jealousy</i> | <i>see</i> Exodus 20:5, 34:14; Zechariah 8:2 |
| 6-10 | <i>humble submission</i> | <i>c.f.</i> 1 Peter 5:5-9 |
| 6 | <i>God opposes the proud . . .</i> | <i>see</i> Proverbs 3:34 |
| 7 | <i>Come near to God and he will come near to you</i> | <i>c.f.</i> Exodus 3:1-6; 2 Chronicles 26:16-20 Heb 4:16; 7:19 |
| 11b, 12c | Don't judge | Matthew 7:1-5 |
| 12 | Only God has authority to judge | <i>see</i> John 5:22-23, 30. |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 2 *What does he mean 'kill'?*
- 3 *What do you not have?*
What are the wrong motives?
- 4 *Why 'adulterous'?*
- 5 *Where does scripture say....?*
- 6 *Why would God cause you to 'envy intensely'?*
- 7 *How do you 'submit to God'?*
Why will the devil flee?
- 8 *How do you come near to God?*
- 9 *How do you grieve ... if you don't feel like it?*
Why should you grieve etc?
- 11 *Why are they slandering one another?*
How is speaking against your neighbour against the Law?
- 12 *Why 'But you...'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

Why is it so extreme? — Kill (2), adulterous people (4), resist the Devil (7), grieve, mourn, wail (9) do not slander / judge (11)

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

- 2 *Covet c.f. envy and selfish ambition (3:14,16)*
- 3 *Wrong motives = selfish ambition (3:14,16)*
- 11 *Judges (3:1)*

I b) individual book,

- 6 *Proud — those with selfish ambition and envy (3:14 -16)*

c) whole Bible,

- 1 *Whited sepulchres (Matthew 23:27)*
- 2 *Do not murder / do not be angry (Matthew. 5:22,23)*
- 2b *You do not have because you do not ask (Matthew 7:7)*
- 4 *Israel's adultery e.g. (Jeremiah 3:20; Hosea 2:5ff)*
Jesus calling people adulterous in NT (Matthew 12:39; 16:4)
Choose this day whom you will serve (Joshua 24:15)
- 7 *Followed by 'humble yourself' (Proverbs 3:34)*
- 8 *Devil / Satan (Hebrew) (Revelation 20:2)*
- 9 *Godly grief.. that leads to salvation brings no regret. (2 Corinthians 7:10)*

- Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted (Mathew 5:4)
 Zacchaeus – half his possessions + 4 Xs to those he cheated (Luke 19:8)
 10 He who humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 18:14)
 11 Speaking evil linked to jealousy & selfishness (2 Corinthians 12:20; c.f. 1 Peter 2:1)
 12 Do not judge (Matthew 7:7)

d) Bible story.

See study 1

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?
 - 2 'Kill' is not literal but in (Matthew 5:21ff) sense.
 - 3 They do not have the status of teacher(?)
 The wrong motives are selfishness
 - 4 'Adulterous' is in the sense that they have gone after other 'god's'
 - 5 Where does scripture say - unspecified?
 - 6 Why would God cause you to 'envy intensely'?
 - 7 You 'submit to God' by obeying Him
 the devil flees when we are submitted to God?
 - 8 You come near to God by receiving /believing His Word
 - 9 You can't grieve if you don't feel like it(?)
 They should you grieve etc because of the waging of war within (1), the quarrels and fights (2) the 'adultery' (4) friendship with the world (4)
 - 11 They slander one another to 'get ahead'.
 It is against the Law because the Law forbids it.
 - 12 'But you' because you are setting yourself up in competition with the one Judge and Lawgiver.

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

James was 'extreme' because he feared the extinction of the church? C.f. Paul – the Galatians r/e circumcision (Galatians 5:12)

- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Quarrelling comes from inner jealousy. (1,2a) Your prayers are unanswered because they are self-centred. (2b,3) God jealously opposes the proud and graciously blesses the humble. (4,6) REPENT and God will restore you. (7-10) Brothers, /don't slander & judge one another – that is the right of the Lawgiver/ Judge alone. (11,12)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Don't flirt with evil by quarrelling, fighting and judging one another, rather submit to God and the Devil will flee.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 7**

Submit yourself, then, to God. Resists the Devil and he will flee from you.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

2 *God awaits prayer.*

4 *God is 'monogamous'!*

6 *God favours humility.*

7,8 *God is 'safe'!*

8 *God wants to 'draw near to us'.*

12 *God alone is the judge and Law giver.*

b) His grace?

6 *God gives grace to the humble.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

12 *Only one (Jesus) is able to save a destroy.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

1 *Confront jealousy as it battles within.*

4 *Choose whom you will serve - the world or God.*

7 *Submit to God and resist the devil.*

8 *Draw close to God.*

Remove your sin.

9 *Turn from your sin – openly.*

10 *Humble yourself before the Lord.*

11 *Do not slander one another.*

12 *Do not insult God by judging one another.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 8

James 4:13-5:6

Repent of your pride and greed

Background

James tackles the arrogant pride of some much-travelled business people. The first century AD was a period of great commercial activity, involving especially the Hellenistic cities of Palestine. Many Jews were active in these businesses. James wants the church members to appreciate sincerely God's control of affairs and his specific will for them.

In first century Palestine before AD70, land was increasingly held by a small group of very wealthy landowners. Smallholders were assimilated into these estates and these farmers were forced to earn their living by hiring themselves out to their rich landlords *cf* Jesus' parable in Matt 20:1-16. Paying workers by the day was an OT command.: Deut. 24:14-15; Leviticus 19:13; Malachi 3:5

In 5:1-6, James condemns the wealthy landowners who oppressed their workers and the poor. Their inclusion here does not necessarily imply they are part of the Christian church; James warns all who behave like this, judgment is coming to them.

Word list

4:13 <i>listen, you who say</i>	the language conveys a rather brusque tone
14 <i>mist</i>	or 'a puff of smoke'
5: 3 <i>eat your flesh like fire</i>	an image of God's judgment
4 <i>Lord almighty</i>	lit. 'Lord of Hosts' i.e. head of the army
6 <i>condemned</i>	a judicial term used in courts
<i>innocent men ..not opposing</i>	lit. 'the righteous man; he does not resist you.'

Bible Connections

4:14 <i>the short duration of life</i>	<i>see</i> Proverbs 27:1; Job 7:7,9,16; Psalm 39:5-6; Luke 12:16-20
4:16 <i>arrogant self-sufficiency</i>	<i>see</i> John 12:16; Romans 1:30; 2 Tim 3:4
4:18 <i>not doing the good one ought</i>	<i>see</i> Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 12:47
5:4 <i>unpaid wages 'cry out against you'</i>	Leviticus 19:13b; Deuteronomy 24:15; Malachi 3:5

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 13 *Who is speaking?*
Why does he say 'now listen'?
- 14 *What does he mean 'What is your life'?*
Why the image of the mist?
- 16 *What is their boast?*
Why is boasting evil?
- 17 *What is the good they should do?*
- 5:1 *Why target the rich? (is it the same as (13-17)?*
What is the misery that is coming upon them?
- 2 *Does wealth always rot?*
Why does silver and gold corrupt?
When will their corrosion testify against them?
- 4 *How do the wages cry out?*
- 5 *When is the day of slaughter?*
- 6 *How had they condemned and murdered innocent men?*
How might they have been 'opposing' them.

What surprises or confuses you?

The venom of his condemnation of the rich men. (5:1-6)

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

b) individual book,

- 5:1 *Rich people (1:10; 2:1-6)*
- 6 *The righteous man i.e. the believer in Jesus (c.f. 2:23)*

c) whole Bible,

- 14 *The worries of tomorrow (Matthew 6:34)*
Do not boast about tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1)
- 15 *The Lord's will - be joyful, give thanks, pray continually (1 Thess 1:17)*
The Lord's will in Paul's plans ((Rom 1:10; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7 cf Heb 6:3)
The Lord purposes good (Rom 8:39)
- 16 *Everything in the world – the cravings of the sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does (1 John 2:16)*
- 17 *The good that I would, I don't do (Romans 7:15,16)*
The servant that knew his masters will but did not make ready or act according to his will shall receive a severe beating (Luke 12:47)

- 5:1 Weep and howl c.f. the day of the Lord (Isaiah 13:6; 15:3; Amos 8:3)
 A man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possession (Luke 12:15, 16-20)
 Woe to you who are rich for you have received your comfort (Lk 6:24f)
- 2 Where moth and rust do not destroy (Matthe 6:20)
 Work man fair wage (Luke 10:7)
- 3 In the last days -the rich fool and judgement (uLek 12:15-21)
- 4 Daily payment for the poor commanded (Deuteronomy 24:14-15; Leviticus 19:13)c.f. parable of workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)
 Crying out – c.f. Cain's blood (Genesis 4:10)
 Lord Almighty – lit. Lord of Hosts cf David (1 Sam 17:45) Isaiah (Is 6)
 head of army – can and will impose his will.
 Your sins will find you out (Numbers 32:23)
- 5 Son remember in your life you received your good thing and Lazarus
evil things' (Luke 16:25)
 in the day of the slaughter (Isaiah 30:25)
- 6 c.f. Put your sword back in its place ...this has all taken place that the
 writings of the prophets might be fulfilled. (Matthew 26:52...56)
 A sheep is silent before his shearers so he did not open his mouth (Is53:7)

d) Bible story

See study 1

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 13 James / the Lord is speaking.
 He says 'now listen' because this is very important.
- 14 Your life means your total existence –possessions, relationships, plans, etc.
 The image of the mist signifies that it is fleeting.
- 16 Their boast are their plans for money making etc.
 Boasting is evil because it robs God of His credit.
- 17 The good is submission to God / His will and caring for the poor.
- 5:1 The businessmen / the rich are the powerful.
 The misery is the judgement of God.
- 2 Wealth always rots.
 Even silver and gold corrupt will ultimately?
 Their corrosion will testify against them on the day of judgment.
- 4 The wages cry out as God marks their injustice.
- 5 The day of slaughter is the day of judgement.
- 6 They have condemned the innocent man – Jesus.
 He (Jesus) has not resisted them – yet!

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
He speaks vehemently as he fears the young church is going to implode(?)

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Listen traders. Plotting, boasting of your future, sinfully ignores that God rules (13-16) Note - Ignoring doing good is a sin (17 Listen you wealthy land owners (1a): the wealth you are hoarding will come to nothing (1b-3), God knows you are withholding fair payment of workers (4), You have simply indulged yourselves. (5) You condemn the righteous man (Jesus?); He does not resist you. (6)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Don't let ignorance mask your sin.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 17**

Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is a sin.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

4:15 The Lord wills our future/the future.

17 God expects His people to do good

5:4 The Lord is totally in control of all things.

b) His grace?

15 The Lord is in complete control of your life.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

5:6 You condemned and murdered the righteous man (Jesus?)

He will not resist you – (yet).

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

4:13; 5:1 Pay very close attention to what the Lord says.

14 Examine your life / your mortality.

Acknowledge how fleeting are your days.

16 Face the fact that pride / boasting in achievement is evil.

17 Note - Omission of doing a good thing, is sin.

5:1 Live anticipating judgement and eternity

3 Note - Hoarded wealth is lost in future.

4,5 Note - 'your sin of selfish indulgence will find you out'

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Save and heal the “wanderer”

Background

The subject of this final section is judgement (5:7,9,11,12,15,16,17,18, 19,20)
The early church, like Jesus, knew neither the day nor the hour when He would return (Mark 13:32). James urges them to be patient, just as a Palestinian farmer waits for autumn rains in Oct-Nov before sowing, then on the spring rains in March-April for the swelling and ripening of the crop, to give the best yield. James thus urges patience – the judge is standing at the door’ (9)

James uses the example of OT prophets who persevered in the face of opposition or suffering. Job complained, but he never gave up his trust or disobeyed God. *c.f.* Hebrews 11.

The next section (13-17) is about prayer for the sick and it seems to guarantee healing for all in all circumstances. Such an answer to prayer is not our general experience. Perhaps James is addressing such sickness as in (1 Corinthians 11:30). ‘Many are sick and some have fallen asleep’. Repentance and confession of sin, James promises, would bring God’s healing and forgiveness. He sums up by encouraging the believers to save the wanderers.

Word list

7	<i>coming</i>	Gk <i>Parousia</i> became a technical term in early church for the expected return of Jesus in glory to judge the wicked and rescue the saints
8	<i>stand firm</i>	<i>literally</i> ‘establish your hearts’
11	<i>blessed</i>	the objective, unalterable approval and reward of God
12	<i>swear</i>	using God’s name to guarantee what we say is true.
	<i>condemnation</i>	= judgement (same root as judge in 5:9)
13	<i>suffering</i>	General term – all kinds of trials cf (2Tim 2:9; 4:5)
	<i>Cheerful</i>	not dependent on outer circumstances (Acts 27:22,25)
14	<i>elders</i>	<i>presbuteroi</i> , Jewish leadership e.g. (Acts 6:12) copied by the church e.g. (Acts 11:30; 14:22; 20:17) tasked to be ‘overseers’, <i>episcopoi</i> , often translated ‘bishops’ in English e.g. Acts 20:28)
	<i>anoint with oil</i>	a symbolic action <i>see also</i> Mark 6:13
15	<i>prayer</i>	Gk word implies a strong, fervent wish or petition

Bible Connections

7	<i>endure patiently</i>	<i>see</i> Psalm 37
	<i>the Lord’s coming</i>	<i>see</i> Matt 2:37,39; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Cor 15:23; 1

Thessalonians 2:19; 3:3; 4:15; 5:23

- 10 *the Lord's compassion and mercy* see Psalm 103:8; 111:4
- 12 *do not swear* see Matthew 5:34-37
- 13 *pray on all occasions* see Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17
- 14 *in the Lord's name* see John 14:14; 15:16 16:23; Acts 3:6,16; 4:7,10
- 15 *sin and sickness* see Mark 2:3-12; 1 Corinthians 11:27-30
- Healing not inevitable* see 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- 17 *Elijah prayed...* 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-46
- 3 1/2 years – judgment* Daniel 7:25; Revelation 11:12; 12:

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 7 *What is the Lord's coming?*
- 8 *What are you to 'stand firm' against?*
- 9 *Why would they grumble against each other?*
Why is the judge standing at the door?
- 10 *How were they blessed who persevered?*
- 11 *What did the Lord finally bring about?*
How does that show the Lord is full of compassion and mercy?
- 12 *What is it above?*
Why would you swear by Heaven etc.?
What will you be condemned to?
- 13 *Why does he ask questions in the progression?*
What would he pray for in trouble?
- 14 *Who are the church elders?*
Why anoint him with oil?
- 15 *How do you offer a prayer in faith?*
Why does he say 'the Lord will raise him up'?
Why 'if' he has sinned?
- 16 *How is confession related to healing?*
Who is 'a righteous man'?
- 17 *How was Elijah like us?*
Why 3yrs and six months?
- 18 *What part did prayer play?*
- 19 *What is truth?*
- 20 *What is the death he will be saved from?*
How will it cover over a multitude of sins?

What surprises or confuses you?

19 Where does 'the wandering soul' fit in to the passage?

2) The Context

S a) surrounding passage,

12 *Condemnation (lit. judgement)– day the Lord/the judge returns (5:9)*

13 *Prayer in trouble – for patience? (5:7)*

16 *A righteous person (5:6)*

b) individual book,

9 *The judge c.f. (3:1; 4:12)*

16 *Righteousness (1:20; 2:23; 3:18)*

21 *Save his soul (1:21)*

c) whole Bible,

7 *Coming of the Lord ('parousia') (Matthew 24:37; 2 Thessalonians 2:8)*

8 *Stand firm / (establish their hearts) as they wait for the Parousia (1 Thessalonians 3:13; c.f. 2 Thessalonians 2:17)*

Near / don't know the time (Mark 13:32)

11 *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake (Matt 5:10)*

12 *Swearing by (Matthew 5:34-36; 23:16 -22; 26:74)*

Paul swearing (Romans 1:9 2 Corinthians 1:23; 11:11 Galatians 1:20 Philippians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:5,10)

13 *Pray at all times (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)*

Paul singing at midnight (Acts 16:25)

14 *Anointing oil – symbol of holiness /set apart for God (Exodus 37:29; 40:9)*

15 *Raise him up (from the dead) (John 6:40,44,54; 11:19)*

Ask in Jesus name and it shall be done (John 14:13,14)

Sins are forgiven ((Luke 7:48; c.f. Romans 4:7)

That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died. But if we judged ourselves we would not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:30)

16 *In your name – prophesy, demons, mighty works? – I never knew you (Matthew 7:22)*

17 *Elijah prayed (1 Kings 17 & 18)*

Of like nature – not 'gods' (Acts 14:15), by nature, children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)

Credited to him as righteousness (2:23; Gen 15:6)

19 *What is truth? (John 18:38)*

I am the way, the Truth and the life. (John 14:6)

Straying like sheep (1 Peter 2:25)

20 *Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow (Isaiah 1:18)*

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

7 The Lord's coming is the return of Jesus.

8 'Stand firm' (be patient don't grumble) in the face of oppression.

9 They would grumble against each other as they didn't trust God.

The judge standing at the door as he is about to enter.

11 Those who persevere c.f. Job, were restored ++!

The Lord finally bring about the complete restoration of the Lord.

It shows the Lord is full of compassion and mercy because he worked all things for good.

12 'Above all' are fundamental doctrine and principles for the christian life.

You swear by Heaven etc. if you wanted to give maximum certainty.

The judged / condemned will be excluded from the presence of God.

13 The first 2 question highlight that whatever the circumstance seek the face of God

He prays for patience and an established heart (resolute mind) in time of trouble? (7,10)

14 The church elders are the Jewish community leaders.

Oil is a Jewish symbol of setting apart for God.

15 You offer a prayer in faith when you believe God will act.

'The Lord will raise him up' means heal.

'If he has sinned is a way that is connected to / a judgement on his illness

16 The illness is a 'judgement'. Confession acknowledges this.

Any who are in Christ are righteous.

17 Elijah was like us in that he was a sinner too.

3 years and six months speaks of God judgement.

18 Prayer was the vehicle by which God's will / judgment was expressed.

19 Jesus is truth.

20 Death is final separation from God.

What surprises or confuses you?

19 This is passage is about judgement. These verses conclude with our part in saving souls.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Be patient. Don't grumble against one another. The Lord will return soon as the Judge of all. (7-9) Be patient and persevere like Job. In the end, he proved God's compassion & mercy. (10f) Trust Him alone to avoid judgement. (11,12) Pray in all circumstances especially if someone is sick. Pray with the church and if the Lord wills he will be healed and forgiven. (13-15) Therefore repent of your sin – a righteous man is powerful. (16) God used Elijah to administer his judgement. (17,18) Be assured believers my save souls from death. (19,20)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Anyone may be used to bring back / save one who has wandered from the faith.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 19,20**

'(If anyone of you)... brings back a sinner from among you from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.'

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

9 *The Lord is the judge.*

10 *The Lord gives his name to his people.*

11 *The Lord works his purpose out inevitably.*

b) His grace?

11 *God in his mercy and grace has put off judgement for now.*

15 *The Lord is the one who saves / heals.*

19 *The Lord gives a way back for repentant sinners.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

14 *The Lord allows us to use His Name.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

7 Be patient / wait on the Lord's return, soon.

9 Do not grumble against one another

10 Learn perseverance from the saints of old.

Believe in and wait on God's good purposes

13 All are welcome

14 If you are sick – call on the church/leaders to pray for you

15 Be prepared to receive the prayer of faith for others

16 If convicted by the Holy Spirit, be prepared to share that with another.

Note - The prayer of a believer is powerful.

17 A believer may bring judgement or blessing.

19 Seek to retrieve wandering sinners.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Sharing the Word

Use

'Hearing the Word' can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers. *

Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not!)
Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus?
What should I do

n.b. Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

* The **process** is explained and practiced in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**

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