

WINSHAPE CAMPS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY

THE BOOK OF
JAMES

A STUDY OF
GENUINE
FAITH

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

We have broken the first half of the Book of James down into 5 weeks. You will go through a whole chapter over the span of two weeks. James may seem like a short book, but it is jammed packed with so much depth. We have spread the content out into 5 DAYS worth of work. So, take your time as you work through each day. Some days will be longer than others. Feel the freedom to take an extra day on a section. That is why we only mapped out 5 days of study.

Make sure to have a Bible with you for study each day. We used the ESV Bible translation when we wrote this study, but you can use other Bible translations too.

DAY 1 of each week will use the S.O.A.P. Method (more to come on S.O.A.P. below), giving you space to journal out the Bible passage and just observe the text. No commentaries, no searching the internet, and no study Bibles. We want you to take time evaluating the text and walk away with great questions.

DAY 2/DAY 3/DAY 4 We will be digging and digging deeper into Scripture in a method we call SHOVEL (more details on the following page), using inductive methods to go deeper into the text. We want you to slow down and see how much deeper you can go into the Word!

DAY 5 We want you to repeat Day 1 by conducting S.O.A.P. again on the exact same passage. However, this time you should have a wider, deeper, and fuller view of what James is trying to communicate!

BI-WEEKLY SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

You will meet virtually with your small groups six times this fall, meeting every other week. In our first small group meeting, we will cover the Prewrite section, pp. 6-11. Then, the second time we gather, we'll look at Week 1 of the study.

TOOLBOX | S.O.A.P

S.O.A.P. is a Bible study method that we trust will help you grow in your walk with Jesus. This method creates the space and the structure for you to slow down, spend intimate time in God's Word, and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you to Truth. The method is made up of four sections: Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. On Days 1 and 5 you will walk through this method to really dig into what the text says for yourself! Here is more direction on how to use S.O.A.P.

SCRIPTURE In this section, we have given you the most amount of space to write out the text itself. We encourage you to read through that week's passage slowly and write it out. Some people like to write out every verse or just a few that stick out to you. This space is created for you to do what you wish with it!

OBSERVATION After going through the passage, we want to interrogate the text. Ask the questions, "What does the text say? Who is speaking? What is happening? Where is it taking place? When did the event take place? Why is the author writing this? How did the people respond?" Look for keywords or phrases and any grammatical connections. Take notes and formulate questions in this section.

APPLICATION In this section, we are asking, “Now what do I do?” Look out for these applications:

EXAMPLE: Is there an example for me to follow? **CONDITION:** Is there a condition to meet?
SIN: Is there a sin to avoid? **VERSE:** Is there a verse to hide in my heart?
PROMISE: Is there a promise to claim? **CHALLENGE:** Is there a challenge to face?
COMMAND: Is there a command to obey?

*All Scripture is ... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.
2 Timothy 3:16*

PRAYER In response to the text, end your time in prayer. You could write out a prayer thanking God for any Truth revealed to you that day or any questions He may have placed on your heart. Take this space to be raw and honest about what God might be stirring in your heart.

TOOLBOX | SHOVEL

Most Bible studies begin and end with interpretation, asking, “What does this mean to me?” Our goal on Days 2-5 of our study is to help guide you to see the depth of the Scriptures. Each day will have a “Dig” or “Dig Deeper” section with a theme or focus. These activities only scratch the surface of inductively studying the Word of God, but we hope they will open your eyes to how much we can get out of two and a half chapters of James. We will unpack a few specific tools:

CROSS-REFERENCING We will guide you through certain passage that James would have wanted his audience to be reminded of when reading these passages. Several cross-referenced Scriptures will help build a bigger picture of the themes James was trying to communicate.

WORD STUDY Explore the original Greek that the Book of James was written in to highlight the meaning of the text.

GRAMMAR BREAKDOWN

- **CONTRAST:** opposites
- **COMPARISON:** similar
- **CAUSE & EFFECT:** if/then statements
- **TERMS OF CONCLUSION:** therefore, since, etc.
- **EXPRESSIONS OF TIME:** after this, when, etc.

MAKE A LIST/KEYWORDS Keywords unlock the passages and help identify the author’s emphasis and purpose. Make a list of what you learn from each reference.

METAPHORS/WORD PICTURES These figures of speech compare two seemingly unlike things. James is filled with figurative language like this, in an effort to bring more clarity to the reader!

JAMES

PRE- WORK

DAY 1 PREWORK

Overview, Themes, and James's Thesis

The letter of James is like a couple of swift punches from a boxer. It is extremely direct and does not beat around the bush. James did not shy away from addressing his audience in a way that directed them to examine their hearts. In our prework the next couple of days, we will learn more about who James was and who specifically he was writing to, but today we want to focus on the big picture of the Book of James. The message James was trying to communicate is worth our close attention because it applies to us as believers today! A quick glance at the text may shed light as to why this book has been so widely criticized. Some early believers even questioned its inclusion in the New Testament. The great Reformer Martin Luther has been quoted as saying that James is “an epistle of straw.”¹

If you briefly glance over the Book of James, you'll notice why some have found it to be a controversial book. Most New Testament letters are filled with the names “Jesus” or “Christ” scattered throughout the pages, but James only references Jesus explicitly twice. Therefore, it is no surprise that not much is said in James about Jesus' death and resurrection, two major themes and events in the Scriptures. Gospel centrality is a question mark as you first glance at this letter.

Several others have also critiqued James, saying the writing is choppy. It almost seems as if he bounced from one topic to the next with no major overarching theme. Those critical of the book find no cohesive message. However, the most famous criticism comes from those who say James contradicted Paul. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9 and make any observations about how someone is justified.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
Ephesians 2:8-9

Ephesians 2:8-9 summarizes one of Paul's most central teachings through his letters. At first glance, it seems as if James completely flipped this message upside down. Read James 2:24 and make your initial observations.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
James 2:24

What a tough statement to put on the table—one that skeptics of the divine inspiration of Scripture, who argue the Word isn't inspired by God, would jump on immediately. However, we should not be quick to dismiss the validity of this book. We will close today with the thesis of the book, gaining clarity between the concepts of *grace*, *faith*, and our *works*. Our goal in this study is to slow down and examine the text. What we discover will confirm the reasons this book has been cherished by Christians for many years.

James was direct and to the point. This book is one of the most practical of all of the New Testament writings. James addressed everyday issues that his audience at the time seemed to be wrestling with—speech, views on different socioeconomic classes, how to navigate conflict, how and why trials happen, and how to love those around you. All of these apply to us today! If you are breathing, you could use some guidance on those areas of life, right?

When you read Scripture or any letter, try to examine how someone writes. James's letter is chock-full of beautiful pictures and illustrations that actually connect us to other parts of Scripture.

Read the following passages of James to look at just a few of these pictures. Make notes of all the illustrations you see.
James 1:6 | 1:10-11 | 1:23-24 | 3:3-8 | 3:11-12

As we close out today's prework, know that James was as passionate as Paul was about Christians living out their faith in light of being justified by faith alone. As we dig more and fully understand James's message, you will see that we are saved by grace alone through faith and a genuine faith will result in good works. That is the thesis of James. It is all about what it means to follow Jesus! James's goal was for his audience to radically walk in obedience to God because of what He has already done for them through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. To set the scene for the Book of James, we must understand the relationship between *grace*, *faith*, and our *works*.

GRACE: Unmerited favor. God giving us something we do not deserve. Think of the following acronym for grace: God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

We deserve death; see Romans 6:23. We don't deserve God's love and compassion. But as we read in Ephesians 2:8-9 earlier, God wants to give us the gift of salvation, not because of anything we have done, but because He created us and loves us.

FAITH: Being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Heb. 11:1-2). Faith is the confidence that God will do what He promised He would do.

The Bible is loaded with God's promises. Some of those promises have been fulfilled, and some have yet to be completed. But God never breaks a promise, so we never have to doubt His love for us.

WORKS: Living a life in accordance with the assurance of our faith and following God's instructions in His Word. Ephesians 2:10 talks about how we are God's workmanship. It tells us God has good works that He has prepared for us to walk in. He wants to use us!

GRACE IS THE GROUNDS FOR OUR SALVATION.

FAITH IS THE MEANS BY WHICH WE RECEIVE THE GIFT OF SALVATION.

WORKS ARE THE EVIDENCE OF SALVATION.

If you were to open up a random mailbox (we do not encourage this by the way) and start to read a personal letter that someone had written, would you have any idea what was going on? Probably not! Before we read this letter (from God through the pen of James), we need to know who wrote the letter and who lives in the house. Our last two days of prework will cover both of these topics, and then we will jump into the study!

DAY 2 PREWORK

Who was James?

Today we are going to guide you through what the Scriptures tell us about James, to help us get context for what the author's relationship was to Jesus. According to historical context, this book is said to have been written in AD 44-49 in Jerusalem. Let's dive in to learn more about the author.

According to James 1:1, who is the author and how does he describe himself?

What do you think it means to be a servant in this context?

Read the verses below to learn all we can about James. Make observations regarding what you learn.

Mark 6:3

John 7:3-5

Acts 1:14

Acts 12:17

Acts 15:13-21

Acts 21:18

1 Corinthians 15:7

Galatians 1:19

Galatians 2:9

NOTE: James, the brother of John, was executed early on, in Acts 12:2, so he was not the James who emerged as a church leader.

Why do you think James didn't introduce himself in James 1:1 as the brother of Jesus?

Now that we have a little more context for the author of the letter, let's now look at his audience!

Who was the original audience?

According to James 1:1, who was James writing to?

The “twelve tribes” refers to the nation of Israel, comprised of the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. The imagery of the twelve tribes as God’s people continues into the New Testament, as Jesus chose twelve disciples to join Him in His kingdom ministry. Referencing James’s introduction, we can conclude that his audience was Jewish Christians.

Because of their rebellion against God during the time of the Old Testament, Israel faced difficulties that forced them to leave the Promised Land. They had to disperse across the nations that overtook them. This was a diaspora (scattering). In Acts 8, we see another dispersion, this time among Christ followers. Persecution forced these believers out of Jerusalem. They were scattered out of their homeland and in a sort of exile as they awaited the kingdom to come.

With that context, here are some facts we can gather about the audience:

- 1. They were Christ followers
- 2. Of Jewish descent
- 3. Who were facing persecution.

Read more about the “scattered” in the Book of Acts and make observations.

Acts 1:8 Acts 2:5 Acts 2:8-11 Acts 8:1

Where would they be witnesses?

Where were the people in Acts 2 from?

Why were the Christians forced to leave in Acts 8:1?

As we go throughout the Book of James, it will be very significant to know that James’s audience would have had a very distinct Jewish heritage. James knew his audience was rooted deeply in religious traditions, but his desire seemed to be to get deep into the heart of the reader. James will take us on a journey through parts of the Old Testament to understand more about the people of Israel.

THE BOOK OF
JAMES
STUDY BREAKDOWN

WEEK 1 Genuine Faith *Endures Trials*
JAMES 1:1-12

WEEK 2 Genuine Faith *Stands on the Word*
JAMES 1:13-27

WEEK 3 Genuine Faith *Seeks to Love All*
JAMES 2:1-13

WEEK 4 Genuine Faith *Results in Good Works*
JAMES 2:14-26

WEEK 5 Genuine Faith *Is Mindful of the Tongue*
JAMES 3:1-12

JAMES 1:1-12

GENUINE FAITH // ENDURES TRIALS

WEEK 1

DAY 1 S.O.A.P.

Trials: why do we have them and how should we respond? James didn't waste any time addressing the current reality of these scattered and persecuted believers. Let's use our "Toolbox" to dig into this passage and discover the truth that God has revealed in it. (Feel free to look back at pp. 4-5 if you need a refresher on S.O.A.P.)

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ENDURING TRIALS

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WEEK 1: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

JAMES 1:2-4

WEEK 1 JAMES 1:1-12

DAY 2

THE REASON FOR TRIALS

Shovel James 1:1-4

What a privilege it is to dig into God's Word! Begin your study in prayer, and then read James 1:2-4.

DIG | TOOL: CROSS-REFERENCING

Read these three passages about God's purpose for trials and make observations below.

JAMES 1:2-4

ROMANS 5:3-5

1 PETER 1:6-9

According to these passages, what attitude should we have when we are met with trials? Why?

What is happening, and what is being produced through these trials?

Based on these cross-references, what is the end result of trials?

DIG | TOOL: CONTEXT IS KING

Looking at 1 Peter 1:3-5, what has God done and what has He promised that allows believers to have joy or rejoice in trials?

DIG DEEPER | TOOL: METAPHOR | THE ART OF METALLURGY

Peter and James both used the Greek word *dokimion* to draw on a well-known metaphor from the ancient world. *Dokimion* brings to mind a word picture from the art of metallurgy (metal working). A master craftsman knew the conditions necessary for precious metals to reach their full potential. To purify metal, first, the craftsman heated the metal in a crucible over fire until the metal was melted. As the metal heated, slag would rise to the surface. The craftsman scraped these impurities off and repeated the process until the craftsman could see his reflection in the metal and know it was fully pure. Then the craftsman poured the purified metal into a mold where it solidified into what the craftsman had in mind from the very beginning. Peter and James drew on refinement and reshaping as two key aspects from this metaphor.

DOKIMION

James 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:7

What is found approved (genuine) after testing, focusing on the inevitable results of refinement

CRUCIBLE

A container that holds metal while being melted with high heat

SLAG

Anything that's not supposed to be in the metal, like another type of metal, debris, or air pockets

How do the components of this metaphor help us understand the purpose of trials?

Today, we unpacked how God is not far off, not surprised, and not blindsided by our trials. Instead, He is working intricately in the middle of the difficulties of life here on earth, refining and making us look more like Jesus because of His love for us. Take a moment to ask God what He is currently doing with the difficulties you face. Ask Him for wisdom on how to endure, knowing He has a purpose beyond your current understanding.

WEEK 1 JAMES 1:1-12

DAY 3

RESPONSES TO TRIALS

Shovel James 1:2-11

We have established that it's not if trials will come, but when. With this reality in mind, how should we respond when trials come to test and refine us? We might find ourselves doubting God or solely focused on getting out of the trial. Today, let's examine three ways to respond, as laid out in James 1:2-11. Begin in prayer. Ask God to guide your time in the Word today.

Response #1: COUNT IT ALL JOY | James 1:2-3

Given the purpose for trials that we discovered in Day 2 of our study, was James telling us how to feel? Or telling us how to think? Why?

In v. 3 James used the term "knowing." In the Greek this translates into *ginōskō*, which is defined as, "to know, especially through personal experience." How does what we know influence the way we perceive the trials we face? What point of view are we able to have?

How does this way of thinking differ from the world? Do you think people notice a difference in you because of the way you respond to difficulties?

Response #2: ASK GOD FOR WISDOM | James 1:5-6

Trials and confusion may go hand and hand. Look up the following passages to discover more about wisdom from above. Psalm 25:4-5 | Daniel 2:20-23 | 2 Peter 2:9

Read Mark 9:20-27. How did Jesus respond to the father in this account? Is this the same kind of doubting mentioned in James 1:6? Look up *diakrino* in the Greek. How is this doubting defined?

Response #3: GIVE GLORY TO GOD | James 1:9-10

How might poverty and wealth act as trials for Christians?

How do people in each circumstance uniquely give glory to God in light of the gospel?

Take a moment and meditate on Psalm 46:1-3.

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

DAY 4

REWARD FOR TRIALS

Shovel James 1:12

Based off what we have learned this week, how does James 1:2-4 connect with James 1:12? Ask God to lead you as we connect the last verse of this section to what we have learned!

Read Matthew 5:10-12 and list any observations you see that may be connected to James 1:12.

God will continue to allow trials to come into your life to refine you until He looks at you and sees His reflection. In other words, this side of eternity, we will constantly be going through the storms of this world, but God is with us in the middle of them. When, according to James 1:12, will we receive the crown of life?

Ultimately, who is given the promise of the crown of life? What does God desire our ultimate result to be in trials?

Take a moment to examine your heart. Do you truly realize the love that God has for you? Press in to whatever may be going on in your heart.

WEEK 1 JAMES 1:1-12

DAY 5 S.O.A.P.

Go back through James 1:1-12 with the S.O.A.P. method, incorporating everything you have learned this week. We hope this week you fell more in love with God by digging into Scripture! (See pp. 4-5 for help.)

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ENDURING TRIALS

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WEEK 1: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

JAMES 1:2-4

JAMES 1:13-27

GENUINE FAITH // STANDS ON THE WORD

WEEK 2

DAY 1 S.O.A.P.

S

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STAND ON THE WORD

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WEEK 2: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13
JAMES 1:13-15

WEEK 2 JAMES 1:13-27

DAY 2

THE PROCESS OF TEMPTATION

Shovel James 1:13-15

Substance of Temptation: WHAT IS IT?

Last week, we learned that God uses trials to help us grow, but here James was talking about temptation. What is the difference between trials and temptations?

James provided guidance for when, not if, we face temptation. Is temptation sin? Look up Matthew 4:1-11 and Hebrews 4:14-16 for more.

Read John 10:10. Who is up against us? Read James 1:16,22,26. What word sticks out?

Do you feel the tension in your life between a God who has come to bring life and an enemy who has come to kill, steal, and destroy? How have you seen this play out in your life?

Source of Temptation: WHO'S TO BLAME?

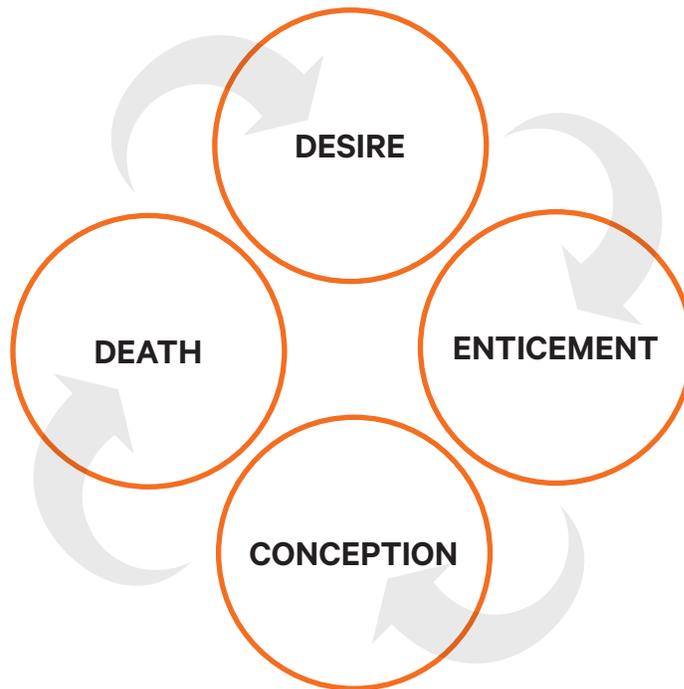
Where does temptation come from? Is it from God? Is it fair to say "the devil made me do it"? Are we to blame? Look at the following passages to inform your answers.

Malachi 3:6 | Romans 7:18 | Galatians 5:19-21 | Ephesians 6:11 | Hebrews 2:18 | James 4:7

Read Genesis 3:12-13. How did Adam and Eve respond to God? Do you see that response in your life? Who did Adam and Eve recognize as the source(s) of the evil they brought into the world?

Steps of Temptation: WHERE DOES IT GO?

Make observations from Romans 7:14-25 and James 1:13-15 regarding the steps involved in temptation. With this knowledge, ideate how you can overcome the process of temptation.



DIG DEEPER | HEART EXAMINATION

Is desire a bad thing? Where in your own life do you see broken desires manifesting themselves?

How do you naturally respond to temptation? How does James 1:13-15 help you be aware?

Sin is appealing, looking like it will fulfill your desires and bring you pleasure. But every single time, sin leads to further brokenness and death. Do you agree? How have you found this to be true in your own life?

Close your time by reading Psalm 51. This psalm points to confession to the Lord. Perhaps you find yourself asking the question: "How many times have I sinned and confessed to God and then fallen back into this cycle again and again?" God so badly wants you to experience the freedom that He offers you. Examine your heart. Is there any unconfessed sin in your life? Know and trust that He has grace upon grace for you! Take the sin to Him.

WEEK 2 JAMES 1:13-27

DAY 3

GOD'S CALL TO ACTION

Shovel James 1:13-27

James started the letter to his readers with something like, "I know you are scattered and facing trials. Persevere! There is temptation coming from all angles. Resist! As followers of Christ, we get to take action! We not only hear the Word (the gospel), but we do it!" Begin by praying to our Heavenly Father, asking Him to teach you and transform you.

DIG | TOOL: KEYWORDS AND CROSS-REFERENCING

Take a look at James 1:13-27 and record everything you learn about the word.

Look up the following cross-references to expand your understanding of the word.

Psalms 119:11 | Colossians 3:12-17 | 2 Timothy 3:16-17 | Hebrews 4:12

DIG | TOOL: COMPARE & CONTRAST

James told us to be "doers of the word" (Jas. 1:22a). Commands are key to understand what God calls and doesn't call us to walk in. Make a list of all the things that James said a believer should or shouldn't do in verses 13-26.

DO

DON'T

Close your time today in prayer. Thank God for providing clarity on how to walk in the abundant life (John 10:10)!

DAY 4

SOLUTIONS TO TEMPTATION

Shovel James 1:16-27

Start today by thanking God for not leaving you unarmed against temptation. We are going to dive into three key reminders and the power they hold. Spend a moment continuing to examine your heart as we seek to know God more.

DIG DEEPER | REMEMBER

Remember GOD'S CHARACTER.

Read James 1:16-17. Make observations about who God is in relation to trials and temptations.

God is sovereign (the Creator of lights) and dependable (unchanging). How do these two characteristics boost your confidence in Him? Do you believe these truths? What happens if we don't believe them to be true? Think back on some of the contrasts earlier in the chapter.

Remember GOD'S WORD.

James 1:18 says, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth." What is the word of truth?

"Brought us forth" is translated from the Greek word *apokueó*. Look at the definition below and compare James 1:15 and 1:18.

APOKUEÓ

"to produce; to bring forth as from the womb; to give birth to"

Remember GOD'S PLAN.

What does it mean to be "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18)? Note James's original audience.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Make observations about: 1) our previous state as unbelievers, 2) God's actions, and 3) our current state as believers.

Why do you think James 1:22, "... be doers of the word ..." is vital when we face trials and temptations? Note also James 1:12.

Close this week by examining the good works God has prepared in advance for you to walk in!

WEEK 2 JAMES 1:13-27

DAY 5 S.O.A.P.

This side of eternity will be filled with a variety of difficulties, some from our fleshly desires and some from the circumstances of the broken world we live in. Today look at how this passage can transform your approach to struggling and suffering well in this broken world.

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STAND ON THE WORD

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WEEK 2: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13
JAMES 1:13-15

JAMES 2:1-13

GENUINE FAITH // SEEKS TO LOVE ALL

WEEK 3

DAY 1 S.O.A.P.

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WEEK 3: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

MATTHEW 22:37-39

JAMES 2:13

1 JOHN 4:19

WEEK 3 JAMES 2:1-13

DAY 2

GOD'S ECONOMY

Shovel James 2:1-7

Remember, the Book of James was written as one letter and only divided up into chapters and verses later. Chapter 2 continues the thoughts started in Chapter 1. James now further addressed issues for the wealthy and poor in the churches to whom he was writing. This idea, first introduced in 1:9-11, was now discussed in light of religion that is pure in 1:27. Take a few minutes to pray to our Father, asking Him for humility, understanding, transformation, and wisdom.

DIG | TOOL: GREEK WORD STUDY

RELIGION

THRESKEIA

Religious worship, external worship acts

This word comes from the root word *thrēskos*, which means to fear, tremble, or worship God. It's a posture of life.

According to James 1:26-27, what is pure religion?
How does this immediately come up in chapter 2?

PARTIALITY OR FAVORITISM

PROSOPOLEPSIA

Respect of persons

To make a judgment based on either an outward circumstance or appearance

What can we observe about the sin of partiality in James 2:1-7?
What did James say to hold, instead of judgment (v. 1)?

DIG DEEPER | TOOL: CROSS-REFERENCE

The economy of God is different than the economy of man. Man's tendency can be to hoard material things to gain power, security, or indulgence. Jesus, the Creator and Sustainer of all, teaches us to place value on the eternal, rather than the temporary. God demonstrates this value in how He treats the materially poor of this world. Make observations on the passages below.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

JAMES 2:5

Because of sin we are all equally broken. Read Luke 7:36-50.

What was the Pharisee's attitude toward the sinful woman? What was Jesus' point in His teaching?

Finally read Romans 3:23. What was true for both the Pharisee and the sinful woman in the Luke 7 story? How does this truth help explain God's economy?

Close in prayer, asking God to reveal any hidden prejudice, partiality, or impurity in your heart. We cannot ignore this reality in our world, and God does not stop highlighting it in James!

DAY 3

LOVE GOD / LOVE PEOPLE

Shovel James 2:8-9

Begin today by reading Matthew 22:34-40. Pray for a deeper desire to love God today. This love for God will change the way we see the world and the people around us.

The original audience for the Book of James was a group of Christians with a Jewish background. It seems as if James was focused throughout the book on things they must do, but truly James was after, and more importantly Jesus is after, their hearts—for them to love God and to love people. Let's connect some dots today between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Our focus is on James 2:8-9—what this “royal law” (v. 8) is and how we are to live it out.

DIG | TOOL: CROSS-REFERENCES

Make observations on the following passages and see how they help build a fuller understanding of the “royal law” mentioned in James 2:8-9.

MATTHEW 22:34-40	DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5	LEVITICUS 19:34
	LEVITICUS 19:1-18	ROMANS 13:8-10

WEEK 3 JAMES 2:1-13

DIG DEEPER | TOOL: CONNECT THE DOTS

In the Jewish tradition, Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is referred to as the Shema, which comes from the Hebrew word “to hear.” Faithful Jews would have recited this command twice a day.

Put yourself in their shoes. What would reciting this passage twice a day remind you to do?

According to Leviticus 19:18 and 19:34, how does an overflowing love for God impact the way a person treats others?

James’s audience came from Jewish descendants. Their religious upbringing would have emphasized keeping the law in a way similar to the zealotry of the religious leaders.

According to Romans 13:8-10, what actually fulfills the law?

Given the context held by both the religious leaders and James’s original audience in knowing the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), what motives do you think the religious leaders might have had in asking Jesus this question? Would they have recognized His answer?

Read Exodus 20:1-17. List the 10 commandments below.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Do you notice anything about the type of relationship the first three commandments are focused on? The fourth commandment speaks of the Sabbath, a day of rest, showing Israel that God was in control.

What type of relationships do the last six commandments focus on?

How does this pattern connect with Matthew 22:34-40 and James 2:8? Think about those two relationships: God and people.

As we close out today, take a moment to examine your heart through the lens of Matthew 22. Ask yourself: How is my intimacy with God? Do I spend intentional time with Him daily? Do I value anything more than Him? Do I truly love all my neighbors as much as I love myself? Am I focused on my needs or the needs of others? Do I see people the way Jesus sees people? Ask God to reveal these things in your heart. He wants your full attention, your full devotion. He is inviting you into deeper relationship with Him and into His Kingdom work here on earth.

DAY 4 MERCY OVER JUDGMENT

Shovel James 2:8-9

Open by reminding yourself of the gospel. When did you first believe it, and when did you start to live it out? Read 1 John 4:7-12 to open up our time together. Spend a moment in prayer. Ask the Lord to reveal any judgment in your heart. Ask for a heart that is quick to extend mercy.

Read Matthew 23:23. Here we see Jesus admonishing the religious leaders for obeying tiny details of the law and neglecting what was most important. What did Jesus say they neglected?

In Day 2 of this week's study, we talked about God's economy. In our spiritual poverty, what judgment do we deserve? Who has shown us mercy? How?

We are no longer under the law of Moses, but we are now under the law of Christ, the law of freedom!

Reflect on the word *freedom*. What has Christ freed us from? What has Christ freed us for?

We could never keep the law on our own. The law showed us our sin and our need for a Savior.

Read Romans 8:3-4. How should this truth help with freely live out the royal law and the law of liberty?
Read Romans 7:1-7.

Take a moment to reflect on the idea of showing mercy because you have been given mercy. How does knowing you have been extended so much mercy change the playing field? We are all sinful and broken. In God's economy, lined up against the King of kings and the Lord of lords, we are all nothing in comparison to Him. We were all once poor and separated from God, but God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive together in Christ (Eph. 2:4-6). Love your neighbor the way Jesus loves us, unconditionally and with no partiality!

WEEK 3 JAMES 2:1-13

DAY 5 S.O.A.P.

Finish out this week using your Toolbox to see all that God has revealed to you about this passage this week. Don't shy away from making it personal. This is a convicting passage, as we are constantly battling the sin of favoritism. Ask God to reveal any broken areas of your heart that He wants to make new. Finally think about those around you. Who do you need to extend mercy to instead of putting on the stand in judgment?

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WEEK 3: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

MATTHEW 22:37-39

JAMES 2:13

1 JOHN 4:19

JAMES 2:14-26

GENUINE FAITH // RESULTS IN GOOD WORKS

WEEK 4

DAY 1 S.O.A.P.

James was as passionate as Paul about Christians living out their call in light of being justified by faith alone. As we dig to fully understand James's message, you will see that we are saved by grace alone through faith, and a genuine faith will result in good works. James's thesis is all about what it means to follow Jesus! James's goal was for his audience to radically walk in obedience because of what Jesus has already done for them on the cross. To set the scene for the Book of James, we must understand the relationship between grace, faith, and our works. At first glance, this may seem like a controversial passage, but after some digging you will see the beauty of what James was calling these believers, and us, to walk in. Begin in prayer!

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WEEK 4: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

**EPHESIANS 2:8-10
JAMES 2:18**

WEEK 4 JAMES 2:14-26

DAY 2

LIVING FAITH VS. DEAD FAITH

Shovel James 2:14-26

We are stepping into a deeper topic today. Don't feel overwhelmed or inadequate if you don't understand what the text is saying. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and convict you in this time. Remember you are spending time getting to know and understand who God is and what He has for us. Remember John 10:10; He has abundant life for us. Stop and pray.

DIG | TOOL: WORD STUDY

When you see a word repeated multiple times in a book of the Bible, your ears should perk up. If a word is used 11 times in just a few verses—as *faith* is in James 2:14-26—then you should dig deeper. Here in James, two types of faith are being referenced. Read James 2:14-26, and then below record all of your observations about the word *faith* in the passage.

FAITH

Using your observations listed above, build out a definition for the two types of faith.

LIVING FAITH

DEAD FAITH

DIG DEEPER | TOOL: CROSS-REFERENCES

At first glance, it may look like this passage contradicts Paul's teachings. However, all of Scripture is God-breathed and therefore perfect and without error (2 Tim. 3:16). If something does not appear to line up, our understanding, not the Bible, is off. Let's compare James and Paul's writings. Both men would agree that we are saved by grace through faith and that someone is justified (declared to be in right standing before God) by faith, not as a result of works. They would also both agree that saving faith is active, and thus someone is justified (displayed to be in right standing before God) through works.

GRACE IS THE GROUNDS FOR OUR SALVATION.

FAITH IS THE MEANS OF SALVATION.

Paul: Romans 3:28 | Romans 4:1-4 | Romans 5:1-5
Galatians 2:15-16
James: James 2:21-23
(Note: both reference Genesis 15:6.)

WORKS ARE THE EVIDENCE OF SALVATION.

Paul & Jesus: Matthew 12:33-37 | Galatians 5:6 and 5:13
James: James 2:22

Tomorrow we will unpack this idea more. Make a list of your questions, and ask God to bring clarity this week!

Today we will unpack James's argument that a genuine faith results in action. Put yourself in James's shoes. James was the half-brother of Jesus, and he had previously rejected the truth of the gospel. James wanted these Christians to examine their hearts in light of all that Jesus has done. Let's do the same today. Begin with prayer, and ask the Lord to build your confidence in what He has done!

Point #1: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" (Jas. 2:14).

Read James 2:14-17. James once again spoke on seeing others and meeting their needs. Compare this passage in James with the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. What was James's point?

Point #2: "Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (Jas. 2:19).

Last week we talked about the Shema (Deut. 6:4). Read the Shema again and look for any references to it in James 2:18-19.

James challenged a dead orthodoxy. It is not enough to give only mental assent to belief about God, or believe God with your mind. Read Matthew 8:28-29. Who did the demons recognize, and what did they know about their fate?

Point #3: Two familiar faces—Abraham and Rahab

In James 2:20-24, James referenced Abraham's actions in Genesis 22. Abraham was instructed to take his son Isaac, who was born miraculously by God's plan, and kill him as a sacrifice to God. He obeyed all that God had instructed him, until God intervened to save Isaac's life. How did this action demonstrate Abraham's faith?

Rahab, a Gentile and a former prostitute, had faith that led to action. Read Joshua 2:1-13, Matthew 1:5-16, and Hebrews 11:31.

How would you describe Rahab's statement of faith in Joshua 2:11? How did her actions demonstrate her faith? How was she honored for her faith?

Having sound doctrine is not enough, God calls us to genuine faith in action. Calling Him God or Lord is not enough. The gospel is active in and through our lives, and it results in good works, works that demonstrate the genuineness of our faith. What is the nature of your faith? What does it look like? What effect does it have on your life?

WEEK 4 JAMES 2:14-26

DAY 4

YOU ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP

Shovel James 2:14-26

God displayed His love for us by sending His Son to die in our place. This sacrifice changes everything. As we close out our Shovel section this week, let's explore God's purpose for us. Approach today with a heart of anticipation. Believe that as God reveals his deep love for you, your heart will be stirred to greater love and greater obedience. Begin in prayer.

All of Scripture fits together seamlessly. Today let's dig into a few Greek words, a few of Paul's writings, a teaching from Jesus, and then land the plane to close out chapter 2.

DIG | TOOL: CROSS-REFERENCES

James 2:1 describes the audience as believers who "... hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ..." He is speaking to Jewish Christians. Let's look at a few of Paul's teachings and see what results from being in Christ.

ROMANS 6:4

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

GALATIANS 2:20

What does it mean to be made new? How have you seen this in your life? In the lives of other believers?

James used strong language to describe a faith that is dead. At one time, we were all dead in our sins, separated from God. Look at the two passages below and identify where we once were, God's intervention, the new creation He makes us, and our new calling in Christ. Reference where in the passage you find these observations. Then write out your story!

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Old:

But God:

New:

Our calling:

TITUS 3:1-8

Old:

But God:

New:

Our calling:

YOUR NAME

Old:

But God:

New:

Your calling:

Looking at James’s argument in James 2:14-26 and these two passages from Paul’s letters, do you think they include a different message? Why? Do you think Paul would agree or disagree with our statements from Day 2 of this week’s study? Grace is the grounds for our salvation. Faith is the means of salvation. Works are the evidence of salvation.

DIG | TOOL: GREEK STUDY

Look at the Greek word below and make observations about what you see.

Workmanship, Ephesians 2:10

POIÉMA

“Something made”

Where we get the word poem
or poetry in English

Ephesians 2:10 paints a beautiful picture of our new status as God’s creation. We were dead in our sins and hopeless to change. While we were stuck in our brokenness and sin, God stepped in and changed everything. We are born again by His grace through faith. God has created believers twice—first in His image as humans and second as new creations in Christ Jesus. His work makes us new. Paul described us as God’s workmanship or masterpiece. The Greek word *poiēma* is a poignant illustration of what God desires for our new life. Like a stunning portrait or a moving poem, the nature, character, and intent of the creator are shown through the masterpiece. God has sent us into a lost world so that it can observe us and learn what He is like. The lost world is going to look at the way you love, the way you serve, the way you live, and attribute your actions to God. He desires to put you on display for His glory, through His transformational work in your life and the good works that result from it.

Spend a moment unpacking your story, how God has saved you and redeemed you. Reference the section on the previous page to unpack it more fully.

How might your view of yourself need to change to align with God’s description of you as His masterpiece? How would your life look differently if you truly believed your identity in Christ and lived it out?

End in prayer, asking God to help you embrace this truth in your heart!

WEEK 4 JAMES 2:14-26

DAY 5 S.O.A.P.

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WEEK 4: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

**EPHESIANS 2:8-10
JAMES 2:18**

JAMES 3:1-12

GENUINE FAITH // IS MINDFUL OF THE TONGUE

WEEK 5

DAY 1 S.O.A.P.

James was adamant in explaining how a genuine faith should transform every aspect of a believer's life, including something as small as the tongue. This small part of the body has the potential for massive impact. Let's use our "Toolbox" to dig into this passage and discover the truth that God has revealed in it.

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MIND YOUR TONGUE

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WEEK 5: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

LUKE 6:45
JAMES 3:8-9

WEEK 5 JAMES 3:1-12

DAY 2

SEVEN METAPHORS

Shovel James 3:1-12

Metaphors take abstract ideas and make them more clear and tangible. Many metaphors are used multiple times in the Bible. It is key that we become familiar with these metaphors and understand what is being said. Begin today by praying for clarity and understanding.

DIG | TOOL: METAPHOR

Make observations about the following metaphors. We will take a closer look at them in Day 3 of this week's study.

BITS (James 3:3)

Read James 3:3 and 3:5. What does this metaphor highlight about the tongue? Apart from a bit, what directs a horse? Is it an internal or external motivation? Remember, a horse is a living creature.

RUDDER (James 3:4)

Read James 3:4 and 3:5. What does this metaphor highlight about the tongue? If a rudder was not present, what would direct the ship—the internal forces for the ship or external forces of the sea?

FIRE (James 3:5-6)

James 3:5 is the hinge verse for the first 3 metaphors, highlighting that something very small can have a huge impact. How does the fire metaphor expand on this idea in verse 6?

A WILD BEAST (James 3:7-8a)

Read James 3:7-8a. What does this metaphor compare? Who did James say cannot tame the tongue? So, who must we rely on when we try to "... bridle [our tongues]" (Jas. 1:26)?

POISON (James 3:8b-10)

Read James 3:8. Why do you think he used the metaphor of poison here? Use the surrounding verses to build your observation. From Scripture, what do we know to be poisonous that James might have been highlighting here?

Read James 1:8. Does this sound similar to verses 9 and 10? Make your observations below.

WATER (James 3:11)

Read James 3:11. How does this metaphor connect with James 1:8?

James continually pressed into the heart of a believer. How does this water metaphor connect with the theme of our hearts?

FRUIT-PRODUCING PLANTS (James 3:12)

How does this metaphor connect with James's argument in chapter 2 about faith and works? How would you describe the tongue based off of these metaphors? We will take a deeper look into the characteristics of the tongue in our next day of study.

God desires so deeply for believers to examine their hearts. How is your speech? Think through what is coming out of the well of your heart. End today by asking God to chip away at anything in your heart that does not glorify Him.

DAY 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TONGUE

Shovel James 3:1-12

Today we will examine the qualities of the tongue. Identifying these characteristics will build our awareness and allow us to fully surrender it to God. To control your tongue, you need to understand it. Like a doctor, James is asking us to open our mouths and stick out our tongues, so he can give us a good examination. Let's dive into these metaphors. Begin in prayer; ask God to give you wisdom.

DIG DEEPER | TOOL: UNDERSTAND THE METAPHORS

POWERFUL (vv. 3-5)

James provided us with two visual aids to describe the power of the tongue, horses (v. 3) and ships (v. 4). If you have ever ridden a horse, you know two things: they are big, and they are incontinent—which overall is not a great combination. However, horses can be controlled. A small piece of metal called a bit, which sits in a horse's mouth, can be used by the rider to direct it.

James then spoke of the rudder of a ship. The U.S.S. Eisenhower weighs more than 91,000 tons, is 1,100 feet long, has a 280,000-horsepower engine, and carries nearly 100 aircraft. Now this will blow your mind: the rudder of the U.S.S. Eisenhower is just a tenth of one percent of the ship.²

How do these metaphors put this power in perspective? Stop and think about things you or others have said or not said that have changed the path of your life. Do you see the power?

According to verse 5, what is the tongue capable of? What does "... boast[ing] great things ..." mean, and what sin does it indicate?

DESTRUCTIVE (vv. 5-6)

The tongue's power is a neutral characteristic. It can be positive or negative. This next characteristic is strictly negative. The tongue has an inherently destructive nature. On October 8th, 1871, some say Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over a lantern and started the historic Chicago fire. 300 people died and 17,450 buildings were destroyed. The tongue is like a match. It can set things aflame.³

When have you seen this play out in your life? Where have you seen destruction with words?

WEEK 5 JAMES 3:1-12

Read verse 6. What does it mean that the tongue is “... a world of righteousness ...”? How does verse 6 describe the tongue differently than any other part of the body? What is it capable of doing to the whole body? Read Matthew 15:11.

What other observations can you make about the tongue from verse 6?

UNCONTROLLABLE (vv. 7-8)

James took us to the zoo in verse 7, “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind.” Think for a second about all the incredible things we have trained wild animals to do. There are people who raise lions and tigers as pets; dog training is a profession.

Who can tame the tongue? Read verse 8.

The tongue is beyond our control, because it operates out of the overflow of what is within our hearts.

Read Luke 6:45. How does this passage help us approach controlling the tongue? How can it be controlled?

REVEALING (vv. 9-12)

The diagnostics continue. James has already established that the tongue is enormously powerful, relentlessly destructive, and beyond our human control. He then tacked on one last characteristic: the tongue is revealing, showing what is going on inside. The tongue could be considered a spiritual stethoscope; it gives us a pulse on what is truly going on in our heart. Verses 9 and 10 show how inconsistent we can be with our tongue.

How have you seen this inconsistency play out in your life? Where do you see yourself praising? Cursing?

James pointed to nature to highlight how unnatural this inconsistency is. Read verses 11 and 12. James highlighted that a product is typically consistent with its source.

In these metaphors, what does the product represent and what does the source represent? How does that information play into verses 9 and 10? Read Matthew 12:33-35 for further context.

End today in prayer. Ask for God to purify the well and for the source of your words to come from God, not your flesh. Take a moment to evaluate your speech. What have you been unaware of that you might need to address?

What a privilege it is to dig into God's Word! Begin your study in prayer. Today we want to see what should be coming up out of the heart of someone who has a genuine faith. Let's cross-reference and learn more about speech, words, and the source of the heart.

DIG | TOOL: CROSS-REFERENCES

John Calvin wrote, "Bad things don't produce good things. So, a person who is not right with God and walking daily in his presence cannot consistently speak pure and helpful words." How vital is our time with Jesus when it comes to what comes out of our mouths? Does it make sense that when I am intimate with Jesus, my words will reflect Him? Remember the correlation between genuine faith and actions. Read Psalm 19:14

What words are penetrating our hearts? Let's take a look at God's words, man's words, and Satan's words. Evaluate for yourself which words are being spoken louder in your heart.

GOD'S WORDS

Genesis 1 | Psalm 33:6-9
2 Timothy 3:16 | Hebrews 4:12
Hebrews 11:3

SATAN'S WORDS

Genesis 3:1-5 | Matthew 4:8-9
John 8:44

MAN'S WORDS

Proverbs 10:11 | Proverbs 18:21
Luke 6:45 | Romans 3:10-14

We are capable of life or death; that is a significant realization. It also highlights the tension between our flesh and the Spirit at work within us. Look up the following passages for specific guidance on areas where we might fall short in our speech. Which passage do you need to memorize to help keep yourself in check?

Bragging | Jeremiah 9:23-24

False Teaching | Matthew 7:15-20

Gossip | James 4:11

Lying | Psalm 119:163

Slander | Proverbs 11:13

God wants the gospel to shape every part of your life. How do His words hit you? Do you believe them? Do they motivate your actions and words?

WEEK 5 JAMES 3:1-12

DAY 5 S.O.A.P.

James has shown us the truth about our tongues. They are powerful, destructive, uncontrollable, and revealing. How should we respond? Should we just not open our mouths and be silent the rest of our lives? This option seems safer, but it's not really practical. Instead, we seek God's help and wisdom, because what is impossible for man is extremely possible for God. Take some time to examine the way you speak to God, yourself, and others. Ask God for help being cautious and wise with your words.

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MIND YOUR TONGUE

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WEEK 5: MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

LUKE 6:45
JAMES 3:8-9

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