



James | An interactive discussion guide

Instructions:

Thank you for joining an online or off-site Bible Study as part of your Church on the Hill experience. long to exalt Christ and to rightly understand the Word of God. To aid in this, we have developed the following path to help you on this journey:

1. **Join a Bible Study Group:** If you are still trying to decide which group to join, you can visit CometotheHill.com/groups (available beginning 4/12/2020) to find a group. Each group has a unique facilitator and platform where they meet. Some meet via conference call while others use Zoom or other online platforms.
2. **Read and study the passage assigned for the appropriate week:** The table below will assist you in knowing what passage the group will be studying for the week.
3. **Answer the discussion questions:** You may find it helpful to answer the discussion questions ahead of the group meeting so that the discussion is more fruitful. In addition, you may have new questions to discuss. That is encouraged!
4. **Meet together to discuss:** When the group gathers, prayer requests are often shared, a song may be sung, and we simply “catch up” on life. Then we discuss the questions.
5. **Repeat:** Repeat the process with the next passage!

Pro Tip: Download the Church Center App for better access to groups and group resources!



Part 1 | Introduction and Background Information

Author: In the New Testament, there are apparently five men by the name of James, but only two who might conceivably have written this epistle—James the apostle, or James the half-brother of Jesus. Since it is almost certain that the apostle James (the son of Zebedee) was killed by Herod in A.D. 44 (before this epistle could have been written), traditionally the author has been assumed to be James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem and half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3).

Date: It is difficult to date the book of James. Some place it very early, around A.D. 45, making it the first New Testament book. Others date it quite late.

Theme: Christianity in action.

Historical Background: The pilgrimage of James to faith in Christ is fascinating. At first Jesus’ family was hostile to his ministry (John 7:5) and, in fact, tried to stop it at one point (Mark 3:21). Yet after Jesus is ascension, his mother and half brothers are listed among the elderly believers (Acts 1:4). For James, this conversion may have resulted from Jesus post resurrection appearance to him (1 Cor. 15:7).

James eventually emerged as a leader of the church in Jerusalem. It was to James that Peter reported after his miraculous escape from Herod's prison (Acts 12:17). James presided over the first Jerusalem council which decided the important question of how to handle Gentile converts (Acts 15). James was consulted by Paul during his first trip to Jerusalem after his conversion (Galatians 1:19), and then James joined in the official recognition of Paul’s call as an apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8-10). It is to James that Paul later brought the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-25).

Purpose: While James clearly stands in the tradition of other Christian writers, he has some special concerns. The relationship between rich and poor crops up at various points (1:9-11; 5:1-6). He is concerned about the use and abuse of speech (1:19, 26; 2: 12; 3:3-12; 5:12) and gives instruction on prayer (1:5-8; 4:2-3; 5:13-18). Above all, he is concerned with ethical behavior. How believers act, he says, has significance for the return of Christ; future reward depends on it. In this regard, James bemoans the inconsistency

Date	Passage	Topic
Week 1 / May 31	1:1-18	Trials and Temptations
Week 2 / June 7	1:19-27	Listening and Doing
Week 3 / June 14	2:1-13	Mercy and Judgment
Week 4 / June 21	2:14-26	Faith and Works
Week 5 / June 28	3:1-18	Taming the Tongue; True Wisdom
Week 6 / July 5	4:1-12	Friendship with God
Week 7 / July 12	4:13-5:6	Investing in the Future
Week 8 / July 19	5:7-20	Suffering and Prayer

of behavior (1:6-8, 22-24; 2:14-17; 4:1,3). Being “double-minded” (1:8; 4:8) stands the believers in sharp contrast to God who is One (2:19) and does not change (1:17).

Audience: James is one of the general epistles (along with 1 and 2 Peter, John's epistles, and Jude), so called because it has no single destination. It is not clear to whom James is addressing his comments. At first glance, it appears he is writing to Jewish Christians dispersed around the Greek world: “to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (1:1). But since Peter uses the same sort of inscription (1 Peter 1:1-2) when he is clearly addressing Gentile and Jewish Christians, James's destination remains unclear. In fact, a strong case can be made that James was writing to a community of God-fearers—Gentiles who had been deeply attracted to Judaism. That such folks were then drawn to Christianity is clear from examples in Acts, such as Cornelius (Acts 10:2, 22), Lydia (Acts 16:14), Titius Justus (Acts 18:7) and others. This would help explain the convergence of Jewish, Greek and Christian elements in the book of James.

Part 2 | Discussion Questions

Week 1 – May 31, 2020 / James 1:1-18 / Trials and Temptations

🗨️ Open:

- Who was/is the tower of strength in your family?
- In stressful times, what do you do to ease the stress?

📖 Study:

- According to James, what should be a Christian's attitude when facing trials? How often is this your attitude in your own hard times?
- Why is perseverance important? What reward comes with persevering in the faith?
- What does it mean to be a “double minded” person? How can one avoid being double minded?
- How does James turn the assumed status of the rich and poor upside down?
- How should a Christian look up on hard times such as financial pressure, workplace stress, and family problems?
- In this passage, what do we learn about the origin of temptation? What stages does temptation progress through to become full grown sin?

♥ Application:

- Where are you feeling under pressure at the moment?
- Do you tend to blame God and everybody else for your problems?
- What have you found helpful when temptation hits?
- What would you like to learn from this study in this group?
- How can this group help you in prayer this week?

Week 2 – June 7, 2020 / James 1:19-27 / Listening and Doing

🗨️ Open:

- Which best describes your temper: short fuse, big bomb? Long fuse, little fizz? Other?

📖 Study:

- When was a time you wish you had been quick to listen and slow to speak (v 19)?
- What is the “word planted in you” and how can it save you (v 21)?
- How does the term “Sunday Christian” illustrate James's point in verses 22-24?
- Conversely, what does the life of someone described in verse 25 look like?

♥ Application:

- How would you describe your spiritual life right now?
- What have you found helpful in keeping your mind from being polluted?

Week 3 – June 14, 2020 / James 2:1-13 / Mercy and Judgment

🗨️ Open:

- When did you go to a big party and feel like you didn't fit in at all?
- What third-world country, or low-income area common have you spent time in?

📖 Study:

- In general, what are some ways people show favoritism?
- How does God look upon favoritism?
- What is the lesson in this passage for how we are to relate to others, both rich and poor?

- If a prominent and wealthy person showed up at our church, how would this person be treated?
- If a poor person or beggar showed up, where would this person be seated?
- What two gifts does God give the poor?
- Why would the poor be rich in faith?
- If Jesus was the pastor of our church, what would He do to reach out to the poor and homeless?

♥ Application:

- What are you doing to open up your home to the broken people in your world?
- Who would you like to invite to this group or your church?

Week 4 – June 21, 2020 / James 2:14-26 / Faith and Works

📖 Open:

- Are you more likely to act without thinking or think without acting?

📖 Study:

- What kind of faith is condemned in verse 14?
- In what ways does this still happen today?
- What is the relationship between faith and deeds/works, according to James?
- In what way is “faith without works” dead?
- Why is Abraham such a good example of faith in action (Genesis 22)?
- In Abraham's sandals, would your faith have prompted you to do what he did, or trust God to find another way, without climbing the mountain?

♥ Application:

- As you think of your own spiritual journey, what is the closest you have come to having your faith put to the test?
- What is the growing edge in your faith journey right now?

Week 5 – June 28, 2020 / James 3:1-18 / Taming the Tongue; True and False Wisdom

📖 Open:

- What famous personality do you appreciate for his or her uplifting words?
- What personality do you not appreciate?
- Who have you known that was truly wise?

📖 Study:

- What is the warning here for leaders or teachers in the church?
- What do the examples of the bit, rudder, and fire teach about the importance of watching what we say?
- What is the point the author makes in verses 9 -12? Do you agree?
- Reading between the lines, what do you think is going on in this church?
- If you applied the test here for wisdom to what goes on at decision meetings in your workplace, what would it do?

♥ Application:

- As you get older and wiser, what have you learned about personality conflicts?
- Who do you admire in your church or job because they always build people up rather than tear them down?
- What would you have found helpful in controlling your own tongue?

Week 6 – July 5, 2020 / James 4:1-12 / Friendship with God

📖 Open:

- When you were growing up, how did you get along with your brother or sister?
- What issue was guaranteed to provoke an argument?

📖 Study:

- What is at the root of all conflicts among you? Have you found this to be true?
- What is the caution here on prayer?
- When the author uses the word *adulterous* to describe these Christians, what is he referring to?
- From a study of the verbs in verses 7-10, what is the author asking or commanding this church to do if they are going to be a Christian community?
- How would you put this challenge in a few words?
- What is the point here about slandering another person?

♥ Application:

- Have you ever been a part of a group that took difficult issues head-on? Did they stay with the issues until they were lasting resolutions?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you grade your Christian community today on dealing with conflict?

Week 7 – July 12, 2020 / James 4:13-5:6 / Investing in the Future

📖 Open:

- Are you a long-range planner, or do you take one day at a time?
- When you were 15, what did you expect to be doing at 25?

📖 Study:

- How far into the future have you planned your life?
- What attitude should we have toward our plans?
- What four areas of life are discussed in 4:13? What is wrong with this type of planning?
- What is James saying to the wealthy?
- What is a proper attitude towards finances?

♥ Application:

- Reflect on 4:17 and tell the group how this is true of you.

Week 8 – July 19, 2020 / James 5:7-20 / Suffering and Prayer

📖 Open:

- Who is the green thumb in your family?
- What is the sickest you have been lately?

📖 Study:

- If you were the spiritual leader of an inner-city church with lots of poor and homeless people, what would you urge your flock to do? What does James urge this flock to do?
- What is the principle here on dealing with your circumstances?
- Do you believe in calling the elders to anoint the sick with oil?
- What is the sickness is the result of sin?
- Do you believe that Christians should confess their sins to each other? In what circumstances?
- Do you believe that prayer is effective?
- As Christians, how are we to confront another Christian in our community if he or she is out of line?

♥ Application:

- What is the closest you have come to belonging to a Christian community that practiced anointing with oil over the sick and confessing your sins to one another question mark what was it like?
- What was the high point in the study for you?
- What would you like to study next week?

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Coleman, Lyman. *Serendipity's Interactive Study Bible: New International Version*. Serendipity House, 2001.