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SPIRITUAL WISDOM

— *for* —

LIFE

A BIBLE STUDY ON
THE BOOK OF JAMES

SPIRITUAL WISDOM FOR LIFE

A BIBLE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES



The Book of James was written by James, the half-brother of the Lord. He was one of the many half-brothers of Jesus in addition to Joseph, Simon, and Judas ([Matthew 13:55](#)). James was an early convert to Christianity and dedicated his life to following Jesus.

He became the head of the Jerusalem Church and disciplined many believers. The Book of James is focused on trials, godly wisdom, wealth and oppression, favoritism, and good acts as the result of faith.

In this Bible study, we are going to be going over the entire Book of James through Bible reading, questions, application, and what it means for your own personal life. If you are ready to learn more about the Book of James and how to apply its teachings to your life, you are in the right place.

Before you begin each session, make sure to go to God in prayer and ask Him to prepare your heart for this Bible study. Ask Him to help you stay focused and to learn more about Him through this Bible study time.

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CHAPTER 1

Trials and Temptations, Wisdom, and Obeying God



Read [James 1](#).

Questions to Consider:

- What does this chapter mean?
- What is the surrounding context?
- How can I apply this to my daily life?

In James 1, we are told how we need to see trials as pure joy (verses 2–4). This can be challenging for us since trials are never pleasant. Trials cause us to develop perseverance, which perseverance helps us to become mature in our faith.

Through our trials, we can rest in the knowledge that we have help from Jesus. He can help us in our trials and temptations since He also underwent trials and temptations.

James also tells us we can ask God for wisdom, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (verses 5–6).

As James tells us, God will give us wisdom if we ask, yet we must believe and not doubt. We have to be secure and confident when we are asking God. If we aren’t secure, we are like a wave of the sea that is tossed and blown around by the wind.

This chapter covers the additional concepts of being humble in your circumstance and avoiding pride (verses 9–11). James also discusses the importance of listening to God and obeying Him (verses 19–27). We are not only to listen to the Word, but rather, we are to obey the Word.



If we only read the Bible and not do what it says, we are like one who looks in the mirror and automatically forgets what we look like. Instead of doing this, we need to read the Bible and apply it to our lives.

1. What does this chapter say? This chapter of James covers many topics, yet the main themes are trials and temptations, wisdom, and obedience to God. God allows trials and temptations to occur in our lives because they help us develop perseverance.

God doesn't cause us to be tempted because He doesn't tempt us. Rather, we are all tempted by our own sinful flesh. We can better follow and obey God by being aware of this and applying it to our lives.

2. What is the surrounding context? The surrounding context of these passages is bookended by James' other teachings. Trials and temptations are the main themes of this first chapter, yet there are still many other topics to discuss.

Within this first chapter, we see the need to ask God for wisdom, to ask faithfully and without doubt, as well as the concept of being humble in our positions. This brings God glory and helps us in our daily walk with the Lord.

3. How can I apply this to my life? We can apply these lessons in our lives by turning to God. He can help us in our trials and temptations. We can also apply the teaching of being humble in our circumstances by never thinking too highly of ourselves.

We don't need to look down on others because this goes against God's teachings. Lastly, we are taught the truth that we need to read the Bible, retain it, and apply it to our lives. Reading the Bible can be hard enough, yet applying it to our daily lives can be even harder. Ask God to help you apply what you read in your Bible reading to daily life.

CHAPTER 2

No Favoritism Allowed and Discussion on Faith and Deeds



Read [James 2](#).

Questions to Consider:

- What does this chapter mean?
- What is the surrounding context?
- How can I apply this to my daily life?

James 2 discusses two major topics—the topics of forbidding favoritism and faith and deeds. This chapter has been controversial to many believers because of the topic of faith and deeds. Many believe James is advocating for good works to earn a person a place in heaven, but this isn't true.

None of us can “earn” our salvation. Rather, placing faith in Jesus is all we need to do in order to receive the beautiful gift of salvation. James believes this as well; however, he is making the statement that good deeds should be a result of a person's faith. If a person has truly placed faith in Jesus, then they should want to do good things for Him.

Verse 14 tells us, “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” James is not trying to say salvation is earned by good deeds, but rather that good deeds are a result of faith.

James isn't advocating for works-based salvation. He is advocating for placing faith in Jesus for salvation. This concept has been debated by many; however, we can see the importance of our faith expressing itself in our daily lives and actions.

Within this chapter, James also talks about forbidding favoritism (verses 1–13). James is teaching us that we should not show favoritism to the rich or the highly sought individuals of society.



Rather than showing special favoritism to select individuals, we need to treat all people the same. We don't need to be rude to select individuals, nor should we look down on them. If we love others, we are truly fulfilling the teaching to love others as ourselves (verse 8; Leviticus 19:18).

1. What does this chapter say? This chapter of James discusses the importance of not showing favoritism as well as the topic of faith and deeds. We are not to show favoritism because it breaks the command to love others as we love ourselves.

As believers, we need to love all people—no matter their skin color, socioeconomic status, or what they look like. We are to love all people. This chapter also discusses the matter of faith and deeds. James tells us that true faith will result in wanting to do good deeds for God.

2. What is the surrounding context? The surrounding context is the matter of salvation in the back of James' mind. He is not trying to advocate for faith-based salvation, but rather, he is telling us that true salvation will show itself in the things we do to serve God.

In the same way, our genuine faith will result in us not showing favoritism to others. We are to love all people regardless of their appearance, financial statement, or beliefs.

3. How can I apply this to my life? You can apply this to your life by avoiding favoritism and striving to do good things for God as led by the Holy Spirit. For many individuals, abstaining from showing favoritism is difficult.

If you find it difficult to abstain from favoritism, reflect on this chapter of James and remind yourself of it whenever you are tempted to show favoritism.

Also, we can trust in the genuine nature of our salvation by wanting to do good things for the Lord. Good deeds can't save us, yet they are a sign of true salvation.

CHAPTER 3

Taming the Tongue and Two Wisdoms



Read [James 3](#).

Questions to Consider:

- What does this chapter mean?
- What is the surrounding context?
- How can I apply this to my daily life?

James 3 discusses the importance of taming our tongues and the two different types of wisdom.

Verses 5–6 says, “Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”

As James tells us in this passage, the tongue has the power to corrupt our entire body. With our tongue, we curse and bless, yet this should not be. God wants us to use our tongues for good and to only speak what is good, pleasant, and encouraging to others.

Using foul language or being mean toward others is not acceptable. James goes on to say that nobody has been able to tame the tongue, even though more extreme things have been tamed, such as wild animals (verses 7–8).

Even though we cannot tame the tongue, we can ask for God’s help to help us tame our tongues. If we can keep control of our tongues, we will be better able to serve God and bring His name glory.

James also talks about the two wisdoms in the world. One wisdom is



the wisdom that comes from God; however, the other wisdom is of the world (verses 13–18).

As believers, we need to pay close attention to the wisdom of God and follow after it rather than following after the wisdom of the world. James describes the wisdom of the world to be earthly, unspiritual, and demonic (verse 15b).

Worldly wisdom contains evil, self-ambition, and every evil practice (verse 16). In contrast, the wisdom from God is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, as well as impartial and sincere (verse 17).

1. What does this chapter say? This chapter of James addresses the importance of taming our tongues and following godly wisdom instead of the wisdom of the world. James stresses the importance of how difficult it is to tame our tongues in the modern day. As believers, we need to be intentional about watching what we say and how we treat others because we are the representatives of Christ in this age.

Similarly, this chapter talks about the two wisdoms of the world—God’s wisdom and the wisdom of the world. We have to choose whether we will follow God’s wisdom or the wisdom of the world. James encourages us to follow the wisdom of God because it is full of good fruit and a sincere faith.

2. What is the surrounding context? The surrounding context is that the people whom James is writing to must have fallen into the habit of using their tongues for evil as well as following the wisdom of the world. James writes this section of his book not only for them but also for us as present-day believers.

Everything contained within each chapter was crafted in a purposeful manner for the recipients of the letter, yet we can also benefit from its teachings in the modern day. We don’t need to overlook the importance of each chapter of the Bible and how it relates to our own life.

3. How can I apply this to my life? You can apply this to your life by taming your tongue and choosing to follow God’s wisdom instead of the

wisdom of the world. If you struggle with taming your tongue, ask God for His help. It can be hard at times, especially when we are upset, yet God can help us tame our tongues.

We need to only use our tongues to say what is right and what is encouraging to others. It is also equally important to live in accordance with God's wisdom rather than listening to the so-called wisdom of the world. The world will try to deceive us, yet we can trust God to be the ultimate source of our wisdom.



CHAPTER 4

Submitting Yourself to God and Not Boasting about Tomorrow



Read [James 4](#).

Questions to Consider:

- What does this chapter mean?
- What is the surrounding context?
- How can I apply this to my daily life?

James 4 covers the topics of submitting ourselves to God and refraining from boasting about tomorrow because we are not even promised tomorrow.

Verses 7–8 challenges us by saying, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

We are to subject ourselves to God, and through submitting ourselves to God, we will be able to resist the devil. If we resist the devil, he will flee from us. This is a great promise that we need to keep with us and apply it to our lives.

Within this chapter, a major theme is James urging us not to boast about tomorrow (verses 13–17). James says for us not to boast about tomorrow because we are not promised tomorrow.

We are but a mist that appears for a small amount of time and then vanishes. Instead of boasting about tomorrow, we need to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that” (verse 15).

This is the best approach to take in life because we are not promised tomorrow. All boasting is evil, and we need to abstain from boasting

about things that might never happen.

1. What does this chapter say? This chapter teaches us the importance of submitting ourselves to God, and by doing so, we will be able to resist the devil. By resisting the devil as well as our sinful nature, we will be able to better obey God and serve Him with our lives.

James also talks about how we don't need to boast about the future. We don't know what tomorrow will bring; therefore, we need to trust God with our future. If it is God's will, it will happen.

2. What is the surrounding context? The surrounding context is that James is also discussing that friendship with the world is hatred toward God (verse 4). We cannot both be friends with the world and friends with God. The world promotes everything contradictory to God.

It promotes sin, idolatry, and a life of living in denial of the true God. The readers of this letter most likely were struggling in this area, to which James responded in a confident affirmation that they could not be friends with both God and the world because friendship with the world is hatred toward God.

3. How can I apply this to my life? We can apply these teachings to our lives by submitting to God, resisting the devil, avoiding boasting about the future, and choosing to be friends with God instead of the world. Submitting to God means you obey His teachings in the Bible and you faithfully serve Him.

By doing this, you will be able to better resist the devil and his schemes. Similarly, we can apply James 4 in our lives by not boasting about our future. We can trust God with our future, and if it is His plan for us to do something, then it will happen. Likewise, we need to choose to be friends with God instead of being friends with the world and accepting its practices.



CHAPTER 5

Wealth, Patience, and Prayer



Read [James 5](#).

Questions to Consider:

- What does this chapter mean?
- What is the surrounding context?
- How can I apply this to my daily life?

James 5 contains three major points—wealth, patience, and prayer. First, James warns rich oppressors of the evil they have done.

He says, “You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you” (verses 5–6).

These rich oppressors oppressed the poor and caused damage to befall. They exploited the poor and have not paid attention to their needs. Since this is true, misery will come upon them, and all their fine clothing, jewels, and belongings will rot away (verses 1–3).

Their lack of proper pay to their workers has come before the ears of God, and the rich oppressors will not go unpunished (verse 4).

This chapter also contains the importance of patience. James is writing to the believers to remain patient until the Lord’s coming (verse 7). He warns them not to grumble or to grow impatient but rather to look forward to the day with joy and patience.

It can be hard to be patient even in the present day, yet we also need to joyfully wait for the Lord. As we wait for the Lord, we don’t need to become bitter.



We don't know if Jesus will return in our lifetimes, which is why we need to patiently wait for Him and not allow our hearts to grow bitter.

Thirdly, James talked about prayer in chapter 5. James urges us to pray for all individuals, whether they are in trouble, happy, or sick (verses 13–14).

He also tells believers to sing songs of praise. In all things, we need to pray even if the situation seems hopeless. No situation is hopeless because we have hope in God.

James reminds us of the mighty power of prayer in the person of Elijah (verses 17–18). In the same way, we can pray like Elijah, and God will answer prayers in accordance with His will. We never need to underestimate the power of prayer.

1. What does this chapter say? This chapter discusses multiple topics, including wealth, patience, and prayer. Rich oppressors were a common problem during James' lifetime, and he was warning them that God knew about their sins and that they would not go unpunished.

He also urges believers to remain patient for the Lord's coming and to be like faithful farmers who eagerly wait for their crops to grow. Lastly, James discusses the importance of prayer and how we need to pray in all seasons of life. Whether others are sick, happy, or in trouble, we need to pray for them. Just like Elijah, our prayers can be powerful and effective.

2. What is the surrounding context? The surrounding context is James referring to common problems of the day. Rich oppressors, striving to be patient for the Lord's return, and the need for prayer were all popular topics circulating among the churches.

Through this part of his letter, James was able to bring awareness to these issues and to assure believers they are not being overlooked by God. In the same way, none of these problems are being overlooked by God in the modern day, either.

3. How can I apply this to my life? You can apply these teachings to your life in many ways. If you have noticed you have oppressed the poor



or oppressed other individuals, turn to God and repent. You are not destined for destruction if you turn away from your sin. A second lesson taught that we can apply to our lives is the importance of patience.

Maybe you are similar to the people urgently waiting for Jesus' return. If you are, try to practice patience and know that Jesus' coming will be at the perfect time. The third lesson James teaches us in this chapter is the power of prayer. Never underestimate the power and pray and what it can do. If you know someone who is sick or struggling, pray for them. God hears your prayers, and none of your prayers go unnoticed.

About the Author

Vivian Bricker loves Jesus, studying the Word of God, and helping others in their walk with Christ. She has earned a Bachelor of Arts and Master's degree in Christian Ministry with a deep academic emphasis in theology. Her favorite things to do are spending time with her family and friends, reading, and spending time outside. When she is not writing, she is embarking on other adventures.