

James - Study Companion

A printable guide for tracing the argument, testing interpretations, and recording your own conclusions

Don't take my word for it - Open your Bible.

Use this Companion beside an open Bible and the full James study at OpenYourBible.org. Read the assigned passage first. Record what you actually see before consulting commentary. The questions here mirror the manuscript so your notes stay aligned with the teaching.

Name: _____

Date started: _____

Study completed: _____

Study Progress

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Before You Read James

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 1-5

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What subjects does James return to more than once?

2. What kinds of behaviors seem especially important to him?

3. Where do you notice a contrast between what a person says and what a person does?

4. What does James say about wealth, poverty, speech, wisdom, mercy, prayer, and obedience?

5. How often does James draw from Israel's Scriptures or from people and events found there?

6. What teachings remind you of something Yeshua said?

7. Before studying the letter in detail, how would you describe James's picture of a mature believer?

8. Write down any verse that seems to conflict with something else you have been taught from Scripture. Do not solve the tension yet. Simply record it so we can return to it later.

Session 1 - When Faith Is Put Under Pressure

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 1:2-18

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What does James say the testing of faith can produce?

2. What is endurance supposed to accomplish?

3. What words in verse 4 communicate maturity or completeness?

4. Why do you think James moves from trials directly into asking for wisdom?

5. What does James tell us about Yehovah's willingness to give wisdom?

6. Compare James 1:6-8 with James 4:8. What does the later use of 'double-minded' add to the picture?

7. Does the text explicitly teach that every moment of emotional uncertainty makes prayer invalid? What does it actually say?

8. How does James speak differently to the poor believer and the rich believer?

9. What progression does James describe from desire to sin to death?

10. Why is it important to distinguish testing from enticement toward evil?

11. Compare the two birth images in verses 15 and 18. What does each one produce?

12. What does James reveal about Yehovah's character in verses 16-18?

13. Looking over the whole section, where do you see movement toward maturity? Where do you see instability or division?

14. What pressure in your life most easily exposes where you need wisdom, endurance, or renewed trust?

Session 2 - Hearing Is Not the Finish Line

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 1:19-27; Leviticus 19:9-18; Psalm 19:7-11; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 7:24-27

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What progression do you see from hearing to receiving to doing?

2. What does James say human anger fails to produce?

3. In the mirror illustration, is the problem inadequate information or failure to respond to what was seen?

4. What words does James use to describe the law in verse 25?

5. Does James describe continuing in that law as slavery or blessing?

6. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. Where does Yehovah say His Torah will be located in the new covenant?

7. Compare James 1:22-25 with Matthew 7:24-27. What distinguishes Yeshua's wise hearer from the foolish hearer?

8. What three areas of lived faith does James emphasize in verses 26-27?

9. Why do you think control of the tongue becomes one of James's early tests of religion?

10. Where in your own life is there something you already know Scripture says but have been tempted to leave at the level of hearing?

Further Study

What Is Torah? - If the words law, Torah, and obedience have become tangled together, begin here.

Session 3 - When the Assembly Has a Better Seat for the Rich

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 2:1-13; Leviticus 19:9-18; Matthew 5:7; Matthew 7:1-2

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What specific behavior does James condemn in the opening example?

2. What assumptions about wealth and worth appear to be operating in the gathering?

3. Does James teach that every wealthy person is wicked or every poor person righteous? What does he actually say?

4. Where does the command James calls the 'royal law' originate?

5. Read the surrounding context of Leviticus 19:18. What other commands near 'love your neighbor' concern justice, wages, speech, or treatment of others?

6. Why is it significant that James uses Torah when evaluating believers in Yeshua?

7. What point is James making with the commandments against adultery and murder?

8. Does James explicitly say every sin has identical earthly severity or consequence?

9. How does the 'law of liberty' language connect with James 1:25?

10. What relationship does James describe between mercy and judgment?

11. In what ways can congregations show partiality even when nobody literally assigns seats according to clothing?

Session 4 - Faith That Never Leaves the Mouth

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 2:14-26; Genesis 15:1-6; Genesis 22:1-18; Joshua 2; Romans 3:21-31; Romans 4:1-8

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What exactly does the hypothetical person in James 2:14 claim to possess?

2. How does the example of the hungry and poorly clothed believer illustrate James's argument?

3. What does James say about faith that has no works?

4. What do the demons believe, and why is that belief insufficient?

5. In Genesis 15:6, what happens when Abraham believes Yehovah?

6. What happens in Genesis 22 that James uses in discussing Abraham's faith?

7. According to James 2:22, what relationship exists between Abraham's faith and works?

8. Does James say Abraham's works created faith from nothing?

9. What language does James actually use in verses 21 and 24 concerning justification?

10. Why should we resist replacing James's wording before understanding his argument?

11. What question is Paul addressing in Romans 4? What problem is James confronting in James 2?

12. Read Romans 3:31. Does Paul say faith abolishes law?

13. What does Rahab confess in Joshua 2, and what action follows that confession?

14. Based on James 2, how would you explain the difference between works earning salvation and works belonging to living faith?

15. Write your own explanation of James and Paul that allows both writers to speak without making either one cancel the other.

Further Study

Grace and Obedience: Opposites or Partners? - Explore the difference between obedience as the price of salvation and obedience as the life salvation produces.

Did Paul Teach Against Torah? - Walk through Paul's difficult passages in context instead of reducing him to a slogan.

Session 5 - Your Mouth Will Tell on You

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 3:1-12; Proverbs 10:19; 12:18; 15:1-4; 18:21; Matthew 12:33-37

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. Why does James warn that teachers will receive stricter judgment?

2. How should James's admission that everyone stumbles affect the posture of someone who teaches Scripture?

3. List the images James uses to describe the power of the tongue.

4. What contradiction does James identify in blessing Yehovah while cursing people?

5. Why does the fact that human beings bear God's likeness matter to speech?

6. How do James's spring and tree illustrations fit our theme of wholeness?

7. Compare James 3 with Matthew 12:33-37. What connections do you see between speech and the heart?

8. What is the difference between truthful confrontation and destructive speech?

9. What forms of harmful speech are especially easy to disguise as religious concern?

10. If someone observed only your speech during a stressful week, what conclusions might they draw about the faith you profess?

Session 6 - Two Kinds of Wisdom

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 3:13-18; Proverbs 3:13-18; Matthew 5:9

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. How does James say wisdom should be demonstrated?

2. What attitudes characterize the wisdom James rejects?

3. What results follow jealousy and selfish ambition?

4. List the characteristics James attributes to wisdom from above.

5. Compare several Bible translations of James 3:17. How do they render the quality translated 'open to reason,' 'willing to yield,' or similarly?

6. What idea seems consistent across those different renderings?

7. Which characteristic is hardest to maintain during theological disagreement?

8. Does James define peace as avoiding every disagreement?

9. How can someone possess accurate information and still exercise ungodly wisdom?

10. What kind of harvest does James associate with peacemaking?

11. Think of a recent disagreement. Which characteristics in James 3:17 were present? Which were missing?

Session 7 - Where Do the Wars Come From?

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 4:1-10; James 1:5-8; Proverbs 3:34; Matthew 6:19-24

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. Where does James say quarrels and conflicts originate?

2. What relationship does he describe between desire and conflict?

3. Why are some prayers not received according to verse 3?

4. What does 'friendship with the world' appear to mean in this context?

5. Compare several translations of James 4:5. What differences do you notice?

6. Why should significant translation differences make us cautious about dogmatic conclusions from a difficult verse?

7. What statement becomes much clearer in verse 6?

8. What does James say immediately after declaring that God gives greater grace?

9. List the commands in verses 7-10.

10. Does James see those commands as contradicting grace?

11. Compare 'double-minded' in James 4:8 with James 1:8. What additional light does chapter 4 provide?

12. What promise is attached to drawing near to Yehovah?

13. Which desire most often competes with your willingness to obey?

14. What would genuine submission look like in that area?

Further Study

What Is Sin? - James traces desire toward sin and sin toward death; this teaching explores how Scripture defines sin.

Session 8 - When Judgment Becomes Self-Exaltation

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 4:11-12; Leviticus 19:16-18; Matthew 7:1-5

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What kind of speech does James forbid?

2. Why does James connect speaking against another believer with judging the law?

3. Who does James identify as the ultimate Lawgiver and Judge?

4. Does the larger letter suggest believers must never evaluate conduct?

5. What distinction can you make between biblical correction and self-exalting judgment?

6. How should remembering that you are also under Yehovah's authority change the way you correct someone else?

Session 9 - Tomorrow We Will...

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 4:13-17; Proverbs 27:1; Luke 12:16-21

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What assumptions do the planners in James's example make about the future?

2. Does James condemn planning itself? What appears to be wrong with their attitude?

3. What image does James use for human life?

4. What does 'if the Lord wills' communicate about dependence on Yehovah?

5. How can the phrase become empty religious language?

6. According to verse 17, can sin include refusing to do known good?

7. What is one good thing you already know you should do but have delayed?

8. How does James's teaching challenge the desire for control?

Session 10 - Wealth That Testifies Against Its Owner

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 5:1-6; Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14-15; Isaiah 5:8-10; Amos 5:11-15; Malachi 3:5

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What specific wrongdoing does James identify?

2. What does the text say about withheld wages?

3. Who hears the cries of the exploited workers?

4. What connections do you see between James and Torah's commands concerning wages?

5. How does James's language resemble the Prophets?

6. Does James say possessing money alone is the offense?

7. What does the imagery of decaying or corroding wealth communicate?

8. Who might 'the righteous one' or 'righteous person' describe in verse 6?

9. What kinds of economic power can ordinary people exercise over others?

10. What would obedience look like in the way you earn, spend, save, pay, give, or employ?

Session 11 - Wait Like a Farmer

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 5:7-12; Matthew 5:33-37; Job 1-2; Job 38-42

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What image does James use for patient waiting?

2. What is the farmer able to do, and what remains outside the farmer's control?

3. Why would Yehovah's future judgment comfort people suffering injustice?

4. Why might James warn suffering believers against grumbling at one another?

5. What do the Prophets teach us about the relationship between faithfulness and suffering?

6. What does James emphasize about Yehovah in his reference to Job?

7. Does Job portray faithful endurance as emotionless silence?

8. Compare James 5:12 with Matthew 5:33-37. What similarities do you see?

9. Where are you tempted to force an outcome that may require faithful patience?

10. What would strengthening your heart look like while you wait?

Session 12 - When You Suffer, When You Rejoice, When You Are Sick

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 5:13-18; 1 Kings 17-18; John 9:1-3; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Timothy 5:23

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What different circumstances does James bring into prayer and worship?

2. What are sick believers instructed to do?

3. Who is instructed to come and pray?

4. What does James explicitly say about the oil? What questions does he leave unexplained?

5. Why should we avoid claiming more about the purpose of the oil than the text states?

6. Does James say every illness is caused by a specific sin?

7. Why is the word 'if' important in the statement about sin and forgiveness?

8. What does John 9 teach us about assuming sickness always results from personal sin?

9. How do Paul's thorn and Timothy's physical difficulties caution us against turning healing prayer into a guaranteed mechanism?

10. How can we maintain strong confidence in Yehovah's ability to heal without condemning someone whose healing does not come when we hoped?

11. Why does James connect confession and prayer?

12. What point does James make by describing Elijah as a human being like us?

13. What place does prayer actually occupy in your response to suffering, sickness, joy, and sin?

Session 13 - Bring the Wanderer Home

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 5:19-20; Ezekiel 18:21-23; Matthew 18:12-14; Galatians 6:1-2

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What has happened to the person James describes?

2. What does another believer do?

3. Does James treat wandering from truth as insignificant?

4. Does he treat the wanderer as beyond restoration?

5. Compare James's closing picture with Yeshua's teaching about the wandering sheep.

6. What spirit does Galatians 6:1 say should characterize restoration?

7. What is the difference between restoring someone and controlling someone?

8. What can we confidently say from James 5:19-20?

9. What larger theological questions should we avoid claiming these two verses settle by themselves?

10. Is there anyone you have written off when Yehovah may instead be calling you to pray, speak truth, or leave a door open for restoration?

Final Review - The Whole Letter

OPEN YOUR BIBLE James 1-5

Read the passage before answering. Record the evidence first. Let context have the final word.

1. What themes did you notice during your final reading that you missed during the first?

2. Where does James explicitly connect faith with action?

3. What does James say about law throughout the letter? List the relevant verses before forming a conclusion.

4. What does James teach about wisdom?

5. What does James teach about the tongue?

6. What does James teach about wealth and poverty?

7. What does James teach about prayer?

8. What does James teach about repentance and restoration?

9. Where does James speak about mercy?

10. Where do you see similarities between James and Yeshua's teaching?

11. After reading the entire letter, how would you describe dead faith?

12. How would you describe living faith?

13. What evidence does James give that human works are not simply a substitute for faith?

14. What evidence does James give that obedience nevertheless matters deeply?

15. Revisit James 2 beside Romans 3-4. Can you state the different concerns of James and Paul without making either writer cancel the other?

16. What does James reveal about the danger of a divided life?

17. Which section challenged an assumption you brought into the study?

18. Which command is easiest for you to affirm but hardest for you to practice?

19. What is one specific act of obedience this study has placed in front of you?

20. What conclusion can you state confidently from the text?

21. What interpretive question are you willing to leave open rather than pretending Scripture says more than it does?

My Conclusion

After completing the whole study, summarize James in your own words. Do not begin with what Sasha believes. Begin with the evidence you traced in the letter.

How would I now describe living faith?

What is the relationship between grace, faith, obedience, and works?

What did I learn about Torah and the law of liberty?

What did I learn about James and Paul?

What is one act of obedience I need to take from this study?

What question am I willing to leave open until I have more evidence?

Keep Studying

- What Is Torah?
- Grace and Obedience: Opposites or Partners?
- Did Paul Teach Against Torah?
- What Is Sin?
- Did Yeshua Abolish the Law?
- The New Covenant

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