



JAMES

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WINDOWS, MIRRORS, PICTURES

Every time we come to the Scriptures we should seek to learn about God, learn about ourselves, and come away with practical ways we can live differently in light of what we have read. At the end of each week's study will be a series of questions for Bible reading that were created with those goals in mind; they are not a formula, but a suggestion for more thoughtful and intentional time in the Word. Whether you are reading the Bible for the first time, or you have been reading it for 50 years, we pray you find these questions helpful for cultivating a more biblically oriented life.

1. WINDOWS

What does this teach me about God?

How does the text show God's attributes, character, cares/concerns, tendencies, etc.? What does this reveal about what He's like and how He acts?

2. MIRRORS

What does this teach me about myself?

Look for ways the text may reveal your own character, tendencies, mindset, likes/dislikes, etc.

3. PICTURES

Today, how should I ...think? ...feel? ...act?

What are practical ways you can live in light of these truths about God and yourself? Be specific.

EXAMPLE RESPONSE

Read Mark 10:42-45.

WINDOWS What does this teach me about God? How does this text show God's attributes, character, cares/concerns, tendencies, etc.? What does this reveal about what He is like and how He acts?

This shows that Jesus values selflessness and desires for His followers to be people marked by their service to others.

MIRRORS What does this teach me about myself? How does this text show my own attributes, character, likes/dislikes, tendencies, etc.?

I know my tendency is to do the opposite of what Jesus says here. Often I act as if everyone else should serve me, not vice versa.

PICTURES What does this teach me about the way God and mankind should interact? Look for ways we are to live and respond to God for his glory, our good, and the good of others. Specifically...

Starting today, how should I...think?

Today I will meditate on the grace He showed in saving me and consider ways to humbly serve others.

...feel?

Today I should feel humbled and blessed that Jesus came down from His place in heaven to serve and save me.

...act?

Today, instead of lording my opinion over others, I will be quick to listen, value input from others, and serve them in whatever way I can.

READING PLAN

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|-----------|--|-----------|--|
| 01 | James 1:1-8 Proverbs 2:1-15 1 Kings 3:1-15 Romans 5:1-11 | 08 | James 3:13-4:3 Proverbs 1:1-4; 11:2; 29:23 Colossians 3:1-17 1 John 3:11-24 |
| 02 | James 1:9-11 Proverbs 10:2; 11:4 Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 Luke 12:13-21 | 09 | James 4:4-10 John 15 1 John 2:7-17 1 Peter 5:1-11 |
| 03 | James 1:12-18 Proverbs 7 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13 Matthew 7:7-11 | 10 | James 4:11-12 Romans 2:1-16 Romans 14:1-13 Matthew 7:1-5 |
| 04 | James 1:19-27 Proverbs 10:19; 15:1-4 Deuteronomy 8:10-18 Matthew 7:21-27 | 11 | James 4:13-17 Proverbs 3:27-28; 27:1 Psalm 90 Luke 10:25-37 |
| 05 | James 2:1-13 Galatians 3:19-29 Matthew 5:17-20; 22:34-40 Matthew 18:21-35 | 12 | James 5:1-6 Proverbs 11:28; 15:16 Jeremiah 9:17-26 Luke 12:13-21 |
| 06 | James 2:14-26 Luke 10:25-37 Romans 3:21-31 Matthew 7:13-29 | 13 | James 5:7-12 Psalm 37 2 Peter 3:1-13 Luke 6:20-35 |
| 07 | James 3:1-12 Proverbs 12:18; 18:21; 21:23 Romans 12 Matthew 12:33-37 | 14 | James 5:13-20 Proverbs 15:8, 29; Psalm 54 2 Kings 20:1-11 Luke 15 |

WEEK 01

JAMES 1:1-8

READING PLAN

James 1:1-8
Proverbs 2:1-15

1 Kings 3:1-15
Romans 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION

First, read through James 1:1-8 in its entirety. If you have time, try to also read its surrounding section or the entire letter for greater context to prepare you for study.

The believers James was originally addressing in his letter were facing troubles and trials of various kinds simply because they were Christians. Although the difficulties they faced were painful, James encouraged them to rejoice – not because pain itself is pleasant but because it is by going through trials that their perspective and faith would be refined. There is joy to be had in troubling times because difficulty gives us the opportunity to become more mature, more like Christ.

James encourages his readers to remember that the key mark of a Christian's life should be that they trust God rather than self – even when life seems unbearably hard. Thus the believer's heart should be inclined to ask God for wisdom rather than relying on his own understanding. His words should strengthen our faith that God has a purpose to go with our pain and embolden us to approach the God who gives wisdom generously to all those who ask for it in faith. James makes the case that the way in which we respond to and understand life's trials has everything to do with our faith.

REFLECTION

1. TRIALS, JOY, AND ENDURANCE (1:1-4)

²*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.* ³*For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.* ⁴*So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.* **JAMES 1:2-4**

The ESV renders the word “troubles” in verse 2 as “trials.” What qualifies as a trial? What trials are you currently experiencing?

What is your immediate reaction to the comment to rejoice in trials? How do you tend to react to difficulties and personal pain in your life?

How do unbelievers you know try to make it through difficult and painful circumstances? How does the way you persevere in trouble look different from their approach?

How does our culture teach us to respond to troubles and suffering? Does your response tend to match what the culture says or what James is saying here?

Follow James' argument in these verses. What do trials do to your faith (v. 3)? What does that experience produce within you (vv. 3-4)?



Read Romans 8:28-29. This tells us that God works all things (even difficulties) together for our good (v. 28), and ultimately the goal is that we become like Jesus (v. 29). With that in mind, take a moment to reflect on your own response to difficulties. Do your own goals in your trials match God's goals?

List some ways your painful circumstances and unanswered questions can actually strengthen your faith.

2. WISDOM FROM GOD (1:5-8)

⁵If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. ⁶But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do. **JAMES 1:5-8**

James' encouragement in verse 5 to ask God for wisdom is closely related to the theme of enduring in times of trouble. Read Proverbs 2:1-15. How would you define wisdom? What is the source of wisdom? What are the benefits of wisdom?

What does James 1:5 show about God's character? What is His attitude towards those who desire wisdom?

Does your life's pattern reveal a tendency to rely on God for wisdom or to rely on your own wisdom?

IMPLICATIONS

WINDOWS What does this teach me about God? How does this text show God's attributes, character, cares/concerns, tendencies, etc.? What does this reveal about what He's like and how He acts?

MIRRORS What does this teach me about myself? How does this text show my own attributes, character, likes/dislikes, tendencies, etc.?

PICTURES What does this teach me about the way God and mankind should interact? Look for ways we are to live and respond to God for his glory, our good, and the good of others. Specifically...

Starting today, how should I...think?

...feel?

...act?



WEEK 02

JAMES 1:9-11

READING PLAN

James 1:9-11
Proverbs 10:2, 11:4

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20
Luke 12:13-21

INTRODUCTION

Through the writing of James, the Holy Spirit seeks to challenge the preconceived notions that fill our mind; this passage is just one example of Scripture's power to challenge and reverse our thinking and values in favor of God's thinking and values. Here James introduces one of the major themes that we see throughout his letter: riches and poverty. But why, in the middle of a section talking about trials, would James write about wealth?

Having already spoken about single-minded devotion and rejoicing in trials, James is turning to more specific language for how this can apply to believers. Poverty and riches both put pressure on a person to focus on the world rather than Christ, and thus serve as trials in their own way. Each of us must ask ourselves: will my life be built upon the material resources of money, wealth, and prosperity on earth, or on the spiritual resources that God alone provides?

REFLECTION

⁹*Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. ¹⁰And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field.*

¹¹*The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements. **JAMES 1:9-11***

As you read these verses, do you self-identify as one of the "rich" or the "poor"? James says that each group of believers have something different to boast in – what are those things?

What other things besides God do you have the tendency to rely on for your sense of security and well-being (ex: spouse, children, job, wealth, approval from others, etc.)? What in your life would bring you devastation if you lost it?

Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. What would you say it is that you "boast" in most? How does that compare with what God's word compels us to "boast" in?

Have you ever gone through a season in which God has removed or kept something from your life, and later you were grateful that he did?

How does the fact that your life here will "fade away" impact the way you view and handle your wealth and resources? Do you feel freedom to be open-handed with your money?

Read Matthew 23:12. In what ways are you actively exalting yourself or humbling yourself? Based on Jesus' words here, are you one who will ultimately "be exalted" or one who will "be humbled"?

IMPLICATIONS

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PICTURES What does this teach me about the way God and mankind should interact? Look for ways we are to live and respond to God for his glory, our good, and the good of others. Specifically...

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*James 1:9-11 highlights the idea of a future reversal of fortunes – that those who exalt themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be exalted. In God's economy, those who make much of themselves will in the end be brought low. We traced this theme extensively through our previous sermon series on the Gospel of Luke, called "Luke: Rise & Fall," **available online and on the Grace Church teaching app.***



WEEK 03

JAMES 1:12-18

READING PLAN

James 1:12-18
Proverbs 7

1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13
Matthew 7:7-11

INTRODUCTION

Expect God's reward. Living in expectation of God's reward is vital for every believer who hopes to endure to the finish line of their life's race. But this critical piece of the Christian life goes hand-in-hand with looking to God for his goodness, wisdom, and help in times of trouble. Having established that God is sovereign over our trials and that we can actually find joy in trials, James moves on to a word of warning. After encouraging his readers to endure various troubles and difficult circumstances with steadfastness, James wants believers to be careful to not begin believing that God is the source of their temptations. Instead, he helps us get a clear look at sin's anatomy – its source, the way it comes to influence us, and where it ultimately leads. In the end the question becomes one of source: what is the true source of my temptation – is it external or internal? In light of the truths about temptation and God's goodness, believers should seek to be people who "patiently endure testing and temptation" with God's help, because when the test is finished, eternal reward awaits.

REFLECTION

¹²God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. ¹⁴Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. ¹⁵These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. ¹⁶So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. ¹⁸He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. JAMES 1:12-18

Who is it that Scripture says God will bless (v. 12)? How does your own need for strength and endurance play into your relationship with God?

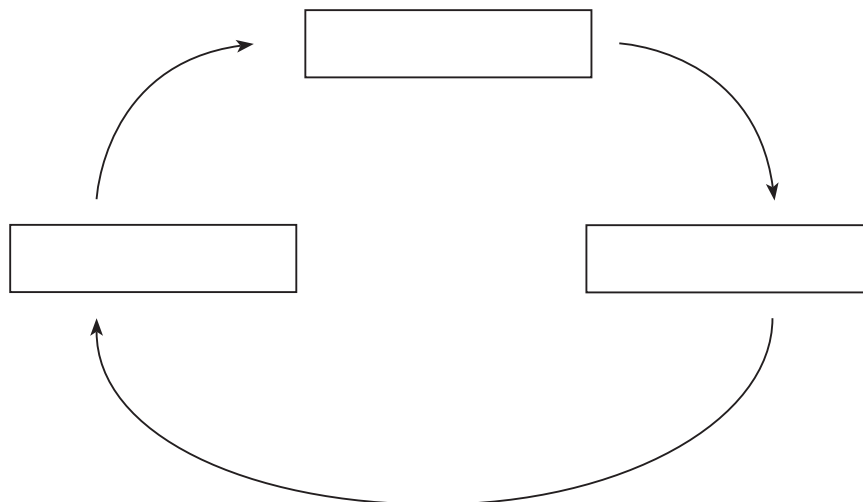
The Bible tells us that those who love God are the faithful and obedient (Deut. 7:9; 1 John 5:2). What outlets or avenues have you established in your life to evaluate yourself in these areas? In what ways are you providing that accountability for others?

How should the promise of reward motivate us in our walk with Christ? Do you think being motivated by reward is wrong? Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and 2 Corinthians 4:17. What perspective does the apostle Paul seem to have on rewards?

Earlier in this chapter, James talked about the spiritual benefit that can come from trials; we also know from the life of Abraham that God does test believers (Gen. 22). If God does sometimes ordain that his people will face trials, then what is James saying in verse 13 that God does not do? What's the difference between being tested and being tempted?

Look at verse 14. What does James say is the source of temptation? Is the cause of temptation internal or external? Does the fact that God is sovereign mean we are not at fault when we choose to sin?

How have you seen this process (being tempted, enticed, and pulled away by sinful desire) play out in your life?



Why might James shift in verse 16 to emphasize God's goodness and faithfulness to believers? What are Christians in danger of deceiving themselves about regarding the trials and temptations that they face in life?

IMPLICATIONS

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