



TEXAS A&M CRU

JAMES

INTRODUCTION

What is our goal for those you are leading? Most simply I would say that we want them to follow Jesus, to be His disciples for life. To follow Jesus we need to interact with Him through His word. James will help us focus on who Jesus is and why He is worth following. Everyone in your Study should receive a Bible Study Basics card from you. These cards will help them to spend time in the passage over the week and give them a few questions to think about. Our hope is that it would serve as training wheels that prepare them to study other books on their own. We would like for the card to give a basic framework and questions as the student reads James. As the leader you will need to use your group time well. There is so much to this book that you will not be able to discuss it all. It would be helpful for you to use the process of Connect, Hear, Apply, and Tell.

Before the study:

Everyone in the group needs to work through the section for that week. Their participation in the discussion will be much more profitable that way.

During the study: (1 hour & 15 minutes for this part of the small group time)

Connect: (around 10 minutes)

You want to connect the group to each other and to the topic for the week. It would be a good time to review what you've covered so far. Maybe ask a question or introduce an idea that relates to the week's topic.

Hear: (around 50 minutes)

Now you want to 'hear' what the Bible has to say through observation (what does it say?) and interpretation (what does it mean?). It may be helpful to read through the passage out loud together and then walk through it from beginning to end asking what was observed and what questions they had. After you've moved through the passage, it's a good time to pull it together by asking, "What do you think is the main idea of the section?" or "What is James' point here?"

Apply: (around 10 minutes)

We don't want to end the semester just smarter. We want the Word to change our lives. You can't force those in your small group to take this step, but you can make sure you take the step yourself. And you can create an environment that assists your group in applying the scriptures to their lives. You want everyone to think about how they should live in light of what they've just learned or been reminded of. This needs to be practical and specific. Such as: 'I'm going to serve my roommate by keeping my part of the room clean and asking how I can pray for her' verses 'I'm going to be a better roommate.'

Tell: (around 5 minutes)

This is one more step in application and it's huge. If you tell someone what you've learned from reading the Bible it's much easier to continue engaging in spiritual things with that person and it may lead to an opportunity to share the Gospel. It also helps us to see that Bible study isn't just for us to know more and it's not just that we would live differently, but that we would share with others what has been given to us from the Lord. We must pass on what we've been given. This is an essential step in the process of spiritual multiplication.

First Week

So what will you do this week? For the first week, have fun with your group and let them get to know each other. Have snacks and drinks and create an inviting atmosphere. During the first week share what material you will be going thru (James) and explain how it works (i.e. doing the work before hand). This means you need to be familiar with the format of the study to orient those in your group. Also, it would be good for you to read through the book. Spend a few minutes of your time discussing God's big picture and where James fits into it.

The next week covers James' introduction, and chapter 1:1-11. Show them how to work through those first 11 verses. Remind them how to observe, interpret, and apply.

As you work through the introduction/overview, please use these great resources!

- www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-james (has great overview and questions)
- The Bible Project - James
- ESV Study Bible Introduction of James

Thanks for leading! Please feel free to ask any questions you have along the way. I will be teaching it too.

Dan Dillard

daniel.dillard@cru.org

BIBLE STUDY BASICS

(Be sure to share this sheet with the people in your Bible study so they can use it thru the week as they read the passage)

Pray

1. Ask God to open your heart and eyes to Him and to understand what He has written in the Bible.
2. Ask Him to help you to be focused, not distracted, and willing to grow.
3. Invite Him to meet you in your time studying His Word.

Read to understand the passage

1. Have someone read the passage out loud. Or read aloud together from www.esv.org.
2. Note the author, audience, characters, themes and historical context
3. Have everyone read it again to themselves and write on their printed-out passage
 - Circle repeated words or ideas.
 - Put a ? by words you don't know. Put an ! by things you thought were interesting.
 - Is an idea confusing? Write your questions in the margin.
 - Are there key transition words (if/then, therefore, but, because)? Draw arrows to visualize the connection between statements.

Discuss your observations

1. Was there anything that confused you or any words that you wanted to define better?
2. What stuck out to you? What questions do you have?
3. Was there anything helpful for you to write out?
4. What were some repeated words or ideas? (*Camp out here for a while)
5. *Optional Deep Dive: How do all these repeated ideas relate to each other?

Interpret what the passage says

1. What do you learn about God in this passage (who He is/what He does)?
2. What do you learn about yourself in this passage?
 - Follow-up question: what are we called to be or do in this passage?
 - How do you fall short of those standards? Why do you fall short?
3. How does this passage point me to Jesus and my need to be saved (how do you see the grace of God in this passage)?

Application

1. How can you see God more clearly because of this passage? How does that encourage or challenge you?
2. In light of what's true about God, how will that affect the way I live (attitudes, thoughts, actions)?
 - Tip: focus on the main theme expressed by the passage. Keep it short and practical.

Helpful Resources: your Bible's book introductions or footnotes, BlueLetterBible.org (or the app) for verse breakdowns and Greek/Hebrew word meanings, The Bible Project videos on YouTube, SonicLight Commentaries (<http://planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes/>)

KEY REMINDERS

Suggested Calendar

- Week 1 - Social*
- W2 - Intro / 1:1-11
- W3 - 1:12-18
- W4 - 1:19-25
- W5 - 2:1-13
- W6 - 2:14-26
- W7 - 3:1-18
- W8 - 4:1-12
- W9 - 4:13-5:6
- W10 - 5:7-12
- W11 - 5:13-20
- W12 - Conclusion



01 — Be with Jesus

Because Jesus said "... for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, ESV), we realize our need for Him in every aspect of life and ministry. We depend on His Spirit moment by moment, yielding to Him as He instructs, abiding in Him and seeking to maintain a wholehearted devotion to Him.



02 — Pray for God's Word to change lives!

"Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer." - Elisabeth Elliot
If we want to see ourselves grow and others grow as learners of Jesus then we need to ask God to grow us!



03 — Faithfulness = Success

Be faithful with what you can control! You can invite people to come, you can study God's word and be ready to facilitate the time, you can meet lots of folks - but you can't ultimately make people come or cause the growth in their lives. We leave that up to God! Don't feel under the pile or the pressure to perform. But also remember you get out what you put in. You can't give away what you don't have.

Summary and Conclusion

As we come to the end of our study of the book of James, it will be good for us to consider the big picture of the book as a whole. Then, we will take a final look at Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings in James, all with a view toward understanding James's letter in its entirety and hearing his heart and exhortation to us as Christians.

The Big Picture of James

James is sometimes accused of having written a book that really has no internal organization—no structure and no driving point, but is rather a hodgepodge of unrelated issues thrown together haphazardly. Studying the book carefully, however, it's easy to see how false that charge is. James does have a driving point, and it is this: now that God has given us new life (James 1:18), we should live in such a way that this new life is reflected in our actions. We are to be doers of the word and not just hearers of it. Our faith is to be a living faith, which produces good works, not dead faith, which is really no faith at all.

James drives this point home throughout his book, holding up issue after issue for consideration in light of that main point. In James 1, he talks about how a follower of Jesus will handle trials and temptations. In James 2, he tells followers of Jesus how they should act in the presence of powerful people and weak people. In James 3, he tells them how a Christian should control his or her tongue, and in James 4 he discusses how Christians should handle conflict with other people. Finally, in James 5, he reminds us to live as Christians in the eager anticipation and certainty of Christ's imminent return.

Read through the following three sections on Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings. Then take time to reflect on the Personal Implications these sections may have for your walk with the Lord.

Gospel Glimpses

James has often been accused of not having a deep understanding of the gospel. It is sometimes argued that his is a sub-biblical understanding of Christianity, that it is a purely ethical or even moralistic conception of what it means to be a Christian. That could not be further from the truth! Throughout our study of James, we have seen how deeply he understands the truth of the gospel. He affirms strongly that being a Christian is about being born again, not just doing good things (James 1:18). He agrees with the rest of the New Testament that a living faith saves (James 2:14), and that it was in fact faith that was credited to Abraham as righteousness (James 2:23). He looks forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ (James 5:7–8).

The desire of James' heart is simply to help believers think more clearly about how to live in light of all those things. If he doesn't give as full an explanation of the gospel as some other books of the New Testament, it is not because he doesn't believe it or understand it. It is because he understands it and believes it deeply and is focusing on the life of obedience that should flow from it.

Have you ever wondered why James doesn't contain as full and detailed an explanation of the gospel as other books of the New Testament?

In your own words, describe James's focus in this book and how the gospel is crucial to that focus.

- Has your understanding of the gospel changed at all during the course of this Bible study?
- How has James helped you to understand the gospel better than you did before you started this study?
- Are there any particular passages in James that have brought the gospel home to you in a fresh way?

Whole-Bible Connections

James has been called the Proverbs of the New Testament, and it's easy to see why. As a Jewish man who came to faith in Jesus, James is steeped in the imagery and wisdom of the Old Testament. He also obviously learned deeply from the teaching of Jesus, his brother and his Savior. Therefore, his letter is filled with themes from and allusions to both the Old Testament and the teaching of the Lord Jesus. His warnings to the unbelieving rich and powerful about the coming judgment are deeply reminiscent of both the Old Testament and Jesus. His teaching about wisdom draws heavily on Old Testament Wisdom Literature, as do his exhortations about the tongue. And his teaching about prayer and oaths, among other things, show how much he learned from Jesus.

James is also quick to use Old Testament examples to make his points. He uses Abraham and Rahab in James 2, the prophets and Job in James 5:10–11, and Elijah in James 5:17. James's mind is filled with the Word of God, and when he needs an illustration for his points, his mind naturally goes to the Scriptures to fill that need.

- How has your understanding of the place of James in the sweep of the Bible's story been deepened through your study of this letter?
- What are some connections between James and the Old Testament that you had not noticed before? What are some connections between James and the teaching of Jesus that you had not noticed before?
- Has your understanding of the unity of the Bible been clarified through studying James? How so?

Theological Soundings

James contributes a great deal to Christian theology, especially regarding how to practically work out the teachings of Jesus. Doctrines that are reinforced and clarified in James include regeneration, the doctrine of the Word of God, wisdom, divine sovereignty, prayer, and the relationship between justification, faith, and works.

- How might our understanding of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ be impoverished if we did not have James's letter?
- How does James contribute to our understanding of Jesus?
- How does he contribute to our understanding of the gospel?
- How does he contribute to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian?

Personal Implications

- As you consider the book of James as a whole, what implications do you see for your own life? Consider especially James's exhortation that we are to be doers of the word, and not hearers only. More than anything else, this is the organizing center of James's letter. What are the ramifications for your own life of James's exhortation there?

•

*Excerpt from: *Knowing the Bible: James* written by Greg Gilbert, Crossway*