



James

AN 18 WEEK INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

**SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES
WWW.SCRIPTUREPATHS.COM**

By Lisa Hughes

Welcome

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?*

Nothing could be more true! There is no better foundation for a believer than the rock-solid Word of God. It's my prayer that your faith and love for the Lord will be strengthened as you study His Word in these lessons. I want your hunger for the Scriptures to grow as you study its truths. And more than anything else, I want you to know that you can live upon the Word of God.

Steadfastness, assurance, and hope are the characteristics of all those who build upon the unshakeable foundation of the Word of God. That's why I'm so thrilled you've found your way to this Bible study. Our Bibles contain all the wisdom and guidance we'll need for our daily life (2 Peter 1:3). God's Word is one of the primary means God uses to strengthen our faith and sanctify our hearts. That's why it's so important to dig in to the details of the Scriptures and mine the treasures tucked away for us there.

Scripture Paths Bible Studies are in-depth, inductive studies of the Scriptures. Each lesson endeavors to teach you how to feed yourself when you delve into God's Word. As you spend time on each lesson you will grow in Bible knowledge and understanding, learn how to apply the Scriptures to your life, and become more firmly convinced than ever that God's Word is authoritative, complete, without error, and sufficient for your life.

HELPFUL THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT *SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES*:

1. *Purposefully prepared.* Each lesson has a unique goal, whether it's to train you in the art of studying the Scriptures or to showcase the point of the passage. None of it is busywork—it's lifework for our souls.
2. *Plan ahead.* Adding a Bible study to an already busy life takes preparation. You'll need to figure out when you can complete your lessons. Do you like to set aside bits of time each day to work on the lesson or do you prefer to do it all in one sitting? Try experimenting with a method that works best for you.
3. *Persevere.* Keep going to the Lord for wisdom, for strength, and the desire to press on when life gets busy and you find it difficult to finish your lessons.
4. *Pray.* Ask the Lord to transform you through the study of His Word. Use your study time to get to know the Lord better.

5. *Prompt your memory.* Try to glean little nuggets of truth or application from each lesson, and then share them with someone. This will help solidify what you're learning and encourage someone else too.

6. *Put it into practice.* Nearly every lesson has questions for you to apply to your life. To study just to study is not our goal. Studying to grow in our understanding of the Scriptures, of the Lord, and how to live lives honoring to Him is what we're aiming at. Look for opportunities to apply God's Word.

There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger.

~Charles Spurgeon

THE GOAL AND PURPOSE OF THIS BIBLE STUDY

John Calvin wrote, “We owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing of man mixed with it.” It’s that premise which propels me to write and study the Bible for myself and for anyone else who wants to study along with me. God has revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture. The Bible is complete and authoritative and contains everything we need to live for His glory. It’s in the study of the Scriptures that we grow in our knowledge of God and are transformed into His likeness. A commitment to lean on and live in God’s Word is a distinguishing characteristic of a Christian as Jesus explained to a crowd of His followers in John 8:31-32: “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Because all “Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16) we study inductively in order to glean as much as we can from the Word of God. Inductive Bible study consists of observation, interpretation, and application. Simply put, *observation* is noticing what the author is saying; *interpretation* is finding out what he means; and *application* is utilizing those truths to your life.

As you study this book of the Bible it is my prayer that you will grow in your commitment to the Word of God as the source of life and godliness, and you will accept it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe (1 Thess. 2:13). As a young man Jonathan Edwards (one of America’s most famous theologians and preachers) made a list of resolutions he desired, by God’s grace, to do his best to live by. One of those commitments is resolution #28: “Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.” May you see the study of God’s Word making such a difference in your life that you bear the fruit of wisdom, knowledge, godly conduct, that you overcome sin and grow daily in your love for Christ.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,
Lisa Hughes*

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Feel free to tailor this study to your needs. Some have found it works best for them to complete the lesson in one sitting, while others find that breaking up the lesson by answering a few questions each day works the best for them. Try experimenting with different ways to complete each lesson, you'll soon discover what works for you and produces the most spiritual benefit.

Some of the lessons have what I call "Eager Beaver" questions. They're rabbit-trail questions. They don't really fit with the theme of the passage, but they're interesting nonetheless. They're there for your enjoyment and growth.

Another feature of the Bible studies is the opportunity to do word studies. Whenever I want you to study a word further I'll include the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance number with it. The Strong's number is basically a reference number attached to most words found in the Bible. That number allows you to search for it in different reference works easily—even when you don't know Hebrew or Greek. I explain how to use those resources in an Addendum at the end of the study. These tools are valuable for any Bible study student, yet not mandatory for completing these lessons.

If you're new to studying the Bible then you may feel a bit overwhelmed, but I want to encourage you to stick with the study. Studying the Bible takes planning on your part and commitment, but the spiritual blessing and personal growth in Christ makes any "hardship" worth it. Remember, the goal of studying the Bible is that you would grow more in Christ, so start each lesson with a time of prayer asking the Lord for wisdom and His grace to study His Word, then continue to seek the Lord as you complete the lesson.

If you're a leader and you're introducing this study to your ladies for the first time, be sure to encourage them a lot! Though each lesson was written to achieve a specific purpose, you may find your ladies would fare best if they take two weeks to complete each lesson. If that's the case, feel free to do so. You want the ladies to enjoy studying God's Word, so keep encouraging them. Pray together, memorize a chapter out of the book, and dig in to each lesson. As you work on the lessons each week you will all gain a clearer picture of our great God, His will for us, and how to live for Him.

And what could be better than that?

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore, my soul observes them.
 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.
 I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.
 Turn to me and be gracious to me, after Your manner with those who love Your name.
 Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.
 Psalm 119:129-133

A Common-Sense Guide to Studying the Book of James

As you study this book, remember:

1. The Bible study principle of context is a “must” while studying this book. Remembering the maxim, *Context is king* will help you so much as you study. Reading the chapter or book again and again will help you untangle any knots you may find.
2. If you are still struggling to understand James’ thoughts after following the above suggestion, then remember that James’ purpose in writing is to remind his readers that saving faith is a transforming faith that will result in a changed life, goals, purposes, and actions.
3. Often it *appears* that James changes subjects as often as the wind changes in the spring in Kansas, which is a lot! However, that really isn’t the case. James doesn’t necessarily provide all the connecting points for where he’s going, but there is still a ribbon that ties his thoughts to what came previously. Dig out your magnifying glass and get ready for some fun while you do some serious sleuthing! The clues are there, if you’re willing to spend the time hunting for them.
4. James’ tone and teaching style is very similar to his half-brother, Jesus. Neither of them pull any punches, yet it’s helpful to remember that behind every forthright statement is the desire for our growth and God’s glory.
5. Take note of the examples, word pictures, and Old Testament Scripture references James uses to clarify the doctrinal points he makes. There is always a connection in his thinking, even if it is not readily apparent. Keep looking, reading, and praying for understanding.
6. Commentaries are a welcome and wonderful blessing, and I encourage you to make use of the knowledge and insight of these Bible scholars. However, reading a commentary *before* you have studied the passage yourself can lead to confusion.
7. As students of the Bible we want to understand what the author intended his original audience to know. And this process of pulling truth from the passage is called “exegesis.” Some people are tempted to do something called “eisegesis,” which is to read information *into* the text. That is when we take something we know and try to put it back into the text to derive the text’s meaning, though the original audience would never have arrived at that conclusion. One way to guard against this is to ask, “What would the original audience have understood this statement to mean?”

How to Do a Chapter Observation¹

Begin with prayer, asking God to show you how His Word fits together. Ask Him to reveal the gems of His Word as you approach it. Pray for a clear mind and the ability to see the truths in His Word.

1. Read straight through the chapter using the *Bible Text Handout*. This will show you the flow of the chapter. *Mark words or phrases by creating a symbol or using a certain colored pencil every time it appears.* This will enable you to see at a glance how often a word is used in the chapter or note a progression of thought. *God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit* are always key words. Mark *repeated* words or phrases. Mark any other words that seem *important* to the chapter or are strongly *emphasized*.
2. Next, *list* the phrase containing the key words on a separate sheet of paper. *This step will allow you to pull together the information you noted from marking the key words.* Be sure to *cite* the verse references when you list your key word information. For example, in James chapter 1, with *God* as your key word you would begin to make a list of the information you discovered every time God is mentioned in James. For Chapter 1, it would start with a list like this: Vs. 1—James, a bond-servant of God or God has bond-servants Vs. 5—ask God for wisdom. Vs. 5—God gives wisdom generously, without reproach.
3. Mark any *commands* that are listed in the chapter and any actions that are required of the reader.
4. Now, list them on your separate sheet of paper in the same way you did for the key words.
5. Mark words or phrases that are being *compared*. Words like *as, likewise, in the same manner, or like* will help you find these words or phrases.
6. Mark *contrasting* words: light/dark, love/hate; the word “but.” Look for phrases or thoughts that are being contrasted.
7. Now list what you discovered from the comparisons and contrasts on the extra paper you’ve been using or at the side or bottom of the *Bible Text Handout*.

¹ This process for Bible study originated from the Precept Inductive Bible Studies method. Through the years, other people have adapted it or come up with similar methods on their own, just as I have for my studies. The method and process of observation in Bible study does God honor, as we stop, observe, and consider every one of His recorded Words, in their context, during Bible study.

8. Mark *transition* terms: *therefore, for, wherefore, finally*. Sometimes an author has his own kind of transition term that lets you know he is making a switch to a new topic, so be sure to look for those kinds of terms.
9. Mark expressions of *time*. Look for words like *shortly, quickly, soon, for a little while*.
10. Look for *lists* of words, phrases, or related thoughts. Number the lists within the Bible text, then record your list out to the side in the margin or on a separate sheet of paper. This will help you see the thought progression of the author or the results of some action. For example, in James 1:5-6 we find a list about how God responds when we ask him for wisdom. We discover 1) He gives wisdom generously; 2) He gives wisdom without reproach; 3) He desires that we ask in faith, without doubting. Be sure to mark or write down any “nuggets” you observed which you thought were interesting.

Remember, the purpose of this lesson is to observe and take note of what is in this chapter. You aren't making any interpretations or applications to your life at this time. Your task at this stage is to look for the treasures that God has put in the chapter.

How To Do a Word Study

There's a couple ways you can do this. You can do your Bible word study using the internet or a Bible program like Logos. There are quite a few good Bible study websites available on the internet like www.net.bible.org; www.blueletterbible.org; www.biblestudytools.com; or www.biblegateway.com. Each site is set up a little different but you should find a section on "word studies" for each of them.

Or you can do your Bible word study in the time-honored tradition of using books! Below you'll find a step-by-step guide in how to do a word study from the Bible.

Starting with the basics

You will need an *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [Strong's or Holman's] that matches the Bible you study out of – like NASB or KJV. Then you will need *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

Now what?

1. In the main part of the Concordance find the word you wish to define. Example: *consider* from Hebrews 3:1.
2. Write down the number assigned to it. You will need this number for the dictionary. In our example *consider* from Hebrews 3:1 is Greek word #2657.
3. Now flip to the back of the Concordance. This section of the concordance is divided into Hebrew words from the Old Testament and Greek words from the New Testament. You will need to make sure you are in the Greek section so you can find #2657. Once you locate the right number then you can see the Greek spelling of the word as well as the English transliteration of the word. You will need to write down the English transliteration of the word [for our example it is *katanoeo*. You will also find a short definition of the word here in the concordance.

2657 κατανόεω [*katanoeo* /kat·an·o·eh·o/] v. From 2596 and 3539; **TDNT** 4:973; **TDNTA** 636; **GK** 2917; 14 occurrences; **AV** translates as "consider" seven times, "behold" four times, "perceive" twice, and "discover" once. 1 to perceive, remark, observe, understand. 2 to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon.

4. Now you are ready to look up your word in *Vine's Dictionary of Biblical Words*. Make sure you are in the Greek section if you are looking up New Testament words or the Hebrew section if you are looking up Old Testament words. Go to the back of the dictionary and look up your word using the English transliteration of the word, in our example it is *katanoeo*. This step will show you the different English words the Greek word has been translated into. For example: *katanoeo* has been translated into *behold*, *consider*, *discover*, or *perceive*.

5. Now, look up the English version of the word. In our example we look up *consider*. Find the right definition for the word by checking the English transliteration and the Strong's number assigned to it. Check to make sure that the Greek number is the same and then read away. Remember, that context is what gives a word its meaning and variation of meaning. The dictionary will supply you with all the meanings and translations of the word and how it is used differently in different verses.

CONSIDER [from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words]

1. *eidon* (Aor. of ὀράω, 3708), used as the aorist tense of *horaō*, "to see," is translated "to consider" in [Acts 15:6](#), of the gathering of the apostles and elders regarding the question of circumcision in relation to the gospel.

2. *suneidon* (συνειδῶ, 4894), *sun*, with, and No. 1, used as the aorist tense of *sunoraō*, to see with one view, to be aware, conscious, as the result of mental perception, is translated "considered" in [Acts 12:12](#), of Peter's consideration of the circumstances of his deliverance from. See KNOW, PRIVY.

3. *katamanthano* (καταμανθάνω, 2648), lit., "to learn thoroughly" (*kata*, "down," intensive, *manthano*, "to learn"), hence, "to note accurately, consider well," is used in the Lord's exhortation to "consider" the lilies. [Matt. 6:28](#).¶

4. *noeo* (νοιέω, 3539), "to perceive with the mind" (*nous*), "think about, ponder," is translated "consider," only in Paul's exhortation to Timothy in [2 Tim. 2:7](#). See PERCEIVE, THINK, UNDERSTAND.

5. *katanoeō* (κατανοέω, 2657), "to perceive clearly" (*kata*, intensive, and No. 4), "to understand fully, consider closely," is used of not "considering" thoroughly the beam in one's own eye, [Matt. 7:3](#) and [Luke 6:41](#) (KJV, "perceivest"); of carefully "considering" the ravens, [Luke 12:24](#); the lilies, v. 27; of Peter's full "consideration" of his vision, [Acts 11:6](#); of Abraham's careful "consideration" of his own body, and Sarah's womb, as dead, and yet accepting by faith God's promise, [Rom. 4:19](#) (RV); of "considering" fully the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, [Heb. 3:1](#); of thoughtfully "considering" one another to provoke unto love and good works, [Heb. 10:24](#). It is translated by the verbs "behold," [Acts 7:31-32](#); [Jas. 1:23-24](#); "perceive," [Luke 20:23](#); "discover," [Acts 27:39](#). See BEHOLD, DISCOVER, PERCEIVE.¶

6. *logizomai* (λογίζομαι, 3049) signifies "to take account of," [2 Cor. 10:7](#) (RV, "consider," KJV, "think"), the only place where the RV translates it "consider." See ACCOUNT.

Companion Volumes

Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament. This is arranged by book and moves through the text explaining and defining key words along the way.

Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament. Wuest died before he finished all the New Testament, but what is completed is a treasure for word studies. This is arranged in the same way as Vincent's book is arranged.

James

Lesson #1, Introduction to the Book

Read through the book of James two times before answering the questions below. It's important to take the time to read through the whole book before beginning this lesson. Ask the Lord to help you maintain interest and diligence.

Using only the text of James, try to answer the following questions. Be sure to note the Scripture references to show where you found your answer from the Bible. *At this point in the lesson you may not be able to answer every question using only your Bible.* You will have an opportunity at the end of this lesson to come back and complete your answers using other Bible study sources.

1. Who wrote the book?
2. To whom was it written?
3. When was it written?
4. Where was it written?
5. What's the general tone of the author in the book?
6. What's the author's purpose in writing this book?

7. What topics are included in this book?

8. What are the key words of the book? Key words are words that are repeated or carry an important thought.

9. What are the main themes of the book? A theme is the main idea, the overall message.

10. List 5 attributes of God that you see in this book. Attributes are those characteristics or qualities that are true of Him. They describe who He is.

11. List 5 attributes of Christ that you see in this book.

Now you can go back and add to your answers above using a Bible dictionary or Bible commentary.

12. What insights have you gained thus far into the book of James?

13. What's one verse in the book that has caught your attention? How did it encourage or convict you, or make you want to study and think about it more?

James

Lesson #2, Chapter 1 Overview

The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to look at and begin to study a text of Scripture. *Observation* is a necessary part of Bible study, but can often be overlooked or rushed through. Observation begins with reading through the chapter and then reading and rereading it again and again! At this stage in our Bible study you're noticing and then recording what God has put into the chapter. You're not making any interpretations about what it means or how it applies to your life—that will come later. Don't rush through this lesson. Set aside time this week to peer into the living and abiding Word of God. You'll be glad you did!

I've included Chapter 1 at the end of this lesson so you can print it out and mark it up if you'd like. I find it helps me see items more easily if I'm marking and noting things as I go.

1. To begin, read through Chapter 1. Now, *summarize* the contents of Chapter 1. This is not the time to be super detailed; instead, think of trying to tell a 4th grader the contents of the chapter.
 - a. Summarize paragraph 1 (verses 1-4).
 - b. Summarize paragraph 2 (verses 5-8).
 - c. Summarize paragraph 3 (verses 9-18).
 - d. Summarize paragraph 4 (verses 19-25).
 - e. Summarize paragraph 5 (verses 26-27).

2. After reviewing the chapter and what you wrote for your summaries, ask yourself: What is the *main point* of this chapter? How do all these details and events reveal the main idea of the chapter? Record your answer below.

3. Next, look for a verse in the chapter that best summarizes the contents of the chapter. You might be tempted to choose your favorite verse here, but please don't do that. Instead, *consider which verse best sums up what's in the chapter*. Write down the verse you chose here.

4. Now you're ready to *title* your chapter. Your 3-5 word title should reflect the contents of the chapter. Remember, a title's purpose is to help you remember what is in each chapter.

5. List the things you observe about *God* in this chapter. Look for things *He* does, *His* attributes, and truths about *Him*. Be sure to list the verse reference with your answer. Your answer might look like this: James is God's bond-servant (verse 1) *or you could phrase it like this*: God has bond-servants and James is one of them (verse 1).

6. Now do the same thing for *Jesus Christ*. Look for things *He* does, *His* attributes, and truths about *Him*. *Usually*, the word *Lord* will refer to Jesus Christ so include those references here also. Be sure to list the verse reference with your answer.

7. What do you learn about the recipients of James' letter in this chapter? Be sure to list the verse reference with your answers.
8. What do you learn about *wisdom* in this chapter? Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.
9. What do you learn about *tempt, tempting, temptation* in this chapter? Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.
10. List what you observe about *doers* versus *hearers*. Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

There's more observations to be found to this chapter than what I've asked you here. If you're eager for more, try looking for and noting:

- *References to time*
- *Repeated words*
- *Transition words like "for," "therefore," "so," "finally."*
- *Commands*
- *Comparisons*
- *Contrasts*
- *Lists of words, phrases or related thoughts*

11. Write down at least one thing you thought was interesting from this chapter.

James Chapter 1

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

10 and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James

Lesson #3, Chapter 1:1-8

Go to the Lord and ask Him for insight, understanding, and a teachable heart from this passage. Read through Chapter 1 before beginning this lesson.

1. What clues can you gain about the one who wrote the book from verse 1? Now look up the following verses and summarize what you learn about him: Matthew 13:55; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Galatians 1:18-19; 2:9, 12; Jude 1.
2. What do you learn about the author's spiritual journey from Mark 3:20-21; 6:1-6; John 7:2-5; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7?
3. James identifies himself as a *bond-servant* of God and of Christ. Describe what he means when he uses that word, especially as it relates to the Lord [Strong's¹ #1401 (ESV, NIV *servant*)].
4. What attitudes are necessary to be a faithful servant? Now, don't be overwhelmed at the list of verses that follow. What's amazing to consider is that we could have looked at more! *Choose any 5* of these verse references (or all of them) and see what you glean about the attitudes every servant of God must possess. See Psalm 116:16; Matthew 8:9; 10:24-25; 20:28; 24:45-46; Luke 1:38; John 12:24-26; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6; 2:5-8.

¹ Created in 1890 by James Strong, Strong's Concordance indexes every word in the Bible and gives it a number, which then allows the Bible student to look up the Hebrew or Greek word attached to that number and discover the word's meaning. You can even use that number with online Bible study helps to discover the word's definition. If you've never used these helps, I also have a step-by-step guide on using word study resources.

5. What attitudes you discovered from the preceding question are the most challenging for you right now? What do you think would help and encourage you to have a more consistent response? Are there any specific things you need to do to ensure that takes place?

6. Who is James writing to and what is unique about them according to verse 1?

7. What are we to *consider* according to verse 2? In what manner is all that “consideration” to take place (also from verse 2)?

8. Let’s look further at the word *consider* so we can more faithfully obey this admonition. What does the word mean [Strong’s #2233 (ESV *count*)]? Also see the following verses to gain a better sense of the word’s meaning: Philippians 3:8; Hebrews 11:11, 26.

9. Now define *encounter* [Strong’s #4045 (ESV *meet*; NKJV *fall*; NIV *face*)].

10. What do you learn about the word *trials* used here [Strong’s #3986]? Look up the following texts to see a similar treatment of the word: Luke 22:28; Acts 20:19; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:6.

11. How can encountering different kinds of trials bring joy? See verse 4.

12. What challenges do you face when you seek to find joy in your trials? What core attitudes must be in your heart for you to obey this command? See also Romans 8:28 as an encouragement.

13. What do you learn about the meaning of the word *testing* [Strong's #1383]? Also, see 1 Peter 1:7, the only other place this word is used in the New Testament.

14. Define *endurance* [Strong's #5281 (ESV *steadfastness*; NKJV *patience*; NIV *perseverance*)]. Also see James 1:4; 5:11; as well as 2 Thessalonians 1:4 and 2 Peter 1:6.

15. What are we supposed to do with *endurance* according to verse 4? See also Galatians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 12:1-2.

16. How do we do that? See 1 Peter 5:6-7.

17. What is the goal of letting our trials do God's intended work in our souls? See verse 4; Hebrews 12:10-11; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 5:10.

On accepting adversity in our lives: Always it is initiated by an act of will on our part; we set ourselves to believe in the overruling goodness, providence, and sovereignty of God and refuse to turn aside no matter what may come, no matter how we may feel. (Margaret Clarkson, *Grace Grows Best in Winter*)²

² Margaret Clarkson, *Grace Grows Best in Winter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 40-41.

18. What situation does James address in verse 5?

19. Explain how verse 5 fits in with the previous context of verses 2-4. How does that understanding help you apply verse 5 in your life?

20. What do we learn about God's response to our lack of wisdom in verse 5? How does that encourage you to apply this verse? What further encouragements and insight do you gain from Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9; 32:8-10; Proverbs 3:5-7; James 3:13-18.

21. What attitude should underscore our request for wisdom in our trials, according to verses 6-8? Why?

22. Why is this attitude important to the Lord? See also Hebrews 11:6; Psalm 62:5-8; 147:10-11; Proverbs 1:7; 29:25.

23. What do the presence of those soul-sanctifying trials reveal about God's care for you? See also Hebrews 12:5-8. Now from James 1:1-8 and Hebrews 12:5-8 make a list of observations about God's intended good for you when you encounter those various trials.

God does not delight in our suffering. He brings only that which is necessary, but He does not shrink from that which will help us grow. (Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*)³

³ Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 177.

We can be sure that the development of a beautiful Christlike character will not occur in our lives without adversity.... Love, joy, peace, and patience—can only be developed in the womb by adversity. (Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*)⁴

The trials which come from God are sent to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord in his infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon his people's faith that he will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant grace. (Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings, Sept. 3*)⁵

⁴ Ibid, 174.

⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings, Complete and unabridged; New modern edition*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), Sept. 3 Evening.

James

Lesson #4, Chapter 1:9-18

As you read Chapter 1 before beginning this lesson, ask the Lord for insight, understanding, and a teachable heart.

1. Summarize the content of verses 1-8. Be sure to explain the subject jump from *trials* to *wisdom* to asking in *faith* and how those thoughts connect.

2. When we come across a difficult or puzzling section of Scripture, one of the first Bible study principles to employ is that of studying the *context* surrounding a verse or verses. A quick look at verses 9-11 may seem like James introduces a new topic, yet even a brief look at the surrounding context helps us determine the heart of what James communicates here. Let's *briefly* establish the context of chapter 1.
 - a. Verses 1-8 contain practical wisdom in how to live when something happens to us. What is that?

 - b. Now, jump down to verse 12. What is the basic subject of that verse?

 - c. Though verses 9-11 appear to introduce a new subject, the near preceding and following context provides the lens through which we view verses 9-11. What lens should guide how we see the instruction of verses 9-11?

3. What two groups of people does James address in verses 9-11?

4. In verse 9 James introduces us to the poor man. What does James mean by *humble circumstances* (ESV and NKJV *lowly brother*)? See Proverbs 18:23; 1 Corinthians 4:11-13; Philippians 4:12; Hebrews 10:32-34; James 2:1-6.

5. James tells us the poor man is to *rejoice* in his humble circumstances. What is it about his circumstances that allows the poor man to rejoice? See Jeremiah 9:23-24; Romans 8:16-18; James 1:2-4.

6. In contrast to the poor man, what do you learn about the rich man from verses 10-11? What seems to be the underlying attitude about the rich man's spiritual state from these verses?

7. What does James mean by telling the rich man to *glory* in his humiliation? Why is that important? See also 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 4:13-14; 1 Peter 1:22-25.

8. What were some of the situations these believers faced that contributed to their trials? See James 1:1; 2:1-7, 15-16; 4:1, 11.

9. No matter what our earthly station or status, what is the great equalizer? For a hint, see verses 2-4 and 12.

10. Whether we're rich or poor or somewhere in between, how would maintaining the attitudes we discovered in questions 5 and 7 help us persevere in our trials?

11. According to Jesus, what attitudes must the rich and the poor possess to be pleasing to the Lord? Make some observations from Luke 12:13-34.

12. Let's spend some time looking at verse 12. What observations can you make about the man referred to in verse 12?

13. What does *perseverance* reveal about our spiritual state according to verse 12? See also Matthew 24:13; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 John 5:4-5.

14. What do you discover about the word *trial* in verse 12 [Strong's #3986 (NKJV *temptation*)] and *tempted* used in verse 13 [Strong's #3985]?

15. James encourages the beleaguered believers with certain truths about God in verse 13. What do we learn?

Eager Beaver: How does that insight help explain why the translators used *trial* in verse 12 (except for the NKJV) and *tempted* in verse 13? Remember, context ultimately determines a word's definition.

16. James then gives a little lesson on the nature of temptation. What do you learn from verses 14-15?

17. In verse 16, James tells them not to be deceived. What weren't they to be deceived about? See verses 12-15.

18. Why do we need this admonition about temptation and sin when we find ourselves in the midst of trials?

19. How is that promise of perseverance from verse 12 an encouragement when we find ourselves tested and tried and doubting our own faith because of the trials we face?

20. How do the truths contained in 1 Corinthians 10:13 lend substance and support to this passage?

21. What do you learn about God's gifts from verse 17? See also verses 2-4 and verse 12.
 - a. How should that understanding shape our response to the trials and troubles we face?

22. Why does James wrap up this section on trials and temptations with a reminder about God's gifts? See also Job 2:10; Lamentations 3:19-33; Romans 8:28; James 1:2-4.

23. Again, how should that understanding shape our response to the trials and troubles we face?

24. What good gift does James put on display for any believers under trial to consider? See verse 18. Also, see the following verses to help explain the meaning of the verse: Romans 8:23, 29-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:23.

All events are under the control of Providence; consequently, all the trials of our outward life are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance the armies of trial march forth in array, clad in their iron armor, and armed with weapons of war. All providences are doors to trial. Even our mercies, like roses, have their thorns. Men may be drowned in seas of prosperity as well as in rivers of affliction. Our mountains are not too high, and our valleys are not too low for temptations: trials lurk on all roads. Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Yet no shower falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every drop has its order ere it hastens to the earth. The trials which come from God are sent to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord in his infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon his people's faith that he will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant grace. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valor, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut; affliction does this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Thus, it is well that Jehovah tries the righteous, for it causes them to grow rich towards God.¹ Charles H. Spurgeon

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, [*Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*](#), Complete and unabridged; New modern edition. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), Evening, September 3.

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek, more earnestly, His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer!
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request;
And by His love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue Thy worm to death?
'Tis in this way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,
From self, and pride, to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st find thy all in Me.²

John Newton

² John Newton, "I Asked the Lord that I Might Grow,"
<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/i/a/s/iaskedtl.htm>

James Lesson #5, Chapter 1:19-27

Ask the Lord for His grace as you sit and study His Word. We always need His help in coming to the Word.

1. By way of review, explain the flow of thought in verses 1-18.
2. What does he remind them in verse 19?
3. How would being *quick to hear* be an antidote to anger? How do the following verses help put feet to this instruction? See Proverbs 12:15; 18:13; 19:20.
4. Complete this sentence: If I am “quick to hear” then my interactions with others, whether face to face or in my thoughts, will be guided by....

“Wherever wisdom is the goal, hearing will be a first virtue.”¹

Kurt A. Richardson

5. How would being *slow to speak* also be an aid in overcoming anger? See also Proverbs 17:27; 21:23; James 1:26; 3:1-2.
6. Complete this sentence: If I am “slow to speak” then my interactions with others will be guided by....

¹Kurt A. Richardson, *James, vol. 36, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 88–89.

7. How would just being *slow to anger* help us in battling the sin of anger? See also Proverbs 16:32; 19:11; Colossians 3:8, 15.

8. Complete this sentence: If I am “slow to anger” then my interactions with others will be guided by....

9. Take note again, who is to obey this command in verse 19?

10. What motivation for this three-fold command is given in verse 20? Explain what that means in your own words.

11. When we desire to live for God’s glory, then verse 20 really is a death knell to our fleshly desires. Why is that?

12. As a result of understanding verse 20, what are we to do in verse 21?

13. The Greek word translated *filthiness* [Strong’s #4507 (NIV *moral filth*)] only occurs here in verse 21, however a similar adjective can be found in James 2:2 and in 1 Peter 3:21. What do you learn about the word and James’ instructions here in verse 21?

14. What are we supposed to do with filthiness and wickedness (verse 21)? Look up the following verses to gain a clearer picture of what our actions might look like: Isaiah 2:20; Romans 13:12-13; Colossians 3:5-8; Hebrews 12:1.

“All Filthiness”—This term often means “a wax build-up in the ear.” It may refer to unholy living which impairs a believer’s hearing of God’s word. However, its primary usage was “dirty,” as in dirty clothing (cf. James 2:2) which would relate to a believer’s lifestyle.²

15. Before moving on to the next question, take some time to examine your life and heart. Are there any areas of filthiness or wickedness you need to lay aside? The verb tense indicates this is an action we continuously do because sin, just like the sea, laps back up on the beach it previously vacated.

“We wonder why a certain church-member is so lax in his devotions and loose in his practices. The reason is that, while his trunk and his branches are over on the *church side* of the wall, his roots run under the wall and dwell in the bad soil on the *other side*.”³ T. L. Cuyler

16. And while we’re putting those things aside we’re told how to do something, what to do, and why we’re to do it. First Thessalonians 2:13 helps explain the concept of receiving the Word. What do you learn?
17. What are some specific ways you can humbly receive God’s Word today? And again, why would you do that (verse 21)? See Psalm 23:3; 147:3; 1 Peter 2:24.

² Robert James Dr. Utley, *Jesus’ Half-Brothers Speak: James and Jude*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 23.

³ T. L. Cuyler, ed. Josiah H. Gilbert, *Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers* (New York: Wilbur B. Ketchum, 1895), 622.

18. Explain the connection in thought between verse 21 and verse 22 when it comes to the Word.

19. After receiving that Word what should we take care to do according to verse 22?

20. What do you learn about a doer compared with a forgetful hearer from verses 22-25?

21. What is the perfect law, the law of liberty? See Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 3:15-18; Galatians 5:1.

22. Verses 26-27 provide a test to see if we are actually a doer of the Law of Liberty. What should we check according to those verses?

23. James doesn't hold back in verses 19-27. He is calling us to examine our hearts and lives to see if we truly are the transformed people we say we are.

“But think also, what encouragement there is here for every honest and true-hearted believer. To you also, Jesus says, “I know thy works.” You see no beauty in any action that you do. All seems imperfect, blemished, and defiled. You are often sick at heart of your own short-comings. You often feel that your whole life is one great arrear, and that every day is either a blank or a blot. But know now, that Jesus can see some beauty in every thing that you do from a conscientious desire to please Him. His eye can discern excellence in the least thing which is a fruit of His own Spirit. He can pick out the grains of gold from amidst the dross of your performances, and sift the wheat from amidst the chaff, in all your doings. Your tears are all put into His bottle. Your endeavours to

do good to others, however feeble, are written in His book of remembrance. The least cup of cold water given in His name, shall not lose its reward. He does not forget your work and labour of love, however little the world may regard it.

It is very wonderful; but so it is. Jesus loves to honour the work of His Spirit in His people, and to pass over their frailties. He dwells on the faith of Rahab, but not on her lie. He commends His Apostles for continuing with Him in His temptations, and passes over their ignorance and want of faith. (Luke 22:28.) “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” (Ps. 103:13.) And as a father finds a pleasure in the least acts of his children, of which a stranger knows nothing, so I suppose the Lord finds a pleasure in our poor feeble efforts to serve Him.”⁴ J. C. Ryle

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1889), 331–332.

James

Lesson #6, Chapter 2 Overview

The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to look at and begin to study a text of Scripture. *Observation* is a necessary part of Bible study, but can often be overlooked or rushed through. Observation begins with reading through the chapter and then reading and rereading it again and again! At this stage in our Bible study you're noticing and then recording what God has put into the chapter. You're not making any interpretations about what it means or how it applies to your life—that will come later. Don't rush through this lesson. Set aside time this week to peer into the living and abiding Word of God. You'll be glad you did!

I've included Chapter 2 at the end of this lesson so you can print it out and mark it up if you'd like. I find it helps me see items more easily if I'm marking and noting things as I go.

1. To begin, read through Chapter 2. Now, *summarize* the contents of Chapter 2. This is not the time to be super detailed; instead, think of trying to tell a 4th grader the contents of the chapter.
 - a. Summarize paragraph 1 (verses 1-7).
 - b. Summarize paragraph 2 (verses 8-13).
 - c. Summarize paragraph 3 (verses 14-17).
 - d. Summarize paragraph 4 (verses 18-26).

2. After reviewing the chapter and what you wrote for your summaries, ask yourself: What is the *main point* of this chapter? How do all these details and events reveal the main idea of the chapter? Record your answer below.

3. Next, look for a verse in the chapter that best summarizes the contents of the chapter. You might be tempted to choose your favorite verse here, but please don't do that. Instead, *consider which verse best sums up what's in the chapter*. Write down the verse you chose here.

4. Now you're ready to *title* your chapter. Your 3-5 word title should reflect the contents of the chapter. Remember, a title's purpose is to help you remember what is in each chapter.

5. List the things you observe about *God* and the *Lord Jesus* in this chapter. Look for things they *do*, their attributes, or truths about them. Be sure to list the verse reference with your answer.

6. What do you learn about the *rich* and the *poor* in this chapter?

7. What do you learn about *faith* in this chapter? Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

8. Now make a list of any examples of *faith with works* that you see in this chapter along with the verse references.

9. Now, make a list of any examples of *faith without works* that you see in this chapter. Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

10. What do you learn about *works* in this chapter? Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

There's more observations to be found to this chapter than what I've asked you here. If you're eager for more, try looking for and noting:

- *References to time*
- *Repeated words*
- *Transition words like "for," "therefore," "so," "finally."*
- *Commands*
- *Comparisons*
- *Contrasts*
- *Lists of words, phrases or related thoughts*

11. Write down at least one thing you thought was interesting from this chapter.

James Chapter 2

1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

James

Lesson #7, Chapter 2:1-7

Ask the Lord for His grace as you sit and study His Word. We always need His help in coming to the Word.

1. How does James 1:26-27 fit with the subject theme of Chapter 2 verses 1-7?
2. The NASB tells us in James 2:1, “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.” What James wants us to do might seem a bit difficult to mentally grasp so it’s helpful to look at other translations. The ESV lends some understanding when it says, “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” While the NIV translates verse 1 as, “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.” So, what is it that James is concerned about according to verse 1?
3. What is *personal favoritism* [Strong’s #4382 (ESV, NKJV *partiality*)]?
4. How was that attitude of partiality or favoritism showing up in the early church according to verses 2-4?
5. Brainstorm for a minute about how partiality or favoritism might show up in our church. Now consider, how it might show up in you personally.
6. When we show partiality or favoritism like the kind mentioned in verses 2-4, how are we described in verse 4?

7. What is at the heart of God's objection to this kind of favoritism or partiality among believers? See Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 10:17; Proverbs 14:20-21; James 2:4; Jude 16.

8. How can we combat these attitudes? See Romans 12:16; 13:8-9; 1 Corinthians 13:3; Galatians 3:28; James 2:8.

9. All partiality isn't forbidden however. We are to show honor, which naturally means singling someone out for favor. What instances are we to do that? See Romans 12:10; Ephesians 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:1-3, 17-18; 1 Peter 2:17.

10. Neither is God saying all judging is bad. In what situations is it right and good to judge? See Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:19-25; Hebrews 5:14.

11. So again, if some kinds of judging and honoring aren't bad, then what's wrong with the kind of partiality being addressed here in James 2:1-4?

12. What do we learn about the poor from verse 5?

13. How should the information from verse 5 be a death knell to the distinctions taking place between the rich and the poor described in verses 2-4?

14. What honor and dignity the Lord gives to His children, even though they are disdained in the world's eyes! Look up the following verses about being poor as a believer. See Proverbs 22:22; Matthew 11:5; Mark 12:42-44; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 8:1-5.

15. What is the true spiritual state of many who are rich? See Proverbs 11:28; Matthew 13:22; 19:23-26; Luke 12:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:9-10; Revelation 3:17-18.

16. Whether rich or poor, noticed or unnoticed, favored or not, what must be our guide no matter who we are or what we have or don't have? See 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; 12:9-10; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 4:10-13.

17. It's easy to think of this section in more abstract terms, that these kinds of attitudes are embodied in *others* rather than ourselves. So, let's bring the mirror of the Word in a little closer to examine our own heart attitudes. What kinds of favoritism or partiality attitudes do you find yourself battling at times?

18. Have you ever been one of the "poor" in the eyes of another and been passed over or ignored? What truths from God's Word did you need to tell yourself so you wouldn't sin in response?

19. Have you ever been one of the "rich" in the eyes of another and been fawned over or exalted to the point of being uncomfortable? What truths from God's Word did you need to tell yourself so you wouldn't sin in response?

20. Most of us are rich in the world's goods compared with most of the rest of the world, so what truths from God's Word do we need to impress upon our hearts so we don't sin against our brothers and sisters in Christ who live in more humble circumstances? What attitudes do we need to cultivate so we won't fall into the trap of wrong thinking James addresses in this passage?
21. What do we learn about God Himself and His desire for His children from James 2:1-7? See also Acts 10:34-35.

“The doctrine of God’s grace, if we really believe it, forces us to relate to people on the basis of God’s plan and not on the basis of human merit or social status. A “class church” is not a church that magnifies the grace of God. When He died, Jesus broke down the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11–22). But in His birth and life, Jesus broke down the walls between rich and poor, young and old, educated and uneducated. It is wrong for us to build those walls again; we cannot rebuild them if we believe in the grace of God.”¹ Warren Wiersbe

“We should do well to measure all men by God’s standard,—to measure them not by the amount of their income, but by the condition of their souls. When the Lord God looks down from heaven and sees the children of men, He takes no account of many things which are highly esteemed by the world. He looks not at men’s money, or lands, or titles. He looks only at the state of their souls, and reckons them accordingly. Oh, that you would strive to do likewise! Oh, that you would value grace above titles, or intellect, or gold! Often, far too often, the only question asked about a man is, “How much is he worth?” It would be well for us all to remember that every man is pitiably poor until he is rich in faith, and rich toward God. (James 2:5.)”² J. C. Ryle

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 352.

² J. C. Ryle, [*Practical Religion: Being Plain Papers on the Daily Duties, Experience, Dangers, and Privileges of Professing Christians*](#) (London: Charles Murray, 1900), 317–318.

James
Lesson #8, Chapter 2:8-17

Take a moment and ask the Lord's help in studying His Word, and for the Holy Spirit's aid in applying it.

1. Summarize the contents of James 2:1-7. Now choose one or two words to describe the main point James makes in this paragraph.
2. How can you tell in verse 8 that James intends to continue discussing the same topic he addressed in verses 1-7?
3. What is the "royal law" as described in verse 8?
4. What else do you learn about the Royal Law from the following verses? See Luke 10:25-37; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; 1 John 3:13-18.
5. What commendation in verse 8 is given for keeping this law?
6. How is love for the brethren *the* answer when partiality and favoritism are at work?
7. What contrast to verse 8 is given in verse 9 that would *not* be good for us to do?

8. What sweeping statement from verse 10 levels the playing field so that everyone is included? Be sure that your comment shows the connection between verses 9 and 10.

“The command against favoritism, or positively, the imperative of neighbor love, especially toward the poor, so embodied the spirit of the law that to stumble on this point was to offend the law at its heart. It must never be forgotten that wisdom, the law, and love are all inseparably bound together. Any separation of these three is the result of calculated self-deception that looks for man’s favor rather than God’s and withholds the love that is due one’s neighbor.”¹ Kurt Richardson

9. James further illustrates his point in verse 11. What is he trying to get people, like us, to understand and take to heart in this paragraph? Why is this important to understand when we’re dealing with less obvious sins like partiality or favoritism?
10. Sometimes those less obvious sins can really get a foothold in our lives, especially in how we deal with one another. Try listing some of those more “respectable sins”² and see if James’ admonitions apply to them as well. Here’s a couple to get you started: defensiveness, a competitive spirit in places where there shouldn’t be competition. Can you think of more?
11. What is the answer to any of those type of “relationship” sins we’re prone to committing according to verse 12?
12. What is the law of liberty that James references in verse 12? See also Galatians 5:1; James 1:25; 2:8.

¹ Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 122.

² For further study on this, read Jerry Bridges’ excellent and convicting book, *Respectable Sins*.

13. Based on what you just learned, describe what our lives should look like, especially in speaking and acting, when we are submitted to the *Law of Liberty*?
14. What do we learn about the judgment that comes by the *Law of Liberty* in verse 13? See also Matthew 6:14-15 and 18:21-35.
15. If you didn't already say so, what do we learn about mercy from verse 13?
16. What interesting things do you learn about the word *triumphs* [Strong's #2620] from verse 13? Please define.
17. James continues to hammer away at some wrong attitudes showing up in the believers. What new "argument" does he introduce in verse 14?
18. Explain what verse 14 has to do with verses 8-13.
19. How does James illustrate his verse 14 comments in verses 15-16? How is that illustration an appropriate one for the subject he introduced in verses 1-13?
20. What challenging statement does James give in verse 17 as he pulls his thoughts together for this paragraph?

21. How would you summarize James' *underlying assumption* about what our lives should look like, as well as what "having faith" really means?

"We only believe as much of the Bible as we practice."³ Warren Wiersbe

"There is one obvious message to this section: our beliefs should control our behavior. If we really believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God is gracious, His Word is true, and one day He will judge us, then our conduct will reveal our convictions. Before we attack those who do not have orthodox doctrine, we must be sure that we practice the doctrines we defend. Jonah had wonderful theology, but he hated people and was angry with God (Jonah 4). One of the tests of the reality of our faith is how we treat other people. Can we pass the test?" Warren Wiersbe⁴

"Oh! may we all tonight go to Christ to be our complete Savior in very deed and truth. Then we will be saved; and then, being saved, we will seek to serve Christ with heart and soul and strength."⁵

Charles Spurgeon

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 352.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 353.

⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, [*A Collection of Sermons*](#), electronic ed., Logos Library Systems (Simpsonville, SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996), 261.

James

Lesson #9, Chapter 2:18-26

As you come to your lesson today, be sure to ask the Lord for insight and help as you study this rather technical and theologically dense section.

1. Briefly summarize James' train of thought in Chapter 2, paying special attention to his thought processes coming into verse 18.

2. What does James mean when he says in verse 17, "Faith without *works* is dead?" Consider James 1:22-26 and 2:14-17.

3. What are some synonyms or phrases you could use in place of "works" that might provide clarity as you look at verses 2:14-26? Try inserting your substitute words in the text (either mentally or by writing it out here) to see if they give more insight into James' meaning *while maintaining doctrinal precision*.

4. Verse 18 begins with an illustration that further explains James' comment in verse 17. What does the "someone" say about their own faith in verse 18?
 - a. What does that same "someone" say about "your" faith in verse 18?

 - b. Does that "someone" line up with what James is saying or do they oppose his reasoning? Consider your answer in light of verse 17 as well.

- c. What is the point of faith *with works*?
5. What do those who say, “faith without works is enough” believe according to verse 19? Is this a good thing according to James (verse 19)?
6. Who else believes that very same thing from verse 19? What does that point have to do with the whole “I have faith without works” argument?
7. Eager beaver: Consider what verse 19 reveals about what the demons know and believe about God. What do the demons know about God? See James 2:19; Matthew 8:28-29; Mark 1:24; 5:7; Acts 16:16-17; 19:15. Isn't it interesting that the demons sometimes have a greater faith than even those who claim to be Christians?
8. The Scriptures *never, never, never* argue among themselves. They always agree with each other, though sometimes it may look like there are discrepancies, there aren't. It's our job then, to solve any apparent mysteries through study and observing the context. First, what point is James making about *faith that works* in this section?
- a. Next, look at Romans 3:21-4:25. What wrong thinking was Paul trying to correct as he discussed *faith and works*?
- b. How is Paul's use of *faith and works* different than James' use of *faith and works*?

- c. What hermeneutical (Bible study) principle provides us with the simplest answer for explaining the so-called discrepancy between Romans 3 and James 2?¹ Isn't it a wonderful comfort to know that this *one* hermeneutical principle solves most of the Scripture "problems" we come to in studying the Bible?

"Of the other writers in the NT we must notice James, for he has often been held to be in opposition to Paul in this matter. Where Paul insists that a man is justified by faith and not by works James maintains 'that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone' (Jas. 2:24). There is no more than a verbal contradiction, however. The kind of 'faith' that James is opposing is not that warm personal trust in a living Savior of which Paul speaks. It is a faith which James himself describes: 'You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder' (Jas. 2:19). He has in mind an intellectual assent to certain truths, an assent which is not backed up by a life lived in accordance with those truths (Jas. 2:15f.). So far is James from opposing faith in the full sense that he everywhere presupposes it. Right at the beginning of his Epistle he speaks naturally of 'the testing of your faith' (Jas. 1:3), and he exhorts his readers, 'show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory' (Jas. 2:1). He criticizes a wrong faith but assumes that everyone will recognize the need for a right faith. Moreover, by 'works' James does not mean what Paul means by that term. Paul thinks of obedience to the commands of the law regarded as a system whereby a man may merit salvation. For James the law is 'the law of liberty' (Jas. 2:12). His 'works' look uncommonly like 'the fruit of the Spirit' of which Paul speaks. They are warm deeds of love springing from a right attitude to God. They are the fruits of faith. What James objects to is the claim that faith is there when there is no fruit to attest it."²

9. What does Paul desire his "faith without works" imaginary friend to understand in verse 20?
10. What does faith without works reveal about our salvation?

¹ *Context*. Context is our "fall back" hermeneutical principle that solves most all Bible study conundrums.

² *The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible Software under "faith."

11. Finish this thought: Dead (verse 17), useless (verse 20) faith is faith _____.

“Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than standing in the garage makes you a car.” Unknown

12. Based on all James has said in this section, is it possible to say we’re believers, walk in newness of life, be new creatures in Christ, and yet not walk in obedience or have evidence of a transformed life? Is it possible to live a life of faith without there being some evidence of faith, hope, and love in it?
13. Look up the following verses. What do each of these sections of Scripture attest to when it comes to a life of faith in Jesus Christ? See Matthew 7:15-23; John 15:1-4, 8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:10; Titus 2:11-14.
14. James then uses another example to hammer home his point that our faith must be a transforming faith, a faith that reveals itself in how it lives. What did Abraham’s already life-transforming faith prompt him to do according to verse 21?
15. To keep our thinking in this passage precise and accurate, let’s remind ourselves of Hebrews 11:6, 17-19; Romans 4:1-4. How does that information work with James’ purpose in challenging the thinking that faith that without life-transformation is saving faith?
16. According to verse 22, what were the results of Abraham’s works?
17. What does this teach you about how faith grows?

18. Look at verse 23 and note the progression. First, Abraham did what? Then what happened as a result? And that resulted in what happening for Abraham?
19. It's good to remember as you read verse 24 that when James is using works here, it means "faith that is lived out" or "faith that shows up in a transformed life" or "faith in God can't help but live it out." And as that faith is "living out" what is God doing in us (verse 24)?
20. James just can't help himself so he gives another example of someone whose new-found faith was revealed in how they lived. What example is given?
21. And just to make sure we get it, what comparison does James cite to drive home his point in verse 26?
22. There's just no way we can leave this impassioned instruction without considering our own lives. Consider if your faith does have works. What does that look like in your life? Remember, faith accompanied by deeds is *not the means* of salvation, but the *fruit* of salvation.
23. Now, brainstorm a bit and consider some of the ways, big and small, in which you live out your faith, that is, do works or deeds in your salvation. Now, narrow it down to today. How are you living out your faith, accompanied by deeds, today? These questions are not meant to self-congratulation, but rather for assessing the state of your soul.
24. Apply this statement to your daily life, "Faith without works is dead. Saying I believe God and love Him without putting faith, hope, obedience, service, and trust into practice is like those times when I... "

“In any and every case suitable works attend upon saving faith, and it is idle to claim to be saved by faith, unless our lives are holy.”³ Charles Spurgeon

“Faith is the root, good works are the fruits, and we must see to it that we have both. We must not think that either, without the other, will justify and save us. This is the grace of God wherein we stand, and we should stand to it.”⁴ Matthew Henry

³C. H. Spurgeon, [*The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964), 742.

⁴Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2414.

James Lesson #10, Chapter 3 Overview

The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to look at and begin to study a text of Scripture. *Observation* is a necessary part of Bible study, but can often be overlooked or rushed through. Observation begins with reading through the chapter and then reading and rereading it again and again! At this stage in our Bible study you're noticing and then recording what God has put into the chapter. You're not making any interpretations about what it means or how it applies to your life—that will come later. Don't rush through this lesson. Set aside time this week to peer into the living and abiding Word of God. You'll be glad you did!

I've included Chapter 3 at the end of this lesson so you can print it out and mark it up if you'd like. I find it helps me see items more easily if I'm marking and noting things as I go.

1. To begin, read through Chapter 3. Now, *summarize* the contents of Chapter 3. This is not the time to be super detailed; instead, think of trying to tell a 4th grader the contents of the chapter.
 - a. Summarize paragraph 1 (verses 1-12).

 - b. Summarize paragraph 2 (verses 13-18).

2. After reviewing the chapter and what you wrote for your summaries, ask yourself: What is the *main point* of this chapter? How do all these details and events reveal the main idea of the chapter? Record your answer below.

3. Next, look for a verse in the chapter that best summarizes the contents of the chapter. You might be tempted to choose your favorite verse here, but please don't do that. Instead, *consider which verse best sums up what's in the chapter*. Write down the verse you chose here.

4. Now you're ready to *title* your chapter. Your 3-5 word title should reflect the contents of the chapter. Remember, a title's purpose is to help you remember what is in each chapter.

5. List your observations about the *tongue* in this chapter. Be sure to note the verse references as well.

6. The word *tame/tamed* is used a bit in this chapter. List what you observe and where you found it.

7. What do you learn about *wisdom* in this chapter? Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

8. Now make a list of any things that *control other things* like a "bridle." Be sure to cite where you found them.

9. Now, make a list of the kinds of illustrations James uses. You don't have to write down the whole illustration; just note what he uses to illustrate a point, like *horses*, for example. Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

10. List what you learn about *earthly wisdom* in this chapter. Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

11. Now, list what you learn about *God's wisdom*, along with where you found it.

There's more observations to be found to this chapter than what I've asked you here. If you're eager for more, try looking for and noting:

- *References to time*
- *Repeated words*
- *Transition words like "for," "therefore," "so," "finally."*
- *Commands*
- *Comparisons*
- *Contrasts*
- *Lists of words, phrases or related thoughts*

12. Write down *at least* one thing you thought was interesting from this chapter.

James Chapter 3

1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James

Lesson #11, Chapter 3:1-12

As you come to your lesson today, be sure to ask the Lord for insight and help as you study this life changing section of Scripture.

1. Explain the ribbon of thought that connects Chapter 3 verse 1 with James' previous comments at the end of Chapter 2.
2. What command is given in 3:1? What reason is given for that command?
3. Why do you think the church needed to be admonished to "not let *many* of them become teachers" based on what you've learned about the church in Chapters 1 and 2?
4. What does James mean when he says that teachers will be judged more strictly? See 1 Corinthians 9:17; 1 Timothy 1:11-12; 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:17.

"James's point is that no believer should begin any form of teaching God's Word without a deep sense of the seriousness of this responsibility. To sin with the tongue when alone or with one or two other persons is bad enough; but to sin with the tongue in public, especially while acting as a speaker for God, is immeasurably worse. Speaking for God carries with it great implications, both for good and ill."¹
John MacArthur

¹John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 148.

“There is no special honor in preaching. There is only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors; and like the sea, it batters and bruises and does not rest. ... To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know each time you do it that you must do it again.”² Unknown

5. How does verse 2 explain the reasoning behind the command of verse 1?

6. See if you can come up with at least 5 observations about verse 2.

7. Define *perfect* [Strong's #5046] as James uses it here in verse 2. Notice how James uses the same word in 1:4, 17, 25. Paul speaks similarly in 1 Corinthians 9:27. Explain how the two passages are similar.

8. What term(s) would you use to describe the mature believer in verse 2?

9. In verse 2 we learn that a believer who is controlled in their speech will *generally* exercise self-control in other areas of their life. Why is that? See also 2 Corinthians 4:14-15; Philippians 1:21; 3:7-11; Titus 2:11-14. What is it about those motivations that guides and directs how we live?

10. From verses 3-7 list James' examples of small things that control larger things.

²Unknown author quoted by John F. MacArthur Jr., [James](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 150.

11. What is James' point in giving all those illustrations in verses 3-7? What does James want to make sure we *get*?

12. What specific things do we learn about the tongue in verses 5-6?

13. What dire warnings in verses 5-6 do we need to take to heart as we consider our own speech?

14. According to verses 7-8, what kinds of things are tamed? And yet, what one thing remains untamed?

15. What further information do we learn about our tongues from verses 8-10?

16. It's at this point that we need to look again at verse 2, which contains a "wonder" to consider, as well as an "encouragement." List the "wonder" and "encouragement" you see in verse 2, in light of all we've just observed about our speech.

17. James concludes verse 10 by saying, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." Here is hope! That simple statement indicates there's a way out, that we are *not bound* to destructive speech. He lays the groundwork for that hope by asking two rhetorical questions. Please explain what James wants us to understand from his questions in verses 11-12.

18. Summarize what you learn from the following verses as it relates to what we're discovering here. See Romans 8:1, 5-10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 1:9.

19. What truths about the Christian life underscore James' comments at the end of verse 10 and in verses 11-12?

20. Read verses 9 and 10 again. Here we find ample room for *application* as we consider *our own speech*. What issues are brought up in these verses? When do we find ourselves most susceptible to engaging in these speech sins?

21. It goes without saying that we're *all* guilty of the sins of the tongue. The key then is not to high-five each other in recognition of that fact, but rather, to consider *how we can honor* the Lord *and* our brothers and sisters in Christ. What can we learn and apply from the following Scriptures to aid us in giving God glory in our speech? See Psalm 19:12-14; 139:23-24; Colossians 3:1-3, 5, 8-10, 12-17; 1 Peter 1:14-16, 22-23.

22. If you find you are continually losing the battle in taming your tongue what does verse 12 indicate you need to consider about your spiritual condition? See also 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:2-11. Why is this spiritual self-assessment so important and something *every one* of us should undertake?

My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. James 3:10

“The implied application to the tongue is the point that it will produce according to its *nature* and not otherwise, and that it can have only *one* nature and not two or more. If it then blesses and curses out of the same mouth, something is wrong. It cannot be

possible that its cursing is untrue; thus it follows that its blessing must be untrue, be nothing but formality and hypocrisy. It is, indeed, water out of the cleft, but brackish, undrinkable water to God. Even a tree and a vine yield only the one kind of fruit.”³ R. C. H. Lenski

“Back to the principle at hand, those who truly praise God do not curse their brothers. James did not refer to a thoroughly new constitution of the person but to true faith that does what is natural to it, both toward God and toward other human beings. Such faith praises and blesses.”⁴ Kurt Richardson

“To a large extent, we are known by the way we talk. Over the long haul, what we say gives others a pretty good idea of who and what we really are. That principle applies to good things as well as sinful, but James’s emphasis here is entirely on the negative aspects of our speaking—such as gossip, slander, false accusations, lying, filthy language and stories, and other sins of the tongue—that can destroy individual lives, families, schools, churches, and communities.”⁵ John MacArthur

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

James 3:2

³R. C. H. Lenski, [*The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*](#) (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), 613.

⁴Kurt A. Richardson, [*James*](#), vol. 36, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 160.

⁵John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 156.

James

Lesson #12, Chapter 3:13-18

Ask the Lord to help you gain His wisdom as you study this section of James. There are riches here to apply and learn!

1. James isn't introducing a new topic here in Chapter 3 verse 13, so let's take a look at how verse 13 is a continuation of James' discussion in Chapter 3, especially of verses 9-12. What do you see?
2. In verse 13 James continues his pattern of using rhetorical questions. What challenge does he raise by asking the question he does in verse 13 and then giving its subsequent instruction?
3. Eager Beaver: Speaking of questions: James loves them! Look through each chapter of James and note each time he asks a question. Be sure to list the verse reference. See if you can figure out what point he's trying to make each time he asks a question.
4. List at least 5 observations of verse 13.
5. What do the Scriptures teach us about being *wise and understanding*? See Exodus 31:3; Deuteronomy 4:5-6; Psalm 107:43; 111:10; Proverbs 1:5, 7; 23:23; Daniel 2:21; Hosea 4:9; Matthew 7:24.
6. What do we learn about *living out* wisdom and understanding from the following Scriptures? See Matthew 11:19; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:1-2, 16.

7. Define *gentleness* [Strong's #4240 (ESV, NKJV *meekness*; NIV *humility*)].

“This Christian meekness involves a healthy understanding of our own unworthiness before God and a corresponding humility and lack of pride in our dealings with our fellow-men.”¹ Douglas Moo

8. Why is *gentleness* such a valued component to wise living? See Matthew 11:29; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:11; James 1:21; 3:17.
9. What are some challenges you face in applying the *wisdom of gentleness in your behavior*? What encouragements have you gained from our lesson so far that will help you apply this precious characteristic?
10. In contrast to the lovely picture painted in verse 13 about living our lives in the gentleness of wisdom, what character qualities are presented in verse 14? Where do those qualities reside?
11. If those qualities were to *somehow* show up in our lives, what's the first thing we need to do according to verse 14? Why is that so important?
12. What do we know about our hearts if we see the characteristics from verse 14 coming out in our lives? See John 8:44-47; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Ephesians 4:25-32.

¹Douglas J. Moo, [*James: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 136.

13. At this point James connects his comments to the theme of wisdom he began in verse 13. What does he have to say in verse 15 about the so-called “wisdom” illustrated in verse 14?
14. What are the products of the world’s wisdom (verse 16)? Why are those qualities antithetical to godly wisdom? See Isaiah 9:16 (in speaking about false teachers); 1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 5:19-21.
15. Say you were a young believer desiring to line up every area of your life in obedience to the Word of God, but you weren’t sure how to do this, how could you start if you only used verses 14-16 as your basis for examining your heart, your words, your choices, your philosophies, your practical application? How would those verses give you wisdom about the true state of your life and what to do about it?
- “We are creatures of a great master Designer, and His ordering of our lives is sure and certain, yet many people live without any visible order or peace or serenity. The way we live ought to manifest the truth of what we believe. A messy life speaks of a messy—an incoherent—faith.” Elisabeth Elliot²
16. Verse 17 contains a wonderful description of God’s wisdom. James indicates that even the *listing order* of these qualities is significant for us. What is the very first element found in all godly wisdom? John reveals why this quality would show up in godly wisdom in 1 John 3:3. What do you learn?
17. Following on heels of purity, we learn that God’s wisdom is *peaceable*. What do we learn about godly, *peaceable* wisdom from Proverbs 3:17; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:18?

² Elisabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976), 34.

- a. If you're eager for a little more study, read Psalm 34:11-14 and consider how the fear of the Lord leads you to peaceable wisdom.

“God’s wisdom leads to peace. It is a peace based on holiness, not on compromise. God never has “peace at any price.” The peace of the church is not more important than the purity of the church. If the church is pure, devoted to God, then there will be peace.”³ Warren Wiersbe

18. Don’t you just love that godly wisdom is *gentle*? Why would that be essential for every believer to understand and seek from the Lord? See Matthew 11:29; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 5:22-23.
19. Define our next quality of wisdom—*reasonable* [Strong’s #2138 (NIV *submissive*; NKJV *willing to yield*; ESV *open to reason*)]. What would that look like lived out in our lives? See 1 Samuel 25:17 and 2 Kings 5:13 for how *not* to act; then see Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5.

“The Lord is easy to be entreated; for he is slow unto wrath, but ready to show mercy. S. James saith that the wisdom which is from above is “gentle, peaceable, easy to be entreated.” If his grace in his children make them gentle and easy to be entreated, what shall we think of himself? Since he will have such pity in us poor creatures, that seventy times seven times in the day he will have us to forgive the offences of our brethren; Oh, what pity and compassion abound in himself! Thus we see our comfort is increased; that as his mercies are great, so are they tender; easily obtained, where they are earnestly craved.”⁴ William Cowper

³Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 364.

⁴William Cowper, quoted by C. H. Spurgeon, [*The Treasury of David: Psalms 111-119*](#), vol. 5 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 419–420.

20. Wisdom shows up in really tangible ways too—by being *full of mercy and good fruit*. Why are those qualities a perfect component in godly wisdom? See Luke 6:36; Titus 2:14.

21. The last two qualities of godly wisdom listed here link arms in life application. They can be translated as *impartial* or *unwavering* and *sincere* or *without hypocrisy*. Why is it necessary to remind the people James is writing to that godly wisdom doesn't show partiality and is sincere in its efforts to love others?

22. What does the last verse in Chapter 3 remind us about the results of living out God's wisdom? How is that a fitting epitaph to the chapter? And how does it provide a bridge into James' opening comments in Chapter 4 verse 1?

23. This practical chapter closes with concrete instruction about what our lives should look like. And James leaves no doubt as to what that looks like. How were you encouraged or challenged by this study of James 3:13-18? What are some specific ways you can assess whether you are applying godly wisdom or worldly wisdom to how you live each day?

24. The Christian life isn't static. Just because we show wisdom and understanding at one point, doesn't mean it's guaranteed that we will show that same godly wisdom at another point. What checkpoints and guides have you gained from Chapter 3 that will help you apply wisdom each and every day of your life?

“True wisdom, like real faith, is a vital, practical quality that has as much (or more) to do with the way we live as with what we think or say.”⁵ Douglas Moo

⁵Douglas J. Moo, [*James: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 136.

James

Lesson #13, Chapter 4 Overview

The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to look at and begin to study a text of Scripture. *Observation* is a necessary part of Bible study, but can often be overlooked or rushed through. Observation begins with reading through the chapter and then reading and rereading it again and again! At this stage in our Bible study you're noticing and then recording what God has put into the chapter. You're not making any interpretations about what it means or how it applies to your life—that will come later. Don't rush through this lesson. Set aside time this week to peer into the living and abiding Word of God. You'll be glad you did!

I've included Chapter 4 at the end of this lesson so you can print it out and mark it up if you'd like. I find it helps me see items more easily if I'm marking and noting things as I go.

1. To begin, read through Chapter 4. Now, *summarize* the contents of Chapter 4. This is not the time to be super detailed; instead, think of trying to tell a 4th grader the contents of the chapter.
 - a. Summarize paragraph 1 (verses 1-10).
 - b. Summarize paragraph 2 (verses 11-12).
 - c. Summarize paragraph 3 (verses 13-17).
2. After reviewing the chapter and what you wrote for your summaries, ask yourself: What is the *main point* of this chapter? How do all these details and events reveal the main idea of the chapter? Record your answer below.

3. Next, look for a verse in the chapter that best summarizes the contents of the chapter. You might be tempted to choose your favorite verse here, but please don't do that. Instead, *consider which verse best sums up what's in the chapter*. Write down the verse you chose here.

4. Now you're ready to *title* your chapter. Your 3-5 word title should reflect the contents of the chapter. Remember, a title's purpose is to help you remember what is in each chapter.

5. Words that refer to *fighting* or *violence* occur frequently in verses 1-4. List what you find along with the verse references.

6. James addresses his readers in various ways. List the terms he uses along with the verse reference.

7. Make a list of what you learn about *adulteresses* from verses 1-5.

8. Now make a list of any *commands* that are given in this chapter. Be sure to cite where you found them.

9. Words like *speak* or *say* are used frequently. Record what you find along with the verse references.

10. List any references to *time* from this chapter. Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

There's more observations to be found to this chapter than what I've asked you here. If you're eager for more, try looking for and noting:

- *References to time*
- *Repeated words*
- *Transition words like "for," "therefore," "so," "finally."*
- *Commands*
- *Comparisons*
- *Contrasts*
- *Lists of words, phrases or related thoughts*

11. Write down *at least* one thing you thought was interesting from this chapter.

James Chapter 4

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.

12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”

14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”

16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

James Lesson #14, Chapter 4:1-10

Read Chapter 4 before beginning this lesson. And as you do so, ask the Lord for His help in studying and applying His precious Word in your life.

1. What line of thought does James pick up in Chapter 4 verse 1? Explain how it connects with the end of Chapter 3.

2. What is the *source* of the quarrels and conflicts among us according to verse 1?

3. Both the NASB and NKJV translate the end of verse 1 with the word *members*, while both the ESV and NIV chose *within you*. Why would our pleasures or desires wage war *within us*? See Romans 7:21-25; Galatians 5:16-17; Colossians 3:5-7; James 3:14-18; 1 Peter 1:14; 2:11.

4. James gives two examples of what the war raging within us might look like. What two examples does he cite?

5. What solution does James propose at the end of verse 2?

6. James often appears to “hear” a rebuttal from those he’s instructing. The white space in between verses 2 and 3 is one such spot where it seems that James anticipated a response to his “You don’t have because you haven’t asked” comment in verse 2. What possible objection was he anticipating? You can figure that out by looking at verse 3.

7. There is a presupposition floating around here that isn't directly addressed, so let's take the time to bring it to the forefront. Look up the following verses and then explain how they undergird James' comments in verse 2-3. See Psalm 66:18-19; Isaiah 59:1-2; Matthew 6:31-32; Luke 11:9-13; 1 John 5:14-15.

8. There are other reasons for unanswered prayer than what we've discovered here, yet for now, please summarize what you've learned from verses 2-3 about prayer.

9. We can't leave verses 1-3 without taking some time to examine the desires of our hearts. I doubt you've committed murder, but most likely there have been times when you've been angry or envious or selfish. According to verses 1-3, if we want God to hear and answer our prayers what do we need to recognize?
 - a. Where do we go from there? See Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9-10.

 - b. What comfort do we find in these Scriptures? See Psalm 130:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 4:14-16.

10. What were James' hearers doing in verse 4 that prompted him to call them *adulteresses*?

11. From verses 1-4, explain why being a friend of the world would cause us to commit spiritual adultery against God.

12. What does friendship with the world look like? See Matthew 6:24; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; James 1:27; 5:5; 1 John 2:15-17.

13. What do you learn about God's heart for His children from verse 5? Why would friendship with the world jeopardize that relationship?

14. Is there ever a time when God is *not* jealous for our affections? See also Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:23-24; and consider 2 Corinthians 11:2 that speaks of a similar jealousy. How does that knowledge, that the Lord longs for you to love Him with a whole heart, motivate and encourage you to spend time with Him each day?

“Our Lord hunts for our love.” Samuel Rutherford¹

15. Be sure to look up Proverbs 3:34 which James quotes in verse 6. Now consider and explain how that Old Testament quote supports James' exhortation to his hearers.

“My counsel is that ye come out and leave the multitude, and let Christ have your company. Let them take clay and this present world who love it: Christ is a more worthy and noble portion. Blessed are those who get Him.” ~Samuel Rutherford

16. Verses 7-10 provide us with the steps we need for becoming the *humble who receive God's gracious help*. What's the first step to humbling our hearts from verse 7? What does that look like in our lives? See Psalm 131; Proverbs 3:5-8; Isaiah 45:9; Daniel 4:34-37.

¹ Samuel Rutherford, *The Loveliness of Christ* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1909, reprinted 2008), 26.

17. What's the second step to humbling our hearts according to verse 7? What else do we learn about this process? See Matthew 4:3-11; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 5:18.

Pilgrim, burdened with thy sin,
Come the way to Zion's gate;
There, till mercy speaks within,
Knock, and weep, and watch, and wait.
Knock—He knows the sinner's cry;
Weep—He loves the mourner's tears;
Watch—for saving grace is nigh;
Wait—till heavenly grace appears.²

18. What promise is given at the beginning of verse 8 that encourages and aids as we engage in this heart-work of humbling ourselves before the Lord?
19. As we draw near to God, what must we make sure we do according to the second half of verse 8? How does that fly in the face of the current "just come as you are" Christian climate that never seeks to turn sinners from their sin?
20. Verse 9 explains part of the process of repentance in humbling our hearts before the Lord. What are we to do? What does being miserable, mourning, and weeping in repentance reveal to the Lord? See also 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.
21. As we humble our hearts before the Lord, what assurance do we have from verse 10? What other encouragements do we gain from the following Scriptures? See Psalm 10:17; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Peter 5:5-6.

²J. C. Ryle, *Hymns for the Church on Earth* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1876), 12.

“A garrison is not free from danger while it hath an enemy lodged within.”

You may bolt all your doors, and fasten all your windows, but if the thieves have placed even a little child within doors, who can draw the bolts for them, the house is still unprotected. All the sea outside a ship cannot do it damage till the water enters within and fills the hold. Hence, it is clear, our greatest danger is from within. All the devils in hell and tempters on earth could do us no injury if there were no corruption in our nature. Alas, our heart is our greatest enemy; this is the little home-born thief.³

“Holy Lord, I have sinned times without number, and been guilty of pride and unbelief, of failure to find Your mind in Your Word, of neglect to seek You in my daily life. My transgressions and short-comings present me with a list of accusations, but I bless You that they will not stand against me, for all have been laid on Christ.

Go on to subdue my corruptions, and grant me grace to live above them. Let not the passions of the flesh nor lustings of the mind bring my spirit into subjection, but rule over me in liberty and power.

I thank You that many of my prayers have been refused. I have asked amiss and do not have, I have prayed from lusts and been rejected, I have longed for Egypt and been given a wilderness.

Go on with Your patient work, answering 'no' to my wrongful prayers, and fitting me to accept it. Purge me from every false desire, every base aspiration, everything contrary to Your rule.

I thank You for Your wisdom and Your love, for all the acts of discipline to which I am subject, for sometimes putting me into the furnace to refine my gold and remove my dross.

No trial is so hard to bear as a sense of sin. If You would give me choice to live in pleasure and keep my sins, or to have them burnt away with trial, give me sanctified affliction.

Deliver me from every evil habit, every accretion of former sins, everything that dims the brightness of Your grace in me, everything that prevents me taking delight in You. Then I shall bless You, God of Jeshurun, for helping me to be upright.”
Valley of Vision, "Confession and Petition"⁴

³ C. H. Spurgeon, [*Daily Help*](#) (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward & Company, 1892), 165.

⁴ Arthur Bennett, editor, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975, reprinted 1999), 77.

James

Lesson #15, Chapter 4:11-17

Please read all of Chapter 4 before beginning this lesson. And as you do so, ask the Lord for His help in studying and applying this life-transforming Word to your life.

1. As we've discovered in previous lessons, at times James appears to make rather large subject leaps only to observe that the "leaps" really do follow with all he's been saying. Our lesson today begins in that same way. How does the command in verse 11 fall in line with verses 1-10?
2. What command is given in verse 11? What are some specific ways we put this sin into practice?
3. To whom is the command addressed? Why is this important to remember?
4. It's easy to see the Scriptures have much to say on this subject, so let's start by summarizing what you learn about engaging in this sin from the following verses. See Exodus 23:1; Psalm 50:20; 101:5; Proverbs 10:18; Romans 1:30; Ephesians 4:31; 1 Timothy 3:11; James 5:9; 1 Peter 2:1.
5. Let's get back to looking at the rest of James' comments. What argument in verses 11 and 12 does James present for speaking well of each other?
6. How does James tie in previous instruction with what he says here in verses 11 and 12? See James 1:22-23; 2:8-12; 3:10.

7. What do you learn in verses 11 and 12 that show how serious this sin is to God? Also explain *why* it's offensive to Him.

8. Matthew Henry eloquently reminds us, "Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice. This, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, *that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness* (Prov. 31:26), must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian."¹ How would a firm commitment to not to speak evil of anyone change our interactions with each other?
 - a. How should we respond if someone reminds us not to defame someone?

 - b. What are some ways we can lovingly help someone else not to speak badly of someone else?

"This is a much-needed warning. People are slow to realize that there are few sins which the Bible so unsparingly condemns as the sin of irresponsible and malicious gossip. There are few activities in which the average person finds more delight than this; to tell and to listen to the slanderous story—especially about some famous person—is for most people a fascinating activity. We do well to remember what God thinks of it." William Barclay²

"*Speak not evil one of another*, because you are brethren. The compellation, as used by the apostle here, carries an argument along with it. Since Christians are brethren, they should not defile nor defame one another. It is required of us that we be tender

¹Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2417.

²William Barclay, [*The Letters of James and Peter*](#), 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 128–129.

of the good name of our brethren; where we cannot speak well, we had better say nothing than speak evil; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, merely to expose them, nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve, and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading things concerning them of which they are altogether innocent.”
 Matthew Henry³

9. What situation does James address in verse 13?

10. We know God doesn’t condemn planning or working hard (see Proverbs 20:18; 31:10-21; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12), so what attitudes and motivations is James going after in verse 14? See also Proverbs 27:1; Isaiah 56:12; Luke 12:17-21.

11. What attitudes does God desire to see His children possess when it comes to living out their lives? Consider our text, along with Psalm 39:4-5; 90:10, 12, 14-17; Matthew 6:34; Luke 12:22-34.

12. According to verse 15, what is the antidote to the thinking found in verses 13-14?

13. Describe what our daily lives look like when we live like verse 15.
 - a. What are our *thoughts* or *motivations* like when we live the *James 4:15* way? See also Proverbs 3:5-8; 19:21; Matthew 6:9-10, 33; John 3:30; Romans 1:10; Hebrews 6:3.

³Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2417.

- b. What word or phrase would you use to describe this kind of life?

- c. How much would you say that word or phrase characterized you this week?

“The true Christian way is not to be terrorized into fear and paralyzed into inaction by the uncertainty of the future, but to commit the future and all our plans into the hands of God, always remembering that these plans may not be within God’s purpose.” Willam Barclay⁴

- 14. How does God view our independence according to verse 16?

- 15. List the Scripture verses or passages *you* go to that encourage and remind you *to live dependently upon the Lord*. Be sure to explain why that particular passage strengthens your heart.

- 16. Explain how if we don’t live the James 4:15 way, it will result in the sins of verse 16.

- 17. What else do we learn about boasting from the following verses? See Isaiah 10:15; 47:7-8, 10; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 4:6-7; 13:4; 1 John 2:16.

⁴William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 132.

18. Douglas Moo, in his commentary on James writes, “Phillips⁵ perfectly captures the resultant meaning, ‘you get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence’. It is this ‘pride of life’, this arrogant sense of self-sufficiency and self-importance, that John deplors as characteristic of the world (1 John 2:16; see also Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:4). People not only leave God out of account in planning their lives; it is the essence of sin that they brag about it as well—‘I’ takes centre stage in place of God. This kind of boasting is *evil*, then, not because of the arrogant manner in which it is done; it is evil because the objects of the boasting are instances of arrogant disregard for God.”⁶ Douglas Moo reveals how subtly our sins of independence and self-sufficiency can lead us to think they aren’t really being noticed. What are some specific ways you can train your heart to live more dependently upon the Lord, knowing He does see them?

19. How does James wrap up his counseling session that has focused on practical ways to live dependently upon the Lord? See verse 17.

20. Explain how the seeds of self-sufficiency and independence wend their way through verses 11-17.

21. What choice does the straightforward counsel from verse 17 force us to make?

22. What does our “choice,” either of dependence or self-sufficiency, proclaim to the Lord? Review what we’ve seen in verses 11-17.

⁵J. B. Phillips translator of *The New Testament in Modern English*, 1958.

⁶Douglas J. Moo, *James: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 162.

James

Lesson #16, Chapter 5 Overview

The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to look at and begin to study a text of Scripture. *Observation* is a necessary part of Bible study, but can often be overlooked or rushed through. Observation begins with reading through the chapter and then reading and rereading it again and again! At this stage in our Bible study you're noticing and then recording what God has put into the chapter. You're not making any interpretations about what it means or how it applies to your life—that will come later. Don't rush through this lesson. Set aside time this week to peer into the living and abiding Word of God. You'll be glad you did!

I've included Chapter 5 at the end of this lesson so you can print it out and mark it up if you'd like. I find it helps me see items more easily if I'm marking and noting things as I go.

1. To begin, read through Chapter 5. Now, *summarize* the contents of Chapter 5. This is not the time to be super detailed; instead, think of trying to tell a 4th grader the contents of the chapter.
 - a. Summarize paragraph 1 (verses 1-6).
 - b. Summarize paragraph 2 (verses 7-11).
 - c. Summarize paragraph 3 (verses 12).
 - d. Summarize paragraph 4 (verses 13-18).
 - e. Summarize paragraph 4 (verses 19-20).

2. After reviewing the chapter and what you wrote for your summaries, ask yourself: What is the *main point* of this chapter? How do all these details and events reveal the main idea of the chapter? Record your answer below.

3. Next, look for a verse in the chapter that best summarizes the contents of the chapter. You might be tempted to choose your favorite verse here, but please don't do that. Instead, *consider which verse best sums up what's in the chapter*. Write down the verse you chose here.

4. Now you're ready to *title* your chapter. Your 3-5 word title should reflect the contents of the chapter. Remember, a title's purpose is to help you remember what is in each chapter.

5. Words that refer to *riches* occur frequently in verses 1-6. List what you find along with the verse references.

6. Look for any lists you can find in the chapter about *riches* or the *rich* and observations you may have discovered.

7. Make a list of what you learn about *patient/patience/endurance/waiting*. Be sure to include the verse references.

8. Now make a list of any *commands* that are given in this chapter. Be sure to cite where you found them.

9. The word *sin/sinner* and descriptions of those terms are key words in this chapter. List them along with any observations and their verse references.

10. List any references to *time* from this chapter. Be sure to include the verse references with your answer.

11. List what you learn about *judge/judgment* from this chapter and the verse references.

12. What do you see about the word *pray/prayer* in this chapter? Be sure to include the verse references.

There's more observations to be found to this chapter than what I've asked you here. If you're eager for more, try looking for and noting:

- *References to time*
- *Repeated words*
- *Transition words like "for," "therefore," "so," "finally."*
- *Commands*
- *Comparisons*
- *Contrasts*
- *Lists of words, phrases or related thoughts*

13. Write down *at least* one thing you thought was interesting from this chapter.

James Chapter 5

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,
20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James

Lesson #17, Chapter 5:1-11

Please read all of Chapter 5 before beginning this lesson. And as you do so, ask the Lord for His help in studying and applying this life-transforming Word to your life.

1. James begins Chapter 5 with “Come now (NIV *Now listen*);” a phrase he used to good effect in 4:13. Who was he addressing in 4:13? And who is he addressing in 5:1?
 - a. Now consider, to whom James has been addressing his comments throughout this book. What do you see from James 1:2, 16; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10; 4:11?

2. And also throughout this book, James forthrightly deals with different sin issues to help his beloved brethren grow in their faith. In essence, the letter is a perfect example of his final words to them, “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).” Review the previous chapters and list the different sins of the heart James confronts in this book.

3. Look for key verses in the book that show what kind of faith James desires to build in believers and list them here.

4. As he’s been tackling sin issues in his beloved brethren, it’s also helpful to see some of the other names for them that he uses to reveal the sin in their lives. What are some of the other ways he addresses the believers in this book?

5. Many think James 5:1 introduces a new topic to a new group of people, yet that doesn't fit with the flow of the book, the way James has confronted his fellow believers, or the near context of 4:13-17, which also spoke to the believers. So, though James 5:1 *appears* to change audiences, it really doesn't; it is simply James' way of bringing to light holdover sins from their former way of life as unbelievers. Take a quick glance at 5:1-6, and consider what sin issue James desires to root out in these precious believers?

6. Eager Beaver: How does James' forthrightness and willingness to "call-out" his brethren about sin in their lives indicate his motives? What is James more concerned about? Their holiness or their comfort? What's the purpose in calling sinners to repentance? See Luke 5:31-32; 2 Corinthians 12:19-22.

7. What specific sins have the "rich" committed that are no longer appropriate now that they have come to faith in Jesus Christ (verses 1-6)? You can almost hear James repeating, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way (James 3:10)."

8. What foundation of right thinking needs to be built in the rich now that they are believers? See James 1:9-11, 27; 2:1; 4:4-6, 11-12. Also see Luke 12:21, 29-34; Galatians 3:26-28; 1 Timothy 6:7-11; 1 Peter 1:22.

9. What does James mean when he tells the "rich" to "weep and howl?" See James 4:8-10 for your answer. Why is that an important first step in bringing to light the sins that are now plaguing them?

10. Why do the riches of the rich *rot* and *moths* eat their fine garments (verse 2)? And why does the gold and silver of the rich *rust* (verse 3)? What else does the gold and silver do according to verse 3? How does that give you insight into the motivations and focus of those who sought to amass those riches?

11. At the end of verse 3 James says, “You have laid up, hoarded, stored your treasure in the last days.” Why is that reference to “the last days” significant? See Luke 12:13-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-2; 1 John 2:15-18.

12. Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; and James 4:4-5 provide the focus for all our endeavors, no matter who we are, how much “treasure” we have, or at what point in history we live. What are we supposed to do? Why?

13. Two things witness or cry against the rich in verses 3-4? Who sees all that has gone on (verse 4)?

14. What picture is painted of the rich in verses 5-6? And while the rich were living that way, how were those in poorer circumstances living? (The answer isn’t given, but is understood nonetheless.)
 - a. James brings these things up to get the believers to leave behind these sins. Peter urges much the same thing in 1 Peter 4:1-6. What do you learn there?

15. What counsel does James give to all believers, especially those who may be suffering? See verse 7. How is his illustration intended to help them obey this counsel?
 - a. Define *patient* as used in verses 7 and 8 [Strong’s #3114].

16. The coming of the Lord, and with it His judgment, is mentioned in verses 7, 8, and 9. How is that an encouragement for anyone who suffering?
- a. Second Thessalonians 1:6-10 and 2 Peter 3:9-15 both address similar circumstances. What do those authors counsel believers who are suffering trials?
17. Even while suffering, what does God desire from us according to verse 9? And again, what added motivation do we have for living out this command?
- “Christian waiting is not waiting for something, but for someone.”¹
18. Why do we all need to be reminded not to complain about each other in light of what we’ve studied in this chapter and the rest of the book?
19. Who are examples for us according to verse 10? Generally, what were their situations (cite specific ones if you would like) that reveal their *suffering and patience*?
20. Why do we count those *blessed* who endured? See verse 11. Also look back at James 1:3-4, 12 and see what we learn.

¹Peter H. Davids, “[James](#),” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1366.

- a. As usual, James barely dips his quill into this bottomless inkwell, so we'll try to plumb some of those untapped depths. Look up the following verses that add their written testimony to the one given here in James 5:11. See Psalm 86:15; Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-33; Joel 2:25-27.
21. James hasn't held back in bringing to light the sins of our heart in this section. What are some of "the rich man's sins" you've identified as being resident *in your own heart* at times? What counsel has been the most helpful in putting those sins to death?
22. Words like *patient, wait, strengthen, suffering, and endure* permeate James' repeated encouragement in verses 7-11. How does the knowledge that the Lord's return is near, or knowing that others have endured great sufferings too, or remembering the Lord's immeasurable kindness to His children help you persevere when life presses in upon you?

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

by Henry F. Lyte

Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee.
Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition, all I've sought or hoped or known.
Yet how rich is my condition! God and heaven are still mine own.

Let the world despise and leave me, they have left my Savior, too.
Human hearts and looks deceive me; Thou art not, like them, untrue.
And while Thou shalt smile upon me, God of wisdom, love and might,
Foes may hate and friends disown me, show Thy face and all is bright.

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure! Come, disaster, scorn and pain!
In Thy service, pain is pleasure; with Thy favor, loss is gain.
I have called Thee, "Abba, Father"; I have set my heart on Thee:
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather, all must work for good to me.

Man may trouble and distress me, 'twill but drive me to Thy breast.
Life with trials hard may press me; heaven will bring me sweeter rest.
Oh, 'tis not in grief to harm me while Thy love is left to me;
Oh, 'twere not in joy to charm me, were that joy unmixed with Thee.

Take, my soul, thy full salvation; rise o'er sin, and fear, and care;
Joy to find in every station something still to do or bear:
Think what Spirit dwells within thee; what a Father's smile is thine;
What a Savior died to win thee, child of heaven, shouldst thou repine?

Haste then on from grace to glory, armed by faith, and winged by prayer,
Heaven's eternal day's before thee, God's own hand shall guide thee there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission, swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope soon change to glad fruition, faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

James

Lesson #18, Chapter 5:12-20

As we come to our last lesson in James, please read Chapter 5 before beginning this lesson. Be sure to ask the Lord for His help in your study because there's so much to learn and understand in this section!

1. Summarize the flow of thought in verses 1-11.
2. Verse 12 starts with a contrast that clearly links it with the previous instruction. What command is given in verse 12? Why is obedience to that command so important (verse 12)?
3. How does verse 12 line up with what we've studied in verses 1-11?
4. Explain what kind of "swearing" we're dealing with in verse 12. See also Matthew 5:33-37; 23:16-22; 2 Corinthians 1:17-20.
5. Living under trial and suffering can wear down the spiritual robustness of even the most mature believer. What oaths or vows might we be tempted to make when life is hard and our hearts are weighed down in trial? See also James 1:13-17.
6. Continuing with the theme of patient endurance while suffering (5:7-11), James then gives what advice in verse 13? How are both responses wise counsel when we're in the midst of affliction? See also James 1:2-5.

7. Verses 14 and 15 give us the opportunity to do some amateur sleuthing and apply important Bible study principles in the process. Words usually have a range of meanings, which is why it's important to remember *the context determines a word's meaning*. In verse 14 we have, "Is anyone among you *sick*?" Another way that word has been translated is "*weak*." Then in verse 15 we read, "and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is *sick*." The word translated "sick" in verse 15 is a different Greek word than the one in verse 14. Another way the word "sick" in verse 15 can be translated is "*grown weary*." Write out verses 14-15 and insert "*weak*" instead of "sick" in verse 14 and insert "*has grown weary*" in place of "sick" in verse 15.

8. How does translating those Greek words as *weak* and *grown weary*, rather than "sick," change the meaning of verses 14-15? And how does that alternate translation fit the context of the passage better?

Take the time to read the sections below as Ron Blue, and then John MacArthur, provide helpful insights into our passage:

Ron Blue writes, "James asked a third question and then answered it fully. **Is any one of you sick?** A great deal of misunderstanding has resulted from these verses. Some seem to teach from this passage that full physical health is always just a prayer away. Others have found in this passage justification for "extreme unction" (a practice begun in the eighth century). Still others have tried to relate the process outlined by James to the modern practice of invoking God ("pray over him") and using medicine ("anoint him with oil")—prayer plus a physician.

The heart of the problem lies in just what James meant when he referred to the "sick." Actually there is no reason to consider "sick" as referring exclusively to physical illness. The word *asthenei* literally means "to be weak." Though it is used in the Gospels for physical maladies, it is generally used in Acts and the Epistles to refer to a weak faith or a weak conscience (cf. Acts 20:35; Rom. 6:19; 14:1; 1 Cor. 8:9–12). That it should be considered "weak" in this verse is clear in that another Greek word (*kamnonta*) in James 5:15, translated **sick person**, literally means "to be weary." The only other use in the New Testament (Heb. 12:3) of that word clearly emphasizes this same meaning.

James was not referring to the bedfast, the diseased, or the ill. Instead he wrote to those who had grown weary, who had become weak both morally and spiritually in the midst of suffering. These are the ones who **should call** for the help of **the elders of the church**. The early church leaders were instructed (1 Thes. 5:14) to “encourage the timid” and “help the weak” (*asthenōn*).

James said that the elders should **pray over him and anoint him with oil**. It is significant that the word “anoint” is *aleipsantes* (“rub with oil”) not *chriō* (“ceremonially anoint”). The former is the “mundane” word and the latter is “the sacred and religious word” (Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, ninth ed. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950, pp. 136–37). “Therefore James is not suggesting a ceremonial or ritual anointing as a means of divine healing; instead, he is referring to the common practice of using oil as a means of bestowing honor, refreshment, and grooming” (Daniel R. Hayden, “Calling the Elders to Pray,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138. July/September 1981: 264). The woman “poured” (*aleiphō*) perfume on Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:38). A host “put oil” (*aleiphō*) on the head of his guest (Luke 7:46). A person who is fasting should not be sad and ungroomed, but should “put oil” (*aleiphō*) on his head, and wash his face (Matt. 6:17). Thus James’ point is that the “weak” (*asthenei*) and “weary” (*kamnōnta*) would be refreshed, encouraged, and uplifted by the elders who rubbed oil on the despondents’ heads and prayed for them.

For the fallen, discouraged, distressed weary believer, restoration is assured and the elders’ **prayer offered in faith will make the sick person** (lit., “weary one”) **well** (i.e., will restore him from discouragement and spiritual defeat), and **the Lord will raise him up**.

That the restoration is spiritual, not physical, is further clarified by the assurance, **if he has sinned, he will be forgiven**. Many physically ill Christians have called on elders to pray for them and to anoint them with oil, but a sizable percentage of them have remained sick. This fact suggests that the passage may have been mistakenly understood as physical restoration rather than spiritual restoration.”¹

John MacArthur makes similar helpful comments for us as well: “James directs those who are “sick,” meaning weakened by their suffering to call for the elders of the church for strength, support, and prayer.

5:14 anointing him with oil. Lit. “rubbing him with oil”: 1) possibly this is a reference to ceremonial anointing (*See note on Lev. 14:18; Mark 6:13*); 2) on the other hand, James may have had in mind medical treatment of believers physically bruised and battered by persecution. Perhaps it is better to understand the

¹J. Ronald Blue, “[James](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 834–835.

anointing in a metaphorical sense of the elders' encouraging, comforting, and strengthening the believer.

5:15 prayer of faith. The prayer offered on their behalf by the elders. **save the sick.** Deliver them from their suffering because they have been weakened by their infirmity, not from their sin, which was confessed. **committed sins ... be forgiven.** Not by the elders, since God alone can forgive sins (Is. 43:25; Dan. 9:9; Mark 2:7). That those who are suffering called for the elders implies they had a contrite, repentant heart, and that part of their time with the overseers would involve confessing their sins to God."²

9. What other insights did you gain from those two commentators that helped you understand verses 14-15 better?

10. What contributes to our feeling spiritually weak or weary? See Matthew 26:41; 1 Corinthians 11:27-30; 2 Thessalonians 3:7; Revelation 2:2-6.
 - a. Describe what it's like when you're feeling spiritually *weak* and *weary* due to difficulties, persecutions, temptations, suffering, or trials.

11. Why would it be helpful to have the elders, the spiritual leaders of your church, come and pray for you when you're feeling weak and weary?

²John MacArthur Jr., ed., [*The MacArthur Study Bible*](#), electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1934.

12. Notice that if we are feeling *weak* spiritually, we're told we're to call the elders to come pray for us. Have you ever put that into practice or seen it done? What things might tempt us not to follow through on this instruction? What is the intended benefit of asking the elders to pray for us? See verse 15.

13. What is the hoped-for result of anointing a spiritually weak and weary person with oil? See Ezekiel 16:8-10; 2 Chronicles 28:15; Luke 7:44-46; 10:33-34 for some examples.

14. When we feel spiritually weak and weary, what promises do we have from God to encourage and strengthen our souls? See Matthew 11:28; Romans 8:26; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 12:1-3; James 5:17-18 for a few.

15. When are we to confess our sins to one another and ask for prayer according to verses 13-16?
 - a. What is the intended benefit of our mutual sharing and bearing of one another's burdens from verse 16? See also Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 12:12-13.

16. Notice the reciprocal effect of prayer in these verses. What do you see happening in verses 13-18 as we engage in prayer?
 - a. What picture is painted of the way we are to interact with each other from these verses? What do you notice about *one* of the purposes of our relationship with each other from verses 13-16?

17. What encouragement does James give us so we'll persevere and engage in this aspect of loving one another? See the end of verse 16.

18. What example of effective prayer on behalf of others is then given in verses 17-18?

19. What is the point of the phrase "with a nature like ours" (verse 17) in light of this discussion on praying for one another? Consider the context of this paragraph as you answer.

20. How is the illustration about Elijah to be an encouragement to us as we seek to minister to one another? Remembering the context here, why do we *need* this grand example of powerful prayer when it comes to encouraging our weak and weary brethren?

21. Explain how verses 19-20 perfectly align with the instruction in verses 13-18. See Jude 20-23.

22. How are verses 19-20 a fitting epitaph to all James' instruction in this book?

"The essence of James's letter is a call to action (works) that allows truth to triumph over sin and error. This is the essence of everything he wrote."³

³Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, [*Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*](#), The Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 684.

23. What commands or instruction from this book do you want to keep front and center of your mind and heart?

“Faith without works cannot be called faith. Faith without works is dead, and a dead faith is worse than no faith at all. Faith must work; it must produce; it must be visible. Verbal faith is not enough; mental faith is insufficient. Faith must be there, but it must be more. It must inspire action. *Throughout his epistle to Jewish believers, James integrates true faith and everyday practical experience by stressing that true faith must manifest itself in works of faith.*”⁴

⁴Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, [*Talk Thru the Bible*](#) (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983), 463.