The Book of James

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

James 1:22

Bible Study Guide

5 Bible Studies on James

And 5 week preaching program for All Saints Waitara
Bible Study Approach

Preparation before the bible study meeting:

1. **Pray** for Spiritual insight. Pray God will give you understanding of his word and prepare you to be taught.
2. **Read** the main passage. (Try reading different translations – NIV, NESB, etc)
3. **Meditate** on the passage – think about it.
4. **Prepare** your answers and thoughts to the questions in the study guide, which you will go through in the meeting.
5. **During the meeting, you may not have time to go through ALL of the questions** – your leader will select questions each week that will be most helpful for your group. So it is important you prepare all of the study yourself to get the most out of it.

Meditating on the passage – getting the most out of it:

1. Ask the questions: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, HOW
2. What things are being emphasized?
3. What things are being repeated?
4. Are there things that are connected – within the passage or with other passages in the Bible?
5. Interpretation: What does it mean?
   a. Context – style (poetry, history, etc), culture, geography, etc
   b. Meaning – of important words and phrases
6. Think about applying each passage to your own life:
   a. Personal, Family, Church, Work, Social
7. Is there an example to follow? A sin to avoid? A promise to hold on to? A prayer to pray? Commands to obey? Verses to memorise? Doctrinal understanding that needs correcting? Challenges to face?
8. Finally, ask yourself – “Who can I share this with?”
Introduction to James

The Epistle of James is a book which focuses on practical Christian living. If we are to “be disciples and make disciples”, this is a great book to teach us the practical side of Christian living.

James chastises, exhorts and encourages us in our daily lives to be disciples of Jesus with lots of illustrations and challenging words.

The Letter of James is addressed to 12 tribes throughout the nations (James 1:1) and for a while it was not widely recognised as part of the Canon of Scripture (what we call “the Bible” today).

Possibly written in the mid 40s, James is most likely written to Jewish Christians. Many are living in difficult economic conditions due to the dispersion caused by widespread persecution. But James is certainly applies to all Christians in all living conditions.

There is so much in the book of James, it is worth reading through in one sitting, once a week during our sermon series. It is consistently challenging as we think about our day to day lives and causes us to stop and consider the challenges of living as disciples of Christ in this society, as well as making disciples for Christ.

The structure of these studies:

**Question 1: “Think about this”**
An opening question to get us thinking and talking

**Question 2: “The big picture”**
General short answers and questions about the whole passage – themes, questions and initial responses

**Question 3-8: “The text”**
Specific questions on verses and ideas in the passage

**Questions 9-10: “Applying it to you life”**
Personal application questions from the passage – about our personal relationship with God and the way we respond to God.
1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

Greetings.

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10 But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not
change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
Think about this...

1. What makes a Christian “mature”?

The big picture...

2. Read the passage and write down in a few words:
   a. The theme of the passage:

   ___________________________________________

   b. A question you have about the passage

   ___________________________________________

   c. A response you have to the passage

   ___________________________________________

The text...

3. Looking at verses 1-18. In what way does the writer:

   Encourage ____________________________________________________________

   Warn  _______________________________________________________________

   Exhort _______________________________________________________________

   Rebuke _______________________________________________________________

4. Verse 12: In what practical ways can we persevere under trial?

   _________________________________________________________________
5. Verses 19-21: What is –

The instruction? ________________________________________________
The reason? ________________________________________________
The response? ________________________________________________

6. Verses 22-27. What does verse 22 mean to you?
_____________________________________________________________

7. Verse 23: In what ways are you like a man looking in the mirror and

forgetting? ___________________________________________________

8. Verse 27: How do we achieve this? Is James saying that it’s all about what

WE do? _____________________________________________________

Applying it to your life...

9. How do we make positive change in our lives as Christians?

_____________________________________________________________

10. Think of one way this passage might impact your Christian life this

week.

_____________________________________________________________
1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favouritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbour as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and
well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.
Think about this...

1. What is discrimination? Where do you see discrimination in our society?

The big picture...

2. Read the passage and write down in a few words:
   a. The theme of the passage:

   __________________________________________________________

   b. A question you have about the passage

   __________________________________________________________

   c. A response you have to the passage

   __________________________________________________________

The text...

3. Verses 1-11: In what ways might you or other Christians show favouritism at church? Outside of church?

   __________________________________________________________

4. In what way is “favouritism” breaking the law?

   __________________________________________________________

5. What does this mean for the Christian life: “Mercy triumphs over judgment!”?

   __________________________________________________________
6. Verse 14-25 – Is Christianity about “works” or “faith”?

_____________________________________________________________


_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

8. Discuss Jesus’ faith and actions.

_____________________________________________________________

Applying it to your life...

9. What actions have you done as a Christian as an outpouring of your faith?

(The aim of this is not to boast, but to share how we put our faith into action)

_____________________________________________________________

10. Think of one way this passage might impact your Christian life this week.

_____________________________________________________________
Study 3 Watch Your Mouth
James 3:1-18

1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.
Think about this...

1. Can you think of an event that has had a massive impact worldwide? Why did it have such a big impact?

The big picture...

2. Read the passage and write down in a few words: (If you have time read the whole account 6:1-9:17)
   a. The theme of the passage:

   __________________________________________

   b. A question you have about the passage

   __________________________________________

   c. A response you have to the passage

   __________________________________________

The text...

3. 3:1 – Why should teachers be judged more strictly?

   __________________________________________

4. Why do you think so much of this chapter is spent talking about “the tongue”?

   __________________________________________
5. How can we practically learn to control our tongue? Do you have any wisdom to share on this?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

6. Define:

Wisdom: ________________________________________________________________________________

Humility: ________________________________________________________________________________

8. Verse 16 – How do envy and selfish ambition lead to disorder and evil?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Applying it to your life...

9. Can you think of a time when you have been hurt by someone’s careless use of their tongue?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

10. Think of one way this passage might impact your Christian life this week.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
Study 4  Come near to God
James 4:1- 5:6

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4 You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbour?

13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast and brag.
All such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

James 5

1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.
Think about this...

1. Can you think of a big fight you’ve been involved in? What started it?

The big picture...

2. Read the passage and write down in a few words:
   a. The theme of the passage:

   ________________________________

   b. A question you have about the passage

   ________________________________

   c. A response you have to the passage

   ________________________________

The text...

3. What do you think is the key issue or concern of verse 1-6?

   ________________________________

4. With what sort of wrong motives do we sometimes come to God?

   ________________________________

5. Verses 7-10 – Does God change us, or do we change ourselves?

   ________________________________

6. Verses 11-12 – Do you ever sit in judgment on people?

   ________________________________
7. Verses 13-17 – What plans should we make as Christians?

_____________________________________________________________

8. James 5:1-6. Are you a rich person? (Please compare your wealth to the world population in general!) What are the dangers for the rich Christian?

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

Applying it to your life...

9. In what ways might you be self indulgent?

_____________________________________________________________

10. Think of one way this passage might impact your Christian life this week.

_____________________________________________________________
7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. 9 Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.
Think about this...

1. What is the best advice anyone has ever given you?

The big picture...

2. Read the passage and write down in a few words:
   a. The theme of the passage:

   __________________________________________

   b. A question you have about the passage

   __________________________________________

   c. A response you have to the passage

   __________________________________________

The text...

3. Have you ever had to wait a long time for something important?

   __________________________________________

4. Verses 7-9. In what ways do we judge others, perhaps out of impatience?

   __________________________________________

5. Verse 12. In what ways might we find ourselves breaking our word - our
   “yes” or “no”? How do you think that affects other people?

   __________________________________________
6. How often do we actually act on the advice of verses 13 - 16? Why might some people not act on this very often? Is it difficult to do?

________________________________________________________________________

7. In what way might we be able to confess our sins to one another in a helpful way?

________________________________________________________________________

8. Verses 19 – 20. How does this sort of thing actually happen in a church community?

________________________________________________________________________

Applying it to your life...

9. Think of one way this passage might impact your Christian life this week.

________________________________________________________________________

10. What is the central message you have learned from the teaching in James over these 5 weeks?

________________________________________________________________________
# James Sermon Series Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Passage 1</th>
<th>Passage 2</th>
<th>Preacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24th July</td>
<td>Hear it, do it!</td>
<td>James 1:1-18</td>
<td>James 1:19-27</td>
<td>Rev. Bruce Stanley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31st July</td>
<td>Mercy triumph over judgment</td>
<td>James 2:1-13</td>
<td>James 2:14-26</td>
<td>Rev. Bruce Stanley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Aug</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>James 5:7-12</td>
<td>James 5:13-20</td>
<td>Rev. Bruce Stanley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Useful References:**

- “The Letter of James” – Douglas J. Moo

  *The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (about $40 – Academic)*

- “The Message of James” – Alec Motyer

  *The Bible Speaks Today Commentary Series (About $20 – Easy read)*