



James: Practical Discipleship (Revised Edition) Appendix 1. Participant Handouts

If you are working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the following handouts at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" or A4 size pages, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at: www.jesuswalk.com/james/james-lesson-handouts.pdf

Discussion Questions

You'll typically find 4 questions for each lesson to help your group members process what they're studying. Thinking engages learning! Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you're running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

1. Experiencing Joy in Trials (1:1-18)
2. Hearing and Practicing the Word (1:18-27)
3. Forsaking Favoritism for Love (2:1-13)
4. Energizing Your Faith by Works (2:14-26)
5. Attaining Tongue-Taming Wisdom (3:1-18)
6. Submitting Yourself to God (4:1-12)
7. Learning Patience in an Instant Age (4:13-5:12)
8. Praying the Prayer of Faith (5:13-20)

All the lessons in James are available free in streaming audio format (.mp3) on the website, all linked to: <http://www.jesuswalk.com/james/james.htm>

Appendix 2. Other Resources on James

Inductive Bible Study Questions

www.jesuswalk.com/james/james-inductive-bible-study-questions.pdf

Questions are designed for groups that want to pull their learning entirely from the text. (1) Observation Questions. What Does the Text Say? (2) Interpretation Questions. What Does the Text Mean? (3) Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

Readers' Theater Scripts www.jesuswalk.com/james/james-readers-theater.pdf

Scripts based on the NIV that provide emphasis at key points to bring out the meaning of the text. You are free to print these out for use with your group or congregation.

Introduction to the Letter of James

General Epistle

The Epistle of James is included among the “General” or “Catholic” epistles, since the exact recipient church is not specified. Rather, it seems to have a more general audience, a letter to the whole Church. It is addressed “to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.” The term “twelve tribes” is reminiscent of the 12 tribes of Israel, but it is pretty clear he isn’t addressing primarily Jews, but followers of Jesus as a kind of New Israel and a New Diaspora in the world.

Authorship

Some in the early church felt that the Letter of James was pseudepigraphic, that is, the ascription of a false name of an author to the work.

While early church historian Eusebius (c. 263 - c. 339) “The first of the Epistles styled Catholic is said to be by James the Lord’s brother; but it ought to be known that it is held by some to be spurious. Certainly not too many ancient writers have mentioned it.”

Jerome (c. 348 - c. 420): “James, who is called the Lord’s brother, wrote one Epistle only, which is one of the seven catholic Epistles, which, it is asserted, was published under his name by another, although little by little as time went on it obtained authority.”

Ultimately, the Church came to accept the Epistle not only as apostolic, but also that it should be attributed to James, brother of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19) and the head of the early church at Jerusalem.

Prominent persons called “James” in the New Testament to help you distinguish. These are often confused in Christian art.

1. James the Just, James of Jerusalem, Jesus’ brother, lead pastor of the Church in Jerusalem, and the author of the Letter of James. Martyred about 63 AD.
2. James, son of Zebedee, brother of John, sometimes called James the Greater. He was one of the inner circle of Peter, James, and John, and was beheaded by Herod Agrippa in 44 AD (Acts 12:2).
3. James, son of Alphaeus, sometimes called James the Lesser.

Date of the Epistle

Assuming we accept the Letter’s authorship by James the Just, the brother of Jesus, it could have been written any time between 40 and 60 AD, but probably closer to 60 AD.

Luther’s Criticism

Martin Luther was a bit hard on James, since the letter didn’t fit closely enough to his carefully defined doctrine of *sola fide*, “only faith.” He wrote: “Saint James’s Epistle a right strawy Epistle in comparison with them, for it has no gospel character to it.”

1. Experiencing Joy in Trials (James 1:1-18)

The Value of Trials (James 1:2-4)

“Trials” (NIV, NASB, ESV) or “temptations” (KJV) is the Greek word *peirasmos*, “test, trial,” the same word is sometimes also used for “temptation, enticement to sin.”

The Effect of Perseverance (James 1:4)

“Perseverance” (NIV), “steadfastness” (ESV), “endurance” (NRSV, NASB), “patience” (KJV) is *hypomonē*, “the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance.” “To remain behind, stand one’s ground, survive, remain steadfast, persevere and also to wait.”

“Mature” (NIV, NRSV), “perfect” (ESV, KJV) means “having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect.” When used of people, it means “pertaining to being mature, full-grown, mature, adult” or “‘perfect, fully developed’ in a moral sense.”

Q1. (James 1:2-4) What value have trials had in your life? Have you let Satan destroy you with those trials? Or allowed God to refine you? How have you changed?

Crown of Life (James 1:12)

The Nature of Temptations (James 1:13-15)

Q2. (James 1:13-15) Why do people blame God for evil? Does God tempt us with evil? Does he tempt sinful people with evil? Why does he allow people to sin? Why does he allow evil to exist at all?

Evil Inside (James 1:14)

Doctrine of original sin. (St. Augustine): all men inherit natural corruption from Adam. God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:27) and declared his creation “very good.” But Adam and Eve sinned, and they and their offspring “fell” from the original goodness in which God created them. Only Jesus is without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Only he can say, “... The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30, KJV). Our sins create “footholds” for the devil (Ephesians 4:27).

The Inner Battle and Double-mindedness (James 1:5-11)

Sanctification: Romans 7:19; 8:1-17; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Ephesians 4:13; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 1:9)

1. We are tempted by the evil desires that remain within us (James 1:14), and
2. Double-mindedness keeps us from receiving God’s wisdom and strength (James 1:7)

“Double-minded” -- “pertaining to being uncertain about the truth of something, doubting, hesitating,” literally, “double-minded.”

Q3. (James 1:5-8) How do trials help cure us of “doublemindedness”? How do trials help us grow in faith?

The Unchangeable Father (James 1:16-17)

“Shadow of turning” refers to the variation in shadows when an object is turned in relationship to a light source. God the Father does not change nor vary; immutable.

Ask God for Wisdom (James 1:5)

Q4. (James 1:5-8) What is the promise to claim in verse 5? What is the condition attached to this promise in verse 6? How do trials help us receive this wisdom?

He Chose to Give Us Birth (James 1:18)

Key Verses

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.” (James 1:2, NIV)

“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.” (James 1:5, NIV)

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17, NIV)

2. Hearing and Practicing the Word (James 1:18-27)

- Being born through the Word (James 1:18)
- Preferring the Word to moral filth (James 1:19-21)
- Letting the Word save us (James 1:21)
- Listening to and practicing the Word (James 1:22-25)
- Experiencing the freedom of the Word (James 1:25)
- Living out the Word's teaching in practical ways (James 1:26-27)

Being Born through the Word (James 1:18)

Psalm 119:43; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:18

1. Our spiritual birth was an act of *his* will first and foremost, and only after that, *our* will.
2. Second, we read that the *means* of our begetting was "the word of truth." (John 3:7, 3.

The Role of Faith in Spiritual Life

Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8-10; Colossians 1:23; 1 Peter 1:5.

Firstfruits (James 1:18)

3. Third, James touches on the *purpose* of this spiritual birth:

**Q5. (James 1:18) In what sense are we given spiritual birth by the "word of truth"?
What does spiritual life have to do with the Word?**

Preferring the Word to Moral Filth (James 1:19-21)

Counterfeits and substitutes for the Word:

1. Man's angry, self-righteous words, and
2. Moral filth and evil that would capture our minds and hearts.

Slow to Anger (James 1:19-20)

Moral Filth (James 1:21)

"Moral filth" (NIV) "filthiness" (ESV), "sordidness" (NRSV) is a noun meaning originally, "dirt, filth." Figuratively, in the ethical field, "a state of moral defilement or corruption, moral uncleanness, vulgarity," especially, "sordid avarice, greediness."

"Planted" (NIV), "implanted" (ESV, NRSV), "engrafted" (KJV) is an adjective "engrafted, implanted," in Classical Greek: "implanted by natural process, inborn."

Letting the Word Save Us (James 1:21)

1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:4.

Listening to and Practicing the Word (James 1:22)

Matthew 23:25-26

Q6. (James 1:22) Why are we so easily fooled into thinking that *listening* to Bible teaching means that we are living out righteous lives? What is the nature of the self-deception?

Forgetting What the Mirror Shows (James 1:23-24)

Experiencing the Freedom of the Word (James 1:25)

James led the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 to conclude that keeping the ceremonial law, such as circumcision, was not obligatory for Gentile believers (Acts 15:19-21). This decision was made in place of the position of some Christian Pharisees who contended that “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). So the “perfect law” is not the Mosaic Law, at least in its entirety.

Rather this perfect law is what James calls the “Royal Law” in James 2:8, that is, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (quoting Leviticus 19:18). It sums up “all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:40; John 15:12; Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Q7. (James 1:25) What is this “perfect law” that James mentions? How would you define it? How does it relate to the “royal law” (James 2:8)? In what sense does it bring liberty?

Living Out the Word’s Teaching in Practical Ways (James 1:26-27)

James uses a general word for religion, both an adjective and a noun. The noun is Greek *thrēskeia*, “expression of devotion to transcendent beings, especially as it expresses itself in cultic rites, worship.” The adjective is *thrēskos*, “religious.” Three tests of pure religion: (1) A tongue kept under control (verse 26), (2) Looking after orphans and widows (verse 27a), (3) Keeping oneself from being polluted by the world (verse 27b).

Caring for Widows and Orphans (James 1:27a). Matthew 6:1a; Deuteronomy 10:16, 18-19.

Q8. (James 1:26-27) Why does James make taming the tongue and caring for the poor the prime tests of pure religion? Why not the quality of our quiet time or worship?

Spiritual Pollution (James 1:27b)

“polluted” (NIV), “unstained” (ESV, NRSV), “unspotted” (KJV) means “spotless,” then figuratively, “pertaining to being of untainted character, pure, without fault.” Proverbs 4:23; James 4:8; Revelation 7:14; 1 John 1:9.

Key Verses

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” (James 1:19-20, NIV)

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22, NIV)

“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.” (James 1:27, NIV)

3. Forsaking Favoritism for Love (James 2:1-13)

Partiality in the Church (James 2:1-3)

“Favoritism” (NIV, NRSV), “partiality” (ESV), “respect of persons” (KJV), or “partiality” (RSV) is the Greek word *prosōpolēmpsia* – “partiality.” English synonyms.

Partial “1. of or relating to a part rather than the whole; not general or total. 2. inclined to favor one party more than the other, biased. 3. markedly fond of someone or something.”

Bias “bent, tendency; an inclination of temperament or outlook, especially a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment, prejudice.”

Discrimination, “the act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually; prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment.”

Prejudice, from the words “pre” + “judge”: preconceived judgment or opinion; an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge; an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics.”

Q9. (James 2:1-3) What kind of person or what kind of sinner do you tend to discriminate against? What kind of people are you (or your church) trying to make a good impression on?

What is the source of the evil? In a word, selfishness.

Q10. (James 2:4) In what way does favoritism make one a judge? How does favoritism make one a judge with “evil thoughts”?

Poor and Rich in God’s Kingdom (James 2:5-7; 1:9-11)

Those of us who live middle-class lives in America are richer than the rich of James’ day ever were. James is careful to encourage the poor to value themselves as God values them.

The Royal Law, the King’s Law (James 2:8)

Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34-35; Mark 10:45; John 3:16.

Self-Centered Lawbreakers (James 2:9-11) Love for aliens.

Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:29; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 15:11; Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Q11. (James 2:9-11) Why does James refer to the Great Commandment as the “Royal Law”? How is it more “royal” than the Mosaic Law? How does showing favoritism toward a rich person break the “Royal Law” towards that rich person? How does it break the “Royal Law” in regard to a poor person?

The Law that Liberates (James 2:12)

“The law that gives freedom” (NIV) or “law of liberty” (KJV, ESV, NRSV, NASB). James 1:25 -- “the perfect law of liberty.” We show love and this energizes in the

beloved the potential to be all *they* can be, too. By our love-actions we liberate both our own selves and we liberate our society.

Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment (James 2:13)

James 2:4; Matthew 7:2.

God Is both Just and Loving

1 Peter 2:24; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:15.

Mercy Triumphs (James 2:13)

The word translated “triumphs over” (NIV, NRSV, ESV, NASB) or “rejoiceth against” (KJV) is Greek *katakauchaomai*, “to boast at the expense of another, boast against, exult over” someone.

Q12. (James 2:13b) In what way is showing regard towards the wealthy (James 2:2-3) a denial of mercy? *Extra credit:* Read Hosea 6:6; Matthew 5:7; and 9:13. In what way does mercy “triumph over” (NIV, RSV, NASB) or “rejoice against” (KJV) judgment? What does this mean?

Key Verses

“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.” (James 2:8-9, NIV)

“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (James 2:12–13, NIV)

4. Energizing Your Faith by Works (James 2:14-26)

Bare Faith (James 2:14-18)

The word “dead” here and in James 2:26 is the Greek adjective *nekros*, “dead, without life.”

Q13. (James 2:14-18) In what sense is faith dead if it is unaccompanied by action? In what sense might (if that were possible) it be alive?

Feeding the Poor (James 2:15-16)

Q14. (James 2:15-16) To what degree are we responsible for the poor and needy in the church community? How about our responsibility for those outside the church, in the community at large?

The Faith of Demons (James 2:18-19)

The Amplified Bible has a very helpful way of translating the Greek word *pisteuō* – “to believe.” At John 3:16, for example, the Amplified translate, “... whoever believes in (trusts, clings to, relies on) Him...”

Q15. (James 2:18-19) What is the difference between the “belief” of a demon and the “belief” of a practicing Christian? The “belief” of a non-practicing Christian?

Works vs. Grace Controversy

Galatians 2:12, 16; Ephesians 2:8-9.

“The Works of the Law” vs. “Good Works”

Works can be used in two ways:

1. Acts of righteousness the Pharisees thought would justify them before God (especially in Paul).
2. Good works that are a natural and necessary outflow of true faith (James, but also Eph 2:10).

Q16. (James 2:20-26) How does James’ point about the necessity of works jive with Paul’s emphasis on salvation by grace without works (Ephesians 2:8-10)?

Luther and the Reformers

Paul’s theme was salvation as a gift through faith. Luther’s theme was only faith. James’ theme is that genuine faith always shows itself in deeds.

Key Verses

“Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 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? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:15-17)

“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. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:18-19)

5. Attaining Tongue-Taming Wisdom (James 3:1-18)

The Peril of Teachers (James 3:1-2)

Q17. (James 3:1-2) Why does James discourage people from aspiring to be teachers of the Word? Why is greater strictness appropriate? Should you set higher standards for your pastor than you do for yourself?

Remedy 1: Bridle the Tongue – Self Control (James 3:2)

“We all stumble in many ways” (NIV, NASB, ESV), “in many things we offend all” (KJV), “we all make many mistakes” (RSV). The Greek word is *ptaiō*, literally, “to lose one’s footing, stumble, trip,” then figuratively, “to make a mistake, go astray, sin.” The word indicates a trip, as stumble, rather than a complete fall (cf. Romans 11:11).

We must restrain or bridle our tongues. This is the essence of our “religion.” It is a hallmark of the “perfect man” or “mature man” (James 3:2; Psalm 141:3).

Small Cause, Big Effect (James 3:3-5)

- Bit - guide a horse
- Rudder - steer a ship
- Tongue - great boasts
- Spark - start a forest fire

Destructive Power of the Tongue (James 3:6-8)

“A world of evil” (Greek *adixia*, “unrighteousness”) among the parts of the body.” “Corrupts” (NIV), “staining” (RSV) or “defiles” (NASB, KJV) is Greek *spiloō*, “stain, defile,” from *spilos*, “spot,” figuratively “stain, blemish.” Mt 15:17-18.

Set on Fire by Hell (James 3:6b)

The noun translated “hell” is Greek *gehenna* is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word for Valley of Hinnom. This is the ravine that runs to the south of the city of Jerusalem. Here child sacrifices had been made to the false god Molech. 2 Chronicles 28:3; Jeremiah 7:31-32; 19:1-6; Isaiah 66:24). The Valley of Hinnom was the refuse dump of Jerusalem. By the second century B.C., the Valley of Hinnom had come to be equated with the hell of the last judgment.

The Untamable Tongue (James 3:7-8)

“Evil” here is the common Greek word *kakos*, “‘evil, wrong,’ what is contrary to law or custom.”

“Restless” (NIV, NASB, ESV) or “unruly” (KJV) is *akatastatos*, “unstable, restless,” James uses the same word earlier: “a double-minded man, *unstable...*” (James 1:8).

Q18. (James 3:7-8) Read Matthew 12:34 and 15:18. In light of these verses, why is the tongue untamable? What has to happen before it can be tamed?

Out of the Same Mouth (James 3:9-12)

- Praising God vs. cursing men
- Fresh water vs. salt water

- Fig tree vs. olive tree
- Salt spring vs. fresh water

Remedy 2: Purify the Heart – An Inner Humility (Matthew 12:34)

Humility, Envy, and Selfishness (James 3:13-16)

Ambition itself is not necessarily a bad thing. It is aspiring to better oneself. But ambition is too easily entwined with other motivations -- sense of self-worth, to vindicate our own selves, and to highlight our own achievements.

Q19. (James 3:13-16) In what ways are “bitter envy” and “selfish ambition” (verse 14) direct opposites of “humility” (verse 13)? How does denial of “bitter envy” and “selfish ambition” prevent healing? How does boasting about these prevent healing?

Heavenly Wisdom (James 3:17)

Look at the words that describe this heavenly wisdom, and then compare them to words from the famous “love chapter” in 1 Corinthians 13.

James 3:17	1 Corinthians 13	
• Pure	• Patient	• Keeps no record of wrongs
• Peace-loving	• Kind	• Does not delight in evil
• Considerate	• Does not envy	• Rejoices with the truth
• Submissive	• Does not boast	• Always protects
• Full of mercy and good fruit	• Not proud	• Always trusts
• Impartial	• Not rude	• Always hopes
• Sincere	• Not self-seeking	• Always perseveres
	• Not easily angered	• Never fails

Q20. (James 3:17-18) With what tool do peacemakers sow peace? Why does this produce a ripening crop of righteousness? In whom does this crop grow?

Key Verses

“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” (James 3:1, NIV)

“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.” (James 3:17, NIV)

6. Submitting Yourself to God (James 4:1-12)

Fights and Quarrels (James 4:1-2)

Fights, Greek *polemos* (verse 1) – literally “war, battle, fight,” then figuratively “a state of hostility/antagonism, strife, conflict, quarrel”

Quarrels, Greek *machē* (verse 1) – “fighting, quarrels, strife, disputes.”

Battle, Greek *strateuō* (verse 1) – “serve in the army,” then figuratively, “to engage in a conflict, wage battle, fight” (James 4:1; 1 Peter 2:11).

Kill, Greek *phoneuō* (verse 2) – “murder, kill.” Jesus compared unrestrained anger with murder (Matthew 5:21-22), since anger is one of the roots of murder.

Covet, Greek *zeloō* (verse 2) – in a bad sense, “to have intense negative feelings over another’s achievements or success, be filled with jealousy, envy”

Quarrel (*polemeō*) and **fight** (*machomai*) (verse 2). See related words above.

Hedonism as a Way of Life (James 4:3)

In these verses, *hedonē* is variously translated “desires,” “lusts,” “passions,” or “pleasures.” The word means “pleasure, delight, enjoyment, pleasantness,” usually in the bad sense of “(evil) pleasure, (illicit) desire”

Seeking personal happiness as our main goal in life means (1) that we are not living to love others and seek their good when it conflicts with our own, and that (2) we have not surrendered our lives to fulfill God’s will for us.

The Greek verb *dapanaō* means “to use up or pay out material or physical resources, spend, spend freely.”

Q21. (James 4:1-3) Is God against pleasure? What wrong in living to increase one’s pleasure?

Flirting with Spiritual Adultery (James 4:4)

In the Old Testament God’s people were thought of as God’s wife (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20). In the New Testament the Church is considered “the bride of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25, 32; Revelation 19:7)

“World,” here, is used in the sense of “the system of human existence ... which is hostile to God, that is, lost in sin, wholly at odds with anything divine, ruined and depraved.”

Q22. (James 4:4) Why does James refer to church members as “adulteresses”? What does the adultery consist of? Who is the aggrieved husband? What is wrong with friendship with the world?

Envy Intensely (James 4:5)

There are two possible alternatives:

1. **God’s jealousy** as the jilted husband toward his bride, his adulterous people. ESV and NRSV: “He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us.”

2. **Human envy.** The New English Bible “The spirit which God implanted in man turns to envious desires.” J.B. Phillips “Do you imagine that this spirit of passionate jealousy is the Spirit he has caused to live in us?”

Submitting Yourself to God (James 4:7-10; Proverbs 3:34).

1. “Submit yourselves, then, to God” (James 4:7a).

To “submit oneself” (*hypotassō*) means to come into voluntary obedience to a person, to bend your will to that person’s.

2. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7b).

The word “resist” is Greek *anthistēmi*, “be in opposition to, set oneself against, oppose.” The devil plays on our own desires (James 1:14-15).

3. “Come near to God, and he will come near to you” (James 4:8a)

4. “Wash your hands and purify your hearts” (James 4:8b)

Isaiah 1:15-17. Washing one’s hands is another way of saying, “repent,” stop doing wrong (Revelation 7:14; 1 Kings 18:21; Psalm 86:11).

5. “Grieve, mourn, and wail” (James 4:9)

6. “Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up” (James 4:10)

“Humble” is Greek *tapeinoō*, which literally means “lower, make low” and figuratively, “to cause to be or become humble in attitude, humble, make humble.”

Q23. (James 4:6-10) Verses 7-10 contain 10 different commands. Why are these actions so vital? In what way do they go against our nature? Which of these commands is most difficult for you?

Critics and Pickers (James 4:11-12)

The Greek word is *katalaleō*, “speak ill of, speak degradingly of, speak evil of, defame, slander.” William Tyndale: “backbite.” (1 Cor 13:4-8; Eph 4:15; Lev 19:16; Jas 2:8).

Q24. (James 4:11-12) In what way does criticizing a neighbor cause you to be a judge of the law? Why do you think it is so tempting to criticize others?

Key Verses

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” (James 4:3, NIV)

“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.” (James 4:4, NIV)

“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:6-7, NIV)

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” (James 4:10, NIV)

“Brothers, do not slander one another.” (James 4:11a, NIV)

7. Learning Patience in an Instant Age (James 4:13-5:12)

This passage examines:

1. The presumption of self-determination (James 4:13-16)
2. Sins of omission (James 4:17)
3. The moral bankruptcy of those who oppress the poor (James 5:1-6)
4. The patience necessary to endure the Lord's coming (James 5:7-11)
5. The important simplicity of "yes" and "no" (James 5:12)

The Lord Willing (James 4:13-16)

Impatience with the Lord's Will

Luke 12:16-21.

Q25. (James 4:13-16) What danger is James warning us about in verses 13-16? How can we be humble in our planning without being indecisive and wishy-washy?

The Good We Ought to Do (James 4:17; Micah 6:8)

Negative definition of sin: 1 John 3:4: "Sin is lawlessness" (NIV) or "Sin is the transgression of the law" (KJV). This definition focuses negatively on failure to observe the clear statement of the law.

Positive definition of sin: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (James 4:17; cf. Luke 10:30-37; 16:19-31; Mt18:23-35; 25:31-46).

Impatience of the Wealthy (James 5:1-6)

1. Hoarding wealth and not sharing it. The word translated "hoarded wealth" (NIV) or "heaped treasure together" (KJV) is Greek *thesaurizō*, "lay up, store up, gather, save." (Matthew 6:19-21; Mark 10:21).
2. Withholding just compensation from one's employees.
3. Living in luxury (softness) and self-indulgence. The word translated "live in luxury" in verse 5 is Greek *tryphaō*, "to lead a life of luxury or self-indulgence, live for pleasure, revel, carouse." "Self-indulgence," Greek *spatalaō*, "to indulge oneself beyond the bounds of propriety, live luxuriously or voluptuously."
4. Condemning and killing the innocent.

Q26. (James 5:5-6) What is the spiritual danger of our demand for comfort and luxury? *Extra credit:* How might our demand for low-priced goods and services cause us to (1) oppress our own employees or (2) cause workers in this country or abroad to be under paid or oppressed? How does all this relate to the need for patience?

The Coming of the Lord (James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-10)

Patience and Endurance

The verb in verse 7 and 8 translated "be patient" is Greek *makrothymēō*, a compound word, formed from *makros*, "long, lasting long," and *thymos*, "that which is moved

and which moves, vital force," similar in meaning to the word *pneuma*, "spirit." So a literal translation of *makrothymeō* might be "to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart," or "to remain tranquil while waiting, have patience, wait."

Verse 11, Greek *hypomenō*, "to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, stand one's ground, hold out, endure" (Ephesians 6:13).

"Establish your hearts" (ESV, cf. KJV), "strengthen your hearts" (NRSV), "stand firm" (NIV), Greek *sterizō*, "to fix firmly in a place, set up, establish, support," figuratively, "to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, confirm, establish, strengthen."

Patience for the Early and Latter Rains (James 5:7)

Q27. (James 5:7-8) What can happen to us Christians if we lack the patience to eagerly expect Christ's return? Why is patience so vital?

Patience vs. Grumbling (James 5:9)

"Complain, grumble," *stenazō*, "sigh, groan" because of an undesirable circumstance. With the preposition *kata* it has the meaning "to express discontent, complain." (1 Corinthians 10:6, 10; Philippians 2:14-16; Exodus 16:8; 1 Samuel 8:7).

Q28. (James 5:9) What does our grumbling and complaining say about us? About our faith? About our patience?

Patience of the Prophets and Job (James 5:10-11)

Patience with Our Words (James 5:12)

"Swear," *omnyō*, "to affirm the veracity of one's statement by invoking a transcendent entity, frequently with implied invitation of punishment if one is untruthful, swear, take an oath." (Matthew 5:33-37)

Key Verses

"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."
(James 4:17, NIV)

"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming." (James 5:7a, NIV)

"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." (James 5:12b, NIV)

8. Praying the Prayer of Faith (James 5:13-20)

Faith to Ask for Prayer (James 5:13-14)

Jesus generally looks for an environment of faith for healing to occur (Mark 6:5-6; Matthew 9:28; 20:32; Luke 8:50; Mark 9:23; Matthew 17:20; Matthew 9:29).

Q29. (James 5:13-14) According to verse 14, who is to initiate prayer for healing? Why might this be important?

Elders of the Church (James 5:14)

The word “elders” Greek *presbyteros*, which could designate “an old man,” then an official, “elder, presbyter” (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 5:17). In James’ day, these leaders were looked to because of their faith.

Healing in Our Day

Not everyone we pray for will be healed. But that shouldn’t keep us from praying with faith. Even those whom Jesus healed eventually died. We are to call for the elders, not because they have an official position, but because they are mature believers who are full of faith, best equipped in the congregation to pray “the prayer of faith.”

Q30. (James 5:14) What is the elders’ role in prayer for the sick? What must be their spiritual qualifications for this ministry of prayer?

Anointing with Oil (James 5:14)

Mark 6:13. In the OT, anointing with oil is used to set apart or ordain leaders, priests, and holy things (1 Samuel 16:13-14). In the NT, the word “anointing” is closely connected with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2; 1 John 2:20, 27-28)

In the Name of the Lord (James 5:14)

The Greek word is *onoma*, “name.” In the OT, the “name” meant “something real, a piece of the very nature of the personality whom it designates, expressing the person’s qualities and powers.” (John 14:12-14; Acts 2:38; 3:6, 16).

Prayer Offered in Faith (James 5:15)

Notice that it is the faith of the “pray-er” (rather than the “pray-ee”) who offers the “effective” (KJV) prayer. Yes, the faith of the sick person is important in asking for prayer, but the elders’ “prayer of faith” is what effects the healing.

The “prayer of faith” is said to “save” (KJV, ESV, NRSV) the sick person, or “make the sick person well” (NIV). The word used here is Greek *sōzō*, a common word that means “save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue.” It is found in Classical as well as NT Greek in the sense of “save or free from disease” or from demonic possession.”

Healing and Forgiveness (James 5:15c-16)

1 Corinthians 11:29-30; John 9:1-3.

The Power of Confession (James 5:16)

The Roman Catholic Church institutionalized confession into the Sacrament of Penance (including confession and absolution) by the tenth century, based on James 5:16; Matthew 16:19; and John 20:23. During the Reformation, the Protestants protested against the power of the Church, and refused to acknowledge Penance as a sacrament. Confession need only be made to God, they would argue, and not to a priest. Luther taught “the priesthood of the believer.” But Matthew 3:6; John 1:9.

See Steps 4-6 of the Twelve Step Program. Step 5: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Q31. (James 5:14-16) In the healing prayer, what is the role of oil? What is the role of the prayer of faith? What is the role of faith? What is the role of confession of sins?

Prayer of a Righteous Man (James 5:16b-18)

1 Kings 18-19. For more, see my ‘Elijah: Rebuilding the Altar of Yahweh’ (<http://www.jesuswalk.com/elijah/>)

“Elijah was a man just like us” (NIV) or “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are” (KJV). The Greek word is *homoioopathēs*, from two words *homoios*, “like, similar, resembling” and *paschō*, “to feel, undergo, be affected.”

“Don’t introduce me as a ‘great man of God.’ Rather introduce me as a ‘man of a great God.’”

Ephesians 1:18-20

Bring Back Wandering Brothers and Sisters (James 5:19-20)

Q32. (James 5:19-20) In the light of James’ emphasis on active faith vs. dead faith (James 2:17), why is the role of finding and bringing back the wandering sheep so important?

Matthew 18:12-14)

Key Verses

“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. 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. 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.” (James 5:14-16, NIV)