

# James

## Participants Guide

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

*James 1:22*



# Table of contents

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<b>1</b>	<b>Study 1</b>	The benefits of facing trouble
<b>4</b>	<b>Study 2</b>	The power for facing trouble
<b>7</b>	<b>Study 3</b>	Two basic kinds of trouble
<b>10</b>	<b>Study 4</b>	Sin and temptation
<b>13</b>	<b>Study 5</b>	Grace and the new birth
<b>16</b>	<b>Study 6</b>	Growth through hearing truth
<b>19</b>	<b>Study 7</b>	Growth through obeying truth
<b>22</b>	<b>Study 8</b>	A lifestyle of justice
<b>25</b>	<b>Study 9</b>	A lifestyle of mercy
<b>28</b>	<b>Study 10</b>	A lifestyle of faith
<b>31</b>	<b>Study 11</b>	A lifestyle of self-mastery I
<b>34</b>	<b>Study 12</b>	A lifestyle of self-mastery II
<b>36</b>	<b>Study 13</b>	Wise relationships
<b>39</b>	<b>Study 14</b>	Fights and wars
<b>42</b>	<b>Study 15</b>	Courage
<b>45</b>	<b>Study 16</b>	Communication
<b>48</b>	<b>Study 17</b>	Worry
<b>51</b>	<b>Study 18</b>	Materialism
<b>54</b>	<b>Study 19</b>	Patience
<b>57</b>	<b>Study 20</b>	Prayer of faith



# James

## The benefits of facing trouble

### Study 1 | James 1:1-4

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:1-4

- 1. James identifies himself as first and foremost “a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” What attitudes and behaviors characterize a servant?**
- 2. What fears and concerns arise in your heart when you consider God’s call to be a servant?**
- 3. How does knowing that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are your masters affect such fears and concerns? In what particular situations do you need to let God melt your fears of being a servant?**

4. The hedonist avoids trouble at all costs and the masochist enjoys suffering, but the Christian expects troubles and has a deep joy even in the face of them. According to this passage, why is this so?
5. Why is it important to distinguish between “rejoicing *in* suffering” and “rejoicing *for* suffering”?
6. Consider this definition: “A trial is anything presented to us in life that on the one hand may cause us to disobey or disbelieve God or, on the other, may confirm us in obedience and belief and strengthen our character.” What insight does that definition give you as to what is going on when you face trials?

**7. What trial have you faced that confirmed the truth that we can “count it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds”?**

**8. What trial are you facing now where you need strength to persevere to the end? Take time to pray for one another in these areas.**

SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## The power for facing trouble

### Study 2 | James 1:5-8

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:5-8

- 1. How is James's exhortation in these verses connected to the immediately preceding verses?**
- 2. Why is prayer so important when facing troubles and trials? What role does prayer usually play in your life during difficult times?**
- 3. What is "wisdom"? How does it differ from knowledge?**

- 6. What is the nature and character of the doubt James addresses in verses 6-8? How is this doubt different from legitimate doubt? What is the double-minded person doubting about God that makes the doubt particularly sinister?**

**7. What have you found to be effective ways to deal with double-mindedness in your life?**

SHARING AND PRAYER



# James

## Two basic kinds of trouble

### Study 3 | James 1:9-11

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:9-11

- 1. Do you sense any connection between this passage and the preceding verses? If so, what is that connection?**
- 2. Why would a person in “humble circumstances” be in a “high position”? Why might a person “take pride” in humble circumstances?**
- 3. What particular temptations and spiritual dangers would a person in “humble circumstances” face? How might you overcome these temptations and dangers?**

- 6. As you have sought to be generous with the resources God has entrusted to you, what difficulties have you encountered?**

- 7. What truths or practices have helped you to be more generous with your resources? What steps have you taken to become a more generous person?**

SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Sin and temptation

### Study 4 | James 1:12-15

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:12-15

- 1. This passage distinguishes between “tests” and “temptations.” What do you think the difference is between the two?**
- 2. What motivations does this passage give for standing firm under tests and temptations? Do they motivate you to walk in obedience? Why or why not?**
- 3. What is God’s role in temptation according to this passage? How does that square with Jesus’ teaching us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation”?**

- 6. What truths do you cling to most in the midst of temptation? What helps you fight it off best?**

**7. What is the end product of falling into temptation? How does this serve as a warning to you?**

**8. What truths do you cling to most after you have fallen into temptation and sin?**

SHARING AND PRAYER



# James

## Grace and new birth

### Study 5 | James 1:16-18

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:16-18

- 1. James begins this passage with the exhortation: “Don’t be deceived!” Why is it so devastating to our lives to live under deception?**
- 2. Can you think of a time when you believed a lie about God, the world, or what it means to live a God-pleasing life? How did believing that lie affect the way you lived?**
- 3. What practices have you found helpful to keep deception (either self-deception or deception from outside sources) from taking hold in your life?**

6. What do you understand to be the heart of the experience of the new birth (that is, what takes place in a person's life when God gives him or her new life)? What does the language "firstfruits of all he created" suggest about the nature of this experience?

**7. What does verse 18 suggest about the role God plays and the role we play in the new birth? Why is it important to be clear on this? What difference does it make if we are confused?**

**8. What changes have you seen in your beliefs and behavior that indicate that you have experienced the new birth this passage describes?**

SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Growth through hearing the truth

### Study 6 | James 1:19-21

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:19-21

- 1. Verse 19 gives us three commands: “Be quick to listen. Be slow to speak. Be slow to become angry.” How are these commands related?**
- 2. Why is listening well to others so important? When you speak, what makes you feel that others are genuinely listening to you?**
- 3. James says, “Be slow to become angry.” How does one do that?**

- 6. What is the connection between verse 21 and our anger?**

7. How does this verse suggest we should deal with illegitimate anger?
8. What do you think it means to “humbly accept the word planted in you”? Why is it so important to be humble as you listen to God’s Word? What are the potential consequences if you are not?
9. What does this passage tell us about what it means to be saved? Why is the language of “being saved” (“the word... which can save you”) so appropriate as a description of what happens in the Christian life?



# James

## Growth through obeying truth

### Study 7 | James 1:22-27

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 1:22-27

- 1. According to this passage, what role are the Scriptures meant to play in our lives?**
- 2. Why do you suppose we are so willing to stand before the mirror Scripture holds up to us *without* seeking to change the things about our hearts and lives that are in disarray? What accounts for our willingness to go away unchanged?**
- 3. What does the phrase, “the perfect law that gives freedom,” tell us about God’s law and true freedom? How does this perspective differ from the way people often conceive of God’s law and genuine freedom?**

4. What do you do to ensure that you are not just a person who hears God's Word, but one who does what it says?
5. Can you think of an area where you began to practice God's Word after avoiding obedience for some time? What was that area? What finally moved you to obedience? What benefits did you experience by obeying God?
6. What pictures come to mind for most people when they think of a "religious" person? How do James's words counter these views?

7. James states that true religion consists of three things. What are they and why are they all so important?

8. When it comes to your own life and thinking, which of these three things do you tend to leave off the list of characteristics of a truly religious life? Why?





# James

## A lifestyle of justice

### Study 8 | James 2:1-7

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 2:1-7

- 1. How would you define “favoritism”? What causes it? What warped values lie behind it?**
- 2. Why is favoritism particularly inappropriate for “believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ”? (See Isaiah 53:2-3 for insight into this.)**
- 3. Do you see the scenario James describes occurring in your church? If so, how does it manifest itself?**

4. What arguments does James offer to demonstrate the intolerability of favoritism in the church?
5. What does this passage tell us about God's concern for the poor? What are the implications for us? Is God "guilty" of engaging in favoritism?
6. How and when do you find yourself engaging in favoritism? How do you battle this tendency?

**7. What does this passage say about race and class in the church? What motivation does it provide for ending racism and classism in the church?**

**8. What practical, concrete steps can you take to make your church more fully what God intends it to be in these areas?**

SHARING AND PRAYER



# James

## A lifestyle of mercy

### Study 9 | James 2:8-17

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 2:8-17

- 1. We are told that the royal law is to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” How would you define love? Can you think of a time when someone expressed this kind of love to you?**
- 2. James writes, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” What does he mean by this? What impact does he intend this to have on his readers? How does he want them (and us) to change their lives in response?**
- 3. How do verses 12 and 13 explain what James means when he writes, “Mercy triumphs over judgment”?**

4. Do you see a connection between verses 12-13 and verses 14-17? If so, how are they connected?
5. What has been your experience in living a lifestyle of mercy (caring for the material and emotional needs of those around you)?
6. What are the greatest obstacles you face when it comes to being a merciful person? What do you think you need to do to surmount those obstacles?

- 7. What are some specific situations in which you can show mercy to others? Do you have a plan that will enable you to do this? (You may want to tie this question to the sharing and prayer time.)**

SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## A lifestyle of faith

### Study 10 | James 2:17-26

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 2:17-26

- 1. From an initial reading of this passage, what does James seem to be saying about the relationship between faith and works?**
- 2. James states that “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” How is he defining the word “faith”? What leads you to that conclusion?**
- 3. Look closely at James’s account of Abraham. What is the chronology concerning Abraham’s faith, his being “considered righteous,” his works, and his being “credited righteousness”? How do those things fit together? Does this lead you to refine your initial assessment about the relationship between faith and works?**

- ## 6. How does genuine faith stir us up to produce works?

9. James is trying to protect us from having false assurance about our salvation. How can we regularly apply his warning to our lives so that it spurs us on to live for God *without* crushing us with guilt for not having done “enough”?



# James

## A lifestyle of self-mastery I

### Study 11 | James 3:1-6

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 3:1-6

- 1. What is the basic theme of verses 1-6?**
- 2. Why do you suppose James issued the warning in verse 1? What was he seeking to accomplish?**
- 3. How does the first part of verse 2 temper the warning of verse 1? Why do you think this was important to say? What does it tell us about progressing in holiness in the Christian life?**

**4. How does James connect the control of the tongue with the control of the whole body? Have you found this to be true in your own experience?**

**5. How might you define self-control? What is its purpose, according to this passage?**

**6. What points does James make about our tongues in verses 3-6?**

**7. Can you recall a time when you carelessly said something that hurt another person deeply? Can you recall a time when someone carelessly said something that deeply hurt you? How has either of these experiences continued to affect you? What do these experiences tell you about the power of words?**

**8. What steps have you taken that have helped you control your tongue? Do you engage in certain practices or follow certain rules that have been effective?**

## SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## A lifestyle of self-mastery II

### Study 12 | James 3:7-12

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 3:7-12

- 1. Review last week's study. What were the primary points made about our tongues and the relationship between tongue control and self-control in general?**
- 2. After considering the importance of watching our words, what changes, if any, did you see in your practice during the week? What victories did you experience? What failures did you experience? What did you learn about yourself by trying to control your tongue?**
- 3. According to verses 9-12, what do our words reveal about the state of our hearts? What is James's purpose in stating that it is impossible for an olive tree to bear figs, etc.?**

4. **"Self-control is the ability to choose the important thing over the urgent thing. The important thing is to please God, to bring him joy; to urgent thing is to please yourself (i.e. to seek *joy apart from pleasing God*). Its opposite is a lack of discipline. Its counterfeit is will-power through pride." What is your reaction to this definition of self-control? How does it clarify your reflections on self-mastery in general? On mastering the tongue in particular?**
  
5. **Self-control involves two things: (1) Envisioning the important thing so that it is desirable and attractive; (2) Drawing on the vision and choosing it when the important thing presents itself. Which of these do you find more difficult? What do you do that strengthens your ability to do either of these things?**
  
6. **Name one specific situation in which you would like to exercise better control of your tongue. Pray for one another about this.**

## SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Wise relationships

### Study 13 | James 3:13-18

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 3:13-18

- 1. According to this passage, how do you identify a wise person?**
- 2. How does James's view of the wise person contrast with our culture's view? What does this reveal about our culture and the dangers we must avoid?**
- 3. Why are people filled with bitter envy and selfish ambition sometimes considered "wise" (v. 15)? What do people characterized by "envy and selfish ambition" value? In contrast, what do the truly wise value?**

- 6. Why is each of these traits so important to healthy relationships?**

**7. Is there one trait in which you know you need to grow?**

**8. What do you think James is referring to in verse 18 when he talks about the “harvest of righteousness”?**

SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Fights and wars

### Study 14 | James 4:1-3

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 4:1-3

- 1. What different forms of fights and quarrels you have noticed in relationships within the church? From your observations, what types of issues give rise to quarrels?**
- 2. Why do fights and quarrels so deeply grieve God?**
- 3. What kinds of “desires” do you think James has in mind?**

4. What does James mean when he says our “desires battle within us”? Can you give examples of this battle?
5. What makes desires legitimate and what makes them illegitimate? How is our tendency to “kill and covet” related to the illegitimacy of our desires?
6. What does this passage suggest we are to do with our desires?

- 7. What does this passage teach us about prayer? What should be taking place when we pray?**
- 8. Can you give an example from your own life when a desire had too much control over you but was brought in check? If so, how did the change take place? How is your new attitude toward the desire demonstrated in your life?**

## SHARING AND PRAYER



# James

## Courage

### Study 15 | James 4:4-10

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 4:4-10

- 1. James accuses the church of developing a friendship (a sharing of values, attitudes, and purposes) with the “world.” What values, attitudes, and purposes that are part of the “world” do Christians often assimilate into their lives? What should be a Christian’s values, attitudes, and purposes in contrast with the “world’s”?**
- 2. What do you make of James calling the church an “enemy of God” in verse 4? When is such strong language justified? In such a case, what kind of interaction characterizes the relationship between God and his people (vv. 4-5)?**
- 3. In the midst of severe rebuke, James rather unexpectedly writes, “but he [God] gives us more grace.” What does this tell us about God and the nature and meaning of grace?**

4. What does it mean to “submit yourselves to God”? Why is this James’s first exhortation to this group of stumbling believers?
5. What does it mean to “resist the devil”? What would “resisting the devil” look like in terms of practical, specific actions? How have you found the promise “he will flee from you” to be true in your experience?
6. We often feel as if God wants nothing to do with us when we have fallen into behaviors we know are displeasing to him. How does the promise in verse 8 counter that reaction? What does it tell us about God’s attitude toward us even when we fall into sin?

7. What do verses 8 and 9 tell us about the nature of true repentance, both its actions and attitudes? How does your repentance usually compare to this description?
8. What do you think James means when he writes that God “will lift you up”? In what ways has God lifted you up when you have come to him in repentance?

## SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Communication

### **Study 16** **James 4:11-12; 5:12**

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

BIBLE STUDY: James 4:11-12; 5:12

- 1. Look at James 5:12. What is the basic issue being addressed here? How widely does it apply?**
- 2. Why is it so important to speak honestly and truthfully to one another, avoiding the exaggeration or soft-peddling of the truth? What happens to the Christian community if we do not speak the truth to one another?**
- 3. Look at James 4:11-12. What does it mean to “slander” someone?**

4. What does James mean when he writes that “anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it”?
5. James’s concern seems to be that our speech should be an expression of love for others rather than a product of a desire to harm them. What must be considered if we are going to speak in a way that benefits others?
6. Putting these two passages together, we might say we are to “speak the truth in love” (Gal. 5:6). What happens when we speak truth without love or we speak love without truth?

7. Can you tell about a time when you either did or did not “speak the truth in love” to someone? What effect did this have on the hearer? or Can you tell about a time when someone did or did not “speak the truth in love” to you? What effect did this have on you?
8. How do you think our group is doing in terms of “speaking the truth in love” to one another? Can you think of things that would enable us to do this more effectively?

## SHARING AND PRAYER



# James

## Worry

### Study 17 | James 4:13-17

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 4:13-17

- 1. What is the basic point James is trying to get across? What new attitudes and ways of thinking is James seeking to develop in his readers?**
- 2. What does this passage teach about the way we are to make decisions?**
- 3. Do you think James's words discourage planning for the future or seeking to control things?**

- 6. What is the connection between verse 17 and the verses that precede it?**

**7. What causes an action to be characterized as “good”? What makes our actions “good”?**

**8. Is there any particular “good” thing you believe God is calling you to do, but you have resisted him?**

SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Materialism

### Study 18 | James 5:1-6

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 5:1-6

- 1. How would you summarize the teaching of this passage in a single sentence?**
- 2. What faults lead James to use such harsh and condemning language?**
- 3. What does the intensity of James's language lead you to conclude about God's character and concerns?**

4. What does this passage teach us about the folly of riches? What does it teach us about the dangers of riches?
5. Have you ever seen money exerting a dangerous influence on your life? If so, how?
6. What do you think constitutes a life of “luxury and self-indulgence” and “hoarding wealth”? What makes these behaviors so offensive to God? How can you discern if you have crossed the line into these behaviors?

7. It is sometimes said, "It is your attitude toward riches and material things that matters, not merely having riches and material things." What perspective does this passage shed on that belief?
8. How does this passage affect you as you read it? Does it make you angry, uncomfortable, bewildered, or something else? Why does it make you feel that way?
9. In light of this passage, how do you think God is calling you to live differently? What, if any, specific and concrete steps might God be calling you to take in response to this passage?



# James

## Patience

### Study 19 | James 5:7-11

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 5:7-11

- 1. How would you define patience? What do our lives look like when we exercise patience? How is patience related to “standing firm” (v. 8)?**
- 2. James offers the second coming of Christ as a primary motivation to exercise patience (vv. 7-8). How does anticipating this event help us to stand firm and be patient?**
- 3. How should we understand James when he writes that the Lord’s coming is “near”? What pitfalls must we avoid as we reflect on the nearness of his coming?**

- 4. Do you think about Christ's second coming very often? If not, why not?**
- 5. In addition to making you more patient, how else would your life be different if you reflected more often on this event?**
- 6. Why do we "grumble against each other"? How is this grumbling related to a lack of patience?**
- 7. What hints does James give about how to overcome our tendency to grumble?**

- ## SHARING AND PRAYER





# James

## Prayer of faith

### Study 20 | James 5:13-20

#### OPENING ACTIVITIES AND WORSHIP

#### BIBLE STUDY: James 5:13-20

- 1. According to verses 13-16, when should we pray?**
- 2. How are sickness and sin related in verses 15-16?**
- 3. What is “the prayer offered in faith” described in verse 15?**

4. What is the purpose of praying for oneself or others?
5. Why is Elijah given as an example of a praying person in verses 17-18?
6. Do you have friends who have “wandered from the truth”? (Or were you someone who once “wandered from the truth”?) How have you tried to bring them back? (Or what did someone do to bring you back?)

7. Is there any connection between verses 13-18 on prayer and verses 19-20 on turning a sinner from his ways?

SHARING AND PRAYER