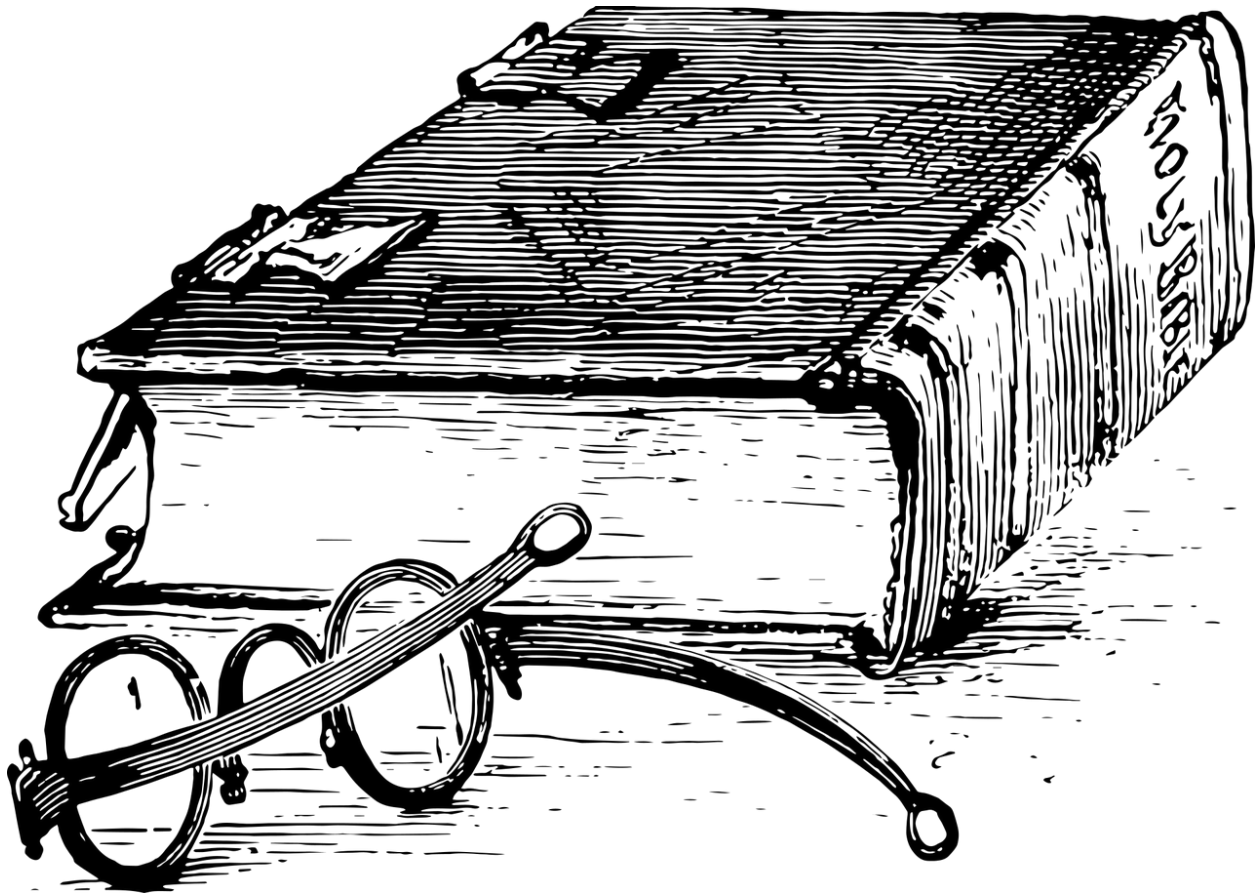


# THE BOOK OF JAMES

## Study Guide



“A Practical Faith”

Kempner church of Christ, Adult Bible Class

Spring 2025



## INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

### I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. This is actually one of the most practical and needed letters for Christians of every generation.
- B. From the beginning to the end of his letter James appeals to Christians to make their lives consistent with their profession of Christianity.

### II. WHO WAS THE AUTHOR OF JAMES?

- A. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..."
  - 1. It was NOT James the brother of John, who was killed in Acts 12:2.
  - 2. Most scholars believe the writer is James, the half-brother of Jesus. Gal 1:18-19
- B. What do we know of James from the New Testament?
  - 1. Along with the other half-brothers and sisters of Jesus, James did not at first believe in Jesus as the Messiah. John 7:1-5
  - 2. But later, he is mentioned as one who was witness to the resurrection of Jesus. 1 Cor 15:4-8
  - 3. James is later identified as one who seemed to be a "pillar" in the church at Jerusalem. Galatians 2:9.
  - 4. In Acts 15:13ff, James takes a leading role in the so-called "Jerusalem Conference." Acts 15:13
- C. Every NT reference to James, the Lord's brother:
  - 1. Matthew 13:55-56; 27:56; Mark 6:3
  - 2. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18
  - 3. 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12.

### III. THE SETTING OF THE EPISTLE.

- A. To Whom was the Epistle Written?
  - 1. "To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad..."
    - (a) "Addressed to Christians, many of whom were of Jewish descent and perhaps widely scattered." (Guy N. Woods)
    - (b) "It is quite certain that it was not addressed to unbelieving Jews." (Guy N. Woods)

2. We thus regard the statement, "the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," to be of figurative significance, comparable to Paul's "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), and to embrace Christians, whether of Jewish or Gentile descent." (Guy N. Woods)

B. Why was the Epistle Written?

1. The "Gospel of Common Sense"
2. The Epistle of James is not, nor was it intended to be, a formal, theological treatise, but a simple, sober presentation of Christian principles, the design of which was to enable the readers thereof to resist the sins peculiar to the age; to exhort them to live in such fashion as to merit, and to receive the approbation of Christ; and to cope with the difficult social problems then prevailing. (Guy N. Woods)

C. When was the Epistle Written? Between 44 and 69 AD.

D. Where was the Epistle written from? Jerusalem.

IV. Keys to the Epistle of James. (Frank J. Dunn, "Know Your Bible")

- A. Key Words: Faith (12x); Works (13x); Doer (5x)
- B. Key Verses: James 2:21, 24, 26.
- C. Key Phrase: "Be ye doers of the word." James 1:22
- D. Key Message:
  1. The Christian book of proverbs.
  2. Practical Christianity.
  3. Faith shown by works.

V. OUTLINE: (Carl B. Garner)

A. LET THE MAN WHO SAYS HE HAS FAITH SHOW IT BY...

1. ...the way he REACTS to temptation. James 1:1-18
2. ...the way he RESPONDS to The Word of God. James 1:19-27
3. ...the way he RESPECTS others. James 2:1-13
4. ...the way he REFLECTS faith through his works. James 2:14-26
5. ...the way he RESTRAINS his tongue. James 3:1-12
6. ...the way he REVEALS true wisdom. James 3:13-18
7. ...the way he RESISTS evil. James 4:1-12
8. ...the way he RECOGNIZES God in his plans. James 4:13-17
9. ...the way he RETAINS the right attitude. James 5:1-18
10. ...the way he RESTORES the erring. James 5:19-20

## JAMES CHAPTER ONE

In the first chapter of the book of James, the word “temptation” in two different senses: First, it speaks of temptation as trials and afflictions from without. Second, he speaks of temptation as in the temptation to commit sin from within.

After his initial greeting, James admonishes these faithful Christian to find joy amidst suffering and that if they endured this suffering the end result would be spiritual maturity. He urges them to find the wisdom of this admonition through faith. Evidently these brethren were impoverished but he wanted them to know that in Christ both rich and poor are equal. He reminds them of the blessings that come when they endure through faith.

He then urges them not to err in thinking that God is the source of temptation (to sin) reminding them that temptation comes from one's own lust. Temptation, if given in to, will lead to spiritual death. God is not the source of temptation, but he is the giver of every good and perfect gift, most importantly salvation. Because salvation comes from the Lord, we need to receive His word and turn away from sin – not only to hear the word but to put it into practice in our life and practice pure religion.

### OUTLINE:

- The Patience Learned by Faith. James 1:1-8
- The Equality Inherent in The Gospel. James 1:9-11
- The Reality of Temptation. James 1:12-15
- Attitude Toward the Word. James 1:16-27

### QUESTIONS:

1. How is it possible to find joy in suffering?
2. What is the result of the trying of our faith?
3. What is promised to those who endure temptation?
4. How is a person tempted to sin?
5. Who does a “hearer only” deceive?

## JAMES CHAPTER TWO

As those who were charged to practice pure religion, James expected them to not show favoritism towards anyone, especially not to the rich. He reminds them that the poor in spirit are the ones who will inherit the Kingdom of heaven. He rebukes them because they have shown such favoritism to the rich, who ironically are the ones persecuting them. He reminds them of the sinfulness of partiality and the commandment to love one's neighbor as one's self and that if they were not faithful in all points, they would be guilty of sin. He warns them against hypocrisy and the judgment they will receive because of it.

He urges them to demonstrate their faith by their works. He highlights the emptiness of faith without "works," likening it to giving mere "lip service" to those in need while taking no action. When writes, "faith without works is dead," to put it another way he means that, "faith without works is not really faith." He uses two examples of faith in action: that of Abraham with a faith that would offer up his only son and that of Rahab whose faith led her hide the spies in Jericho.

### OUTLINE:

- The Respect of Persons. James 2:1-13
- Faith and Works. James 2:14-26

### QUESTIONS:

1. What is respect of person?
2. In what way can the "poor" be "rich"?
3. What is the royal law?
4. How does one demonstrate their faith?
5. How was Abraham justified by works?

## JAMES CHAPTER THREE

James opens this chapter with a warning to those who aspire to be teachers, urging them to be mindful of their words, lest their words lead others into sin. He illustrates the need to control the tongue with the examples of ships' rudders and horses' bridles—small objects that control much larger ones—as well as a tiny flame that can unleash an uncontrollable fire. These examples emphasize the destructive power of an unbridled tongue. He argues that it is inconsistent to use the tongue to bless God and then turn around and use it to curse others.

In the next section, James reveals the true mark of wisdom—a life that reflects the pure word of God. He contrasts this with worldly wisdom, which does not come from God and is evident in the lives of hypocrites. In contrast, Divine wisdom leads to peace, not strife.

### OUTLINE:

- The Unbridled Tongue. James 3:1-12
- The Truly Wise Man. James 3:13-18

### QUESTIONS:

1. Who is a perfect (mature Christian) man?
2. The tongue is compared to what element?
3. How does one show wisdom?
4. Where do envy and strife come from?
5. “Peacemakers” sow fruit of what?

## JAMES CHAPTER FOUR

James warns of the dangers posed by evil influences, emphasizing that even Christians can be led astray by their own desires. This influence may manifest in their prayer life, turning their prayers into selfish requests. He cautions against the pull of the world, because “friendship” with the world leads to enmity with God. However, James assures that one can resist these influences—and even the devil—by drawing near to God. To do so, one must be cleansed from sin, possess a pure heart, and embrace genuine humility, which is essential for a right relationship with God.

Additionally, he urges his readers to treat one another with fairness and refrain from unjustly judging their fellow believers. He underscores the importance of seeking God's guidance in their plans, acknowledging His will in all things. James concludes with a strong admonition against sins of omission, reminding his audience of the responsibility to do what is right.

### OUTLINE:

- Resisting Evil Influences. James 4:1-12
- Proper Regard for God in Our Plans. James 4:13-17

### QUESTIONS:

1. From where do wars and fighting among brethren come?
2. How does one ask amiss in prayer?
3. God does what to the proud?
4. What will the Lord do when we humble ourselves?
5. What should we consider before making plans for our life?

## JAMES CHAPTER FIVE

In this final chapter, James emphasizes the importance of maintaining a right attitude. He condemns the corrupt mindset of the worldly, materialistic rich who were persecuting the church and warns Christians of the dangers associated with the desire for riches. Once again, he encourages his readers to endure their afflictions, using the example of farmers who patiently wait for the rain after planting their crops.

He urges them not to resent one another, particularly those who may not be suffering the same trials. To strengthen their resolve, James reminds them of Job's endurance—how he maintained his integrity through immense suffering and was ultimately blessed by God. He also stresses the importance of prayer, urging them to pray for those in need, those in sin, and the sick.

James concludes both the chapter and the book with a final exhortation: to seek out and restore their brethren who have turned away from God during this time of hardship, thereby saving their souls from spiritual death.

### OUTLINE:

- Maintaining A Right Attitude Toward Riches. James 5:1-6.
- Maintaining A Right Attitude Toward Oppression. James 5:7-12
- Maintaining A Right Attitude Regarding Prayer. James 5:13-18
- Maintaining A Right Attitude Toward the Erring. James 5:19-20

### QUESTIONS:

1. Christians are exhorted to be patient as a “husbandman waiteth” for what?
2. Why should Christians be patient in suffering?
3. Which Old Testament person is used as an example of God's mercy?
4. A Christian can “err from the truth” and become a “sinner.” True or False?
5. From what is a converted sinner saved from?