

Letter of James: Discipleship Lessons on Practical Christianity Participant Guide Handout Sheets

This appendix provides copies of handouts designed for classes and small groups. There is no charge whatsoever to print out as many copies of the handouts as you need for participants.

www.jesuswalk.com/james/james-lesson-handouts.pdf

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Each of these lesson sheets includes:

Questions. You’ll find 4 to 6 questions for each lesson. 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.

Key Verses. Each of these passages is rich in Bible verses worth memorizing. The verses here are in the New International Version, but feel free to have your members memorize in any translation you’re comfortable with. Scripture memory has a way of fixing God’s word in our minds. If you haven’t tried assigning verses for memory – and then testing the following week – you’ll bless your group members, though they may complain about short memories.

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11, NIV)

Lessons

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)

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

Q1. (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?

Q2. (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?

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

Q4. (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?

Key Verses

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

“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)

“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)

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

Q1. (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?

Q2. (1:22) Why are we so easily fooled into that *listening* to Bible teaching means that we are living out righteous lives? What is the nature of the self-deception?

Q3. What is this “perfect law” that James mentions? How would you define it? How does it relate to the “royal law” (2:8)? In what sense does it bring liberty?

Q4. (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?

Key Verses

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

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

“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)

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

Q1. (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?

Q2. (2:4) In what way does favoritism make one a judge? How does favoritism make one a judge with “evil thoughts”?

Q3. (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?

Q4. (2:13b) In what way is showing regard towards the wealthy (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)

“Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (James 2:13b)

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

Q1. (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?

Q2. (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?

Q3. (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?

Q4. (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)?

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 (3:1-18)

Q1. (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?

Q2. (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?

Q3. (3:13-16) In what ways are “bitter envy” and selfish ambition (3:14) direct opposites of “humility” (3:13)? How does denial of “bitter envy” and “selfish ambition” prevent healing? How does boasting about these prevent healing?

Q4. (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 Verse

“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)

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

Q1. (4:1-3) Is God against pleasure? What wrong in living to increase one's pleasure?

Q2. (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?

Q3. (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?

Q4. (4:11-12) In what way does bad-mouthing a neighbor cause you to be a judge of the law? Why is it tempting to bad-mouth others, do you think?

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)

"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)

"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)

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

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

Q1. (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?

Q2. (5:5-6) What is the spiritual danger of our demand for comfort and luxury? *Extra credit:* How might our demand for low-priced good 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?

Q3. (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?

Q4. (5:9) What does our grumbling and complaining say about us? About our faith? About our patience?

Key Verses

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

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

"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)

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

Q1. (5:13-14) According to verse 14, who is to initiate prayer for healing? Why is this important?

Q2. (5:14) What is the elders' role in prayer for the sick? What must be their spiritual qualifications for this ministry of prayer?

Q3. (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 confession of sins?

Q4. (5:19-20) In the light of James' emphasis on active faith vs. dead faith (2:17), why is the role of finding and bringing back the wandering sheep so important?

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." (5:14-16)