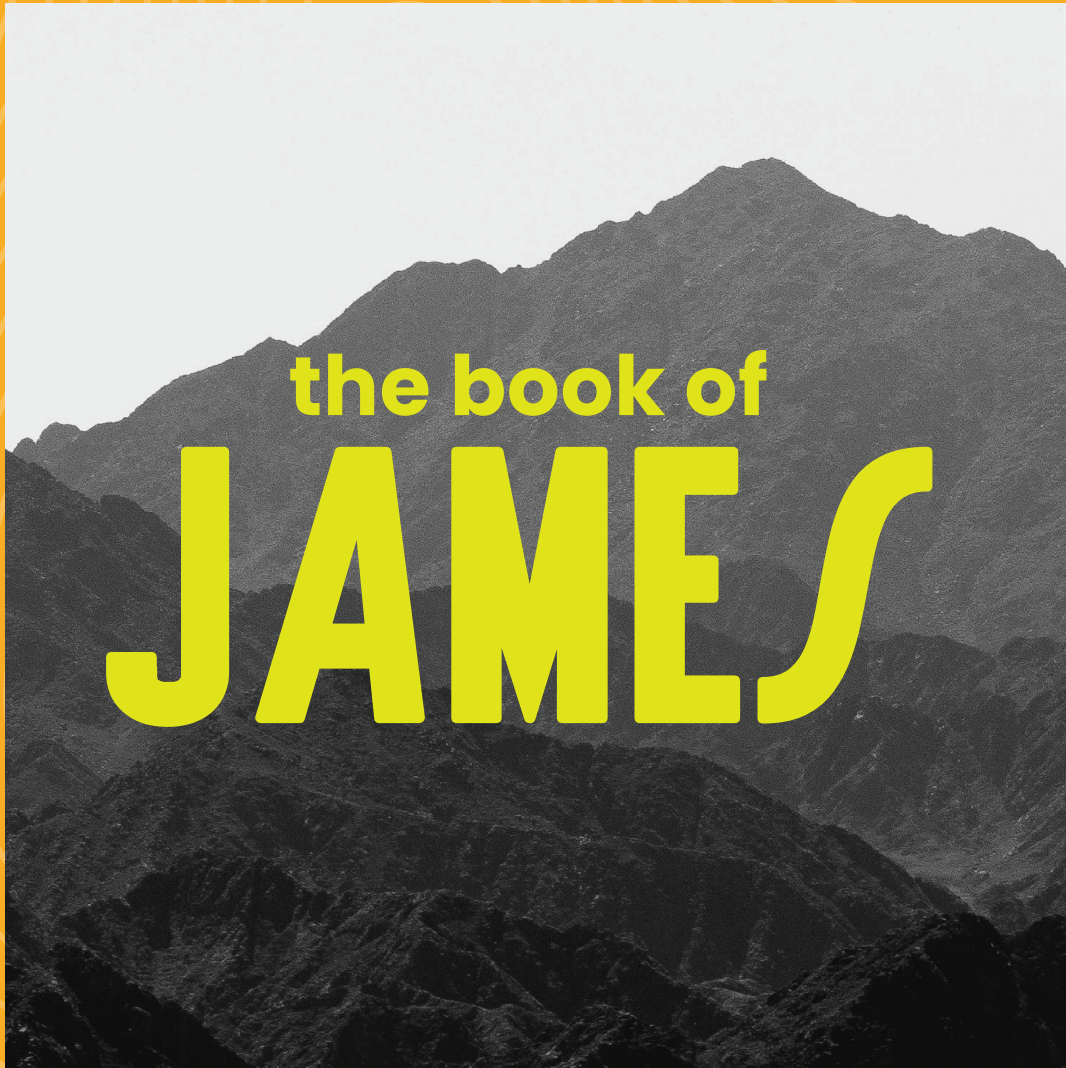




▶ **GRACEPOINT**
CHURCH



small group study guide
fall 2025



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table of contents

▪ Table of Contents	2
▪ A Guide to the Series Discussion	3
▪ The Book of James: An Overview	5
▪ Weekly Guides:	
○ Week 1: James 1:1-8 How Bad Can Be Good	6
○ Week 2: James Overview and Themes in James	8
○ Week 3: James 1:9-12 Humility and the Crown of Life	11
○ Week 4: James 1:13-15 The Truth About Temptation	13
○ Week 5: James 1:19-21 The Power of Listening	15
○ Week 6: James 1:21-25 Doing vs. Dialing	17
○ Week 7: James 1:26-27 The Good Kind of Religion	19
○ Week 8	

A GUIDE TO THE SERIES DISCUSSION

This guide can be used like any other small group guide you've ever seen. Instead of following the cookie-cutter of each previous series, I've tailored it to fit the book of James, a series which is sure to challenge us all into action.

Each week is built around four sections that flow directly from themes found in the book of James. The content of these sections will change each week. Sometimes they'll be questions from the Scripture, things to discuss from the sermon, and practical examinations on the application of the lesson. The last section of each week's guide is the same.

I hope and pray that this series is fruitful for you and your group, and you see God's hand in each and every revelation along the way!

Onward, Canaan

Let's look at the four sections:

section 1: hear it

Purpose: Slow down and really *hear* the Word.

How to lead this section: Read the passage out loud (twice if possible, using two different translations). Ask: "What word, phrase, or image stands out?" You can keep this short and simple... it warms the group up and sets the text at the center. Sometimes there is a lot to cover. Feel free to read the section(s) you're leading over.

section 2: check the mirror

Purpose: Help the group examine themselves honestly.

How to lead this section: Ask the included questions. These are about self-awareness, not just "what does this mean," but "what does this reveal about my life, our culture, or our blind spots?" Allow silence, encourage honesty, and model vulnerability.

section 3: put it to work

Purpose: Move from talk to action. James insists faith must show up in works.

How to lead this section: Each week has a practical challenge. Push each person in your group to commit to one clear, simple action step. Encourage people to write it down or share aloud. Follow up next week with: "How did it go?"

section 4: wisdom in action

Purpose: Apply wisdom principles to life situations.

How to lead this section: These are "big-picture" reflection questions. Don't rush — sometimes this section leads to the richest conversations.

weekly rituals: things to do each week

- **Memory Verse:** Each week has one. Encourage the group to memorize together. The next week, bring it back and start with a review of the memory verse.
- **Action Step Journal:** Suggest that members jot their weekly steps in a notebook. (See the "Put It To Work" section)
- **Closing Ritual:** Pray the prescribed prayer. End by reading James 1:22 together.

...and after the first one, you'll see this section at the of each session:

review it:

Purpose: Follow-up on everything that was shared and assigned in the previous gathering.

How to lead this section: You're going to have to work hard on this! Take meticulous (or at least memorable) notes on each person's Action Step. Follow-up on that. Ask them how it went. Follow-up on prayer requests and the week's Practice. Ask the group to recite the weekly memory verse if they can, and of course, the series verse.

the book of James: an overview

author

The book of James was written by James, the half-brother of Jesus (not James the son of Zebedee, who was martyred early in Acts 12). James became a key leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15; Galatians 1-2).

audience

His letter is addressed "to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (James 1:1; also known as "diaspora"), meaning Jewish Christians scattered outside of Jerusalem, likely facing trials, poverty, and pressure to compromise their faith.

date and context

Most scholars place James among the earlier of the New Testament writings, in the 40s-50s AD. It reflects the early church's struggles: poverty and riches, the testing of faith, divisions in the community, and the tension between believing in Jesus and living out that belief in everyday life.

major themes

- Faith in action: Genuine faith expresses itself in obedience & works (2:14-26).
- Wisdom from above: God gives wisdom for trials and daily life (1:5; 3:17).
- Trials/endurance: Hardship refines believers and produces maturity (1:2-4).
- Riches/poverty: God honors the poor; the rich must not oppress or boast (1:9-11; 5:1-6).
- The tongue: Words have destructive or healing power (3:1-12).
- Prayer/community: Confession, intercession, & restoration mark God's people (5:13-20).

relevance

James is practical, direct, and confrontational. It calls believers to live an integrated life where belief and behavior match. It exposes self-deception, challenges favoritism, demands action, and ends with a call to prayer and restoration.

In a world quick with words but slow to act, James is a pertinent reminder...
...faith without works is dead.

hear it *(Slow down and hear the Word)*

Read James 1:1-8 aloud (twice if possible, using two different translations).

- ASK: What word, phrase, or image stands out to you and why?
- ASK: What does this passage teach about God?
- ASK: What does this passage teach about humanity?

check the mirror *(Help the group examine themselves honestly by asking questions)*

- When pressure hits, what story do you start telling yourself about what’s happening and what it means?
 - How does that story shape your feelings and reactions? (See James’s call to consider and know... thinking before feeling.)
- Where have you been tempted to “bail out” instead of letting perseverance finish its work?
 - What would it look like to endure (James says “remain under”) in that specific situation this week?
- In hard moments, do your prayers lean more toward “God, get me out” or “God, give me wisdom”?
 - What might asking for wisdom in any current trial practically look like, and what would “pre-deciding to obey what He shows me to do” change?

put it to work *(Move from talk to action)*

This week’s practice: **share a pressure point.**

Have your group discuss “pressure points” they’re facing, and how they can pray to God to weather the situation.

Say this prayer: “Father, give me wisdom in this trial. If it’s Your will, deliver me through it, but no matter what happens, by Your grace I will do what You say.”

wisdom in action *(Apply wisdom principles to life situations.)*

- How would believing that God is using trials to produce perseverance and maturity reshape the way you approach work, parenting, finances, or a strained relationship this week?
- Where might you be treating God like a consultant (i.e. *taking advice you'll weigh later*) rather than Lord (i.e. *obeying even when you don't yet understand*)?
 - What's one next faithful step of obedience you can take?

weekly rituals

- Weekly Memory Verse:
"² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." James 1:2-4
- Action Step Journal:

- Series memory verse:
"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James 1:22

review it *(Revisit the weekly rituals and follow-up on the last gathering)*

- Look over the last session's Action Step Journal, and ask how it went. Share as honestly as you can. It's not meant to cause shame or guilt, rather, a community of care.
- Try to recite last week's memory verse.
- Try to recite the series memory verse, James 1:22.

hear it *(Slow down and hear the Word)*

Pick a passage which was preached and read it out loud as a group (twice if possible, using two different translations).

- ASK: What word, phrase, or image stands out to you and why?
- ASK: What does this passage teach about God?
- ASK: What does this passage teach about humanity?

check the mirror *(Help the group examine themselves honestly by asking questions)*

This week, we do a flyover of the book we're about to study.

James is a very practical book. Rich with theological framework and full of application, you could spend a lifetime studying it and not run out of lessons to learn. Distilling the book into broad themes could be done in any number of ways, lists varying widely.

Let's look at a few:

- **trials, hardship, endurance (James 1:2-4, 12)**
 - Why does James say to "consider it pure joy" when facing trials?
 - What is the difference between joy *in* trials vs. joy *for* trials?
- **words matter (James 3:1-12)**
 - How do your words reveal what's happening in your heart?

- What are some practical ways to use our words for encouragement this week?
- **justice, equity, oppression, things (James 5:1-6)**
 - What does generous stewardship look like in everyday life?
- **wisdom, humility (James 3:13-18; 4:6-10)**
 - How does James distinguish between earthly and heavenly wisdom?
 - What role does humility play in resolving conflict?
- **prayer, community (James 5:13-20)**
 - Why is confession and prayer so central to Christian community?
 - What makes it difficult to share our struggles with others?
- **faith, works (James 2:14-26)**
 - In what ways can your faith be made visible this week?

put it to work *(Move from talk to action)*

This week's practice: **deference to Scripture.**

Don't just wait for moments to happen, but where you can, take intentional time to read, listen, and think on God's Word. Whether it be James 1, a Proverb, a chapter of the Gospel, or part of a reading plan, anything is better than nothing.

Have your group discuss how they read and process the Bible—and what works for them. Perhaps another's answer will be an inspiration for their own time and practice.

- ASK: How would showing "humble submission and respect" to the Bible make a difference in your day-to-day life?

wisdom in action *(Apply wisdom principles to life situations.)*

Let's look at how to put this to work. Work through a few of these questions and then transition those into Action Steps.

- Where in my life do I need to let trials produce maturity instead of bitterness?
- Where do I need to humble myself and seek God's wisdom instead of my own?
- Who in my community needs my prayer, confession, or support right now?
- What is one action I can take this week to prove my faith is alive and active?

weekly rituals *(Do these in whatever order—be sure to move through them)*

(Do these in whatever order—be sure to move through them)

- Weekly Memory Verse:
"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Action Step Journal:

- Series memory verse:
"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James 1:22

review it *(Revisit the weekly rituals and follow-up on the last gathering)*

- Look over the last session’s Action Step Journal, and ask how it went. Share as honestly as you can. It’s not meant to cause shame or guilt, rather, a community of care.
- Try to recite last week’s memory verse.
- Try to recite the series memory verse, James 1:22.

hear it *(Slow down and hear the Word)*

Read James 1:9-12 aloud (twice if possible, using two different translations).

- ASK: What word, phrase, or image stands out to you and why?
- ASK: What does this passage teach about God?
- ASK: What does this passage teach about humanity?

check the mirror *(Help the group examine themselves honestly by asking questions)*

- Have you ever measured your *self-worth* by something like your *net-worth* (job, title, stuff and things, balance in life, follower count, achievements, etc.)?
 - What did it do to your heart?
- Verse 9 reads: “Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.”
 - What are “humble circumstances?” How does it work that James describes it as a “high position?”
 - What would it look like to take pride in your place (in general)?
 - What changes *this week*?
 - From where does the “high position” come?
- Read Luke 12:13-21, The Parable of the Rich Fool.
 - What is being rich towards God mean?
- With that parable in mind, let’s discuss the meaning of “rich” in James 1:10-11. What does it look like? What does that create?
 - What sign would tell you you’re putting hope in wealth rather than God?

- Look at Revelation 2:8-11*

(Move from talk to action)

This week's practice: **invest in the eternal.**

This week, take one *tangible* asset like time, skill, money, or even like the Word of God, and invest it in what is eternal: a person.

Pray expectantly and be looking for an opportunity to encourage, serve, or give. Think of what works for you and what you can offer someone. Show that you can be “rich in deed” and not “dead because of riches.”

- ASK: What does focusing on someone else do to your mind and heart?
- ASK: How do you see this working this week?

(Apply wisdom principles to life situations.)

- If you truly believed that your value comes from *whose* we are and not *what* we *have*, how would our calendars, spending, and conversations change over the next month?

(Do these in whatever order—be sure to move through them)

- "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." James 1:12*

- "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James 1:22*

