



TEACH ME
THE BIBLE PODCAST

STUDY GUIDE

PASTOR TIM WEBB AND DR. DAVID KLINGLER



INTRODUCTION

THE BOOK OF

JAMES

Faith, Works and Blessing



James: Introduction

If you are new to the Story of the Bible or would like to review the Story:
Listen to the following TMTB Podcasts:

The Story: Understanding the “Big Story” (30 min)

Old Testament: Walk Through the Broad Story (27 min)

Timeline: New Testament Beginnings (35 min)

Letters: Paul’s Writing to the Churches–Part 1 (30 min)

REVIEW

Jewish believers have adopted (or more likely, returned to) an errant theology that believes one is blessed temporally with prosperity if he or she keeps the law. If such a line of thinking were true then those who were poor simply needed to “shape up” and keep the law so that they too could be blessed.

However, James points out that the law (Deuteronomy 10 and 15) teaches that care for the orphans, widows, aliens, and poor will bring blessing. Thus, these Jewish believers’ temporal “blessing” cannot be ascribed to “law keeping” since they don’t keep the law.



James: Introduction

MONDAY

Listen to the Introduction of James podcast.

TUESDAY

Read through the book of James and try to track the flow of the argument. Pay special attention to three words: **faith**, **works**, and **blessing**. As we continue in this study, we will clarify many translations so that you can more easily see what James is saying. To do this, we will give a more literal translation throughout the book. For example, take a look at the way the word “*works*” is used throughout James’s letter. The root word “*ergon*” (i.e., works) is used 21 times in 17 verses (1:3, 4, 20, 25; 2:9, 14, 17, 18 (3x), 20, 21, 22 (3x), 24, 25, 26; 3:13; 5:4, and 16). Unfortunately, “*works*” is only translated that way throughout chapter 2. This leaves the reader of an English translation the impression that James is starting his discussion on the subject in chapter 2. However, everything that he will say in chapter 2 will already have been introduced in chapter 1.

WEDNESDAY

Yesterday we took an introductory look at “*works*.” Today, let’s take a look at “*faith*.” The root word “*pistis*” (i.e., faith) is used 19 times in 14 verses (1:3, 6; 2:1, 5, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26; 5:15). As with “*works*,” “*faith*” is used heavily throughout chapter 2.

Re-read James and see if you can begin to piece the argument together.

THURSDAY

James is going to use some very relevant illustrations in his short letter. One of the most significant is his reference to Job in 5:11. If you aren’t familiar with the story of Job, go back and read this amazing Old Testament book. The story of Job will tie directly into what James has to say to these first century Jewish believers.



James: Introduction

FRIDAY

By way of application, make a definition of “*blessing*.”

How have you heard the term used in the church context?

How would you define the term “*blessing*?” Now take a look at James 1:12, 25; and 5:11.

Does James use the term in the same way that you have defined it? In fact, here is a list of all 55 usages in the NT (Matt 5:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; 24:46; Luke 1:45, 48; 6:20, 21, 22; 7:23; 10:23; 11:27, 28; 12:38, 43; 14:14, 15; 23:29; John 13:17; Acts 20:35; 26:2; Romans 4:6, 7, 8, 9; 14:22; Gal 4:15; 1Tim 1:11; 6:15; Titus 2:13; James 1:12, 25; 5:11; 1 Pet 3:14; 4:14; Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

Do any of these usages align with how it is most often discussed in the church (or even used by you)?