

the book of
JAMES

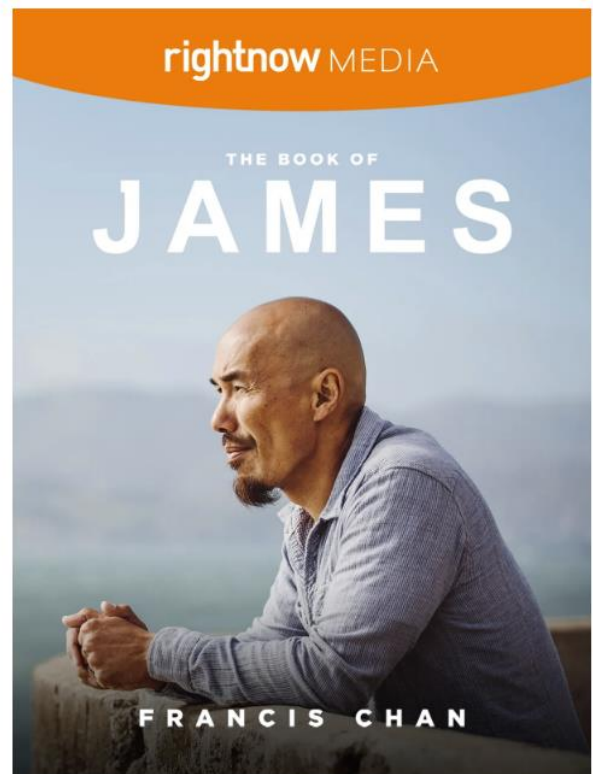
Why Study the Book of James?

True faith produces fruit. A faith without action and without life change is ultimately a dead faith. The book of James speaks to the realities of a living faith in Jesus—the kind of roll-up-your-sleeves and get-your-hands-dirty discipleship that is borne out of an authentic relationship with the risen Lord. James writes to believers who know suffering, who've faced trials, and who ultimately desire a deep relationship with God.

Suggested Resource

Francis Chan unpacks the dense truth contained in the book of James in front of the iconic backdrop of San Francisco, the city where he lives and ministers. Through 12 sessions, Francis works through James verse-by-verse, challenging followers of Christ to move beyond a private, intellectual knowledge of God and His Word, to a vibrant faith that impacts every square inch of life. Found on RightNow Media.

Email levi@christchurch.com if you need access to RightNow Media.



Week 1 Scripture

James 1:1-18

Watch

Sessions 1-2 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

Learn more about how Christians should respond to suffering and trials in their life. What is the benefit in suffering and trials?

Matthew 5:10-12

Romans 5:1-5; 8:16-18

John 15:18-20

Hebrews 10:32-12:13

1 Peter 4:12-19

Peek at the Greek

The word for testing (*dokimion*) refers to the practice of metallurgy. Precious metals would be smelted—tested—by putting them through extreme heat and removing impurities. It is the process of determining the genuineness of metals. For believers, trials test the genuineness of faith. It reveals if our faith is founded upon God or something else. Another aspect of the word picture is that metals are refined in order to be polished and have a reflective surface. As we go through the heat, we become more like him.

Live It Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Conversation: Some of us complain a lot. What if we followed James and started considering our troubles “pure joy”? Who could you contact this week—by email, phone, text, or in person—and instead of complaining, tell them about the way God is helping you grow?

Journaling: Write about your struggles. Don't hold back. Complain all you want. But then go back to your journal the next day and jot some notes in the margins about how God might be making you "mature and complete."

Memorization: Learn James 1:2–3, and maybe verse 4. This will be a powerful support to you in your toughest times.

Prayer: Consider others you know who are going through difficulties. Ask God to help them grow.

Influence: Have you seen spiritual growth in someone else who has gone through trials? Tell them so.

Sermon Notes

Week 2 Scripture

James 1:19-27

Watch

Session 3 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

Learn more about “hearing and doing the Word” in the following Bible verses. How does the Lord feel about those who know His Word but don’t follow it? How does that affect their lives?

Matthew 7:24–27; 21:28–32; 23:1–3

John 13:31-14:24

Romans 2

1 Peter 1:1-22

1 John 2:17

Peek at the Greek

The Greek word for “filth” (*rhyparia*) is found only here in the New Testament, but a related word (*rhyparos*) occurs in James 2:2 and in the Greek translation of Zechariah 3:3–4. Those references involve filthy or shabby clothing. In Zechariah, it’s a strong picture of salvation—God cleansing the high priest. This leads some experts to suggest that James is following a baptismal liturgy—removal of “shabby” garments, then cleansing, then listening to the Word.

Live it Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Memorization: Learn James 1:22. Perhaps you could write it out on a card, which you put (appropriately) on your mirror.

Conversation: Do you need to develop the ability to be “quick to hear, slow to speak”? Is there a particular person in your life with whom you should do more listening? Work on this. You might even think of some questions to ask in your next conversation. Focus on them, not on your own responses.

Journaling: If you have a Bible study journal, add this component. If not, try journaling this week. Take the next six pages and put four headings on each page. Read. Think. Pray. Do! Then select Scriptures to read each day. As you do, record your thoughts on the text, write out key words of a prayer, and then—because of James—figure out something God would like you to do in response to that text. Oh, yeah—and then do it.

Prayer: Pray specifically about two things this week. (1) Your anger. (Even if you're not hot-tempered, do you "stuff" your anger and let it turn into bitterness?) (2) Soul pollution. Ask God to show you ways you might be getting "polluted" by the world.

“Widows and Orphans:” In many parts of Scripture—and here in James—we are urged to care for the neediest members of society. In your area, who are these people, and how can you help? It’s possible they are, literally, widows and orphans, having suffered the loss of a family member. But also consider the homeless, the hospitalized, retirees, special-needs children and adults, the unemployed, immigrants, prisoners, etc.

Sermon Notes

Week 3 Scripture

James 2:1-26

Watch

Sessions 4-5 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

Learn more about Abraham's faith in the following Bible passages. How did Abraham act on his faith? What exactly was Abraham believing in? According to the passages in Romans and Hebrews, what are the implications for us? What can we learn about faith and works?

Genesis 12-22

Romans 4

Hebrews 11:8-19

Peek at the Greek

In verse 26, “spirit” is a translation of the Greek word *pneuma*. This word refers to that which gives life to the body. In some places *pneuma* is translated “breath.”

Live it Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Memorization: Learn the Beatitudes. Matthew 5:3–12 or Luke 6:20–26. In a succinct way, these describe the reordering of the world from God’s perspective.

Evaluation: Talk with God about your own faith. Do you have “faith with works” or “faith without works”? Ask Him to give you the power you need to put your faith into action.

Conversation: Talk with at least one other close Christian friend about this question: Is my faith more on the inside or the outside? Both are good. Both are important. But if you just feel your faith and don't show it, you're out of balance. (It's also possible to tilt the other way, doing stuff for God, but not taking time for personal growth.)

Research: James is very specific about the needs we should be responding to—the needs of widows and orphans, as well as those who need food or clothing. Where do these needs exist in your region? And what are the best ways to help such people? Don't just think about doing these things. Plan something and do it.

Donation: Some ministries are desperate for funds. Lead by example by giving your money to support them.

Sermon Notes

Week 4 Scripture

James 3:1-18

Watch

Sessions 6-7 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

Learn more about the importance of what we say in the following Bible passages. According to these passages, how important is what we say? What different “audiences” are described here? Who’s listening to us? Do you get any ideas here about how to control your tongue?

Psalms 19:14

Proverbs 10:31-32; 18:21

Ecclesiastes 5:2-3

Matthew 12:34-37

Ephesians 4:25-5:4

Colossians 3:8-10

Peek at the Greek

Don't get thrown off by the word perfect. It can also be translated "mature" or "complete." It's the same word used in James 1:4 for the person who develops patience through trials. So James is not saying that people who control their tongues are sinless. In fact, he has just said that we all stumble in many ways. It's just that the one who avoids stumbling in speech is apparently a mature believer.

Live it Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Memorization: Learn James 3:9–10. This isn't your normal type of memory verse, but it might prove helpful in real-life situations.

Stop-Phrase: When you find yourself speaking badly about someone, stop—in mid-sentence if you need to. Find a phrase to run through your mind in those cases. Maybe it's James 3:9–10. Maybe it's just "This should not be." Or maybe it's a more positive statement like "Bless the Lord, O my soul" or the prayer from Psalm 19:14.

Encouragement: Think of three people you can encourage this week, and do so. Be as specific as possible. Can you bolster their confidence or their faith?

Thanks: Who has encouraged you in the past? Who has spoken words into your life that truly helped you? Can you find them and thank them for that?

Media Fast: Many of us learn unkind habits of communication from talk radio, cable news, or online videos. If this is a problem for you, engage in a “fast,” abstaining from those media sources for a period of time—perhaps the next seven days. Then re-evaluate.

Sermon Notes

Week 5 Scripture

James 4:1-12

Watch

Session 8 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

Learn more about our responses to God's grace in the following Bible passages. How do these verses help you understand the list of responses in James 4?

Psalms 1

Proverbs 3:5-6; 16:3

Joel 2:12-14

Mark 1:14-15

Romans 8

Hebrews 10:19-25

Peek at the Greek

The Greek words translated “murder” (*phoneuo*), “covet” (*zeloo*), and “adulterous” (*moichalis*) are the same words (or forms of the same words) found in the Ten Commandments in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint)—the version of the Bible that James’ readers would have known.

Live it Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Humble Prayer: In biblical times they wore rough sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on themselves to come humbly before God. What could you do to show God (and remind yourself of) your humility? Kneel? Wear a dirty shirt? Put soil on your face? The specifics don't matter as much as your attitude. Take a good long time to listen to God. Ask about the things He cares about. Ask what He wants for you. Confess your sins and receive His forgiveness. Ask again for wisdom.

Memorization: Learn James 4:7–8.

Peacemaking: Are there “fights and quarrels” in your life? If you’re not seeing eye to eye with someone, do what you can to set that relationship right.

Service: Find a humble way to serve your church or community. Clean up, fix up, help those who routinely get neglected. This is not about you getting props for a good deed, but about showing the love of God to others.

Sermon Notes

Week 6 Scripture

James 4:13-5:6

Watch

Sessions 9-10 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

Learn more about what to do with wealth in the following Bible passages. According to these passages, what attitudes should we have about wealth? According to these passages, what actions should we take?

Proverbs 11:28

Matthew 6:19-24

1 Timothy 6:6–10; 6:17–19

Peek at the Greek

In James 5:6, the “righteous person/innocent one” (*dikaion*) is singular, but it was a common literary device then (as now) for one person to stand for a whole class of people. A business leader today might say, “We want the employee to feel motivated,” meaning not just one, but all employees. So, some translations of James 5:6 put it in the plural. Righteous people are the victims, and that makes sense in context.

But there's another tantalizing possibility. Could James be talking about Jesus? If any person could be called "the righteous one" (and other translations say "innocent one"), it would be Jesus. In fact, He is called exactly that in Acts 3:14. And Jesus did not resist his executioners, so that fits too. But why would James accuse his readers of killing Jesus?

Live It Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Read: Isaiah 58. This chapter bears a lot of similarities to the book of James. People were religious, proud of their frequent fasting. But God challenges them to a new kind of devotion—caring for the needy, treating workers fairly, etc. Then that will open up a whole new kind of relationship with God.

Prayer of Confession and Commitment: Talk with God honestly and humbly about the role of money and possessions in your life. **Research:** Find out more about exploitation in our world today. Share your findings with other believers. Pray together about what you could do to change things.

Budget: Examine your household budget. How do your expenditures reflect your spiritual priorities? What might need to change?

Sermon Notes

Week 7 Scripture

James 5:7-20

Watch

Sessions 11-12 of the RightNow Media Series

The Book of James, by Francis Chan

Listen

The current episode of the ReThink Podcast by the Christ's Church teaching team

Study

What do these passages teach about suffering as a Christian? Does it help to think of our mortal bodies as “jars of clay”? Peter suggests that suffering actually frees us from “human passions” (1 Peter 4:2). Why would that be? What does it mean to “participate in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 4:13)? Do people who suffer get to know Christ better?

2 Corinthians 4:1-5:10

1 Peter 4:1-2; 12-13

Peek at the Greek

The word James uses for patience is *makrothumia*, which literally means something like “long-tempered.” You know what it’s like to be short-tempered, when any little thing can set you off. Patience is the opposite.

The word for “grumble” in verse 9 (*stenazo*) is used elsewhere for a similar situation. Paul talks about all creation “groaning” with us in anticipation of God’s final redemption and about our own “groaning” as we look forward to our heavenly home (Romans 8:22-3; 2 Corinthians 5:2,4). It’s the same word that’s translated “grumbling” in James. It’s a deep longing for a better future, but when we turn it “against one another,” it can become toxic.

Live It Out

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Gut-Level Prayer: Sometimes when you're suffering, praying can be difficult—especially if you're trying to mind your manners with God and pray correctly. Remember that prayer is open and honest communication with God. Take Job's example and let God know just how miserable you are, just how angry, sad, scared, or confused you may be. Tell Him exactly how you feel. You aren't fooling Him by trying to keep a secret from Him.

Listening: It's good to pray for those who are suffering, and you should pray for them. But, sometimes they need someone just to be there with them, to comfort them and let them talk and hold their hand. You don't have to have answers, especially to the question, "Why is this happening?" You can say, "I don't know, but I'm here for you." Ask to hear that person's story.

Research and Support: In various parts of the world, Christians are suffering for their faith. Research their struggles. Pray for them. Connect with an organization that helps them.

Sermon Notes