

PRECEPT
UPON
PRECEPT

James

A FAITH THAT'S REAL

JAMES
PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT
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6th edition
Printed in the United States of America

PRN QTR 3-08

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HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARTHUR, KAY

How to Study Your Bible

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994

The New Inductive Study Bible

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2000

Word Study Tools

Commentaries on James

(See commentary list below)

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

BAXTER, J. SIDLOW

Explore the Book

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960.

DOERKSEN, VERNON

Everyman's Bible Commentary: James

Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1983

MOO, DOUGLAS J.

Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: James

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985

MORRIS, LEON AND BURDICK, DONALD W.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews, James

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996

WIERSBE, WARREN W.

Be Mature

Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot Victor Publishers, 1978

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

Logos Bible Software

Powerful search engines and up to 4,000 electronic Bible study resources (commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries etc.) make it fast and easy to do simple and complex searches of multiple sources, then pull materials together for orderly presentation—excellent for word and topical studies based on English or original Hebrew and Greek. Available at www.logos.com.

LESSON ONE

Overview

THIS LESSON INCORPORATES Observation Worksheets on James, located in the Appendix

James is a short book tucked away near the back of the New Testament. In all probability you have never heard many sermons on it. Very seldom would you ever find yourself turning to the book of James as a proof text in some doctrinal argument. Nor is it a book that one would readily use in sharing the gospel with an unbeliever. So why study it? That is a question you have a right to ask now; but once you have skimmed its surface even slightly, you will wonder why James has not become the primary reader for every child of God who longs to know how true faith behaves. As the weeks go by, you will begin to feel the increasing weight of faith's works.

Beloved, we live in an age like that of the Old Testament book of Judges: an age of apathy, apostasy, anarchy. We are doing what is right in our own eyes, yet it is invariably wrong in God's eyes. We have departed from the faith and do not even realize it! Why? Because we have been apathetic to the things of God. We are too busy, too entangled with the affairs of this life; thus, we have no time to study the Word of God. Self-denial and discipline are two words that are almost extinct in the life of the average churchgoer. Yet many sit in smug complacency thinking that they have it made, that they are going to heaven. They have their free ticket, *sola gratis*—or they think they have it. What if they don't? And what if God does reward righteousness and commitment? And what if you can be ashamed at His coming as 1 John 2:28 says? Please, for heaven's sake and for your sake, be a man, a woman, a teen who keeps his commitment. Finish what you begin! The Christian life is not a hundred-yard dash; it is a marathon. Run, child of God, run. Don't faint. Decide now. The Lord said, "If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31b). You cannot call yourself His disciple without continuing in His Word.

I do love you.

DAY
ONE
AND
DAY
TWO

Let's begin with a cursory examination of the book itself as a whole. If we are to understand fully an author's message, we must always consider it within its context. Thus, our first step is to gain a broad, general perspective of the book as a whole. Since our primary approach to studying God's Word in Precept Upon Precept is inductive, we begin by examining the book itself rather than by reading secondary works about the particular book under consideration.

1. Always begin your study time by seeking the Lord for revelation and understanding of truth. Only He can open our eyes so that we might behold wondrous truths out of His law.
2. If you have never done a Precept course before, it would be helpful to read the sections entitled "The Rule of Context—Context Rules" and "Getting the Big Picture" in *How to Study Your Bible*.
3. In the Appendix you will find the book of James printed double-spaced. These are your Observation Worksheets. Using your Observation Worksheets, read through the book of James in one sitting without interruption. Do not try to figure out what the author is saying. Simply read it as you would read a book. When you finish reading James the first time, write down any thoughts that you have about this particular book. Whatever it is, record your first impressions.
4. Read James again. Glean all you can about the author and the recipients. Ask the 5 Ws and an H: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Use the 5 Ws and an H to formulate questions to cause you to see the content of the book. Answer the following questions and record your insights on the "James at a Glance" chart, located at the end of this lesson: Who is the author? How does he describe himself? Who are the recipients of the letter? Where are they? What does the author tell you about the recipients? See if you can discern whether the author considers the recipients of his writing to be Christians, non-Christians, or both. (Hint: For clues concerning the facts about the recipients, note the occurrence of the pronoun "you.") Don't panic if you do not find an answer to every one of the 5 Ws and an H. Just record those that are obvious.

Also identify what type of literature the book of James is. Is it a historical record or a biographical account? Is it poetry, or is it a philosophical or doctrinal treatise? Is it a letter (epistle)? Or is it prophecy?

5. As you gathered information about the author and the recipients, you probably noticed clues to the historical background of the book. Record this information on the “**James at a Glance**” chart.
6. That is enough reading for today. Memorize James 1:2-8. Print these verses on a 3 x 5 card so you can carry it in your pocket. In all probability, all you will have to do to memorize them is to read them aloud three times each morning, noon, and evening. It will be easy, and ask God to let it sink in.

DAY THREE

1. Don’t forget, Beloved, to seek God’s revelation. If you have not already done so, why not stop and commit this study time to Him? Remember that Satan desires to keep you from God’s Word. He is the liar, the destroyer, the hinderer, but “greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4b). So persevere! Victory is yours for the appropriation!
2. Read James using your Observation Worksheets and mark the key words used repeatedly throughout the text. Remember that these key words will give you a clue to the general subjects that are mentioned. Record the key words and general subjects on the “**James at a Glance**” chart.
3. The book of James has an interesting pattern. A statement is made or an instruction is given followed by either an illustration or an explanation. Read the book of James looking for this pattern. First, note these statements or instructions by simply underlining them. Then watch to see how one subject relates to another. This will help you see the flow of thought in the book.
4. After observing the general subjects that James mentions and after evaluating the way he makes his point, see if there is any subject that is more predominant than the others or if there is any common denominator between the subjects. This is the major theme of this epistle.
5. Record the main theme of the book on the “**James at a Glance**” chart in the space entitled “Book Theme.”
6. Whenever an author takes pen in hand, he has a purpose for writing; there is some particular message that he wants to communicate. Many times the author will state his purpose; however, at other times it will go unstated. And if it goes unstated, how then are we to discover his purpose? And is it necessary to know? Yes, it is necessary to know the author’s purpose even if it is not directly stated;

for this knowledge will help you understand why the author says what he says. To miss his purpose is to expose yourself to an incorrect interpretation of the text. Thus, if the author's purpose is not directly stated, it can be discerned by careful examination of the main theme of the book. As you read the book of James again today, look for James' purpose for writing. Why did he write this letter? What is he emphasizing or dealing with in his writing? Keep in mind that everything the author does throughout the book is designed to accomplish this purpose for writing. Once you see this purpose, you will be better equipped to understand the message of the book. Again record your observations on the "James at a Glance" chart.

7. How's your memorization of James 1:2-8 coming?

DAY
FOUR
AND
DAY
FIVE

1. Read through James. Record on the "James at a Glance" chart what each chapter tells you about the book theme. To determine the theme or themes, note the main thoughts that are emphasized in each chapter. You may find some overlapping in themes from one chapter to another, but at this point please stick to the chapter divisions. If there seem to be two themes, record both as briefly as possible under "Themes" and next to the number of the chapter you are reading.
2. Also record on your **At a Glance** chart other pertinent information that you have gleaned thus far, such as key words.
3. If you have time at this point in your study, you may want to read what your commentaries say by way of introduction to James. This will enable you to compare your insights with those of other scholars. Please do not read beyond the author's introductory remarks.

Well, Beloved, if you have done your homework, you have begun to become familiar with James. It's quite a book, isn't it? It hits you "where the rubber meets the road"; or to put it in more biblical terms, it is the gospel in "shoe-leather"!

Do you know how much we rejoice over your determination and diligence to study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed? Hangeth thou in there, and together we will stand before Him unashamed.

P.S. Have you memorized James 1:2-8? Oh, how God will use these verses to take you victoriously through trials.

JAMES AT A GLANCE

Book Theme

Chapter Themes

Author

1	
---	--

Recipients

Purpose

2	
---	--

**Historical
Background**

3	
---	--

Key Words

4	
---	--

5	
---	--

JAMES 1
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

JAMES, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

- 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
- 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
- 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.
- 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,
- 8 *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
- 9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;
- 10 and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.
- 11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.
- 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.
- 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

- 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.
- 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.
- 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.
- 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
- 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.
- 19** *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger;
- 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.
- 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
- 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
- 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;
- 24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.
- 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.
- 26** If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless.
- 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

JAMES 2
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

- MY brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with
an attitude of personal favoritism.
- 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in
fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,
- 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes,
and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man,
“You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”
- 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges
with evil motives?
- 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world
to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those
who love Him?
- 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress
you and personally drag you into court?
- 7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?
- 8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture,
“YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing
well.
- 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by
the law as transgressors.
- 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has
become guilty of all.
- 11 For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT
COMMIT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do
commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

- 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty.
- 13 For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.
- 14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?
- 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,
- 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?
- 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.
- 18 But someone may *well* say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”
- 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.
- 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?
- 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?
- 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;
- 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God.
- 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.
- 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?
- 26 For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

JAMES 3
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

- LET not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.
- 2 For we all stumble in many *ways*. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.
- 3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.
- 4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.
- 5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things.
See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!
- 6 And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell.
- 7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.
- 8 But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison.
- 9 With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;
- 10 from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.
- 11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*?

-
- 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.
- 13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.
- 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth.
- 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.
- 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.
- 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.
- 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

JAMES 4
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

- WHAT** is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?
- 2 You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.
 - 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.
 - 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
 - 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?
 - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”
 - 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
 - 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
 - 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.
 - 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.
 - 11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge *of it*.
 - 12 There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

- 13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”
- 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.
- 15 Instead, *you ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”
- 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.
- 17 Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

JAMES 5
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

COME now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

- 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.
- 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!
- 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.
- 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.
- 6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.
- 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.
- 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.
- 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
- 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.
- 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.

- 12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.
- 13 Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.
- 14 Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;
- 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.
- 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
- 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.
- 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.
- 19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,
- 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.