



# JAMES

*Undivided Life*

**Bible Studies  
Term 4, 2024**



# THE BOOK OF JAMES

## BIBLE STUDIES

STUDY 1: <i>James Overview</i>	Page 4
STUDY 2: <i>James 1:1-18</i>	Page 6
STUDY 3: <i>James 1:19-27</i>	Page 8
STUDY 4: <i>James 2:1-13</i>	Page 10
STUDY 5: <i>James 2:14-26</i>	Page 12
STUDY 6: <i>James 3:1-18</i>	Page 14
STUDY 7: <i>James 4:1-12</i>	Page 16
STUDY 8: <i>James 4:13-5:12</i>	Page 18
STUDY 9: <i>James 5:13-20</i>	Page 20

# THE BOOK OF JAMES OVERVIEW

In this study, we will read the whole book of James together and start the process of thinking what it is all about. It is often helpful to look at the "big picture" and see how themes, words and challenges come up time and time again.

## From the Bible...

**Read James 1-5 together in your groups**

1. What themes do you see coming up across the book. Fill in this table:

Theme	Verse(s) that provide an example of the theme

What do you think was going on in the church(es) that James was writing to?

What questions arise for you from this big reading of James? Make a note below so you can come back to it when you do the study together.

Was there a particular verse that spoke to you (as an encouragement or as a challenge) as you read it? Write it down for yourself.

For Prayer:

- Give thanks to God for giving us His Word. Pray that God would help us know him better through the study of James this term.
- Pray that God would help you and your group understand His Word this term.
- Pray that we will be "doers of the word, and not hearers only".

# JAMES 1:1-18: *Undivided in Trials*

## Off the Cuff...

What is the relationship between joy and suffering in the Christian life?

Agree or disagree: "**Money often influences our joy in life**"

## From the Bible...

**Read James 1:1-18 together in your groups**

1. What is the difference between a trial (v2, 12) and a temptation (v13)?
2. In this passage, what is God like (verses 5, 13, 17 and 18)?
3. Why would a believer "*consider it pure joy*" when they face trials?
4. What resources does God give to believers in times of trials?

5. James warns again doubting and double-mindedness in verses 6-8. What does he mean by that?

- (a) Don't allow anything to stop you being certain about Jesus
- (b) God won't listen to anyone that doesn't have 100% loyalty
- (c) Don't shift your allegiance between God and the world, between trusting God and blaming him.
- (d) Don't ask for wisdom, then be unwilling to follow through on what He shows.

Why did you put this answer?

6. What's the wrong way to respond to trials?

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

## Think It Through

How does the world usually respond to trials? What is your own "default" when you are in times of trials?

Christians can face "trials of many kinds", whether there is a direct attack on our faith, or whether an event or situation in life challenges what we believe or how we respond. Share with your group one such trial that you have recently faced or are continuing to face. Ask for wisdom from the group and pray together to face the challenge with joyful trust in God.

# JAMES 1:19-27: *Undivided Obedience*

## Off the Cuff...

What are some of the marks of true faith? How do you spot a true Christian?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 1:19-27 together in your groups**

1. Why is being slow to speak and quick to listen important:

(a) in our relationship with God

(b) in our relationship with others

2. How is the Word "planted" in you (v19)? (See James 1:18, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26-28)

3. What does it mean to humbly accept the Word planted in you?

4. In simple terms, explain the mirror illustration in verses 23-25



5. What are the three tests of true religion according to vv26-27? How do these compare to the list you made in the "Off the Cuff" question?

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

## Think It Through

What do you think would happen if you tried to humbly accept the word, but didn't actively 'get rid of all moral filth'?

How might you summarise your own attitude to God's Word? What are some of the different ways we can read the bible regularly?

Who are the "orphans and widows" or other vulnerable people who might need help around you?

In what situations do you find yourself quick to speak and slow to listen? How might you change those behaviours?

# JAMES 2:1-13: *undivided Community*

## Off the Cuff...

What does it mean to show favouritism? What examples in life have you seen (or experienced) where favouritism was shown?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 2:1-13 together in your groups**

1. Imagine being part of the fledgling first century church. Why would it be tempting to treat wealthy people differently from those who are poor?

2. Why should Christians not show favouritism? Write out the following verses in your own words:

v4

v5

vv6-7

v8

3. Let's drill down on verse 5: "**Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him?**" Who are the poor in this context?

- (a) People who don't have money
- (b) People who the world looks down on
- (c) Those who are in spiritual need
- (d) Those of low socio-economic status
- (e) Something else

4. **Read Isaiah 52:13 - 53:10.** If we show favouritism to the wealthy and impressive, over the poor and unimpressive, what might we have forgotten about our Lord and Saviour?

5. According to verses 12-13, how does James want his readers to "speak and act"? How might this affect their behaviour in the example of vv2-3?

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

**My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism.**

## Think It Through

*"The world thinks that discrimination is bad because it goes against the 'law' of inequality: all humans are equal and should be treated as such. The bible, however, does not speak in those terms. It speaks of mercy and judgement. When we show discrimination between rich and poor, we forget the Kingdom is about mercy. We are not to be judges over each other, for we are all judged by the word." Phillip Jensen*

How does such a kingdom perspective help guard our hearts against showing favouritism?

St Annes Anglican Church Ryde is a family brought together by our Lord from many different backgrounds. What temptations might we face in showing favouritism and undermining our gospel witness to Ryde as:

(a) Individual Christians?

(b) As a church together?

# JAMES 2:14-26: *Undivided Faith*

## Off the Cuff...

How can you tell if someone is a Christian?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 2:14-26 together in your groups**

1. How does James describe "counterfeit faith" in verses 14, 17, 20 and 26?
2. How do verses 15-17 answer the questions asked in verse 14?
3. What might a person with real faith in God have done in the example of the brother or sister without clothes and daily food?
4. How does James describe the faith of:
  - The Demons
  - Abraham
  - Rahab

5. Explain verse 24 in simple English terms.

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

## Think It Through

What sort of fake Christianity is the church being warned of here in these verses? Do you think we are vulnerable to such errors?

Do you think it's possible to be a Christian and never really show it?

How do you explain this "inconsistency" in the bible?

Paul: **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no-one can boast.**  
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

James: **You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.** (James 2:24)

# JAMES 3:1-18: *undivided speech*

## Off the Cuff...

Agree or disagree: "*Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.*"  
Why did you put this answer?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 3:1-18 together in your groups**

1. Why are those who teach judged "more strictly"?
2. What link is James making between horses, fires, the tongue and fire?
3. Why are words and speech so important for Christians?
4. What is the connection between the tongue (verses 1-12) and the heart (verses 13-18)?

5. Godly wisdom ("wisdom from above") is described by James in the following ways. How would you explain what they mean?

Wisdom that comes from heaven is...	What it means
Pure	
Peace-loving	
Considerate	
Submissive	
Full of mercy and good fruit	
Impartial	
Sincere	

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

## Think It Through

What sort of situations can Christians find themselves in where they are tempted to use harmful, or slanderous, or gossiping or malicious speech?

Can you give an example from your own life where your speech has been harmful or gotten you into trouble? What did you do about it?

Give an example of a peacemaker (v18). What made their speech so wise?

# JAMES 4:1-12: *undivided Humility*

## Off the Cuff...

"What causes quarrels and fights among you?" (verse 1). How would you answer this question in:

(a) The home?

(b) The church?

What makes conflict difficult in the church settings?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 4:1-12 together in your groups**

1. "What causes quarrels and fights among you?" (verse 1). Where does James say it comes from?

2. This section describes the double-mindedness the author mentioned in the opening paragraphs of the letter in James 1:8. When we are divided between serving God and our "passions", how is our prayer affected?

3. How does thinking about sin as "spiritual adultery" (v4) change our view of:

(a) Ourselves

(b) Our sin

(c) Our temptations



4. How does God help us in our double-minded sinfulness (v6)? Read also Hebrews 2:11-18.

5. What are the steps to repentance (or saying sorry) given in verses 7-9?

6. What is God's response when we come to him in humility and repentance?

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

## Think It Through

In what way do you see your Christian life being compromised by your own passions and desires?

How often do you confess your sins in prayer? What changes could you make in humility from this study?

How does a humble heart effect our speech towards other people, especially in how we disagree?

# JAMES 4:13-5:19: *Undivided Hope*

## Off the Cuff...

How helpful do you find it that God is in charge of the future?

Agree or disagree: "*Christians don't really show their faith in the way that they plan.*" Why did you put that answer?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 4:13-16 together in your groups**

1. Who is this section written to?
2. What is it about their priorities (v13) that makes them boastful, arrogant and evil (v16)?
3. What ought a faithful person think about of their plans?

**Read James 5:1-6 together in your groups**

3. Who is this section written to?
4. What future is coming towards such people? Why?

## **Read James 5:7-12 together in your groups**

5. Who is this section written to?

6. What is the response of Godly people when they suffer or are oppressed?

7. What do we learn from the examples of the prophets (eg. 1Kings 22:24-27 and Hebrews 11:35b-38) and Job (Job 1:13-22) about perseverance in hard times?

## **Memory Verse**

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered ... the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

## **Think It Through**

Does the way you make plans for the future show the hope you have in God? Why/why not?

Why is it good news that God is in charge of the future?

# JAMES 5:13-20: *Undivided Prayer*

## Off the Cuff...

In times of sickness, which of the following best describes you?

- (a) I tend to go straight for medical advice, without really praying
- (b) I tend to rely on medical advice first, and pray after that
- (c) I rely on prayer and medical advice equally
- (d) I go first to prayer, and then medical advice after that
- (e) I tend to pray without thinking about medical advice

Why?

## From the Bible...

**Read James 5:13-20 together in your groups**

James has been writing to a church that has been riddled with conflicts and quarrels while facing many different kinds of trials. As he finishes the letter, he turns to those who are also facing significant sickness.

1. What is James saying is the correct response of true believers to any situation in life (v13)?

2. Why do you think James encourages the sick person to call the elders of the church? (Who do you think would be the "elders" at St Annes?)

3. What does James say is going to happen?

4. Verses 14-16 are verses that draw different responses from different denominations. Have a look at the summary of the options below to explain these verses. What is good, bad or missing from each option. Have a guess which tradition it comes from. One important detail to know: The word translated "healed" in these verses is the same word as the word "saved" used throughout the New Testament.

Option 1: Healed means spiritually saved here. The elder in the church is the minister who comes to the very sick person to administer "divine unction" or last rites by pouring oil and praying over them just before death to guarantee their salvation.

Option 2: Healed means physically healed. The sick person should come to a healing service, and allow those who have been given the gift of healing to lay their hands and pray over them. Where there is true faith in that moment, the person will be healed, just as James promised.

Option 3: The sick person is to take a full account of their current state – both their spiritual (prayer) and physical standing (oil). A time of sickness is to be used as a time of reflection and prayer for repentance (in case the illness is a sign given by God of sin). Here, healing means salvation, and does not preclude medicinal treatments to be healed from the sickness.

5. How does Elijah's example encourage us to respond in a godly way to any situation we face in life?

## Memory Verse

Here's a great verse from our passage that you might like to commit to memory:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

## Think It Through

How do you recognise a brother or sister who is starting to struggle and potentially wander from the truth?

How committed are you in "bringing back" people who are wandering from the truth? What might it look like?

# PRAYER POINTS

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## **Our Vision Statement**

St Annes Anglican Church Ryde is:

A family brought together by our Lord

From many different backgrounds

Worshipping God as Christian disciples

Loving each other and every neighbour, and

Sharing the good news of Jesus with the City of Ryde and beyond.