

UNLOCK THE BOOK OF

JAMES

10-Lesson Bible Study · For Individual or Group Use

James calls genuine followers of Jesus to become wise by loving God and loving others. This 10-lesson study walks through every chapter of James, grounding each discussion in Scripture and inviting honest, practical application.

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Each lesson follows the same format: Focus (opening discussion), Study (Scripture + questions), and Apply (personal reflection).

QUICK FACTS

THE BOOK OF JAMES BACKGROUND

- The book of James is the earliest written book in the New Testament.
- The author of the letter, James, is the half-brother of Jesus.
- James started as a skeptic when believing his brother, Jesus, was the Christ (Mark 3:21–25) but eventually became a believer and a leader in the early Christian churches in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Galatians 1–2).
- The letter addresses congregations of Christ's followers outside of Jerusalem. These are people who are coming with a salvation doctrine of faith.
- The letter is a book of wisdom. It does not teach new theology and is heavily influenced by Old Testament wisdom books like Proverbs and Jesus' teachings, especially the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).
- Any believer can apply the teachings in this letter.
- James calls genuine followers of Jesus to become wise by loving God and loving others.

REFLECT & CONNECT

As you begin this study, consider: What does it mean to love God and love others in the everyday details of your life? James will challenge you to answer that question with more than words.

LESSON 1 — James 1:1-18

FOCUS

1. How do you generally handle setbacks or hardships in your life? Explain.
2. Describe a time that a Christian you know handled a trial with exceptional faith. What do you think their “secret” was in making it through that hard time?

STUDY

Read James 1:1-12

1. Who are the recipients of the letter, and what can you gather about them so far?
2. Joy and trials are not generally words that seem to go together (v. 2). **Why should Christians consider (count) trials as an opportunity to have joy, an inner peace that comes from trusting in God regardless of circumstances (v. 3-4)?**
 - a) The word “steadfast” means to have endurance. Is endurance something you just have or you grow into? Explain. What does endurance have to do with faith?
 - b) The word “perfection” does not refer to “sinless perfection” but rather “spiritual maturity.” How can trials make someone more spiritually mature?
3. The Jews understood wisdom as the ability to understand, trust, and apply God’s Word (v. 5). **What should you do if you lack the wisdom to see God’s perspective and will amid trials; what is promised when you do this? What does this teach you about God?**
4. **What is the wrong way to approach God during trials (v. 6-8)? The Greek word for “doubleminded” means to have your mind and soul divided between God and the world. The use of the word here and in 4:8 suggests it describes an unbeliever. How does the way we handle trials reveal whether we have genuine faith in Jesus or not?**
5. Verses 9-11 compare the poor and rich believers in the midst of trials. The poor (lowly brother) can boast in their high spiritual standing while the rich can boast in being brought low (humiliation) and finding genuine happiness by relying on God’s grace not earthly possessions that easily fade away. **How do trials act as equalizers among the poor and rich?**
6. The crown of life refers to the believer’s ultimate reward at death or when Christ returns: eternal life. **Who has God promised to give this reward to (v. 12)? How does the promise of eternal life help believers endure during trials?**

7. James began the letter by insisting that Christians see trials as good for us. However, during trials, one may be tempted to question God's motives and claim He is tempting us to sin. **What reasons might someone give for not trusting God? Have you ever felt this way? Explain. How did you handle these thoughts?**

Read James 1:13–18

8. **What reasons does James give for why God is not tempting us to sin (v. 13)? Where do temptations actually come from (v. 14)? When you give into your own desires what does it produce? How is this truth displayed in the garden of Eden? How can we overcome our temptations to blame others and sin today?**
9. **What does James remind his readers about God and His relationship with His people (v. 17–18)?**
10. **How will meditating on God's character help you trust God more, especially during trials?**

APPLY

1. **What verse from this passage stood out to you? Why? Challenge: commit it to memory this week and meditate on its importance.**
2. **Is there something in your life that you would consider a trial or hardship? How does what you read help you know how to approach or view the situation?**
3. **What do you want to remember and apply from today's reading?**

REFLECT & CONNECT

James opens his letter not with comfort but with a challenge: consider your trials as joy. What would change in how you face your current difficulties if you genuinely believed God was using them to make you more like Him?

LESSON 2 — James 1:19–27**FOCUS**

1. **One test of genuine faith is a person's dependency on God during trials. What are other indications that someone is a follower of Jesus?**
2. **How is listening different from applying knowledge?**

STUDY**Read James 1:19–21**

1. **What wisdom does James remind Jesus' followers to live out in verses 19–21? Why might a Christian need reminders to do these things?**
2. Read the verses below from the book of Proverbs, another wisdom book that James and his readers would have been familiar with, and answer: **"What do you learn about speaking and listening?"**

"When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent." (Proverbs 10:19)

"Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense but a man of understanding remains silent." (Proverbs 11:12)

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

3. **How can our failure to listen and our tendency to speak quickly lead to anger? What kind of anger is James referring to in verse 20? How does human anger differ from God's anger?**
4. **How does James say to receive the Word of God? How does one do this?**

Read James 1:22–25

5. The phrase "save your soul" refers to a believer's ongoing transformation into the image of God. **How does the Word of God facilitate this process? Reflect on how you've experienced this transformative power in your own life.**
6. James tells believers to not only receive the implanted word, but to live it out (v. 22). **In the aspect of faith, how are hearing and doing different and how are they related?**
7. **What example does James give to describe the difference between a hearer and a doer of the Word of God (v. 23–24)? How often do you forget what you just read in the Scriptures? What could help you?**
8. **Describe what type of person is blessed according to verse 25. Why do you think perseverance is included in the description? How does this description reveal genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ?**

Read James 1:26–27

9. What type of religion does James note as worthless? In contrast, how will a believer use their speech? How is your speech an indication of what type of relationship you have with God?
10. After expressing that genuine faith is preserving dependence on God during trials and applying His Word, James concludes with two more connected ideas: caring for the vulnerable and being set apart in the world. **Why do you think caring for widows and orphans is connected to the theme of true faith? What does it mean to be unstained from the world? How is this possible when you live in the world? How does being “unstained from the world” also connect to the theme of pure faith?**

APPLY

1. What verse from this passage stood out to you? Why? **Challenge: commit it to memory this week and meditate on its importance.**
2. What practical changes do you need to make to begin practicing what you are learning in the Word of God?
3. What do you want to remember and apply from today’s reading?

REFLECT & CONNECT

James calls us to be doers of the Word, not just hearers. What is one specific area of your life where you know what Scripture says but haven’t fully acted on it yet? What would it look like to take one step toward obedience this week?

LESSON 3 — James 2:1-13

FOCUS

1. What are some of your favorite things? (i.e., food, activities, music, places, etc.)
2. How is having a “favorite” of something helpful? When is having a “favorite” of something harmful?

STUDY

Read James 2:1-7

1. What sin is James warning Christians to avoid in this section (v. 1)? What example does James give to the local churches for showing favoritism (v. 2-4)? Give a current-day example of this situation.
2. Why do you think this can be an easy sin to fall into as a group or individual?
3. What evil thoughts is he referring to (v. 4)? What makes these thoughts evil?
4. How does James describe the poor and wealthy (v. 5-7)? What does it mean to be rich in faith (v. 5)? How are the church members acting nonsensical in the way they are valuing and treating people?

Read James 2:8-13

5. In verse 8, James quotes the greatest commandment. Read Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:34-40. **How does showing favoritism conflict with the teaching of Christ to “love your neighbor as yourself?” How can obeying these great commands eliminate the sin of favoritism in followers of Jesus?**
6. Read Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:43-48. **What more does Jesus teach about loving people? How is this a challenging yet vital part of following Christ for a believer?**
7. **What point is James making by discussing the breaking of God's law (v. 8-11)? What does this teach you about the need for Jesus? Why would he bring this up when discussing the sin of partiality?**
8. The Jewish audience would have recognized a new way of thinking about God's law when they heard the phrasing “law of liberty” (1:25, 2:12). The law of liberty is the message that we have been liberated (redeemed) through Christ's perfect fulfillment of God's law, His obedient sacrificial death, and His miraculous resurrection. **According to verses 12-13 how should we live as redeemed people?**
9. **How does a person's understanding of mercy relate to the topic of favoritism and how Christians should treat others?**

- 10.** In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus taught a parable about a man who was shown forgiveness but did not forgive others. **Read Matthew 18:21–35 and discuss the point Jesus makes and how the parable connects to James 2:13.**

APPLY

- 1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.**
- 2. What are two specific ways to start showing love to people in your home, work, school, extra-curricular activities, church, or any other place you can think of?**
- 3. What do you want to remember and apply from today's reading?**

REFLECT & CONNECT

Favoritism is easy to justify and hard to see in ourselves. Ask God to reveal any ways you have valued or treated people differently based on what they have or how they appear. How would loving your neighbor as yourself change the way you interact with people this week?

LESSON 4 — James 2:14–26**FOCUS**

1. **What kind of things are important to you? How does someone know that these things matter to you?**
2. **What things just go good together?**

STUDY**Read James 2:14–17**

1. **How does James describe what genuine faith in Jesus looks like? What practical example does James give of someone who does not have a genuine faith (v. 15–16)? How does this example help illustrate his point of what true faith is (v. 17)?**

Read James 2:18–26

2. In verse 18, James is likely quoting a critic who claims there are “faith” Christians and there are “work” Christians. **What does James say is the relationship between faith and works in his life (v. 18)? What can be dangerous about separating faith and works altogether?**
3. **According to verse 19, how is knowledge of God different from someone placing their faith in Him?**
4. **What two people from the Old Testament does James give as examples of genuine faith being proven through their works (v. 20–25)? How familiar are you with their stories?**
5. What example does James give from Abraham’s life to show the relationship between faith and works (v. 21)? The word “completed” in verse 22 means a “natural end result.” **What was the natural result of Abraham’s faith? If you know more about Abraham’s story, what good reasons did he have in trusting God? If he had not obeyed God, what would his “lack of works” express about his faith?**
6. **In verse 23, why does James claim that Abraham was counted righteous (a right standing before God)? How else is Abraham’s relationship described to God?**
7. James includes one more Old Testament example of what genuine faith looks like (v. 25). In Joshua 2, you can learn about a non-Jewish woman who had heard and believed the stories about the Israelite’s mighty God who rescued His people from Egypt. The author of Hebrews 11:31 also notices Rahab’s faith displayed through her works and says, “By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.” **Potentially, what did Rahab risk**

helping enemy spies? What do her actions demonstrate about her faith in the God of Israel?

8. In verse 24, James is not contradicting Paul's writing that a person is justified (saved) by faith. Instead, what is he claiming the proof of genuine faith is?
9. Read Ephesians 2:8–10 written by the apostle Paul. What does he preach about the relationship between faith and works? How does James support this idea?
10. In verse 26, James concludes that the connection between faith and works is as close as a person's breath (spirit) to their life. However, every believer will go through times of trials and tribulation that may result in a spiritual drought. How do you walk alongside someone who genuinely believes in Jesus as their Savior but is in a season of hardship or questioning God?

APPLY

1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.
2. How would you describe to someone what faith means in the Bible? Does the faith you claim to have match the Biblical definition? Explain.
3. What do you want to remember and apply from today's reading?

REFLECT & CONNECT

Faith without works is dead — not because works save us, but because genuine faith always produces action. Where in your life is your faith being tested to produce something? What is one tangible way your faith can be seen by others this week?

LESSON 5 — James 3:1-12

FOCUS

1. What is something small that has a large impact? Explain.
2. What does the saying, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me” mean? Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?

STUDY

Read James 3:1-12

1. In a section focusing on “taming the tongue,” **why do you think James first addressed those who desire to serve as a Bible teacher (v. 1)? What is the role of a teacher in the church? Why will a teacher of the scriptures be held to a greater level of accountability?**
2. In chapter 2, James asserts that a saving faith results in good works. **According to verse 2, does he expect Christians to do this perfectly? What would it look like if someone could be a perfect Christian (v. 2)? Since we will not be perfect on this side of heaven, why should we strive to do what’s right with our words and deeds?**
3. **What examples does James give to describe the tongue (v. 3-5)? What point is he trying to make? How have you experienced the positive and negative impact of words?**
4. **What words are used to describe the tongue in verse 6? What dangers does fire pose to people? How does this relate to our words?**
5. In verse 6, “hell” refers to a place outside Jerusalem called the Valley of Hinnom. It was a vile-burning trash heap where human sacrifices once took place and was associated with evil and destruction. Hinnom was seen as a picture of God’s judgment for our sins. **How can our words reveal our sinful nature?**
6. **What more do you learn about the tongue from verses 7-8?**
7. In chapter 2, James pointed out how our actions prove the reality of our beliefs. Similarly, what we say reveals our true inner nature. Read Matthew 15:10-20. **What do our words reveal about our hearts (Matthew 15:18-19)? How have you experienced how your words “tattle” on what you believe and think inside?**
8. **According to verses 9-10, what are the positive and negative ways we can use our words? What examples from nature does James give that cannot occur together (v. 11-12)? What contradiction is someone making who praises God but curses people?**
9. **Like our deeds, why is the tongue a good indicator of whether someone has a genuine faith rooted in Jesus?**

- 10. What are examples of godly speech? What are examples of non-godly speaking? What should Christians do if their words do not match the new spiritual life they received at salvation? Are they hopeless?**

APPLY

- 1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.**
- 2. Is there anyone you need to make amends with for something you have said? If so, what will you do this week to make the situation right?**
- 3. What do you want to remember and apply from today's reading?**

REFLECT & CONNECT

The tongue is small but powerful — capable of both blessing and destruction. Think about the words you've spoken this week. Do they reflect someone whose heart is being transformed by the Spirit? What would it look like to be more intentional with your words this week?

LESSON 6 — James 3:13–18

FOCUS

1. Who is the wisest person you know? What makes them wise?
2. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Do you believe the majority of people in our society value wisdom? Explain.

STUDY

Read James 3:13–18

1. James transitions from talking about the importance of a believer’s speech to that of wisdom. According to verse 13, wisdom is not merely intellectual knowledge. **How does he describe how to identify a wise person? What does meekness (humility/gentleness) have to do with godly wisdom?**
2. Just like in the Old Testament wisdom literature, James compares man’s wisdom to God’s wisdom. **List what you learn about “worldly wisdom” and “wisdom from above.” What do you notice about these lists?**

Worldly Wisdom (v. 14–16)	Wisdom from Above (v. 17–18)

3. In verse 14, “bitter jealousy” is when you have a harsh, resentful attitude towards someone else, and “selfish ambition” is when you seek your agenda at any cost. **What descriptive words does James use to describe what it is like to live by our feelings of jealousy and selfishness (v. 15)? What is the result of living this way (v. 16)?**

- a) Although the world may not outright say, “Be jealous and selfish,” this is at the root of worldly wisdom. Give an example of worldly advice that may sound good at face value but actually promotes self-centeredness.
4. Re-read verse 17. Give an example of when you saw someone display godly wisdom or what it would be like in a hypothetical situation. How did their actions reflect the qualities in James 3:17?
 5. What is the result of practicing the wisdom from above (v. 18)? What does it mean to be a peacemaker? How can we actively “sow in peace” in our families, friendships, and communities?
 6. Read Proverbs 2:1–7. What is the source of true wisdom? How do we get it?
 7. Read Colossians 2:2–3. What does this passage say about Christ and wisdom?
 8. James is writing to Jewish followers of Jesus and reminding them of what it means to live out the faith they placed in their Lord. How is the type of wisdom a person lives out an indicator of their belief system and whether they truly have a saving faith in Jesus?
 9. When you seek help from someone, how can you be sure that the wisdom you receive from them is of God, not the world?
 10. What concrete ways can you acquire God’s wisdom? Which ones are you practicing already, and which ones do you want to make part of a more regular practice – how will you do this?

APPLY

1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.
2. To what degree does the world’s wisdom hold sway over your thoughts, opinions, and values? Why do you think that is?
3. What do you want to remember and apply from today’s reading?

REFLECT & CONNECT

Worldly wisdom says look out for yourself. Heavenly wisdom says serve others in humility. Which voice are you most listening to right now? What would it look like to pursue God’s wisdom more intentionally this week — in your relationships, your decisions, and your words?

LESSON 7 — James 4:1-12**FOCUS**

1. What does the word “worldly” mean to you?
2. What does it mean to live in the world but not be of it?

STUDY**Read James 4:1-10**

1. What behavior towards one another does James point out that indicates the local churches are struggling with wanting the things of earth over heavenly pursuits (v. 1)?
 - a) It is likely that when James asked what causes quarrels and fights among the churches, he anticipated that they would point fingers at one another. Why is it easy to play the blame game when in a fight? In the second part of verse 1, how does James squash the idea that it is the other person’s fault?
2. What does James mean, and what does it look like to have passions or pleasures in this world at war within you (v. 1-2)? Give some more examples.
3. In Matthew 7:7-8 Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” Clearly, God wants us to come to Him, **but what is James pointing out that is wrong about their asking (v. 3)? How can we ensure we are asking God for the right things?**
4. In verse 4, what words describe a person’s relationship with God who is pursuing worldly pleasures?
 - a) The Jewish readers would be familiar with the metaphorical language of being called “adulterers and adulteresses” (v. 4) because of Old Testament texts that would compare Israel to a harlot (Hosea 9:1), which implied they were spiritually unfaithful. How is being called an adulterer an apt description for believers who are not trusting in God but pursuing the passions of their flesh by following the world?
5. What does it mean to be friends with the world (v. 4)? In James 2:23, who is called a friend of God? What does it mean to be friends with God? Why would friendship with the world make you an enemy of God?
6. James quotes an Old Testament scripture to describe God’s deep desire to have all of our allegiance, not just some of it (v. 5). **Why do you think God cares to have all of us; why can’t just part of our lives be enough? How does this make you feel?**

7. What comfort does James offer believers when they have turned from God (v. 6)? In verses 6–10, what response to God will people have who want to be restored to a good relationship with God? What is promised when they turn back to God?
8. Not only does God want us to walk in humility with Him, but also with others. What type of speech and judging is James saying is harmful in this passage? How is this different from holding your brothers and sisters in Christ accountable in their walk with the Lord?

Read James 4:11–12

9. Read Matthew 7:1–5. What more do you learn about judging others? What role do humility and pride play in judgment? Who is the better judge, us or God? Why is it tempting to get this wrong? Why is it dangerous to get this question wrong?
10. How do our pursuits in life and our relationships with others reveal the genuineness of our faith? What can we do when our priorities get out of order?

APPLY

1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.
2. How do your actions reveal where your true affections lie? In what ways are you too enamored with the things of this world?
3. What do you want to remember and apply from today's reading?

REFLECT & CONNECT

James tells us that God gives grace to the humble. Where in your life do you need to humble yourself before God right now — in your desires, your relationships, or your priorities? What would it look like to draw near to Him this week?

LESSON 8 — James 4:13–17

FOCUS

1. **Have you ever made plans for the future, and things did not go as planned? What life lessons did you learn from that situation?**
2. **How do you go about determining God's will for your life?**

STUDY

Read James 4:13–17

1. James is not suggesting that planning for the future is wrong. Instead, **who is excluded in their planning (v. 13–16)? What is wrong with that?**
2. **How does James characterize the length of our lives (v. 14)? If you are only on earth for a limited time, how should that affect how you live?**
3. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." **What is wise about considering the shortness of our lives?**
4. **Why does James insist we preface our plans with, "If the Lord wills" (v. 15)? What are we believing about God when we make plans with this mindset? What are we not acknowledging about Him when we don't have this mindset?**
5. **What are some things you know are clearly God's will? [Verses to consider: Eph. 5:17–21; 1 Thess. 4:3–8; 1 Peter 2:13–15; 3:17] What things might not be as clear when discerning God's will in your life? How does this passage help you as you make decisions that affect your future?**
6. Isaiah 46:9–10 says, "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" **What does this passage teach you about God? How does knowing these things about God help you trust Him with your future?**
7. **Reread verse 16. What does it mean to boast? Is boasting always bad? Explain.**
8. Proverbs 27:1 says, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." **What is arrogant and evil (James 4:16) about boasting in our own efforts and plans?**
9. Read Luke 12:13–21. **What does this parable teach about priorities, wealth, and the certainties of life? How does Jesus' teaching relate to the wisdom James is teaching?**

- 10. What does verse 17 mean? How can this verse be applied to the people in the passage? How can this verse be applied in your life in general? Where in your life do you need to trust God with your future?**

APPLY

- 1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.**
- 2. James compares your life to a “mist” or “vapor” (v. 14). What are some positive changes you would want to make in your life in light of how short life is?**
- 3. What do you want to remember and apply from today’s reading?**

REFLECT & CONNECT

Your life is a mist — here today, gone tomorrow. That’s not meant to be discouraging; it’s meant to reorder your priorities. What plans are you making right now that need to be held more loosely before God? How can you invite Him into your future more intentionally?

LESSON 9 — James 5:1-12

FOCUS

1. Imagine you suddenly received an enormous amount of wealth — more than you could ever spend. What would be your first instinct in how to use it? How might your heart's focus be tested in that situation?
2. When facing difficulties or injustice, what is your natural response — patience, frustration, or something else? How do you think faith in God shapes the way we endure suffering?

STUDY

Read James 5:1-6

1. What are the rich in this passage doing wrong (consider where their heart's focus is and how they obtain their desires)?
2. What miseries are promised to the rich for their self-indulgence and evil treatment towards others? Why does God care?
3. Does James teach it is sinful to be wealthy? Explain.
4. Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 17-19. What do you learn about the proper view and use of money?
5. Why is it tempting to store and focus on earthly gain? How does hoarding our wealth reveal a lack of faith in God? As followers of Jesus, how can we resist this fleshly tendency?

Read James 5:7-12

6. How does James counsel believers to endure suffering while awaiting Jesus' final return and judgment? What does being patient and establishing your heart practically look like (v. 8)?
7. Why would James warn against grumbling in a section about patiently suffering? What does grumbling reveal about our heart condition toward God and others? What are practical ways to fight against the temptation of grumbling against our spiritual family?
8. Who does James tell the people to look to as an example of suffering with patience? How does this help them, and how can it help you?
 - a) Which people in the scriptures inspire you to stay faithful regardless of your circumstances?

- b) Not only are there people in the Bible who model faithful patience during times of trials, but there are people in our current lives who do that. Who do you look to as an example of faithful living in times of hardships?**
- 9. What about God’s character can be revealed through suffering (v. 11)? How can one see those qualities in God when enduring hardships? What can we do to help others trust in God when things seem dark in their life?**
- 10. James prefaces verse 12’s instruction with, “But above all.” Why is honesty an integral part of the Christian faith? Why can it be a struggle to let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no?**

APPLY

- 1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.**
- 2. What does this passage teach you about preparing for the coming of Jesus? Where are you struggling most: your treasuring of earthly possessions, your mistreatment of others, grumbling, not keeping your word? What are the first steps you can take to become right with Jesus?**
- 3. What do you want to remember and apply from today’s reading?**

REFLECT & CONNECT

The farmer doesn’t rush the harvest — he waits patiently, trusting the process. Where in your life are you struggling to wait on God? What would it look like to establish your heart in patience rather than anxiously trying to force an outcome?

LESSON 10 — James 5:13–20

FOCUS

1. When have you experienced a difficult time that caused you to pray more? Why did you pray? How did praying during that time affect you?
2. When is praying difficult? When is it easy?

STUDY

Read James 5:13–18

1. James starts and ends his letter by addressing Christians enduring persecution and various trials. **What does James tell individuals to do when they are suffering (v. 13)? Why is praying helpful? Is prayer your first response during times of suffering? Why or why not?**
2. **What does James tell Christians who are in seasons of gladness (v. 13)? How is singing a meaningful form of worship? How are songs like prayers? What are other forms of worship you enjoy?**
3. There are a couple of thoughts about what “sick” means in verse 14. Some believe it to include physical sickness, while others interpret the word sickness as experiencing a time of spiritual weakness (not feeling firm in their faith). Consider the context of the entire chapter and the surrounding verses (i.e., why are the people suffering in verse 13; what happens as a result of the elder’s prayer; how is sin talked about?). **What do you think James intended by the word “sick”?**
4. Regardless of whether verse 14 includes physical sickness or only spiritual difficulties, **who does God intend Christians to pray with and for? Is it hard or easy for you to ask others to pray for you (and not just to pray for you later in their prayer times, but to pray over you as a group)? Explain. How have you experienced prayer in your church?**
5. The phrase “and the Lord will raise him up” in verse 15 does not explicitly state how or when God will raise him. It may be immediate, or it could be in heaven. **Regardless of the “how,” what should people trust about God?**
6. **If the problem in the suffering Christian’s life (physically or spiritually) is the result of sin, what is promised when they go to the church to pray for them in faith (v. 15)? Why would confessing your sins to other Christians and praying for each other bring healing (v. 16) – isn’t it enough to confess to God? Explain. How have you experienced healing from confessing?**

- 7. What example does James give of someone who had an effective prayer life (v. 16–17)? What do you learn about this prophet from these verses? Why do you think God responded to his prayers? What things do you pray fervently for, or do you want to do better about praying more often?**

Read James 5:19–20

- 8.** In James's letter, he often addresses those in the church assemblies with false, dead faith. He calls out their hypocrisies throughout the letter and contrasts them to what having a saving faith looks like. However, as James concludes his letter, he does not address those with a dead faith but those with a genuine faith. **What does he tell followers of Jesus to do (v. 19–20)? Why? What does this teach you about his intention in writing the letter?**
- 9.** Read Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43. **How does this parable add to your understanding of James's teaching on the danger of wandering from the truth? What are the consequences?**
- 10.** **What does it look like for someone to wander from the truth? Why does this happen?**
- a) How can you help bring someone back to the truth?**
 - b) Why is James's instruction to pursue those wandering from the faith a fitting conclusion to his letter? How does this challenge you?**

APPLY

- 1. Which verse from this passage stands out to you? Why? Challenge: memorize and meditate on that verse this week.**
- 2. Are you spiritually defeated or discouraged right now? Make a list of fellow Christians (including those in church leadership) from whom you could ask for prayer support. Decide to contact them today and share your situation and needs with them.**
- 3. What do you want to remember and apply from today's reading?**

REFLECT & CONNECT

James ends where he began — with community, prayer, and genuine faith lived out loud. After ten lessons in this book, what is the one truth about loving God and loving others that you most want to carry forward? How will you live it out this week?