

Study 1: James 1:1-18

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22.*

That’s the heart of James’ message! James pulls no punches as he writes to his parishioners scattered across the Mediterranean through the persecution of the Jerusalem church. He wants his people to be men and women who not only profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, but who show it practically in the way they live.

In this first study, James gets us to focus on the trials and temptations we face and commands us to face them with a Christian mindset. As ever, James is blunt and to the point and will challenge us in areas that we may well find painful! But he does it because he is a wise and loving pastor, who wants us to hear and do the truth!

Read James 1:1-18

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing:

What do you think is the biggest criticism against Christians today from friends, colleagues or the media?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

How to Deal with External Trials

Read James 1:1-12

1. What do we know about the author and recipients of the letter?
2. How does James say we are to react to trials of 'various kinds'?
(v2) What might the trials of various kinds be?
3. What do you think James means by 'joy' in verse 2?
4. Trials are part of a process: describe the process and its outcome.
(vv3-4)

Application: If we were to adopt this attitude to the various difficulties we face, what effect would it have on our Christian lives and witness?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

Application: Are you marked by perseverance?

5. According to verse 5, what are we most likely to need when we are going through difficult times?

6. From whom does James say we can get this? (v5)

7. What warning does James attach to this great promise? (vv6-8)

8. What does it mean to be 'double-minded'?

Application - In what ways are we in danger of being double-minded?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

9. How might both poverty and wealth be a trial for the Christian?
(vv9-11) How are we to respond in both cases?

10. How is verse 12 both a healthy dose of realism for us and a great encouragement to us in our suffering?

Application: Are you materially-minded or heavenly-minded? What will each of these mindsets look like in daily living?

Application: How does the promise of the 'crown of life' shape your living?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

How to Deal with Internal Trials (vv 13-18).

Read James 1:13-18

11. What are we tempted to do in difficult times according to James in verse 13? Why should we not do this?

12. What is James' diagnosis of the heart of the problem?

13. Where does our evil desire lead us? (v15)

Application: What challenge does this give us about our attitude to our sin?

14. How does James contrast God's character with how we might be tempted to think of Him? (vv16-18)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

15. How did God demonstrate His generosity? (v18)

16. What is the process in verse 18 and in what ways is it contrasted with verse 15?

Application: Are you thankful for the new-birth God has brought about in you?

Application: When you're facing trials, do you turn to God or turn against God?

Application: Is the word of truth causing you to mature or are evil desires being nurtured within you?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church

Prayers arising from your group

Study 2: James 1:19-27

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22.*

So far in our studies of James we have seen his teaching on how we should deal with external and internal trials. We should seek to respond in a godly way to all the afflictions that come upon us, be they external or internal. Now he comes to what many believe to be the heart of his argument, which he will expand on in the rest of the letter. James has already reminded us that we have been born again through the word of truth (1:18), which we saw was the gospel. Now he will tell us that we need to listen to that same word and put it into practice. For this is what marks the wise from the unwise, the mature from the immature.

Read James 1:19-27

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing.

Imagine a friend says to you that they have taken up a new dietary regime in order to get in shape. What evidence would you expect to see that they were serious in their quest and telling the truth?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

5. What is James’ challenge in verse 21? What encouragement is there here that this is actually possible?

Application: Why do we find it hard to get rid of the sin in our lives?

Application: What practical steps can we take in helping one another to be ruthless with sin?

James is teaching here about the centrality of the word. Verse 18 told us that we have been born again through the word. Verse 19 told us we need to listen to that word. And verse 21 tells us that we must humbly accept the implanted word.

Application: What does this mean in practice for the place of the Bible, God’s word, in our lives? How practically can we make sure we are listening to God’s word daily?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

9. What is the result for the person who hears the word of truth and lives by it? (v25)

10. What is at the heart of ‘true religion’? (1:26-27)

Application - Why do we do Bible studies and what should we be seeking to gain from them?

Application - How do you usually respond when you have heard a sermon or been to Small Group?

Application - What practical steps can we take to make sure we do what we have heard?

Application - How might James teaching on what ‘true religion’ is be at odds with how we might be tempted to think of ‘true religion’?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Application - How can we help the ‘helpless’ in our world today?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church

Prayers arising from your group

Study 3: James 2:1-13

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22.*

So far in our studies of James we have seen that the heart of James' concern is to teach us to be men and women who not only believe the truth but also do the truth. If we have been born again through the word, accepting the word and listening to the word, then we must do the word. And at the end of last time's study, we saw that James gave us three headlines for what he's going to cover in the rest of the letter. James now expands on the second of those headlines and teaches us to be people who show concern for the needy and who are marked by Jesus' kingdom values of mercy and concern. We have no right to discriminate or to show partiality. For by doing so we are both **denying our faith** and being **disobedient to the law** that gives freedom.

Read James 2:1-13

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing.

What are some of the ways we label people whom we meet in church and in the world at large?

How do we come to make those judgements? What sort of things make us favour some people over others?

Denying our Faith

Read James: 2:1-7

1. What sort of behaviour does James condemn within the church?
What is the problem in James' illustration? (vv1-3)

2. What is James' view of such behaviour within the church? What
criteria for judgement does James say are wrong? (v4)

3. Why does James condemn discrimination and favouritism?
(2:5-7)

4. Why should believing in our 'glorious Lord Jesus Christ' keep us
from favouritism?

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show
favouritism. James 2:1

*Application: In what ways do you think we are prone to such
discriminations?*

*Application: Why does our culture love the rich and powerful so
much?*

Application: How does this infect the church?

*Application: How should an understanding of the truth that God
does not show favouritism affect the way we do evangelism?*

Disobeying God's Law

Read James 2:8-13

5. How can the 'royal law' of verse 8 guide our treatment of both rich and poor?

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show
favouritism. James 2:1

6. What kind of behaviour does James say is fitting for Christians?
(2:8)

Application: What is your attitude to the 'royal law'? How is that worked out in practice?

7. How do verses 9-11 emphasize the seriousness of treating people unequally?
8. Why can the law not be separated into 'more important' and 'less important' laws? (2:11)
9. What does our law-breaking reveal about our attitude to the Law-giver?

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show
favouritism. James 2:1

*Application: When are you most in danger of putting law-breaking
on a sliding scale?*

10. What does James remind us of in verse 12? Bearing this in mind,
how should we speak and act? (v12)

11. How will the person be treated who does not show mercy?
(v13) How is this a spur for us to live a godly life?

*Application: How do you think this works out in practice in our daily
relationships with others?*

12. What encouragement is there in the way James ends this
passage - 'Mercy triumphs over judgement'?

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show
favouritism. James 2:1

Application: What comfort do you draw from the statement 'Mercy triumphs over judgement'?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church

Prayers arising from your group

Study 4: James 2:14-26

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22.*

In our fourth study of James' letter we delve deeper into James' central theme that Christian faith must be seen in action. “Don't merely listen to the word - do what it says!” In the previous passage James has outlined for us one aspect of what it means to speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom - we're to be impartial in our judgements of others. Now James rams the point home by teaching us that truth faith is seen in action.

Read James 2:14-26

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing.

What are some of the ways that we don't put our words into action in everyday life? What does this lack of actions reveal about our words?

The Marks of Dead Faith

Read 2:14-19

1. Why might verse 14 be an unpopular verse?
2. What point is James making in his illustration in verses 15 & 16?

Application: In what areas of your life are you in danger of being more talk than faithful walk?

3. Do you think James is being a little harsh on readers in verse 17? If not, why not?
4. What does such inactivity reveal about our hearts?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

Application: What do you make of the common Christian phrase 'Only I know what's going on in my heart'?

5. James introduces an imaginary opponent in verse 18. What's the opponent's point?

6. How does James tackle him in verses 18-19?

Application: What has this teaching revealed about your heart?

The Marks of Living Faith

Read Genesis 22:1-12

7. How does Abraham practice his faith in this story?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

8. In what ways is his faith courageous?

Read James 2: 20-26

9. What do you think James means when he says that Abraham's faith was made complete in verse 22?

10. According to James, what is the only way that we can be justified? (v24)

11. How does the story of Rahab help James make his case? (Joshua 2:8-13)

12. Why do you think he uses her as an example?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

13. What is James' final conclusion about faith without deeds? (v26).

Application: How might we tackle a friend at work who says something like: "Yes, I believe in God and Jesus, but I don't go to church or do anything like that. I believe such religion should be private!"

The reformer John Calvin said that "we are saved by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone."

*Application: What do you think he means by this? How does it sum up what James **is** saying and what he is **not** saying in this passage?*

Application: In what ways has James challenged you to put your faith into practice? E.g. at home, work, college or church?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church

Prayers arising from your group

Study 5: James 3:1-18

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22*

As we have seen in our studies so far, James’ main theme has been to urge us not only to be hearers of the word but doers as well! Back in 1 vv 26-27, James outlined three areas that he would tackle in the rest of the letter. He tackled the need to care for the downtrodden in chapter 2, and now he tackles the tongue. As James will show us, the tongue is a good indicator of a person’s spiritual wellbeing, and can either be used for great good and godliness or else be a serious problem in a person’s relationships. Once again James will challenge us to be not just hearers of the Word but doers also!

Read James 3:1-18

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” How would you respond to that?

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. James 3:17

4. What is James wanting us to understand from his illustrations of the horse and the boat in verses 3-5?

Application: In what ways does the tongue have such control over our lives?

5. What is James wanting us to understand about the tongue in verses 5-8?
6. In verses 9-12, James uses a few more illustrations to make his point about the tongue. What do you think his main point is in these verses?
7. What is James' judgement on this divided speech? (3:10-12).

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. James 3:17

Application: How might we see the tongue's destructive ways in our church life, personal life etc.?

Application: Think about how we talk to or about other people, do we treat them as those who are made in the image of God?

The Wisdom to Have

Read James 3:13-18

Looking at these verses, fill in the table to see the difference between these two kinds of wisdom:

	<i>False 'wisdom'</i>	<i>True Wisdom</i>
<i>Where it comes from</i>		
<i>Its character</i>		
<i>Its results</i>		

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. James 3:17

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church

Prayers arising from your group

Study 6: James 4:1-17

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22.*

One of the big problems that James has been tackling in his letter is the problem of double-mindedness. His readers say they follow God but by their actions they are denying their faith. Here, James tackles the issue of double-mindedness head on by revealing the heart of double-mindedness, the cure for double-mindedness and the marks of double-mindedness, marks which we would want to get rid of if we claim to be Christians!

Read James 4:1-17

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing.

What would you say is the cause of many of the fights and quarrels that take place in the world? Why do they seem to be never ending?

The Heart of Double-Mindedness

Read James 4: 1-6

1. What does James say is the cause of fighting in the churches to which he is writing?
2. How is the same root problem affecting their prayer lives in verses 2-3?
3. Verses 2-3 hint at the solution to their quarrelling. What do you think that might be?

Application: What does the content of your prayer life reveal about your motives?

Application: If we find ourselves in a divided Christian community what can we be sure about?

The Cure for Double-Mindedness

Read James 4: 7-10

8. James gives us the antidote to double-mindedness in verses 7-10. What does James say about the following:

What is demanded of us?	What is promised to us?

9. What do you think it means in practice to submit ourselves to the Lord?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Application: What is your reaction to reading verse 9? Why is it that we find such teaching uncomfortable? How can we develop this deep hatred of sin?

Application: What impact would such an attitude to sin have on our own Christian lives?

The Marks of Double-Mindedness

Read James 4:11-17

10. How is the behaviour described in verses 11-12 inconsistent with the truth?

Application: In what ways do we fall into this trap of speaking against others?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Application: How will our speech have to change to make it loving?

11. What is the incentive to behave in a godly way? (v12)

12. How is the behaviour described in verses 13-17 inconsistent with the truth?

Application: In what ways do we fall into this trap?

13. What is the antidote to doing this? (v15)

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Application: How must we view our future and how must we plan for it now?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church

Prayers arising from your group

Study 7: James 5:1-20

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself.
Do what it says.” James 1:22.*

As we have seen in our studies so far, James’ main theme has been to urge us not only to be hearers of the word but doers as well. One of the big problems that James has been tackling in his letter is the problem of double-mindedness. In this final chapter James tackles some sensitive areas of the Christian’s life. James teaches what the pursuit of loyalty to Christ will look like for Christians who are seeking to be single-minded as they live out their days.

Read James 5:1-20

Make a note of themes, repeated phrases, anything striking, challenging, confusing.

What do you think people in the world fear most? What events or anticipated events cause them to quake?

Knowing the Lord Will Return

Read James 5:1-12

1. What does James call the rich people to do? (5:1)

2. Why do the rich need to respond this way? (5:1-6)

Application: How should our view of the future affect the way we use our wealth now?

Application: Is there anything wrong with being rich?

3. How does James want his readers to respond now, knowing that Christ is coming? (5:7-8)

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Application: Are you someone who is marked by the patience spoken of in this passage?

Application: Are you marked by truthfulness in your speech?

Knowing the Lord Forgives Sin

Read James 5:13-20

9. What does James remind his readers to do? (5:13)

10. What kind of healing is James talking about? (5:14-20)

11. For James' readers who are sick and have realised their spiritual adultery, what does James tell them to do and what will be the result? (5:14-15)

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Prayers from the study

15.

Prayers for the church

16.

Prayers arising from your group