



Daily Bible Study Questions

Study Procedure: Read the Scripture references before answering questions. Unless otherwise instructed, use only your Bible in answering questions. Some questions may be more difficult than others but try to answer as many as you can. Pray for God's wisdom and understanding as you study. Don't be discouraged if some answers are not obvious at first.

Day One

Note: The epistle of James is thought to be one of the earliest New Testament epistles written. Traditionally, James, the brother of Jesus, is named as its author.

1. Record what you learn from the following references about James, the brother of Jesus.
 - (a) John 7:3-5
 - (b) 1 Corinthians 15:7
 - (c) Acts 1:14
 - (d) Galatians 1:18,19
 - (e) Galatians 2:7-10
 - (f) Acts 15:13-21
2. Read James 1:1. Although James could have described himself more impressively, he did not. How does he introduce himself in James 1:1?
3. To whom was the letter addressed? (See Genesis 49:28.)
4. Read Acts 11:19 and Acts 18:2. Why were they "*scattered abroad*"?

Day Two: Read James 1:2-8

5. What reasons does James give for telling his readers to rejoice in their trials?
(**Note:** The word “*perfect*” here has the meaning of mature or complete.)

6. Read Acts 5:40-42 and Acts 16:23-35.
 - (a) How did these followers of Jesus rejoice in their trials in these two passages?

 - (b) What view or perspective of God would enable a person to do this?

7. In troubling situations, God wants us to ask Him for the wisdom we need. What is necessary if we are to receive such wisdom?

8. Explain in your own words what being “*double-minded*” means in this passage.

Day Three: Read James 1:9-18

9. The unique problems endured and caused by the rich and the poor in every culture of the world are recognized by James in this epistle. He gives sound advice to Christian “brothers” in both levels of society.
 - (a) What sort of “*exaltation*” could a “*lowly brother*” expect, and how should he react?

 - (b) What “*humiliation*” could come to a rich brother, and what should he learn from it?

10. What do rich and poor people have in common as Christians?

11. While God allows tests to reveal our faults or to challenge our strengths, James assures us that God will never do what?

12. What causes the “inward” tests or temptations in us?

13. How does James describe God’s nature and involvement in the lives of His children in verses 17 and 18?

Day Four: Read James 1:19-27

14. The power of the spoken word is discussed all through this epistle.
 - (a) What is the first command given about this in verse 19?

 - (b) What else does James say about it in verse 26?

15. (a) What can the wrath or anger of a man not produce?
 - (b) What does that mean to you personally?

16. What are the conditions given in verse 21 for receiving the word of God “*which is able to save your souls*”?

17. (a) In what way do people who hear the word of God sometimes deceive themselves?
- (b) To what does James compare such people?
18. According to verse 27, what are two outward proofs that you have a “*pure and undefiled religion before God*”?

Day Five: Read James 2:1-13

19. A true relationship with Jesus will express itself in right relationships with others. To whom should Christians be careful that they do not show partiality?
20. What reasons are given for being careful about this?
21. Describe briefly any personal experience you have had where such partiality has occurred and what consequences followed.
22. What is the “*royal law*” which if followed would keep us from such sins?
23. Read Matthew 5:7.
- (a) What is more powerful than judgment?
- (b) Have you found this to be true in your own life?

Notes

JAMES 1:1-2:13

Which James?

There were several men named James in the New Testament. Two were among the twelve disciples of Jesus (Matthew 10:2-4). Of those two, the most familiar was James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee. He and John, along with Simon Peter, made up Jesus' "inner circle" (Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33). He was also the first disciple to be **martyred** for his faith when Herod had him beheaded in Acts 12:2. The other disciple named James was distinguished as the son of Alphaeus. Traditionally, he was thought to be James the Less, the son of Mary, the mother of James and Joses, who with other faithful women ministered to Jesus (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10). Still another James was listed as the father of a disciple named Judas, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13).

The last James, and the one traditionally believed to be the author of this epistle, was James, the brother of Jesus. His name was first given in the gospel of Matthew, where an incident was recorded in which the people of Nazareth were offended at the authoritative preaching of Jesus. They could not believe that someone they had known all their lives could claim to be Messiah. They tried to humble Him saying, "*Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?*" (Matthew 13:55).

James and Jesus (James 1:1)

According to Acts 1:14, the brothers of Jesus and their mother Mary were present with the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem after Jesus's Resurrection and Ascension, waiting to receive the Holy Spirit. However, the brothers of Jesus, including James, had not believed in Him at the beginning of His public ministry. In the gospel of John, there was recorded a time when His brothers dared Him to prove Himself by going up to a feast in Jerusalem. The Scripture explained, "*For even His brothers did not believe in Him*" (John 7:5). When did the salvation of James occur then? It seems to have happened after the Resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:7, as Paul described Christ's resurrection appearances, he mentioned a specific

appearance to James. He must have been saved then, because after the Ascension of Jesus, as noted at the beginning of this paragraph, James and his brothers were included in the list of believers meeting for prayer, in anticipation of the sending of the Holy Spirit. James grew quickly in his faith. The book of Acts has many references to his being the leader of the Jerusalem church, describing him as one of the apostles and "pillars" of the faith (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9; 2:12).

Traditionally, James, the brother of Jesus, was called "James the Just," because of his widespread reputation as a righteous man. He was also called "Old Camel-Knees" due to the calluses he bore from long hours of prayer. James died a martyr's death,

"[a]ccording to Josephus; and Hegesippus, a Christian historian of the second century, whose narrative Eusebius accepts: Shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army, A.D. 70, when Jews were, in large numbers, embracing Christianity, Ananus, the High-Priest, and the Scribes and Pharisees, about the year A.D. 62 or A.D. 66, assembled the Sanhedrin, and commanded James 'the brother of Jesus who was called Christ,' to proclaim from one of the **galleries** of the Temple that Jesus was not the Messiah. But, instead, James cried out that Jesus was the Son of God and Judge of the World. Then his enraged enemies hurled him to the ground, and stoned him till a charitable **fuller** ended his sufferings with a club, while he was on his knees praying, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do'" (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p.657).

His relationship to Jesus as his personal Savior was so real and important, that when James identified himself at the beginning of his epistle, he claimed no relationship to Jesus other than as a devoted slave. So as a "*bondservant*" of Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, James set out to instruct other Jewish bondservants "*scattered abroad*" about how their faith should "look" in real life. Because of bigotry practiced by Roman rulers and

religious persecution from the unconverted Jews, many Jewish Christians had dispersed to foreign soil (Acts 11:19 and Acts 18:2). To them James sent many wise words of instruction. Yet the truths of his words are still so powerful that they will wake and shake believers from all backgrounds, who have “*ears to hear*” them carefully.

Rejoice in Trouble! (James 1:2-4)

Although the very natural response to difficulties is to complain, James urged his Christian brothers to offer a supernatural response: to rejoice! How can a Christian choose such an attitude? A Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who helps him think with the mind of Christ from God’s perspective (1 Corinthians 2:16). In Christ, no suffering is wasted, because no trial is allowed unless God can bring good from it (Romans 8:28). Testing forces a believer to rely on God, and that reliance builds patience. This is not some anemic passivity, though. Christian patience is a determination to endure until the appropriate time comes to act. Christian patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit combining an awareness of what is happening with a submission to the leading and timing of the Holy Spirit for action. When patience develops, a Christian becomes “*perfect*” or mature in his faith. One of the main themes of this epistle from James is Christian maturity. A child is known for his temper tantrums when tested and displays great impatience at every delay. A person mature in his faith, in contrast, rejoices in trouble and endures testing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ask God for Wisdom (James 1:5-8)

James recognized that when Christians faced trials, they should not try to handle them alone. They were to ask God for wisdom in handling their problems. Wisdom has been defined as the right use of knowledge, and James lifted up the great character of God, who gives such wisdom generously and without **reproach**, whenever His children ask. However, James warned that Christians were not to play games with God. They were whole-heartedly to expect He would meet their needs, asking with full faith. Double-minded, wishy-washy people were like the shifting waves, unable to receive the things of God to any good

purpose. Such people prayed one moment only to move immediately into a frenzy of worry or self-effort in the next. God does not bless such behavior because it indicates a lack of trust in Him. James gives more advice about effective praying in a later chapter and alluded often to the instability of double-mindedness.

Rich and Poor (James 1:9-11 and 2:1-13)

One author remarked that this epistle of James was so timely and radical that if it were passed out in cultures where the caste system of rich and poor is dramatically enforced, this epistle would be **confiscated** and pronounced **contraband!** (*The Scandalous Message of James*, page 1). In our own culture, the difference in the “have’s” and “have not’s,” even in our churches, is such that the commands James gives about righteous behavior can still be quite upsetting to our own **status quo**.

“*Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation*” (James 1:9). When is the poor man lifted up? He can be exalted at any moment in which God’s mercy is allowed to operate through the actions of His children. Also, whenever the “*lowly brother*” puts his hope in the promise of a future and eternal life with the King of Kings, he has cause to praise God.

When does the rich man experience “*humiliation*”? Every child of God, no matter how rich in material things, should realize that all that is of this world can be lost, stolen, or destroyed. As he allows himself to be humbled by that knowledge, he, too, should praise God, because stripped of his worldly goods, he can still call God, “*Father*.” Dr. Adrian Rogers, a well-loved Southern preacher, explained how to calculate true wealth: “*Figure out what you have that money cannot buy and that death cannot remove, and that will be your real treasure.*” Material wealth should never divide us. We are united as members of the family of God.

James returned to the Christian’s attitude toward the rich and poor in chapter two. He gave a vivid illustration of a rich man visiting a Christian assembly and being grandly welcomed, while a poor man was coldly disregarded. Through such

outward actions, James warned, Christians set themselves up as judges with impure motives. God shows no partiality based on material wealth. In fact, though their brothers despise them, God enables the poor to be rich in faith. Actually their poverty pushes them to look whole-heartedly to God for blessings which cannot be taken from them, while the material wealth of the rich often gives them a false sense of self-sufficiency. Ironically, the rich, whom so many rush to flatter, are often the very ones guilty of oppressing the people who hurry to honor them.

What God really wants from his children is for them to show love to everyone, regardless of worldly status: *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (James 2:8). Using the reasoning Paul would later make famous, James stated that any action violating any single moral law made the transgressor guilty of breaking all the law. Passing judgment on one another was not to be the job of Christians; showing mercy to one another was what pleased God. Echoing Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount, James urged mercy: *“Mercy triumphs over judgment”* (James 2:13).

Testing or Temptation? (James 1:12-16)

James began this chapter with a command to rejoice in trials or testings. The Bible contains many instances where tests were specifically allowed by God for certain purposes (Genesis 22:1; Deuteronomy 8:2). However, in this section, James contrasted those external tests with the internal kind we commonly call temptations. He warned that a pull toward sin never comes from God. God cannot be tempted and does not cause temptation. In fact, as Christians we can say: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). If God cannot be tempted, then God in us can empower us to refuse temptation.

How do temptations come to us? We are tempted by our own sinful desires. *“Drawn away”* and *“enticed”* were fishing and hunting terms. The first meant covering a hook with a bait and the

second was like setting a hidden trap to catch an unsuspecting animal. James explained the process. First, we desire something we should not have. Next, we dwell on that desire until we find a way to fulfill it: *“. . .when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.”* When we have sinned, by improperly satisfying that initial desire, the final result is death (James 1:15). *“Do not be deceived.”* Sin is fun for a season, but then the bill comes due. James warned his readers not to take the bait of sin, which first shows itself as temptation. Wherever there is a bait, there is also a hidden hook or trap! *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved (when he has resisted it), he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12).

There are benefits for the one who resists temptation. An immediate denial of self yields a long-lasting blessing. Satan’s way is to offer immediate gratification and then to charge dearly for that temporary pleasure. Jesus’ way requires self-denial in the present, which will yield God’s life-giving satisfaction for eternity. This is evident every day. For example, a person might be tempted to commit adultery. If he gives in to it, it could destroy his marriage, cause such insecurity in his children that they, too, turn to lives of sexual sin, and ruin his effectiveness in any leadership position. When sexual temptation is resisted, however, there is short-term frustration and disappointment but long-term relief that the family has been preserved and shame has been avoided. In the same way, athletes have to deny themselves the immediate gratification of extra sleep or fattening foods in order to train hard and build muscle. Or consider overspending, which can be great fun at first. However, when the bill collectors start calling and fights over finances follow, that fun is quickly forgotten. Life goes much better when we seek to please God first, instead of ourselves.

God Gives Good Gifts (James 1:17,18)

The God we serve does not set traps or bait hooks. There is no darkness in Him; He is the *“Father of lights,”* who never changes. *“There is no variation or shadow of turning”* or double-mindedness in regard to Him. He gives only good and perfect gifts. Because of His own good will,

James declared to his scattered Jewish-Christian brothers and sisters, God had brought salvation to them through the “*word of truth*.” Using typically Jewish imagery, James continued, “*that we might be a kind of firstfruits, of His creatures.*” The Jews were to take the gospel to the whole world. Like the very first sheaves of grain brought to the temple in faith that God would continue the harvest, the Jews were to be God’s firstfruits to the world. They were to give hope and inspiration, with their changed lives, so that many more would follow them in faith in Christ.

Watch the Words (James 1:19,20,26)

What was to be the proper response to the “*word of truth*” (verse 18) as far as everyday living was concerned? Always practical, James commanded, “*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*” (James 1:19,20). James had several things to say about the proper use of speech in this epistle. The first was to be eager and quick to listen to others, especially to the voice of the Holy Spirit. If you want to learn from someone, you must listen. A high-priced consultant just shook his head as the scheduled meeting ended, and he prepared to catch his plane. He had been flown to the headquarters of the troubled company at great expense, but the board members would not stop bickering among themselves long enough to let him even speak. They would not listen, and so they were not helped.

Next, James cautioned, “*be slow to speak.*” So many problems would be completely avoided if people would stop and think before they spoke. Listening to others can be a great delight, but true communication does not occur where someone only listens to find a break so they can take over the conversation. Christians need to resist the urge to comment unnecessarily on every subject. “Have you noticed,” a wise man asked, “that God has given each person two ears and only one mouth? We should, therefore, listen twice as much as we speak.”

Finally, James continued, “*be slow to wrath.*” The “*royal law*” mentioned in James 2:8 would

stop unrighteous anger. When we love others as we love ourselves, we give them the benefit of the doubt in normal matters. We wait to hear their side; we consider the “big picture.” Self-control is a wonderful fruit of the Holy Spirit, evident when He is giving direction to our lives (Galatians 5:22,23). God’s righteousness is not produced by unholy anger. In fact, God’s righteousness is often misunderstood because of the hot-tempered behavior of some of His children.

If a person “*does not bridle his tongue,*” James warned, he is deceiving himself, and all his religion is useless (James 1:26,27). People attempt to excuse themselves for their angry words, by saying they did not really mean what they said, but Jesus stated the truth: “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*” (Matthew 12:34). Words come out of a person’s mouth because the thoughts of them were first in his heart. If words are damaging, the problem is in the heart of the speaker.

Doers (James 1:21-27)

James issued commands about other behavior besides speech and wrath. He commanded his readers to “*lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness.*” As in a garden overrun with weeds, there is no room for the good growth until the weeds are cleared out. The “*implanted word*” of God produces best in well-prepared soil. Repentance clears the way.

However, after hearing, there is doing. If the life of Christ is in us, it must flow out of us to others. We deceive ourselves if nothing happens after we hear God’s word. We are to be “doers,” too. We are to look into God’s word as we would look into a mirror. We are not to glance quickly and forget immediately, but to look with a purpose of correcting what we are shown right away. Such a “doer” is “*blessed in what he does.*”

What are some specifically Christ-like actions that should be part of our Christian service? James described two: to “*visit,*” with the meaning of ministering to the needs of “*orphans and widows in their trouble,*” and next, to keep away from the temptations of the world which would “*spot*” us with their filth.

Faith or Works?

For years the book of James was not carefully studied because of its emphasis on practical service or good works. The great reformer Martin Luther called it a “right strawy book” because of its emphasis on works. He spent his life fighting desperately to free his **contemporaries** from the false teaching of the dominant church, that stated religious works could earn a person entrance into heaven. Also, in Galatians and Romans, Paul drilled into his readers the truth that salvation came to a person by faith in Christ, and faith alone. However, James never contradicted Paul’s doctrine. In Acts 15 and Acts 21, James openly supported Paul’s

teaching. James himself never taught that anyone was saved by works; he taught that when a person is saved, his faith will work. He then described what sort of activities were to be expected. Right doctrine is very important to the Christian; it is the root of his faith. But right actions are important, too. They are the fruit of his faith. Like two wings on an airplane, we need both to fly. If either is missing, we will never get off the ground. Pray to be quick to hear what God is saying to you through this study about your faith and your works. The world longs to see Christianity as a faith that works, making a difference on a daily basis in this present life. What is your faith doing?

VOCABULARY

confiscated: officially seized

contemporaries: people living at the same time or in the same era

contraband: smuggled goods; illegal or prohibited material

fuller: a launderer who specializes in making things fuller through shrinking and beating the fabric;
one who adds fullness to a garment through making pleats or gathers

galleries: porches

martyred: executed for one’s faith or convictions

reproach: blame, criticize, rebuke

status quo: the existing condition or state of affairs; from a Latin phrase meaning “state in which”

Notes