

STUDY GUIDE

The Book of James

Faith That Works

7 Sessions · BOB Study

faith, wisdom, and life in community.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is built around the New Testament letter of James.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Each session contains more material than most groups will cover in a single meeting. Read the chapter summary and all five discussion questions before your group meets. Choose 3–4 questions based on where your group is, follow the energy in the room, not the list. The goal is depth, not completion.

**The Leader Note at the bottom of each session identifies the question that could lead to deep conversation or contemplation.*

SESSION STRUCTURE

Each session includes: a Chapter Summary to orient everyone to the reading; Key Quotes to read aloud and anchor the discussion; 5 Discussion Questions (choose 3–4) with follow-up prompts; Personal Reflection prompts (A, B, C) for between-session use; and a Leader Note for the facilitator.

ON THE REFLECTION PROMPTS

The A, B, C prompts at the end of each session are invitations, not homework. They are designed for personal honesty between sessions (journaling, prayer, a quiet conversation). There's no need to report back on them, just dive in and see what comes next.

A NOTE ON TONE

James writes with warmth and directness — not to condemn, but to call his readers toward a faith that is whole: believed, spoken, and lived.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Session	Title	Chapter	Core Focus
1	Faith Under Pressure	James 1:1–18	Trials, wisdom, temptation, and the character of the God who gives good gifts
2	Hearing That Becomes Doing	James 1:19–27	Quick to listen, doing the word, and practical faith
3	Faith You Can See	James 2	Favoritism, the royal law, and faith proven by works
4	The Words We Live By	James 3:1–12	The power of the tongue as a spiritual diagnostic
5	Two Kinds of Wisdom	James 3:13–18	Earthly wisdom vs. wisdom that comes from heaven
6	When Faith Collides with Our Desires	James 4	Conflict, wrong motives, pride, and submission to God
7	Waiting, Suffering & Prayer	James 5	Patience, endurance, prayer, and restoring one another

SESSION 1

Faith Under Pressure

James 1:1–18

CHAPTER SUMMARY

James opens his letter by addressing believers who are scattered and presumably experiencing pressure, uncertainty, and difficulty. His first instruction is startling: consider it joy when you face trials of many kinds. The reason isn't that suffering is inherently good. James sees trials as an opportunity for faith to be tested, perseverance to develop, and maturity to emerge.

The progression is important: trial → testing → perseverance → maturity.

But trials also reveal something else: we don't always know what to do. That's why James immediately connects trials with wisdom. When we lack wisdom, we are invited to ask God, who gives generously and without finding fault. The issue isn't whether we will face circumstances we don't understand; it's whether we will trust God enough to seek His wisdom within them.

James then introduces the image of the person who doubts—someone like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. He isn't simply talking about intellectual uncertainty. The context suggests a divided confidence: asking God while simultaneously refusing to trust Him.

James then turns to the contrasting experiences of poverty and wealth. Circumstances can change dramatically, but the believer's identity isn't ultimately determined by either. The poor believer can take pride in being lifted up by God, while the wealthy believer is reminded of how temporary earthly status really is.

Then James makes an important distinction: God tests faith, but God does not tempt people to sin. Temptation comes through our own desires. James describes a progression from desire to sin to death.

That makes the opening half of James intensely personal. The question isn't simply, "Why am I experiencing this?" It is: "What is happening in me as I experience it?"

And James ends this section by turning our attention toward God's character. Every good and perfect gift comes from above. God does not shift or change like the shadows. He chose to give us new birth through the word of truth.

In other words, the God who is allowing our faith to be tested is not the God who is trying to destroy us. He is good.

KEY QUOTES

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds."

— **James 1:2**

“Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

— **James 1:4**

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.”

— **James 1:5**

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life.”

— **James 1:12**

“God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”

— **James 1:13**

“Every good and perfect gift is from above.”

— **James 1:17**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

James tells us to consider trials an occasion for joy because of what they can produce in us. What do you think he means by that? How is that different from pretending suffering isn't painful?

Follow up: *Have you ever experienced a difficult season that, looking back, produced something in you that probably wouldn't have developed otherwise? What did the trial reveal or change?*

2

James connects trials with wisdom almost immediately. Why do you think difficult circumstances so often expose our need for wisdom?

Follow up: *When you're facing uncertainty, where do you instinctively look first for answers? What might that reveal about where you place your confidence?*

3

James says that our own desires can draw us toward temptation and eventually sin. What do you notice about the progression he describes in verses 14–15?

Follow up: *Why do we tend to focus on the moment of sin rather than the desire that came before it? What might change if we learned to recognize temptation earlier in the process?*

4

James says God doesn't tempt us, and then immediately emphasizes that every good and perfect gift comes from above. Why is God's character important to James' discussion of trials and temptation?

Follow up: *When life is difficult, what picture of God are you most tempted to believe?*

5

James ends this section by saying that God “chose to give us birth through the word of truth.” How does that change the way you read everything he has said about trials and temptation?

Follow up: *What difference does it make to face difficulty believing that the God you're trusting is fundamentally good?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

Think about a current trial or pressure in your life. Don't ask first, "How do I get out of this?" Ask instead: "What might God be forming in me through this?"

B

James says God gives wisdom generously. Spend some quiet time this week asking God for wisdom about one specific situation—not merely for the outcome you want, but for wisdom about how you should live inside the situation.

C

James presents a progression from desire to temptation to sin. Is there a recurring desire in your life that you need to become more honest about? What happens when you bring that desire into the presence of God rather than hiding it?

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

The most important pastoral tension in this session may be the difference between God using trials and God causing evil. James himself makes that distinction. Don't rush people toward the conclusion that every painful thing has an obvious purpose. The text gives us something more foundational: God is good, God gives wisdom, and God is not the author of temptation.

SESSION 2

Hearing That Becomes Doing

James 1:19–27

CHAPTER SUMMARY

With verse 19, James makes a noticeable turn. He has spent the first eighteen verses talking primarily about what happens inside us as we encounter trials, temptation, desire, and God's goodness. Now he begins talking about what that inner life produces outside us.

“Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” James isn't offering generic advice for being nicer people. He connects these behaviors directly to receiving God's Word. Human anger, he says, does not produce the righteousness God desires.

The answer isn't simply to suppress anger. James tells his readers to get rid of moral filth and humbly accept the Word planted in them.

And then comes the central challenge: Don't merely listen. Do. James uses the image of a person looking at their face in a mirror and immediately forgetting what they saw. The problem isn't that the mirror failed. The problem is that the person didn't respond to what the mirror revealed.

That becomes one of the defining ideas of James: God's Word is meant to reveal something about us and then move us toward action.

James closes by giving three tangible expressions of what he calls “pure and faultless religion”: caring for vulnerable people, maintaining personal holiness, refusing to be shaped by the world's values.

This is a significant transition in the book. James is moving from: What happens to your faith under pressure? to: What does your faith actually produce?

KEY QUOTES

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

— **James 1:19**

“Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

— **James 1:20**

“Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

— **James 1:21**

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

— **James 1:22**

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this...”

— **James 1:27**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

Why do you think James moves from “quick to listen, slow to speak” directly into his discussion of receiving God's Word?

Follow up: *What gets in the way of genuinely listening—to God or to another person?*

2

James says human anger doesn't produce the righteousness God desires. Is all anger wrong? What do you think James is getting at?

Follow up: *What usually sits underneath your anger—fear, frustration, pride, disappointment, feeling ignored, desire for control?*

3

James says we can hear the Word without actually allowing it to change us. Why is that so easy to do?

Follow up: *Is there something you know Scripture says that has become familiar to you without becoming formative?*

4

James' mirror illustration suggests that Scripture isn't simply information—it reveals something about us. What has Scripture revealed about you that you would rather not have seen?

Follow up: *What happens when we see something in the mirror but don't want to respond to it?*

5

James ends by defining “pure religion” in remarkably practical terms: caring for vulnerable people and remaining unstained by the world. What does that tell you about what James thinks genuine faith should look like?

Follow up: *Which is harder for you—being present for other people's needs or guarding your own heart from the values around you?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

Read James 1:19–27 slowly. Ask: “Where am I hearing God's Word but not doing it?”

B

For one day, practice James' instruction: quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. At the end of the day, what did you notice?

C

James gives us a very practical definition of faith. Who is one vulnerable person or group God might be inviting you to notice differently?

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

This session is an important bridge into Chapter 2. James is moving from internal formation to observable faith. Question 3 or 4 could produce the deepest conversation because most Christians have experienced the uncomfortable gap between knowing Scripture and doing Scripture.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

James begins Chapter Two with a painfully ordinary example: two people walk into a gathering. One is wealthy and well dressed. The other is poor. The wealthy person receives the best seat; the poor person is pushed aside.

James calls this favoritism, and he doesn't treat it as a minor social mistake. The problem is theological: if God has shown no partiality and has chosen the poor to be rich in faith, how can God's people rank human beings according to status, appearance, or usefulness?

James calls believers to fulfill the “royal law”: love your neighbor as yourself. Mercy, he says, triumphs over judgment.

Then James turns to one of the most famous—and sometimes misunderstood—passages in the letter: faith and works. His argument is simple but uncomfortable. If someone is cold and hungry and we respond with kind words but no actual help, what good have we done? In the same way, a faith that exists only as words or intellectual agreement is dead.

James isn't arguing that we earn salvation by doing enough good things. His concern is almost the opposite: if faith is real, it should become visible. Abraham demonstrated his faith through obedience. Rahab demonstrated hers through action. In both cases, what they did revealed what they believed.

The question James leaves us with is not merely “Do you have faith?” It is “Can anyone see it?”

KEY QUOTES

“My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.”

— **James 2:1**

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

— **James 2:8**

“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

— **James 2:13**

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

— **James 2:17**

“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

— **James 2:26**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

Why do you think James chooses favoritism as his first example of faith becoming visible? What does the way we treat people have to do with our faith?

Follow up: *Who are the people we instinctively give more attention, respect, or patience to? What makes those people different?*

2

James says we shouldn't treat people differently based on wealth or status. What are some modern forms of favoritism that might be harder to recognize than the example James gives?

Follow up: *Can favoritism exist even when we would never consciously describe ourselves as prejudiced? What might it look like in a church, workplace, or friend group?*

3

James says that telling a hungry person "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed" without actually helping them accomplishes nothing. Where do you see the difference between good intentions and meaningful action in Christian life?

Follow up: *Is there an area where you are good at caring in theory but slow to act in practice?*

4

The relationship between faith and works has caused a lot of theological discussion. What do you think James is actually trying to protect us from?

Follow up: *What would "dead faith" look like in someone's everyday life? What would living faith look like?*

5

James uses both Abraham and Rahab as examples of faith demonstrated through action. What do these two people have in common despite being radically different?

Follow up: *If James were writing about people in your community today, who might he point to as an example of faith that can actually be seen?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

Think about the people you interacted with this week. Who received the best version of you? Who received the least? What might that reveal?

B

Ask yourself honestly: If someone judged my faith only by what I do, what would they conclude I believe?

C

Is there a person you have thought about helping, encouraging, forgiving, welcoming, or serving—but haven't acted yet? What would one concrete step look like?

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

The faith-versus-works question can easily become a theological debate about Paul and James. That's worth discussing, but don't let it consume the session. James' concern is fundamentally practical: faith that never produces action is not functioning faith. Question 1 can also uncover subtle forms of status-seeking within the group. Let people wrestle with it without turning the conversation into confession-by-force.

SESSION 4

The Words We Live By

James 3:1–12

CHAPTER SUMMARY

James begins this section with a warning about teachers. Those who teach carry greater responsibility because their words have greater influence. He then admits something that may be both comforting and convicting: we all stumble in many ways, particularly with our words.

James uses three images to explain the disproportionate power of the tongue. A bit controls a horse. A small rudder directs a large ship. A small spark can ignite an enormous fire. The tongue is physically small, but its influence is enormous.

And James isn't merely talking about profanity or saying the wrong thing. He's talking about the power of our words to direct, destroy, encourage, wound, shape, and reveal.

Then comes one of the most uncomfortable observations in the chapter: with the tongue we praise God, and with the same tongue we curse people who have been made in God's likeness. James sees a contradiction. The issue isn't simply that Christians sometimes say bad things. It's that our speech can reveal a divided heart.

The tongue, in James, becomes something of a spiritual diagnostic. What comes out of us tells us something about what is happening within us.

KEY QUOTES

"We all stumble in many ways."

— **James 3:2**

"The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body."

— **James 3:6**

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness."

— **James 3:9**

"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be."

— **James 3:10**

“Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?”

— ***James 3:11***

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

James begins by acknowledging that “we all stumble in many ways.” Why do you think he begins here before talking about controlling the tongue?

Follow up: *Does knowing that everyone struggles with their words make you more gracious toward yourself, or does it make you more aware of how serious the problem is?*

2

James compares the tongue to a bit, a rudder, and a fire. What do those three images have in common?

Follow up: *Can you think of a time when something someone said had an influence far greater than they probably realized?*

3

James says we use the same mouth to praise God and curse people made in God's image. Why is that contradiction so significant?

Follow up: *What does the way we talk about people when they're not present reveal about how deeply we actually believe they bear God's image?*

4

We often treat speech as something that happens “out there,” while character is something that happens “in here.” James seems to connect the two. What does our speech reveal about us?

Follow up: *What kinds of situations consistently bring out words in you that you later regret?*

5

James asks whether fresh water and salt water can come from the same spring. What does that image suggest about the relationship between our inner life and our outward behavior?

Follow up: *Is the answer primarily to “control your tongue,” or is James pointing toward something deeper than behavior management?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

For one day this week, pay attention to your words without trying to change them. Notice when you encourage, complain, criticize, gossip, defend yourself, exaggerate, interrupt, or speak with kindness. What do you notice?

B

Think about one person you find difficult to speak well about. What changes if you deliberately begin viewing that person first as someone made in God's image?

C

Is there a conversation you need to have—or one you need to stop having? Bring it honestly before God.

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

Question 3 can become a conversation about gossip or profanity, but James is going deeper. His concern is the contradiction between worshiping God and devaluing people made in God's image. Question 5 is worth lingering over. James doesn't offer a technique for managing the tongue. His imagery suggests that lasting change has to reach the source, not merely the output.

SESSION 5

Two Kinds of Wisdom

James 3:13–18

CHAPTER SUMMARY

After spending the first half of Chapter Three talking about the tongue, James asks a different question: Who is wise and understanding among you? His answer is surprising. He doesn't say, "The person who knows the most." He says wisdom should be demonstrated by a good life and deeds done in humility.

James then presents two competing versions of wisdom. One is characterized by bitter envy, selfish ambition, disorder, and every kind of evil practice. The other comes "from heaven." It is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

This is an important distinction because James isn't simply asking whether we are intelligent or knowledgeable. He's asking: What kind of person is your knowledge making you? Someone can be extremely intelligent and still be driven by envy. Someone can know Scripture and still be combative. Someone can win arguments while creating disorder.

James gives us a different measurement. Heavenly wisdom produces a particular kind of person. And that wisdom produces peace—not passive avoidance of conflict, but a life that cultivates righteousness and reconciliation.

KEY QUOTES

"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."

— **James 3:13**

"Where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

— **James 3:16**

"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**

"Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

— **James 3:18**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

James defines wisdom by the kind of life it produces rather than simply by what someone knows. How would that change the way we evaluate whether someone is “wise”?

Follow up: *Who is someone you consider genuinely wise? What is it about the way they live—not just what they know—that makes you say that?*

2

James identifies envy and selfish ambition as sources of disorder. Why do you think those two things are so destructive to relationships and communities?

Follow up: *Can selfish ambition disguise itself as something good—excellence, leadership, success, ministry, even serving God? How?*

3

Read James 3:17 slowly. Which characteristic of heavenly wisdom stands out to you most? Which one challenges you?

Follow up: *What would that characteristic look like in an actual disagreement this week?*

4

How do you distinguish between peacekeeping and peacemaking?

Follow up: *Is there a relationship where avoiding conflict has been easier than pursuing genuine peace?*

5

James says wisdom should be demonstrated through “deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” Why do you think humility is so central to biblical wisdom?

Follow up: *What happens when someone believes they are the smartest person in the room?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

Read James 3:17 every day for a week. Pick one characteristic—pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, impartial, sincere—and ask God to make it visible in you.

B

Think about an area where you are especially confident in your knowledge or judgment. What would humility look like there?

C

Think of one relationship where you are currently experiencing tension. Ask yourself: Am I contributing heavenly wisdom to this relationship, or am I contributing to the disorder?

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

This session can become surprisingly personal because most people instinctively associate wisdom with intelligence, experience, or competence. James gives us a different test. Question 3 is likely the heart of the session. Read the list slowly and let people choose the characteristic that catches them rather than rushing through it. Also notice how this session connects directly to Session 3: what kind of wisdom is producing our words?

SESSION 6

When Faith Collides with Our Desires

James 4

CHAPTER SUMMARY

James begins Chapter Four with an uncomfortable question: “What causes fights and quarrels among you?” His answer isn’t primarily external. He points inward—to the desires that battle within us. We want something. We don’t get it. We become frustrated. We fight. We manipulate. We blame.

James even says that sometimes we don’t have what we want because we don’t ask God—and sometimes we ask God with the wrong motives because we want to spend what we receive on ourselves.

Then James uses some of the strongest language in the letter to describe friendship with the world. His point isn’t that Christians should withdraw from society. He’s addressing divided allegiance: wanting God while simultaneously allowing the world’s values to shape our desires.

But the chapter doesn’t end in condemnation. James says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Then comes the invitation: Submit to God. Resist the devil. Draw near to God. Cleanse your hands. Purify your hearts. Humble yourselves.

James then turns toward another form of pride: our assumption that we control tomorrow. We make plans as though the future belongs to us. James reminds us that life is a mist. His point isn’t that planning is wrong. It’s that planning without surrender is an illusion of control.

The chapter asks a deeply personal question: Who is actually running my life?

KEY QUOTES

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

— **James 4:1**

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

— **James 4:6**

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

— **James 4:7**

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

— **James 4:8**

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

— **James 4:10**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

James says many conflicts begin with desires that are “battling within” us. How does that change the way you think about conflict?

Follow up: *Think of a recent disagreement. What did you want that you weren't getting? How much of the conflict was really about that desire?*

2

James says we sometimes ask God for things with the wrong motives. How do you distinguish between asking God for something you genuinely desire and asking God to give you something primarily because you want it for yourself?

Follow up: *Have you ever prayed intensely for something and later realized that what you really wanted was control of the outcome?*

3

James says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God.” What does submission to God actually look like in ordinary life?

Follow up: *Is there an area where you know what surrender would look like but are still negotiating with God?*

4

James connects pride with our assumption that we know what tomorrow will bring. Why is acknowledging our dependence on God difficult—even for people who genuinely believe in Him?

Follow up: *What area of your future are you most tempted to control right now?*

5

James gives us a progression: submit to God, resist the devil, draw near to God, humble yourself. Which of those feels easiest for you? Which feels hardest?

Follow up: *What might “drawing near to God” look like practically this week—not as an idea, but as an actual practice?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

Think about a conflict in your life. Before thinking about what the other person did wrong, ask: What did I want? Sit with that answer honestly.

B

Write down one thing you're trying very hard to control. Then pray specifically: "God, I give this back to You. Show me what faithfulness looks like whether I get the outcome I want or not."

C

James says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you." Spend ten minutes this week doing nothing but being present with God. No agenda. No request list. Just draw near.

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

Question 1 can move quickly toward blaming other people. Keep bringing the conversation back to James' question: What is happening inside us? Question 4 may expose fears about the future, particularly around family, finances, work, aging, or uncertainty. Don't turn surrender into passivity. James isn't telling us not to plan; he's challenging the illusion that planning gives us control over the future. This is also a good session to emphasize that James' answer to pride isn't self-hatred. It is drawing near to God.

SESSION 7

Waiting, Suffering & Prayer

James 5

CHAPTER SUMMARY

James closes his letter with a mixture of warning, patience, suffering, prayer, and restoration. He begins with a devastating warning to wealthy people who have accumulated riches through injustice and exploitation. Again, the issue isn't simply wealth. James is confronting self-indulgence built on the suffering of others.

Then the tone changes. "Be patient." James gives his readers the picture of a farmer waiting for the harvest. The farmer can't force the crop to appear. He can work faithfully, but ultimately he has to wait.

James tells believers to be patient until the Lord's coming. He points them toward the prophets and then toward Job—not because Job understood why he was suffering, but because Job endured and discovered that God remained compassionate and merciful.

Then James ends where much of Christian life ultimately ends: prayer. Are you suffering? Pray. Are you happy? Praise. Are you sick? Call for the elders. Have you sinned? Confess. Are you struggling? Ask others to pray. Have you wandered? Help restore one another.

James finishes with Elijah, reminding his readers that Elijah was a human being just like them. His prayers mattered—not because he was superhuman, but because God responds to faithful prayer.

And finally, James gives the community responsibility for one another: if someone wanders from the truth, go after them. The book that began with trials producing perseverance ends with perseverance producing a community that prays, restores, and stays faithful together.

KEY QUOTES

"Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming."

— **James 5:7**

"You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

— **James 5:8**

"You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

— **James 5:11**

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray."

— **James 5:13**

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

— **James 5:16**

“Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”

— **James 5:20**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You won't need all five, follow the energy in the room.

1

James tells his readers to be patient like a farmer waiting for the harvest. What does that image teach us about the difference between faithful waiting and passive waiting?

Follow up: *What are you currently waiting for? What would faithfulness look like while you wait?*

2

James points to Job's perseverance but doesn't give us an explanation for everything Job experienced. Why do you think perseverance can sometimes be more important than understanding?

Follow up: *When you're suffering, which do you want more: an explanation or God's presence? Has that changed at different points in your life?*

3

James says, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray." Why do you think prayer is his first response to suffering?

Follow up: *What tends to be your first response when life goes wrong? What does that reveal about where you instinctively look for help?*

4

James tells Christians to confess sins to one another and pray for one another. What makes that difficult? What could a community look like where confession was actually safe?

Follow up: *What's the difference between healthy confession and unhealthy oversharing? What would make confession an act of grace rather than shame?*

5

James ends by talking about restoring someone who has wandered from the truth. What does that tell us about our responsibility for one another?

Follow up: *Who in your life might need someone to come after them—not to judge them, but to help them find their way back?*

PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION

These prompts are for individual reflection between sessions — not homework, just invitation.

A

What are you waiting for right now? Instead of asking only, “When will God change this?” ask: “Who is God asking me to become while I wait?”

B

James says, “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.” Take one situation you're carrying and spend time praying about it without trying to solve it yourself.

C

Think about someone who has influenced your faith simply by the way they endured difficulty. What did their life teach you about God? If they're still in your life, consider telling them.

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

The subject of suffering deserves care. James gives us theological categories for suffering, but he doesn't offer simplistic explanations. Job is particularly important here: perseverance doesn't require understanding everything God is doing. Question 4 may surface vulnerability around confession and trust. Don't pressure anyone to disclose something personal. The goal is to explore what kind of community James imagines—not to manufacture vulnerability. For the final question, consider asking the group to think about restoration rather than correction. James isn't celebrating the person who successfully identifies someone else's sin. He's celebrating the person who helps someone find their way home.

CLOSING THOUGHT

For the Seven Sessions

The Book of James

James begins with a person facing a trial and ends with a community praying for one another.

trials · wisdom · temptation · obedience · favoritism · faith · works · speech · wisdom · conflict · pride · control · wealth · suffering · prayer · restoration

At first, those subjects can seem disconnected. They're not. James is describing what happens when faith moves from our heads into our lives.

Faith changes how we respond when life gets hard. Faith changes how we treat people who can't benefit us. Faith changes what we say. Faith changes what kind of wisdom we pursue. Faith changes how we handle conflict. Faith changes our relationship with control. Faith changes how we wait. Faith changes how we pray. And ultimately, faith changes how we live with one another.

That makes James less a book about having the right Christian beliefs and more a book about becoming the kind of person whose beliefs have actually taken root.

If James followed you around for the next thirty days, what would he say your life reveals about what you actually believe?

What is one thing James has shown you that you want God to change—not simply in what you believe, but in the person you are becoming?