

Faith Works

A JOURNEY THROUGH JAMES



Faith Works ~ A Journey Through James

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Test of Faith *Chapter 1 ~ Lesson One*

In Chapter 1, James encourages Christians to believe and trust, growing in their faith by persevering through trials. He not only instructs his audience to resist temptations, but to also actively pursue righteousness. This week we will explore how remain alert, facing the inevitable challenges and distractions of life. How we choose to live will lead us to either deception or Christ-like maturity.

Step One – Observation

Read through the entire chapter. Using a pen and highlighter, engage with the text. Underline key words and highlight key phrases. Look for repeated words or patterns. Journal your questions, observations and insights in the space on the right.

Chapter 1

¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

⁹Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

¹²Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has

promised to those who love him.

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶ Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Step Two – Key Verse

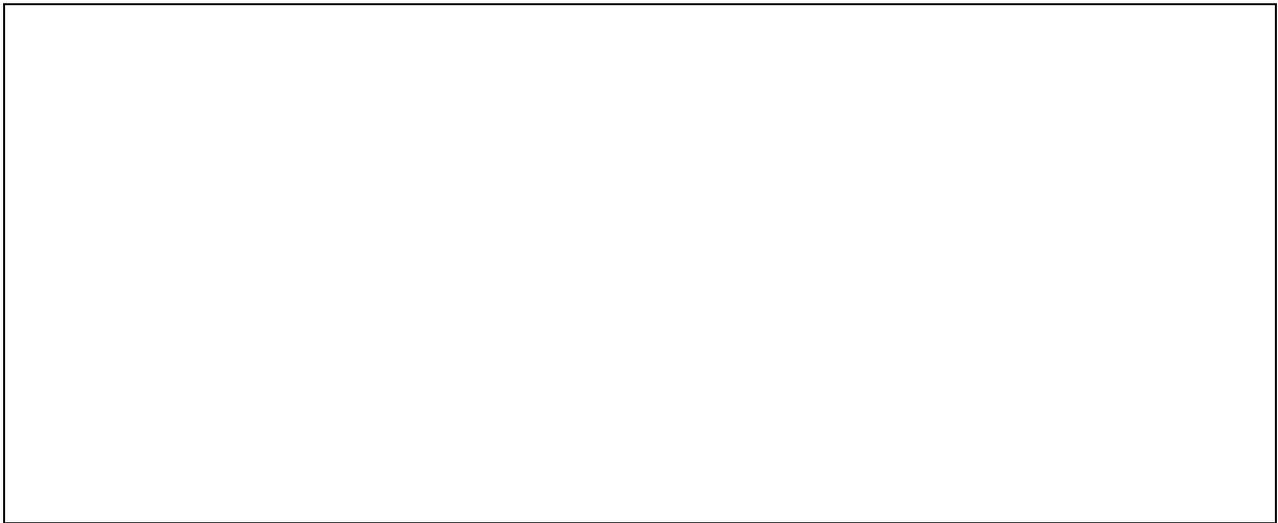
Looking back over this week’s reading, pick one verse that stands out to you. Write it down and explain why you chose it. Commit it to memory as your verse for the week.

Step Three –Questions

1. James wrote to persecuted Jewish Christians who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. He wrote to remind all of us that authentic faith transforms lives when we put our faith into action. Read James 1:2-4. What is the expected result of perseverance through trials? Describe how we can find “joy” in the midst of them.
2. James talks about the testing of our faith and how it is necessary to produce perseverance. The term for “testing” was used of coins that were authentic-vs-counterfeit. God allows such tests to prove – and increase – the strength and quality of a person’s faith. Every trial becomes a test of faith designed to strengthen. The aim of testing is not to destroy or afflict, but to refine. It is essential to grow our faith. How do you see this principle working right now in the world around you or perhaps in your own life?
3. Read James 1:5-8. James tells us problems and faith work together. Challenges invite us to hunt for the joy, cry out for wisdom and to trust God against all odds. How do the decisions we make (wise or unwise) impact us and others? Where do you need to ask for more wisdom?

Step Five – Personal Space

Use the space below to bring in a creative, personal or enriching element. Perhaps it's a poem or drawing of your own. Maybe it's a quote or short clip you want to share with your group. Or possibly it's sharing your findings learned from additional outside study. This exercise is purposefully open-ended. Use your imagination and bring something unique and relevant to this week's lesson.

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NOTES

Works of Faith *Chapter 2 ~ Lesson Two*

James zeroes in on the specific dangers and evils of showing personal favoritism in Chapter 2. He urges believers to be aware of both their words and actions, and unpacks why partiality, discrimination and judgment have no place in the Christian walk. This week we will look at where our own biases influence our thinking, and how authentic faith translates into outwardly-focused actions in our lives.

Step One – Observation

Read through the entire chapter. Using a pen and highlighter, engage with the text. Underline key words and highlight key phrases. Look for repeated words or patterns. Journal your questions, observations and insights in the space on the right.

Chapter 2

¹My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty

of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Step Two – Key Verse

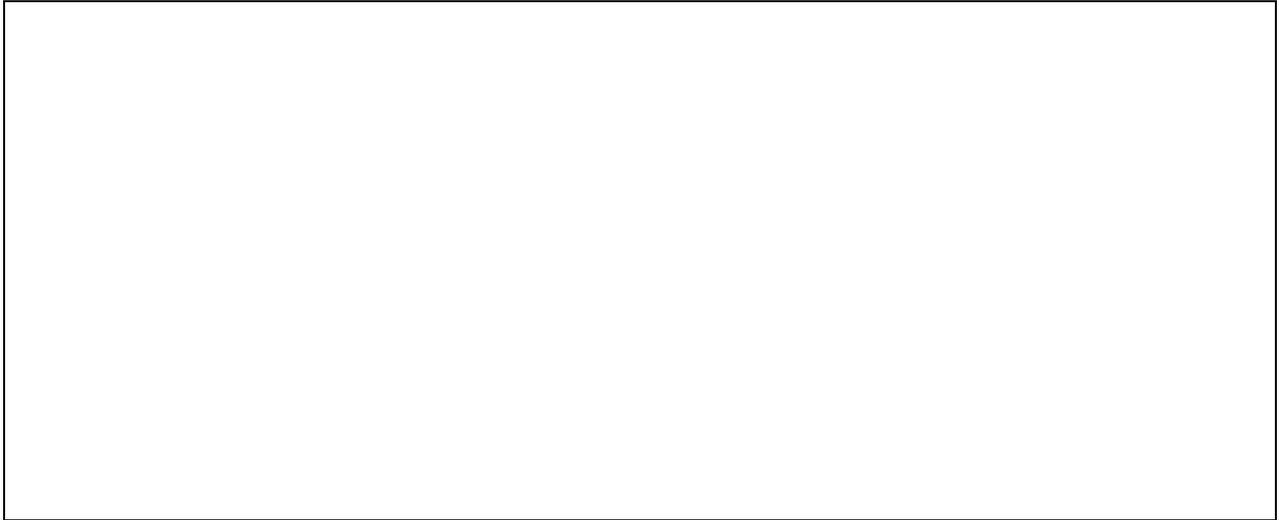
Looking back over this week's reading, pick one verse that stands out to you. Write it down and explain why you chose it. Commit it to memory as your verse for the week.

Step Three – Questions

1. In this chapter, James is addressing a lifestyle that comes out of a relationship with Christ – one that demonstrates a pure vs impure heart. A right heart differs from a religious (ritualistic/legalistic) heart. Explain the difference between being religious and being in relationship with Jesus. What areas in your life might be bent towards religion versus relationship?
2. Jesus called His followers to something beyond rule keeping – He called them to loving relationships. This side of the cross we are not bound to ritual laws, but we *are* bound to love one another. Paul reminds us in Romans 13:10 *that love is the fulfillment of the law*. Likewise, James speaks to the royal law in verses 8-12. How would loving others like we are supposed to love ourselves be liberating for them *and* us? Name two people in your life who could benefit from your intentional care and share some ways you can serve them.
3. Two key words appear in verse 13, *judgment* and *mercy*. In your own words, how would you define each of them? Which one tends to be your default response? Why do you think God values mercy over judgment?

Step Five – Personal Space

Use the space below to bring in a creative, personal or enriching element. Perhaps it's a poem or drawing of your own. Maybe it's a quote or short clip you want to share with your group. Or possibly it's sharing your findings learned from additional outside study. This exercise is purposefully open-ended. Use your imagination and bring something unique and relevant to this week's lesson.

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NOTES

Words of Faith *Chapter 3 ~ Lesson Three*

In Chapter 3, James calls believers to righteousness and greater self-awareness. He describes the dangers of an uncontrolled tongue, selfish ambition, and earthly wisdom. This week we will take an honest look at ourselves and the world around us, discussing practical ways to combat some of life's common pitfalls while keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Step One – Observation

Read through the entire chapter. Using a pen and highlighter, engage with the text. Underline key words and highlight key phrases. Look for repeated words or patterns. Journal your questions, observations and insights in the space on the right.

Chapter 3

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree

bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Step Two – Key Verse

Looking back over this week’s reading, pick one verse that stands out to you. Write it down and explain why you chose it. Commit it to memory as your verse for the week.

Step Three –Questions

1. Read Proverbs 18:21 and write down what it says about the power of our words. As followers of Christ, one of the best ways to represent Jesus is through our speech and conversation. The average person speaks about 30,000 words per day, giving us 30,000 opportunities to build up or destroy, bless or curse, speak words of life or death. How are you doing in these areas? Name some specific people who would benefit from your life-giving words this week.

2. James tells us we've all used our tongue as a weapon against others. But each of us has also been on the receiving end of harsh and hurtful words – words that can affect our ability to trust and love others. How has your life been impacted by harsh words? Share some ways that God's love has helped (or can help) you in the process of healing.

3. Read Proverbs 11:9, 15:1, and 15:28. What if James came to you and said, "My good friend, this year in 2021 let's help each other learn to think before we speak." How would these verses help guide you?

4. In verses 13-16, James masterfully contrasts godly wisdom and worldly wisdom. Consider the characteristics surrounding false, earthly wisdom. Where do you see evidence of it in today's world? Take a moment to search your heart – where might bitterness, envy or selfish ambition be tainting your thinking?

5. List the eight attributes of godly wisdom described in verse 17. Which one would you most like to grow in your life this year and why? Remember – James has already told us we can ask for God's wisdom and he will give it generously!

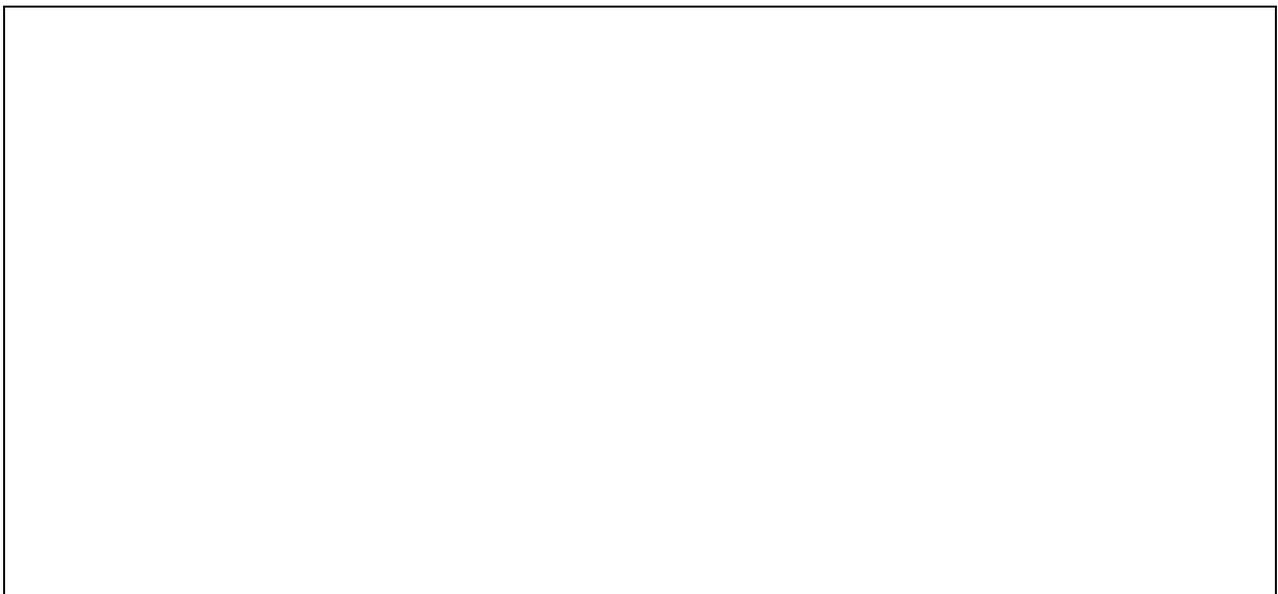
Step Four – Application & Prayer

Take what you've learned from reading and journaling to the next level – apply it to your own life. How might this week's reading impact your thinking and actions?

Take some time with the Lord. Seek Him, listen, and write a prayer based on what you've learned or anything else on your heart this week.

Step Five – Personal Space

Use the space below to bring in a creative, personal or enriching element. Perhaps it's a poem or drawing of your own. Maybe it's a quote or short clip you want to share with your group. Or possibly it's sharing your findings learned from additional outside study. This exercise is purposefully open-ended. Use your imagination and bring something unique and relevant to this week's lesson.

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Walk of Faith *Chapter 4 ~ Lesson Four*

In Chapter 4, as James speaks to his audience, he exposes the bitter roots of quarreling and coveting – their own selfish desires. He encourages believers to look at personal motives and realign themselves with God. This week, as we pursue a posture of humility, we will reflect on our own nature and prepare ourselves to accept God’s healing, direction and grace.

Step One – Observation

Read through the entire chapter. Using a pen and highlighter, engage with the text. Underline key words and highlight key phrases. Look for repeated words or patterns. Journal your questions, observations and insights in the space on the right.

Chapter 4

¹ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

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

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother

or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³ Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Step Two – Key Verse

Looking back over this week’s reading, pick one verse that stands out to you. Write it down and explain why you chose it. Commit it to memory as your verse for the week.

Step Three –Questions

1. The struggle to have what we want, when we want it, is common to all. There is a sinful discontent, related to our insatiable flesh nature. Where does this ugly dynamic rear its head most powerfully in your actions, emotions and/or relationships?

2. Please read verses 1-3. According to these verses what often causes quarrels? In verse 3, why are our prayers sometimes derailed? What might be some other reasons for unanswered prayers? What are some ways we can better align our motivations and pleasures with the heart of God?

3. In verses 7-10, what specific actions does James counsel his hearers to do? Which ones speak most powerfully to you and why?

4. How different would we be if we really left all judgment up to The Judge? Read verses 11-12. Are you bothered when you find yourself judging either the motives or actions of someone else? It should. Nothing curdled the blood of Jesus more than self-righteousness. (Look up Matthew 23:27-28 for a great example.) How are you most prone to play judge?

5. Read verses 13-17 and list some of James' important cautions. Spend some time reflecting on this list – do you struggle with any of his warnings? How might your day-to-day life change if you lived out this teaching?

Step Four – Application & Prayer

Take what you've learned from reading and journaling to the next level – apply it to your own life. How might this week's reading impact your thinking and actions?

Take some time with the Lord. Seek Him, listen, and write a prayer based on what you've learned or anything else on your heart this week.

Step Five – Personal Space

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Waiting Faith *Chapter 5 ~ Lesson Five*

In Chapter 5, James concludes his final thoughts. He reminds his audience to be wary of self-focused living, foregoing the care of others. He encourages believers as they persevere through trials to trust God, avoid grumbling, and pray. This week we will be comforted and challenged to do the same as we are called to deeper levels of patience, surrender, and trust – growing with others through the journey.

Step One – Observation

Read through the entire chapter. Using a pen and highlighter, engage with the text. Underline key words and highlight key phrases. Look for repeated words or patterns. Journal your questions, observations and insights in the space on the right.

Chapter 5

¹ Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have

seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹² Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Step Two – Key Verse

Looking back over this week’s reading, pick one verse that stands out to you. Write it down and explain why you chose it. Commit it to memory as your verse for the week.

Step Three –Questions

1. In verses 1-6, James addresses common misuses of wealth: *hoarding* – an unhealthy accumulation of possessions; *stealing* – justifying cutting financial corners; *wasting* – careless spending; and *abusing* – using money to manipulate. If you were honest, is there one of these you find yourself most naturally prone to? How would your perspective change if you viewed money simply as a gift from God? Where can God help you grow you in your relationship to finances or possessions?
2. In verses 7-12, James seems to be shouting, “Be patient!” Our growth and development are a process, not an event. Jesus is waiting on us to grow – He is not only preparing a place for us, but preparing *us* for a place! Consider the need for patience: when circumstances are *uncontrollable* (v.7), when people are *unchangeable* (v.10) and when problems are *unexplainable* (v.11). What causes you to lose patience or become overwhelmed? Read Proverbs 16:9 and Job 14:5. How can you have confidence God is in control even if you don’t see it? How would shifting your focus from your immediate situation to an eternal perspective change how you are living today?
3. According to James, we have an open invitation to a “Divine Invasion” that occurs through prayer. He calls us to pray when we’re hurting *emotionally* (v.13), *physically* (vv.14-15), and *spiritually* (v.16). The Lord delights in our prayers – what are the two greatest needs in your life right now you need to bring before Him? Read Matthew 5:44, Matthew 26:41, and Romans 12:12. How might these impact how you pray?

Step Five – Personal Space

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Notes:

Fan or Follower *Lesson Six*

Thank you for taking the journey with us through James these past seven weeks. If James were in the room with us for this final study, he would most likely tell us that living a life of *faith* in Jesus *works* in guiding us to the life He has planned for us. And If we have faith, others would see the *working out of our faith* through our *works of faith*. **Faith works!**

Remember in our very first week, we considered the contrast of a *fan of Jesus* versus a *follower of Jesus*. A fan is “an enthusiastic admirer,” whereas James would say a true *follower* is one whose boots are on the ground, is in the game, and is on the field – not just believing, but following by doing! Ponder the famous quote, “Evil triumphs when good men and women do nothing.” This is a not just powerful statement, but great reminder for all of us to live intentionally. James gave us five chapters full of motivation for intentional living, a life filled with the love of Christ. So this is the week we get to decide – will I be a *fan* or a *follower of Jesus*?

(you can use the back of this paper to write your answers)

Step One – Observation, Summary & Reflection

To conclude our time spent with James, this week we’re going to keep things simple:

1. Imagine you’re in a helicopter hovering above the book of James, able to view the entire landscape and see from a larger perspective. Take 5 minutes per chapter in James and look at the key topics.
2. Write down the key topics in each chapter. For example, in James Chapter 1, verses 2-13 – *Trials*; 13-15 – *Temptation*; 15-18 – *The Word of Truth*; 19-21 – *Quick to Listen*; 22-25 – *Doers of the Word*; 26-27 – *The Tongue and True “Religion.”*
3. Decide according to each chapter – A **fan** is someone who? But a **follower** is one who does?
4. Star the areas you most want to grow in.

Step Two – Reflection & Application

Have you noticed that when God is speaking into an area of our lives He repeats it, over and over, and in a variety of ways? Love is His motive, and for sure He is shaping us in new ways. After summarizing, take a little time to reflect.

1. How has God used James, your circumstances, and other ways of communicating to point to the one thing He seems to be addressing in your life throughout these seven weeks?
2. “The thing I’m hearing God say is . . .”
3. “In being His follower, I will . . .”

Step Three – Prayer

Conclude these amazing seven weeks being mentored by James by praying. Write a prayer thanking God for what He’s shown you, ask Him for what your need, and expect Him to answer!