

James study guide

4 sessions for a small group

James is short, blunt, and mostly practical. Resist smoothing it out. Where it stings, that is the point.

Each session lists the reading, who and what appears in it, and questions that send the group back to the text. Nothing here needs to be prepared in advance beyond reading the passage.

Background on every passage, free at protos-app.com/commentary/james

SESSION 1 OF 4

James 1

27 verses. Read it aloud together before anyone talks about it.

Who and what appears

James · Jesus · Anger · Faith · Brother · Crown

Questions

- Try to state the argument in one sentence before anyone reacts to it.
- What does the writer repeat? Repetition is usually the point, not a habit.
- What surprised you, or what did you have to read twice?
- The word Anger is doing real work here. What did you assume it meant, and does the passage agree?
- What problem was this letter written to solve, and does knowing that change how the instruction lands?
- Where does this cut against something you already believe or already do?

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SESSION 2 OF 4

James 2

26 verses. Read it aloud together before anyone talks about it.

Who and what appears

Abraham · Isaac · Jesus · Rahab · Faith · Poor

Questions

- What is the writer trying to get these readers to do or stop doing?
- Who is being addressed here, and what do they already know that we do not?
- What is assumed rather than argued? Those assumptions are often the real claim.
- Read this section from where Abraham was standing. What changes?
- Define Faith from this passage alone, without reaching for what you already know.
- Is this a command, a description, or an argument? They are not read the same way.
- What would actually be different this week if you took this seriously?

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James 3-4

35 verses. Read it aloud together before anyone talks about it.

Who and what appears

Wisdom · World · Birds · Brother · Devil · Fig

Questions

- What has the writer already established that this section is building on?
- Which single verse carries the weight of this section?
- What is left unsaid that you expected to be said?
- Where else have you heard Wisdom used, and is it being used that way here?
- What did the first readers face that we do not, and what does that change?
- Who do you know who needs to hear this, and what stops you saying it?

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James 5

20 verses. Read it aloud together before anyone talks about it.

Who and what appears

Elders · Elijah · Job · LORD · Anoint · Death

Questions

- Where does the writer expect pushback, and how do you know?
- Where does the tone shift, and what causes it?
- What question does this section answer that you had not thought to ask?
- What would this section sound like if Elijah were telling it?
- The word Anoint is doing real work here. What did you assume it meant, and does the passage agree?
- Where does the writer move from what God has done to what we should do?
- What is the hardest thing in this passage to accept, and why that one?

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Where this came from

This guide was put together by Protos, a free Bible study site. The background for James came from the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary, which is public domain, and the people and terms in each session come from a verse index we compiled by hand.

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Background and context for James protos-app.com/commentary/james

A Bible dictionary, 1,129 entries protos-app.com/bible-dictionary

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