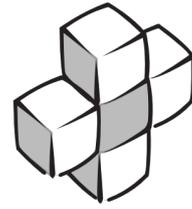




SMACC

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ



Bible Study Series:

James



Our Mission:

To glorify God together in response to his grace

by making disciples of Jesus Christ

About These Studies

These studies were written by various SMACC leaders for use among university students. You are most welcome to use and adapt these studies for your own context. Where you do so please provide the following acknowledgment.

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Study 1: "Undivided Love" (James 1:1-18)

Getting Started

What situations in life tempt you to doubt God's goodness or blame him?

Digging In

Read James 1:1-4

1. What do we learn of the author and the recipients of this letter? (See also Matthew 13:55; Acts 15:12-14; Galatians 2:9)
2. What is James' aim in writing this letter?
3. What does it mean to be 'perfect and complete'? How are trials in one sense a good thing?
4. Is this how you would counsel someone who is suffering? Why or why not?

Read James 1:5-8

5. Who should we turn to when we are not sure what to do? Why? (See also 3:13-18)
6. What should our attitude be? What attitude do people often have?

7. What is the underlying problem for someone who doubts when they pray? Are you ever like this?
Read James 1:9-11

8. What attitude should we have to ourselves? Why?

Read James 1:12-18

9. What is the right way and the wrong way to respond to trials? Why?

10. What is God's character? How will this help someone suffering?

Application

11. How has this passage encouraged you to endure trials in a godly way? What will it look like to count trials as joy?

12. In 1:12 James describes us as those who 'love God'. Yet James acknowledges we are 'lured and enticed' by an adulterous lover – desire (1:14). What desires in your life threaten your love for God?

13. How should the gospel transform your perspective on your life situation? Share an example of how eternity should shape your response to your present life circumstances

To think about for next week...

- What is your attitude to the word of God? Do you consider the law perfect, freeing, a good gift from God your Father? What does your practice of the word of God say about your attitude to the word of God?
- What does this attitude say about your love for your God and Father?
- What are examples of how you care for the needy? Where are you failing to care for the needy? How much do you risk your lifestyle to help the needy?

Study 2: “Undivided Religion” (James 1:19-27)

Getting Started

1. What is your attitude to the word of God?
2. Being honest with yourself, how does your doing of God’s word compare with your listening to it?

Context

James is encouraging believers to become mature and whole in their faith.

Faith in Jesus → testing of faith → steadfastness → mature and whole, lacking nothing.

~ pray to receive God’s wisdom → view life through the gospel, love God not sin

Digging In

Read James 1:19-27

‘Of his own will God brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures’ (1:18). The word of God enables us to reflect the righteousness of God because it reflects God’s righteous character.

3. What examples of obedience and disobedience to the law does James give? What are the outcomes?

Passage	What specific examples of obedience does James give? What does obedience produce?	What specific example of disobedience does James give? What does disobedience produce?
19-21		
22-25		
26-27		

4. Do v19-20 seem to refer to the way we treat God's word or the way we treat others?

5. The book of James is often described as the 'Proverbs' of the New Testament. What further light do the following verses give?
 - a. Proverbs 10:19; 14:29; 15:1; 17:27–28;

 - b. Ecclesiastes 7:9

6. What does it mean to 'receive with meekness the implanted word'? (v21) What is the result?

7. What does James teach us about God's word and how are we to respond to it? (v21, 22-25)?

8. In what aspects of your Christian life are you being hypocritical?

9. What practical steps can you take to be a doer and not just a hearer as we learn from James' letter?

10. James refers to the gospel as 'the perfect law, the law of liberty'. Are Christians under the Old Testament law?

11. James is drawing on Jeremiah 31:31-34. How does this shed light on the role of 'law' in the life of the Christian?

12. How important is obedience in the life of the Christian?

13. What is it to obey God with an undivided religion – one that is pure and undefiled? (v26-27)

Application

14. What is one thing you can do to better practically care for the needy in our midst and around us? What will this involve?

15. God is pure and undefiled. Where are you being made impure by the world? What sin do you need to address to be unstained by the world?

16. How can we as a group, be ensuring that we not only hear God's word but put it into practice? In what ways do we 'deceive ourselves' into thinking hearing God's word is enough?

(Consider speech, anger, filthiness and wickedness, helping the poor and marginalized, standing out from the world)

To think about for next week

- What are the social distinctions you use in your judgment of people? Who do you defer to in life? What do you consider 'cool or uncool', 'in or out', 'high or low'?
- Think of someone you find difficult to love? Do you have fears about loving and caring for them? What are they? How might knowing God and the good news of Jesus change your attitudes here?

Study 3: “Undivided Hospitality” (James 2:1-13)

Getting Started

1. What kinds of people in society do you respect? Who do you look down on?
2. What kinds of people do you find hard to talk to and welcome in church? Why?

Context

3. What has James been teaching us thus far?

Digging In

Read James 2:1-7

As James continues his exhortation to obey the implanted word, he specifically looks at care of the needy.

4. According to this passage, what does it mean to be impartial?
5. Why is impartiality so bad?
6. How does partiality compromise the gospel?
7. In what ways do we commit the sin of partiality in our church?
8. What should our attitude be to the rich and the poor? (See also 1:9-11)

Read James 2:8-13

9. According to James, how is the law summed up?

10. How does showing partiality break that law?

11. Instead of being partial, what are some ways we can love everyone in our church impartially?

12. **Read Matthew 5:17-26.** What is Jesus expectation for Christian conduct?

13. How does James both confront and comfort us in 2:10-13?

Application

14. List all the people you have spoken to in the last two days. What might this reveal about how you show favoritism in your life?

15. When you invite people for dinner / social events, who would you normally invite? Why?

16. Are there particular people at church that you have been failing to love? How have you been challenged tonight to love your neighbor?

To think about for next week

If an outsider were to look at your outward behaviour what would they deduce about what you believe?

Study 4: “Undivided Faith” (James 2:14-26)

Getting Started

1. If an outsider were to look at your outward behaviour what would they deduce about what you believe?

Context

2. What has James been teaching us thus far about the relationship between faith and deeds?

Digging In

Read James 2:14-26

James continues exhorting us to obey the word by demonstrating what true faith is.

3. In 2:14, James ask ‘Can that faith save him?’ There is true faith and there is false faith. Read the four examples of faith James gives and fill in the chart.

Passage	What is the example of faith that James gives?	Is it an example of true or false faith	What principle is James teaching about faith
2:15-17			2:17
2:18-20			2:20
2:21-24 Cf. Gn. 15:1-6; 22:1-12, esp. v1, 12			2:24
2:25-26 see also Joshua 2:1-9, especially verses 8 & 9			2:26

4. What motivated Abraham and Rahab them to make such great sacrifices and take such risks? How are they an example to us of steadfast faith in trials becoming complete and perfect?

5. James has given examples of true faith and false faith. On the basis of this passage what is it have faith in God?

6. **Read James 2:24 and Romans 3:28.** Is Paul contradicting James in what he says? Why or why not? (cf. Rom 6:1-2, 6:15, 12:1-2).

7. **Read Ephesians 2:8-10.** How does this help in resolving the conflict??

Application

8. What would you say to a new Christian who thought that because we are saved only by believing in Jesus it does not matter much what we do now?

9. In what ways are you tempted to regard faith as a mere intellectual exercise? How is this evident in your actions?

10. Are there things you fail to do and you know you fail to do them because you don't trust God? What exactly do you not trust God about? What in God's character and promises could motivate you to start doing these things?

To think about for next week

When you say unkind things about others, what is going on in your heart? What does it reveal about what you really desire?

Study 5: “Undivided Heart” (James 3:1-12)

Getting Started

1. When you say unkind things about others, what is going on in your heart? What does it reveal about what you really desire?

Context

2. How does James want Christians to conduct themselves?

In his introduction James wrote: ‘If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.’ (1:26). In 3:1-12, James goes on to explain what it is to control our tongue.

Digging In

Read James 3:1-12

3. Why does James warn people about becoming teachers? (3:1-2)
4. Why is it so important to bridle our tongue? (3:1-5a)
5. What are our tongues like? Why are they so dangerous? (3:5b-8)
6. According to v9-12, what is the biggest problem with bad speech?

7. **Read Matthew 5:21-22 and 12:33-37.** What is the relationship between our words and our hearts?
8. On the basis of this passage what is it to love God with an undivided heart?

Application

9. What unkind words have you said to, or about, people this week? Take time to write down all the instances.
10. What do these words say about your heart? What was more important to your heart at this time than loving God?
11. What will it take to change your heart?

The sins of speech are many. James goes on to discuss some of them in the rest of the letter – fights and quarrels (4:1-2), lack of prayerfulness or praying with the wrong motives (4:2-3), speaking evil against another (4:11), arrogance and boasting (4:13), grumbling about others (5:9), false oaths and lies (5:12). Pick the area that you think is the biggest issue for you.

Confess your sin to God and ask for his grace to change your heart.

To think about for next week

- Honestly reflect on this question: what do I want most in life?
- Consider a recent quarrel or fight you had – what desires in you did it expose?

Study 6: “Undivided Desire” (James 3:13-4:10)

Getting Started

1. Have you ever witnessed a public fight in your church? What was it like?

2. Consider a recent quarrel or fight you had – what was going on in your heart at the time?

Context

James is encouraging believers to become mature and whole in their faith. Faith in Jesus → testing of faith → steadfastness → mature and whole, lacking nothing.

~ Pray for God’s wisdom → view life through the gospel, love God not sin

~ Obey God’s word → bridle tongue, care for needy, unstained by the world.

Digging In

Read James 3:13-17

3. James says there are two types of wisdom – wisdom that is earthly and wisdom that is from above. Use this table to compare them in James 3:13-18.

	Earthly wisdom	Heavenly wisdom
Origin		
Characteristics		
Results		

4. What role does God's wisdom play in the life of a believer?

5. How is true wisdom shown? How will you know if you are wise?

6. How do these wisdoms affect the level of peace or discord in the congregation?

Read James 4:1-4

7. When we have God's transforming wisdom we will be peacemakers (3:18). So the presence of quarrels and fights (4:1) is a serious concern that indicates deeper problems. What is the heart of the problem?

4:1-3

4:4

8. Carefully reread v3-4. What does it mean to be motivated by your passions? Why?

Read James 4 :5-10

9. According to these verses, what is the real issue?

10. What has God done to address the issue?

11. What is the response that God calls on us to have? (cf. 1:21)

Application

12. In what ways do you see your Christian life being compromised by:

a. Your own desires?

b. The influence of the world?

*Some examples to consider from this passage:

- Lack of purity
- Conflicts
- Being harsh, unreasonable or not gentle
- Bitter jealousy or selfish ambition
- A life that exhibits disorder
- Being judging and lacking mercy?
- Finding it difficult to love people?
- Speaking evil against others
- Anger

13. Having been convicted of this, what should you do next?

14. What is going to grow your heart in an undivided love for God?

15. Consider your prayer life – what do you think is our equivalent of ‘asking for things to spend on your passions’? Do you have a daily time of confession? Do you pray asking God for more grace?

To think about for next week

Why is God’s judgment a good thing?

Why is patience such a crucial virtue in being a mature and whole Christian?

Study 7: “Undivided Judgment” (James 4:11-5:12)

Getting Started

1. What are some of the problems that can arise for a Christian who is rich? What about one who is poor?

Digging In

Read James 4:11-12

2. Beyond the words themselves why is evil speech against our neighbor wrong?

Read James 4:13-17

3. Who does James call to pay attention? (v. 13)
4. How is their attitude inconsistent with reality?
5. **Read Luke 12:13-21.** How does the parable illustrate the foolishness of living without God?
6. What should our attitude to the future be?

Read James 5:1-5

7. Who needs to pay attention this time? (v. 1)

8. What have they done?

5:2-3

5:4

5:5

5:6

9. What does the future hold for them?

Read James 5:7-12

10. Who is being addressed in these verses? (v. 7, 10)

11. How are they reacting to their situation?

12. What should their attitude be?

13. What does the future hold for them?

Application

14. Throughout the passage repeated reference is made to the judgment of God? According to James 4:11-5:12, how should God's judgment affect our lives?

15. What plans or expectations for the future have you made? How did you develop these plans? Have you taken into account that God might have other plans?

16. How are you in danger of idolizing wealth? Are you tempted to hoard it or seek it at the expense of others?

17. How do you feel when other Christians seem to have riches and material wealth that you wish you had? How are you going to cope?

18. Instead of focusing on wealth, what should we be doing?

To think about for next week

How does everything we've been learning from James move us to increased humble prayer and confession?

Study 8: “Undivided Confession” (James 5:13-20)

Getting Started

1. How does everything we’ve been learning from James move us to increased humble prayer and confession?

Context

James began his letter urging us to be steadfast, prayerful, to deal with sin and to stick to the truth. He ends his letter in the same way. Last week we considered steadfastness and patience. This week we will consider prayer, confessing sin and sticking to the truth.

Digging In

Read James 5:13-18

1. In what circumstances does James encourage us to pray? (v13-18, cf. 1:3-5)
2. What should someone do when they are sick? Why?
3. What relationship does James seem to be implying between sickness and sin?
4. What seems odd about vv.15-16? What will happen to the sick person? What will happen to the one who is healed?
5. How does the rest of James letter help us understand why James encourages his readers to go to the elders for healing rather than the doctors?

6. Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, John 5:14, John 9:1-3 and Mark 2:5. Is sickness the result of particular sins?

7. When then is it important that Christians confess their sins to one another? How often do we practice this? Why?

8. What do verses 16b-18 teach us about prayer? How does that relate to v13-16a? (cf. 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2, especially 1 Kings 18).

Read James 5:19-20

9. What is James encouraging people to do in these verses?

10. According to James 5:13-20, what important roles should the community of God's people play in the life of the Christian?

Application

11. When you are sick do you reflect on your sinfulness? What steps should we go through when we are sick?

12. Do you confess your sinfulness to others? If not, why not?

13. Do you seek to bring back those who are wandering from the truth? How do you do this in a godly and helpful way?

Reflecting on James

14. In what specific ways have you been challenged to deal with your sinfulness and grow to become mature and whole in your faith?

15. In what ways have you made progress towards this goal?

16. What can we be praying for you as you work on these things?