

**5 Week Study Guide for Life Groups**



**When I think about the book of James, the thought of a long hike or intense workout comes to mind....**

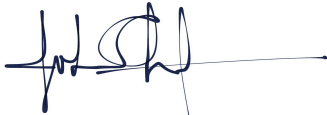
Love it or hate it, a hike or workout provides a unique opportunity. There's a destination and/or goal we want to get to. And every step is intentional and aimed toward that destination or goal. At the same time it can be a long process or journey to get there. You can stop for water, you can take in the sights, you can rest, you can cramp up or even get injured. In other words, it's a challenging journey, but there's grace for that journey when it comes to our faith.

This Life Group season we'll be walking through the book of James. Through this book, James, the brother of Jesus, pushes believers to live a life that essentially resembles the life that Jesus lived. Over the next 5 weeks, we'll look at our lives, and we'll look at God's word, and see if they match. If they do, praise the Lord. If they don't, we'll show each other grace, but also challenge and push one another toward a deeper obedience and resemblance of Jesus Christ. We'll do this in community and we'll do this by learning to open up the Bible for ourselves and discerning what God is saying to us collectively and individually.

REVIVE, my hope is that as we gather together in Life Groups this season, our knowledge and experience of the Word of God increases, and in turn, our church is able to encounter the Gospel of Jesus Christ in transformative, life-giving ways that brings hope to our homes, communities, cities and world.

Through this long walk of obedience, may we come away looking more like Jesus this season than when we started.

In His Grip,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua Chavez', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Pastor Joshua Chavez



## Cross Fit – A Study on the book of James

### Introduction

Have you ever opened your Bible and asked the following questions:

- ✓ What does this passage really mean?
- ✓ How does it apply to my life?
- ✓ Why does some of the Bible seem irrelevant?
- ✓ What do these ancient cultures and traditions have to do with today?
- ✓ I love God; why can't I understand what He is saying to me through His Word?

Many Christians do not read the Bible on a regular basis. Why? Because in the pressures of daily living they cannot find a connection between the timeless principles of Scripture and the ever present problems of day by day living. God urges us to apply His Word to our lives, and to show how to put into practice what we have learned. Applying God's Word is a vital part of one's relationship with God and is the evidence that we are obeying Him. As we spend the next 5 weeks, studying God's Word, praying and fellowshiping together in our Life Groups, be prepared for Him to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

So here we have the book of James being a compact, hard-hitting letter about practicing the faith. It reads like a collection of sermons. Each of its five chapters are packed with pointed illustrations and reminders designed to motivate the wills and hearts of believers. James wanted them to grasp a truth taught by Jesus: "A tree is known by its fruit" (Matt. 12:33; compare James 1:9-11, 3:12-18; 5:7-8, 17-18). For James, religion is not about church membership, financial contributions, or even attending a Life Group. The test of true religion is doing the truth, not just hearing it or speaking it.



## Personality Profile “James”

**Home:** Probably Nazareth.

**Family:** His father was Joseph; his mother was Mary; his older brother was Jesus; younger brothers were Joses, Judas, and Simon; he had sisters whom Scripture does not name.

**Occupation:** Unknown, but since his father and Jesus were carpenters, he may have been a carpenter, too.

**Best known today for:** Leading the church at Jerusalem and writing the book of James.

### Author and Setting

The author of this letter identifies himself as James (James 1:1), but at least five men in the New Testament were known by that name. James the brother of Jesus has traditionally been viewed as the author. James was probably the oldest of Jesus’ four younger brothers (Mark 6:3). Apparently he was at first skeptical about his brother’s claims and ministry (Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21; John 7:5). But after meeting the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:7), he became a strong believer and was numbered among the apostles. He oversaw the church at Jerusalem, and helped resolve the dispute over Gentiles having to keep the Law (Acts 15:13–21).

James was well known to the early church, which may explain why he did not identify himself more fully in his letter. He calls himself simply a bondservant rather than an apostle (James 1:1). James gives few hints by which his letter might be dated. Assuming that the brother of the Lord wrote it, it must have been produced before or about A.D. 62, the approximate time of that was James’s death. Certain characteristics suggest that it might have been written very early, maybe even in the late 40s.



## Key Scriptures in the book of James

- ✓ **James 1:2** “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials”
- ✓ **James 1:5** “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”
- ✓ **James 1:17** “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”
- ✓ **James 1:19-20** “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 1:22** “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”
- ✓ **James 2:20** “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”
- ✓ **James 4:1-3** “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
- ✓ **James 4:6-8** “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”
- ✓ **James 4:17** “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”
- ✓ **James 5:16-17** “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”





**Week 1 - (October 21-27, 2018)**  
**Trials and Temptations**  
**James 1:1-18**

One of the best tests of Christian maturity is tribulation. When God's people go through personal trials, they discover what kind of faith they really possess. Trials not only reveal our faith; they also develop our faith and Christian character. The Jews to whom James was writing were experiencing trials, and he wanted to encourage them. The strange thing is that James tells them to rejoice! The word "greeting" in v. 1 can mean "rejoice!" How is the Christian able to have joy in the midst of troubles? James gives the answer in this first chapter by showing the certainties Christians have in times of tribulation. James teaches that God's purpose is to develop Christians who are mature and complete. If it were up to us, that process probably wouldn't include times of stress, hardship, or testing. But God knows us well, and as our loving Father He knows that our faith and character are developed only through trials and testing. The Apostle Paul's teaching in Roman's 8:28, makes such a practical difference when we face difficult trials. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Although we might be tempted to turn away from God and run during our trials, knowing God's love and remembering His purpose in them can help us even trust Him more.

**Read James 1:1-4 and Answer the Following Questions**

1. How do you normally feel and respond when you have to face a trial?
2. Suffering is apparently the way in which God produces perseverance and maturity in us. Why do you think that nothing seems to be as effective as trials at this? (Read - 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 12:7-10)

**Read James 1:5-8**

3. What does wisdom have to do with facing trials?
4. What does Proverbs 9:10-12 tell us about wisdom?
5. Describe a time when God's wisdom helped you through a problem.



### **Read James 1:9-12**

6. What does James 1: 9-11 have to do with the theme of enduring trials?
7. How should James 1:10-11 affect your attitude toward your career and possessions?
8. What reward awaits the person who perseveres under trial?

### **Read James 1:13-18**

9. When temptation comes, why do people tend to blame others and excuse themselves instead of taking responsibility for their sin and their action?
10. What can you do to prevent yourself from falling into temptation?
11. Think of one particular area of your life where you are being tempted and led into sin. How can you stop excusing yourself? What can you do to prevent this from happening?
12. From James 1:1-18 how would you summarize the difference between trials and temptations?
13. What do you believe God is trying to teach you this week through the trials and situations you are experiencing?

### **Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory**

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. **Romans 8:28 (NLT)***

*The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. **1 Corinth. 10:13 (NLT)***

*Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. **Galatians 6:1 (NLT)***









**Week 2 - (October 28- November 3, 2018)**  
**Dynamic Faith**  
**James 2:14-26**

Faith is a key doctrine in the Christian life. The sinner is saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), and the believer must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Someone has said that faith is not “believing in spite of evidence, but obeying in spite of consequence.” When you read Hebrews 11, you meet men and women who acted on God’s Word, no matter what price they had to pay. Faith is not some kind of vague feeling that we work up; faith is confidence that God’s Word is true, and conviction that acting on that Word will bring His blessing.

In this section of Scripture, James will discuss the relationship between faith and works. This is an important discussion, for if we are wrong in this matter, we jeopardize our eternal salvation. What kind of faith really saves a person? Is it necessary to perform good works in order to be saved? How can a person tell whether or not he or she is exercising true saving faith? James answers these questions and more by explaining to us the true meaning of saving faith. Being a Christian is not a matter of what we say with the lips; it involves what we do with the life. The whole matter of faith and works is summed up in Eph. 2:8-10: (1) the work God does “for us” (salvation) “For by grace you have been saved... not of works”; (2) the work God does “in us” (sanctification) “For we are His workmanship”; (3) the work God does “through us” (service) “created...for good works.”

**Read James 2: 14-17 and Answer the Following Questions:**

1. What does James teach about the relationship between faith and deeds?
2. What illustration did James use to explain how real faith affects a person’s deeds?
3. How did James describe faith that has no accompanying deeds?

**Read James 2:18-20**

4. What would you say to a person who claimed to have faith in Christ but was living an unrepentant lifestyle of sin?
5. What might be some consequences for believers who are not clear on the relationship between faith and works?



## Read James 2:21-26

6. In what ways are Abraham and Rahab different? In what ways are they similar?
7. Why do you think Abraham was called God's friend? What did Jesus mean when He called those who follow Him "My friends" (See John 15:14)
8. James offers Abraham and Rahab as two examples of genuine faith. What did Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac prove? (See Genesis 22:12, James 2:22-23)
9. Abraham showed faith by holding nothing back from God, not even his most valued treasure, his son. Are you holding anything back from God? Is there anything in your life that you wouldn't sacrifice for Him?
10. What do you consider the greatest example of faith you have ever seen? Why?
11. What were some of the victories enjoyed by faithful Old Testament believers? (See Heb. 11:32-34)
12. With what do you need to trust God even though you can't see what the future holds? How can you show this trust?

## Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory

*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. **Hebrews 1:1-2 (NLT)***

*I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. **John 14:12 (NLT)***

*And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. 6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. **1 Peter 1:5-7 (NLT)***







**Week 3 - (November 4 - November 10, 2018)**  
**Taming the Tongue**  
**James 3:1-12**

Through our study so far, we have identified mature Christians by their attitude toward suffering (Chapter 1) and by their obedience to the Word of God (Chapter 2). Now James tells us that a Christian's speech is another test of maturity. We read and hear many words every day and forget what a wonderful thing a word is! When God gave us the gift of speech, He gave us a tool to build with; but it can also become a weapon of destruction. Will we ever be able to control what we say? James says that the tongue corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of life on fire, is a restless evil, and cannot be tamed. Yet we should not give up trying. James indicates in, Chapter 3:2-6, that Christians should work on controlling their tongue. The difficulty with the tongue is that it is connected to the heart. As Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" A tongue problem is really a heart problem. But here's the good news! God specializes in heart problems, giving each Christian a new heart, one that is alive to God's Spirit and sensitive to His leading. Then, as we turn from sin and learn to turn to God in faith and trust, God changes us on the inside, making us like Christ. Apart from God, no person can control the tongue, but with a new heart we can find a new strength to use our tongue to glorify God and build up people around us.

**Read James 3:1-4 and Answer the Following Questions:**

1. What unique responsibility does a teacher bear? In what ways will teachers be judged more strictly?
2. Why is it so difficult for us at times to say the right thing instead of the wrong thing?
3. Why isn't the tongue problem solved when people become Christians? In what ways do you struggle with the tension between "the old man" and "the new man?"
4. James uses some practical examples to explain why controlling our tongues is a key to maturity. He also compares the tongue to a horses bit and a ships rudder. What do these images have in common?

**Read James 3:5-8**

5. How can a person be hurt by the words of others?
6. What practical advice would you give someone who wanted to control his or her tongue better?



### **Read James 3:9-10**

7. What are the ways we sin with our speech?
8. What would you say to someone who professed faith in Christ but was either unwilling or seemingly unable to control his or her tongue?
9. What kind of damage does an uncontrolled tongue do to a family? To a marriage? , To children? , To a church?

### **Read James 3:11-12**

10. What illustrations from nature did James use to condemn cursing?
11. What can a spring or a fruit tree teach us about speech?
12. What weaknesses in our lives does our speech often expose?
13. How can we submit our tongues to the control of God's Holy Spirit? What would be the result?

### **Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory**

*Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? 13 Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies! **Psalms 34:12-13 (NLT)***

*Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything. **Proverbs 13:3 (NLT)***

*Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. 2 They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone. **Titus 3:1-2 (NLT)***

*If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. **James 1:26 (NLT)***

*For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. **1 Peter 3:10 (NLT)***









**Week 4 - (November 11 - November 17, 2018)**  
**Finding God's Will**  
**James 4:1-10**

This chapter makes it clear that there were carnal divisions and disputes among these believers. One cause was the selfish desire of many to be teachers, but the basic cause was disobedience. There was a lack of true separation in the lives of the people. It is tragic when brethren dwell together in conflict instead of unity. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

James doesn't paint a pretty picture of life in the church. It sounds much like life anytime people are together: quarreling, fighting, slandering, and judging. The difference is that there is hope for real change in the church. These problems arise when Christians exchange friendship with God for that of the world. As with all of Satan's treacheries, the world's friendship might sound good at first, but it will soon bring a harvest of sin, jealousy, hatred, and self-centeredness. The good news is that Christians have an alternative, to return to God in confession and dependency. God never tires of welcoming home His wayward children and of lifting them up when they humble themselves before Him. If you find yourself constantly engaged in disagreements and arguments, take a close look at your heart, and come home to friendship with God.

**Read James 4:1-3. Pray and Answer the Following Questions:**

1. What does the Bible mean when it says a war is waging inside of us?
2. When we ask God for things, why do we often not get what we want?
3. What are the wrong motives for prayer?

**Read James 4:4-5**

4. What is the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with people?
5. Why is it impossible to be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time?
6. From your own personal experience and your knowledge of the Word, what are some of the symptoms of friendship with the world?



### **Read James 4:6**

7. How does pride show up in our work? a. Home? b. Church? c. Community?
8. Why does God oppose people who are proud?
9. What is the difference between pride and a sense of accomplishment?

### **Read James 4:7-8**

10. What is involved in humbling yourself before God?
11. Have you ever wondered why at times you might not feel God near you? According to James 4:8, is this a failure on God's part or on our part? What should we do when God seems so far away?

### **Read James 4:9-10**

12. How did James describe the way we should come to God?
13. What can you do this week to help you bring more humility into your life?

### **Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory**

*O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.*  
**Psalms 62:8 (NLT)**

*Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting you. Show me where to walk, for I give myself to you.* **Psalms 143:8 (NLT)**

*In that day the people will proclaim, This is our God! We trusted in him, and he saved us! This is the LORD, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings.*  
**Isaiah 25: 9 (NLT)**

*The LORD is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him.* **Nahum 1:7 (NLT)**

*As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."*  
**Romans 10:11 (NLT)**







**Week 5 - (November 18 - November 24, 2018)**  
**The Life God Rewards**  
**James 5:1-6**

Here in James chapter 5, James lists several sins and shows that the rich were only preparing themselves for coming judgment. If money talks said a popular comedian, “all it ever says to me is good-bye!” But money was not saying “good-bye” to the men James addressed in this section of his letter. These men were rich, and their riches were sinful. They were using their wealth for selfish purposes, and were persecuting the poor in the process.

Jesus spent a lot of time talking about money because there is a close connection between the heart and material possessions. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus asked what it would benefit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul. In this passage, James makes the same point using powerful and dramatic images.

It is nothing less than foolishness to value and pursue things that don't satisfy and won't last beyond the grave. When material possessions become most important, people become expendable. If you have been blessed with riches, guard your heart so they don't become your god. If you find yourself being caught up in the pursuit of material possessions, hear the words of warning and perspective offered by James.

Finally if you have suffered under the hand of rich oppressors (even other believers), know that God has heard your cry and will distribute judgment in His time. The rich person faces a fierce temptation, a temptation so intense that it will consume him unless he lives ever so close to the Lord. What is the temptation that so fiercely attacks the rich? The temptation to bank and hoard money instead of using it to meet the needs of the desperate and dying in the world. The Bible never condemns all rich persons. It only condemns the rich who store up their wealth instead of using it to reach the lost, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the cold and homeless, nurse the sick and sound the glorious news of salvation around the world. God knows that we are without excuse. This is the reason for this passage. To warn all the rich of this world, all those who keep more than what they need. A question that we might ask ourselves personally is: Do you have your possessions, or do your possessions have you?

**Read James 5:1-6 Answer the Following Questions:**

1. How does James describe the lifestyle of the rich?
2. What is the effect of their lifestyle on others?
3. What is the effect of their lifestyle on themselves?



### **Read James 5:1-3**

4. What attitude does God have toward hoarding wealth?
5. How does the love of money and riches affect our relationship with God?

### **Read James 5:4-6**

6. What do luxury and self-indulgence have to do with the trouble that lies ahead for rich people?
7. Why does James speak so strongly against self-indulgence? What kinds of self-indulgent activities are “in now”? Why is this inappropriate for believers?
8. Are you investing time and money in anything that is not really worth much from an eternal perspective? If so what?

### **Read James chapter 5:1-6**

9. Compare the descriptions of the rich in this passage with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. How is this an encouragement to you?
10. It has been said that one of Satan’s strategies is to change the price tags while no one is looking so that people value the wrong things. In the light of this, what do people tend to pursue that has little eternal value?
11. How can you invest yourself even more in what will matter forever?
12. How can you use money to accumulate treasure in heaven?
13. What do you possess that money cannot buy?

### **Here are Some Great Scriptures to Discuss and Bring to Memory**

*Trust in your money and down you go! But the godly flourish like leaves in spring.*  
**Proverbs 11:28 (NLT)**

*Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit.*  
**Proverbs 23:4 (NLT)**





