

A Study of the Book of James: Real Faith Produces Good Works

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says.

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:22-25

This Bible study was written by Marilyn Miller,
a WELS staff minister at Abiding Word Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas.
It has been reviewed by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor-emeritus Joel
Gerlach.

Copyright ©2012 by Marilyn J Miller; MarilynMiller@aol.com; Permission granted to download from welswomen.net and duplicate for Bible study.

A Study of the Book of James:

Real Faith Produces Good Works

Lesson 1

Opening Prayer

Introduction

1. What do we know about James, the author of this letter?
 - He is not one of the two apostles named James. One was the son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John, and a fisherman. The other was known as James the Less, son of Alphaeus and Mary.
 - Half brother of Jesus—probably the oldest, along with Joseph, Simon and Judas also known as Jude. (Matthew 13:5; Mark 6:3)
 - Brother of Jude, author of the letter of Jude (Jude 1)
 - An unbeliever at one time (John 7:5, Mark 3:21)
 - Interfered with Jesus' ministry (Matthew 12:46; John 7:3-4; Matthew 13:57) Jesus gave his mother's care to John rather than his brothers. (John 19:25-27)
 - Jesus appeared to him after the resurrection. (Is this possibly when he came to faith?) (1 Corinthians 15:7)
 - Waited for the Holy Spirit to come after the ascension (Acts 1:12-14)
 - Was married and active in the church (1 Corinthians 9:5)
 - Became the leader (Bishop) of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; Galatians 1:18-19; Galatians 2:9)
 - Mid 40's AD: wrote the letter of James at the time of famine in the eastern Mediterranean (possibly the earliest book of the New Testament)
 - 49 AD: Settled issue of circumcision for gentiles in an important Jerusalem Council meeting. (Acts 15)
 - 57 AD: was a counselor for Paul (Acts 21:18)
 - 62 AD: according to Josephus, was stoned to death by the Jewish high priests and Sanhedrin

2. To whom is the letter of James addressed?

3. What are the main points of the letter?

Chapter 1

Read 1:1-18.

4. How is the outrageous thought of pure joy in the face of trials possible (vs. 2)?

5. Perseverance means patient endurance of hardship; persisting in a state or enterprise in spite of difficulties and discouragement. Read Romans 5:3-7, 2 Corinthians 6:3-7 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 for Paul and Peter's thoughts on perseverance.

6. What comfort do we see in verse 5?

7. James says the poor should take pride in their high position (vs. 9). What does he mean by this seeming contradiction?

8. Can you give an example from the Bible or from your life of a temptation that progressed to a full-grown sin (vs. 14-15)?

What comfort does vs. 16-18 give us when temptations come into our life?

Read vs. 19-27.

9. Does anyone want to share a time when you wish you had been “quick to listen” but “slow to speak”? What is “the word planted in you” and how does it save you (vs. 21)?

10. Not only are we to listen to what God says, but also we are to do it. What are three ways James says we can tell the difference between a “Sunday Christian” and a true Christian (vs. 26-27)?

11. What can you do this week to keep “from being polluted by the world”?

Closing Prayer

Next week: James 2: Favoritism Forbidden, and Faith and Deeds

References:

Jeske, Mark A. *People's Bible Commentary—James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002. 1-21

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1896-1897

A Study of the Book of James: Real Faith Produces Good Works

Chapter 2

Opening Prayer

Read 2:1-13.

12. Why do we usually think favoritism is wrong?

13. What things do we discriminate against in our church?

14. Do we show favoritism in our homes? Can you think of a Bible story where the parents showed favoritism? Did it go well?

15. Reread v.12 &13. Is it okay to act how you want and then ask God for forgiveness afterward? Explain.

Read vs. 14-26.

16. Think of an example when someone's physical needs must be met before their spiritual needs as James indicates in v.16?

17. Why are "deeds" so important in a Christian's life?

18. Read Revelation 3:15-16. How does this passage relate to this topic?

19. Do you feel more led to serve God and live out his will for your life when you are in the Word daily?

20. Which is more important to God: What you do for him or your relationship with him?

21. If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough proof to find you guilty?

How are you going to live out your faith this week?

Closing Prayer

Next week: James 3: Taming the Tongue and Two Kinds of Wisdom

References:

Jeske, Mark A. People's Bible Commentary—James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002. 22-30

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1896-1897

A Study of the Book of James:

Real Faith Produces Good Works

Chapter 3

Opening Prayer

Why is it so hard to be quiet and listen? Maybe because we are busy running households and raising children? Some of us have a job on top of all these other responsibilities. Since we talk all day, is it even possible to watch what we say at any given moment? James tells us in Chapter 3 that as new persons in Christ we will want to control our mouths or they will take over and ruin our lives.

Read 3:1-8.

22. What does James mean in verse 2? Can anyone really be perfect?

23. Why does James compare the tongue to a powerful, raging forest fire?

24. Why can “no man tame the tongue” (v. 7)?

25. If no man can tame the tongue, why should we even try?

26. Read vs. 9-12. As Christians, why is controlling one’s tongue especially important?

Read vs. 13-18.

27. Compare and contrast the world’s definition of wisdom with God’s definition?

28. How can we use spiritual wisdom when it comes to taming our tongues?

How will others know that you have spiritual wisdom?

29. How do we become more spiritually wise?

30. How are you going to tame your tongue this week?

Closing Prayer

Next week: James 4: Submit yourselves to God and Boasting About Tomorrow

References:

Jeske, Mark A. People's Bible Commentary – James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002. 31-35

Life Application Study Bible. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988. 1989-1991

A Study of the Book of James: Real Faith Produces Good Works

Chapter 4

Opening Prayer

Read 4:1-12.

31. What do children fight about and why do they fight?

32. How are our fights with others similar?

33. James mentions three common problems with our prayers in vs. 2 & 3. What are they?

34. In what ways are we friends with the world?

35. Why is this wrong?

36. What hope does v. 6 give us?

37. Describe the seven things that James tells us we can do to subdue our selfishness?

38. What happens to our attitude when we sinfully judge others?

39. What should we do instead?

40. How does sinfully judging others insult God?

Read vs. 13-17.

41. Are vs. 13-15 saying it is wrong to have long-term goals?

42. Give some examples of how we can sin by not doing the good that we know we need to do?

Closing Prayer

Next week: James 5: Warning to Rich Oppressors, Patience in Suffering, and The Prayer of Faith

References:

Jeske, Mark A. People's Bible Commentary – James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002. 37-44

Life Application Study Bible. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988. 1989-1991

A Study of the Book of James:

Real Faith Produces Good Works

Chapter 5

Opening Prayer

Read 5:1-20.

43. In verses 1-6, James warns against hoarding wealth and oppressing others. What is the correct view of money?

44. What kind of treasure should we store up?

45. In verse 7, James compares our waiting on the Lord to the farmer waiting on crops. What must we both do while we wait patiently?

46. James wants us to think about prophets who had “patience in the face of suffering” (v. 10.) Can you think of other examples besides Job?

47. James talks about two kinds of “talk” that are not appropriate for Christians. What are they and why are they not God-pleasing?

48. Prayer is so important. What aspects of prayer is James emphasizing in vs. 13-18?

49. What is meant by anointing with oil in v. 14?

50. Why is it our duty to gently and lovingly guide someone back to a close relationship with God when they have gone astray?

In conclusion, James teaches us what our faith looks like in action on a day-to-day basis. When we read James, it reminds us how God wants us to live. May God bless your efforts to live out your faith daily for his glory.

Closing Prayer

References:

Jeske, Mark A. People's Bible Commentary—James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002. 44-53

Life Application Study Bible. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988. 1989-1991