



Break Chains. Build Faith. Restore Men.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

A five week study for men

ONE CHAPTER A WEEK



f33lg00d.xyz

Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible, English Standard Version.

S T A R T H E R E

The Brother Who Did Not Believe

James was the half brother of Jesus. He grew up in the same house. He ate at the same table. He watched his older brother for roughly thirty years.

And he did not believe.

John puts it plainly. For not even his brothers believed in him. John 7:5. James had more evidence than any man alive and he walked away from it.

Then Jesus died, and rose, and Paul records that He appeared to James. 1 Corinthians 15:7. Somewhere in that meeting a skeptic became a servant. James went on to lead the church in Jerusalem, and tradition says he prayed so much his knees went hard as a camel's.

That is why we start here. James is not a theologian writing from a study. He is a man who wasted thirty years being sure, then spent the rest of his life telling other men how to actually live it.

His letter shows it. One hundred and eight verses, and more than fifty commands. Almost no theory. He writes like a man who is out of time and will not waste yours.

T H E M O N T H

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WEEK 2	James 2	Faith That Leaves Evidence
WEEK 3	James 3	The Smallest Thing You Own
WEEK 4	James 4	Where the Fighting Really Comes From
WEEK 5	James 5	Go Get Your Brother

C O N T E X T

The Man and the Moment

You will read him better if you know where he was standing.

Who wrote it

James, the half brother of Jesus. Paul calls him exactly that in Galatians 1:19, James the Lord's brother. He is not James the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve, who was executed by Herod in Acts 12. This James was not a disciple during Jesus' ministry. He became a believer after the resurrection and rose to lead the church in Jerusalem. You can watch him do it in Acts 15, where he gives the ruling that settles the first great argument in church history.

When

Probably somewhere in the middle to late 40s AD. Many scholars think it is the earliest book in the New Testament, written before any of Paul's letters and before any gospel. One reason is what is missing. The fight over whether Gentile believers had to keep the law tore the church apart at the Jerusalem Council around 49 AD, and James chaired that meeting. His letter never mentions it. The simplest explanation is that he wrote before it happened.

Where he was

Jerusalem. He stayed while others scattered. That matters when you read him, because he is writing from the center to men who got pushed out to the edges.

Who he wrote to

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion. James 1:1. Jewish believers driven out of Jerusalem by persecution, living scattered across the empire. They had lost homes, work, and standing. That is who he tells to count it all joy. He is not writing to comfortable men.

How it ended for him

The Jewish historian Josephus records that James was put to death in Jerusalem around 62 AD, stoned on the order of the high priest Ananus during a gap between Roman governors. A man who spent thirty years not believing died for believing.

What kind of book it is

Wisdom literature. If it reminds you of Proverbs, that is not an accident. It also echoes the Sermon on the Mount over and over, which makes sense coming from a man who grew up listening to the one who preached it. Do not read it looking for an argument that builds. Read it the way you read Proverbs, in pieces, slowly, letting each one land.

T H E G R E E K

Words Worth Knowing

James wrote in Greek. Most of the time English carries it fine. In a handful of places the English word is thinner than what he actually said, and knowing the difference changes how the verse hits.

hypomone ὑπομονή

JAMES 1:3

steadfastness

Literally remaining under. Not waiting for a thing to pass. Staying under the weight without buckling. It is a load bearing word, and you cannot build it in an easy season.

peirasmos πειρασμός

JAMES 1:2, 1:12

trial or temptation

One word doing two jobs. A hardship that comes at you from outside, and an enticement that pulls at you from inside. Same word. Which is why James has to stop and say plainly that God sends the first and never the second.

dipsychos δίψυχος

JAMES 1:8, 4:8

double minded

Literally two souled. The word does not appear anywhere in Greek before James. He seems to have made it up because nothing existing said what he meant. A man split down the middle, asking God for something while hedging against Him.

teleios τέλειος

JAMES 1:4

perfect

Not sinless. Complete. Finished. Brought all the way to what it was made for. When James says let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect, he is not setting an impossible bar. He is describing a man who is done being half built.

T H E G R E E K , C O N T I N U E D

prautes πραΐτης

JAMES 1:21, 3:13

meekness

The Greeks used it for a war horse that had been broken. All the power still there, now under the hand of a rider. Not weakness. Strength with a bridle on it. Meekness is power under control, and that is not a saying, it is the definition.

dikaioo δικαιόω

JAMES 2:21, 2:24

justified

To declare righteous, or to show righteous. Both are in the word. Paul leans on the first, James on the second. That single flexibility is most of what people fight about when they set the two men against each other.

makrothymeo μακροθυμέω

JAMES 5:7

be patient

Literally long tempered. The exact opposite of short tempered. English lost that when it picked patience. James is not telling a man to wait quietly. He is telling him to have a long fuse.

exomologeō ἐξομολογέω

JAMES 5:16

confess

To say the same thing. To agree out loud with what is already true. Confession is not informing God. It is stopping the argument and admitting He was right.

B E F O R E Y O U S T A R T

How to Use This

Read the chapter first.

Every week is one chapter. Read it before you read anything I wrote about it. Ten minutes. Your Bible, not a summary.

Then read the page.

The setting tells you what was happening. What it means is the doctrine underneath. Where it lands is your Tuesday.

Sit with the questions.

Three a week. Write the answers down somewhere. A man who thinks he has answered a question in his head has usually not answered it.

Carry the verse.

One verse a week. Say it in the mirror in the morning. Five weeks, five verses you own for good.

Do it with somebody.

This works alone. It works better across a table from another man who will ask if you actually did it.

One hundred and eight verses.

More than fifty commands.

James did not write this to be admired.

WEEK 1

READ JAMES 1

Trials, and the Man in the Mirror

THE SETTING

James writes to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion. Jewish believers scattered out of Jerusalem by persecution. These were not men in a comfortable season. They had lost homes, work, and standing.

He does not open with comfort. He opens with joy, and it lands like a slap until you see what he actually says.

WHAT IT MEANS

Count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds. James 1:2. He does not say feel happy about the pain. He says count, which is an accounting word. Add it up. Know what the trial is producing.

What it produces is steadfastness. The Greek is hypomone, and it does not mean waiting quietly. It means load bearing. Remaining under weight without buckling. You do not get that from a soft season. There is no other way to build it.

Then he guards God's character. God tempts no one. James 1:13. Trials are not God baiting you into failure. Every good gift is from above, from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation. James 1:17. The circumstances shift. He does not.

WHERE IT LANDS

Two verses in this chapter will change a man's week if he lets them.

Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. James 1:19. Read the order. Most of us run it backwards.

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22. Then he gives the picture. A man who hears and does not do is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and walks away and immediately forgets what he looked like.

That is the whole problem with knowing better. Knowing is not doing. A man can sit in church every Sunday and forget his own face by the time he reaches the truck.

S I T W I T H T H I S

Write the answers. A man who answers in his head has usually not answered.

- 1. Name the trial you are in right now. What could it be building that comfort never would?**

- 2. Where this week did you speak before you heard?**

- 3. What is one thing you already know you should do and have not done?**

C A R R Y T H I S

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

James 1:22

N O T E S

WEEK 2

READ JAMES 2

Faith That Leaves Evidence

THE SETTING

James opens with a scene in the assembly. A man walks in with a gold ring and fine clothing. Another walks in shabby. The room seats one well and tells the other to stand.

From there he moves to the hardest passage in the letter, and one of the most argued over in the whole New Testament.

WHAT IT MEANS

James 2:24 says a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Paul says in Romans 3:28 that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Luther could not reconcile them and called James an epistle of straw.

They are not fighting. They are answering two different questions.

Paul is asked how a man gets right with God. His answer is faith, never earning. James is asked how you can tell whether the faith a man claims is real. His answer is look at what it produced.

Watch how each uses Abraham. Paul points to Genesis 15, where Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness, before he had done anything. James points to Genesis 22, where Abraham put Isaac on the altar, and says there is your proof the belief was real. Same man. The root and then the fruit.

Paul is aiming at men trying to earn God. James is aiming at men claiming God with nothing to show for it.

WHERE IT LANDS

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:17.

A man can say he has changed. He can say it convincingly, in a room full of men who want to believe him. His wife knows. His kids know. They are not reading his statement of faith, they are reading his Tuesday.

This is not a call to earn anything. You cannot. It is a call to stop mistaking agreement for faith. Agreement costs nothing. Faith shows up in a calendar and a checkbook and a tone of voice.

S I T W I T H T H I S

Write the answers. A man who answers in his head has usually not answered.

- 1. If someone examined only your last two weeks, what would they conclude you actually believe?**

- 2. Where are you settling for agreeing with something instead of doing it?**

- 3. Who in your life needs you to show it rather than say it?**

C A R R Y T H I S

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

James 2:17

N O T E S

WEEK 3

READ JAMES 3

The Smallest Thing You Own

THE SETTING

James starts with a warning to teachers. Not many should become teachers, because they will be judged with greater strictness. Then he explains why, and it is about the mouth.

What follows is three images in a row, and every one of them is about scale.

WHAT IT MEANS

A bit in a horse's mouth turns the whole animal. A rudder the size of a plank steers a ship through a gale. A spark you could cover with your thumb takes a forest.

Each one is a small thing with power out of all proportion to its size. That is his point about the tongue.

Then the line that should stop every man cold. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. James 3:9. The same mouth. Sunday and Tuesday, same mouth.

He closes by splitting wisdom in two. There is a wisdom that is earthly and unspiritual, marked by jealousy and selfish ambition. And there is wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason. James 3:17. Notice that real wisdom is recognizable by temperament, not by how much a man knows.

WHERE IT LANDS

Most men reading this have said something to their wife or their kid that they would give a year of their life to take back. You cannot. That is the whole weight of this chapter.

The tongue is small, it is fast, and it is the last thing most men get under control. It is also the clearest gauge on the dashboard. If you want to know where a man actually is, listen to him when he is tired and something goes wrong.

Nobody tames it by trying harder in the moment. It comes from what is stored up. Which is why the reading and the praying and the brothers are not extras.

S I T W I T H T H I S

Write the answers. A man who answers in his head has usually not answered.

1. What have you said in the last month that you would take back?

2. What comes out of your mouth when you are tired and something goes wrong?

3. Who needs to hear you make it right, and when this week will you do it?

C A R R Y T H I S

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason."

James 3:17

N O T E S

WEEK 4

READ JAMES 4

Where the Fighting Really Comes From

THE SETTING

James asks a question straight out. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Then he answers it before anyone can deflect.

Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you. James 4:1. The fight outside is the overflow of a fight inside that a man has not dealt with.

WHAT IT MEANS

He quotes Proverbs 3:34. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James 4:6. That word opposes is a battle word. It is not that God prefers humility. It is that pride puts a man on the wrong side of a line.

Then comes the most concentrated passage in the letter. Ten commands, back to back, in four verses. Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil. Draw near to God. Cleanse your hands. Purify your hearts. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning. Humble yourselves before the Lord.

That is repentance written as a sequence of actions. Not a feeling. Not a moment at an altar. A set of things a man does.

And notice the order. Submit comes before resist. A man who tries to resist the devil without first submitting to God is fighting a war on his own strength, and he will lose.

WHERE IT LANDS

This is the 00 in our name. Starting from nothing. Complete surrender. It is not a slogan, it is James 4:7 through 10.

Most men will fight anything except the thing actually driving them. It is easier to argue with your wife about the dishes than to admit what is at war inside you.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. James 4:10. He lifts you. You do not lift yourself. That is the trade, and every man has to make it himself.

S I T W I T H T H I S

Write the answers. A man who answers in his head has usually not answered.

- 1. What are you actually fighting about, underneath the thing you say you are fighting about?**

- 2. Where are you still holding the wheel and calling it faith?**

- 3. What would submitting look like this week, specifically, with a name and a date on it?**

C A R R Y T H I S

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

James 4:10

N O T E S

WEEK 5

READ JAMES 5

Go Get Your Brother

THE SETTING

James finishes with a warning to the rich who got there by holding back wages, then turns to patience, then to prayer, and then he stops. No farewell. No benediction. No greetings to anybody.

He just gives one last instruction and puts the pen down. It matters what he chose to end on.

WHAT IT MEANS

First, patience. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. James 5:7. A farmer does not dig up the seed to check on it. He waters and he waits and he trusts what is happening where he cannot see.

Then he points to Job, and calls it steadfastness. Job did not endure quietly. He argued, he questioned, he wanted an answer. And James still calls that steadfast. Endurance is not silence.

Then the verse this ministry is built on. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. James 5:16. To one another. Not upward to a professional. Sideways, to a man in the same fight.

And the ending. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death. James 5:19 and 20. That is the last thing he says.

WHERE IT LANDS

He does not end with doctrine. He ends with a search party.

Somebody you know has drifted. You have noticed. He has been quiet, or he has been loud in a way that is not like him, or he just stopped showing up. And you have told yourself it is not your place.

James says it is exactly your place. That is the whole close of the letter.

This is what we mean when we say he helps the next man up. It is not a nice sentiment we made up. It is the final sentence of the book of James.

S I T W I T H T H I S

Write the answers. A man who answers in his head has usually not answered.

1. Who has drifted that you have noticed and said nothing about?

2. What are you carrying that no other man knows about, and who could you tell?

3. What is one thing you are waiting on that you keep digging up to check?

C A R R Y T H I S

*"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that
you may be healed."*

James 5:16

N O T E S

F I N I S H I N G

After the Fifth Week

Five chapters. Five verses you should now own.

James never tells you what to believe about salvation. Paul does that, and does it better. James tells you what it looks like when it is real. He is the practical one, and men need the practical one.

If you got nothing else from this month, take his last sentence. Somebody has wandered. Go get him.

That is not a program. It is one phone call you have been putting off.

T H E F I V E V E R S E S

- † **James 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- † **James 2:17** So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
- † **James 3:17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason.
- † **James 4:10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.
- † **James 5:16** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that...

Somebody has wandered.

Go get him.

James 5:19-20