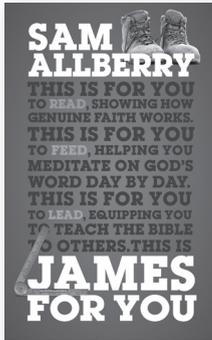




Genuine faith

JAMES

by Sam Allberry



James For You

If you are reading *James For You* (see page 78) alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *James For You*:

Study One → Ch 1-2

Study Two → Ch 3-4

Study Three → Ch 5

Study Four → Ch 6

Study Five → Ch 7

Study Six → Ch 8-10

Genuine faith

The Good Book Guide to James

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Why study James? | 5 |
| 1. Joy in trials James 1 v 1-18 | 7 |
| 2. Listen well James 1 v 19 – 2 v 13 | 13 |
| 3. Faith works James 2 v 14-26 | 19 |
| 4. Tongues on fire James 3 v 1-18 | 25 |
| 5. How to come back to God James 4 v 1-12 | 31 |
| 6. Wisdom in planning, patience in suffering James 4 v 13 – 5 v 20 | 37 |
| Leader's Guide | 43 |

Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. The **Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

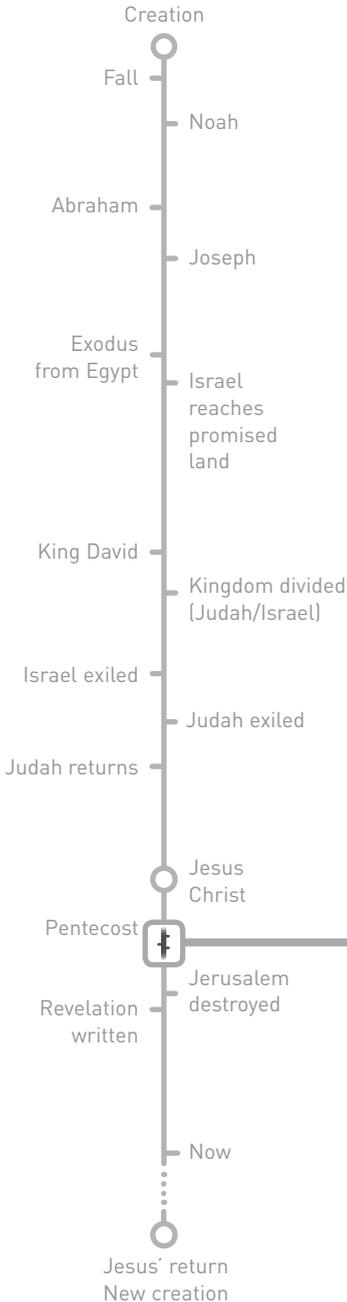
Why study James?

What should it *look like* to be a Christian? How can I be sure my faith is not just theoretical? What difference should trusting Jesus make to my everyday life?

These questions lie at the heart of the letter of James. James is writing to Christians (like us) who are in danger of making Christianity just a matter of hot air—something we claim to have while actually just living the sort of lives we would have been living if we'd never heard of Jesus. James is wanting Christians to pause and check: *what is genuine faith, and does my life show evidence of it?*

After all, real faith in Jesus is not seen in what we claim, but in how we live. It shows itself in all kinds of real-life ways. James knows what life is like, and so this book is all about showing us what difference real faith makes in the real world. We see how Christians are to respond to suffering and trials, injustice and illness, conflict with others and temptation within. James shows us how to think about everything from poverty and wealth to planning and prayer. He shows us what our hearts and tongues are really like. But more than that, he shows us what our great God is like, and how all we do flows from who he is.

These six studies will help you see the beauty and practicality of genuine Christianity. James' letter is full of vivid imagery and punchy language. He does not beat around the bush. In style as well as content, this is down-to-earth Christianity.



BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the letter of James fit into the whole story of God's word?

JAMES poss pre-50AD

c33AD

The risen Jesus appears to James (see 1 Corinthians 15 v 7)

49-50AD

James one of the leaders at Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

61AD

James martyred

1

James 1 v 1-18

JOY IN TRIALS



talkabout

1. What do you see as the relationship between joy and suffering? Why?

- How do wealth and poverty usually influence our joy? Why?



investigate



Read James 1 v 1-12

2. How does James' description of himself and of his readers make reading this letter exciting?

3. What kind of person does James want his readers to be, does verse 12 suggest?

DICTIONARY

Twelve tribes (v 1): a term describing the people of God.

Trials (v 2): testing periods of life: persecution, suffering, ill-health, and so on.

Perseverance (v 4): an ability to keep going.

Humiliation (v 10): a process or event that causes someone to think less highly of themselves.

Blessed (v 12): enjoying the satisfaction and security of living the way we were designed to, under God's rule.

4. What is the main way that we can be or become this type of person (v 2)?

- How is this view different from how we tend to view suffering?

- What reasons does James give for viewing suffering in this way (v 3-4)?

5. What should we do if we struggle to have the “wisdom” to look at our trials in this way (v 5)?

- How will God respond (v 5)?

- What warning does James give in v 6-8? How does “double-minded” (v 8) help us to understand what he means by “doubt” in verse 6?





explore more

optional

▶ Read Romans 5 v 1-8

We are justified through faith (that is, we are declared innocent by God because of Jesus' life and death).

What do we enjoy as a result of this (v 1-2)?

What else do we do, and why (v 3-4)?

How does Paul reassure us this isn't just wishful thinking in:

- v 5?
- v 6-8?

How do Paul's words here reinforce and add to James' message in James 1 v 1-8?



apply

6. How should knowing what Christians will receive in the future (v 12) affect our view of suffering now? What stops us viewing our lives like this?

7. What is attractive about being able to consider trials with "pure joy"?

- How is this a strong witness to those around us?





getting personal

Is there a trial in your life that you have not been considering as “pure joy”? What stops you thinking of it like that?

What would change in your life overall if you were able to see the trial in a joyful way? What might God be doing in you through that hardship that could begin to help you see it differently?

Would memorising verse 12 help you to change your perspective?



investigate

8. How should humble (poor) Christians view themselves (v 9-11)? And rich ones? How does the world view these two states differently?

- Why does the gospel encourage the poor, and humble the rich?

Trials around us can prompt all manner of temptations within us. Understanding temptation is therefore vital for ensuring that we respond in healthy ways to the difficult circumstances we often find ourselves in. We need to make sure we are not “deceived” (v 16).

Read James 1 v 13-18

9. Where does temptation *not* come from? Where does it come from (v 13-14)?

DICTIONARY

Enticed (v 14):
attracted.

Firstfruits (v 18):
the initial batch of a farmer's crop, which proves and guarantees the rest of the harvest is on its way.



- Where does temptation lead, if it is not resisted (v 15)?

10. Temptation does not come from God. What *does* come from him (v 17-18)?

➔ **apply**

11. What are the particular temptations we might face when we feel we are:
- in a period of great trial?

- poor?

- rich?



12. What thought process have verses 13-18 taught us to go through, and encourage others to go through, when temptation comes?



getting personal

Do you need to change your view of relative wealth, and/or of relative poverty? How?



pray

Thank God for his character: the generous, unchanging Father of the heavenly lights.

Thank God for giving you birth through the word of truth, and for promising you a crown of life in eternity.

Share some trials that you are facing, and pray for each other, for wisdom to consider them “pure joy”. Then pray for anyone in your church who you know is facing a particularly difficult trial right now.

