

# Leaders and Helpers Discussion Group Guide

Study Week 2012



Dear Leaders and Helpers,

Thank you for agreeing to lead and help our discussion groups at Study Week 2012.

James is an **extremely practical and easy to understand book**, and it is our hope that the following guide will assist you in leading Godly, uplifting and worthwhile discussion groups. Please remember *this is only a guide*; many of you will have already done your own study so you are welcome to use your own prepared material.

Hopefully by now you have completed your own workbook and any extra personal study you have chosen to undertake, and you have a good grasp of the key lessons and concepts from James' letter. If not, fear not; there is always time to start!

This guide will take you step-by-step through **the key lessons from each section** in James' letter. Each section has an outline of the following:

- The applicable verses
- A brief explanation of the principle/lesson
- Some key questions to ask the group

As you will see each chapter has several sections and you may not have the time to cover all of these. Please note that the sections in **plain boxes** are the ones we think you **definitely need to cover** (as many of these themes reappear throughout the letter) and the remaining sections in **grey boxes** are there if you have time. It is always better to do a little and do it well, than try and cover everything too quickly.

At the end of each day the discussion group leaders for the following day will be meeting with Dave Bowe, Des Partridge and James McCann to discuss the key points, share any extra ideas and make sure everyone is feeling ready and comfortable for their group. Remember, **you can come and see us any time** if you would like some help or general explanations.

Finally, in the lead up to the week **remember to check the website** and our Facebook page for any additional resources. We look forward to seeing you at Study Week 2012 and sharing this amazing letter together.

With love in the faith and on behalf of the committee,

**Dave Bowe and Des Partridge**

## Discussion Group One – Background

### *Listen2serve*

**The Man James: A Servant** Using the workbook, show how James went from being a hostile brother to a loving servant. A bondsman has no rights of his/her own; we must choose between being servant of Sin or a servant of God. Once we appreciate God as our creator and understand we owe everything to him, we will find service can be a delight, not a difficulty. Show how being a servant of Christ actually frees us from sin.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**James 1:1; Matt 6:24; John 7:1-5; Mark 3:21; Luke 8:19-21; Acts 1:14; 15:12-13; Gal 2:9,12; Philemon**

**The Context of Trials** This letter was most likely written around the general time period following Stephen's death in Acts 7. This was the major event that really scattered the believers (Acts 8:1). There is even a possible play on Stephen's name (Stephanos, meaning 'crown') in James 1:12. The believers reading this would have been dealing with trials, hence James makes this an important part of his letter. Using Acts 7 and 8, show how these trials resulted in the subsequent scattering of the believers, to whom James deliberately addresses his letter. Show how trials will only seem a joy if we are trying to fulfil God's purpose in our lives. This can only happen if we know what this purpose is (by reading His word) and by making it a part of our lives (meditating, discussing with our friends, attending classes). Discuss how trials and difficult times can actually make our faith stronger. Provide some examples from the scripture of those who endured trial, and perhaps some personal examples (if applicable). Encourage others to share theirs if they are comfortable.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Job 23:10; Psa 66:10; Prov 17:3; 1 Pet 1:5-9; 2 Cor 4:17; Heb 12:11**

**The Danger of Riches** The area in which the believers were scattered, particularly throughout Asia Minor, was generally very wealthy – this was undoubtedly a trial for the believers and one that is dealt with throughout the letter. Show the contrast between the riches that the world offers and the riches for those who endure temptations as servants of God. Encourage your group to brainstorm all the 'things' the world tells us we need to have (cars, mobile phones, laptops, luxury items, designer clothes etc). Then take a quick survey to see how many people have these things. What are the dangers in trying to accumulate these "riches"? In contrast, what are the riches God has promised us? Why is it hard for us to see these as riches sometimes? Encourage the group to think up three ways we can overcome this. Show how James combines this idea with the previous one: both rich and poor alike are encouraged to have a single-minded focus on their faith.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**James 1:9-12; 1 Tim 6:10, 17-19; Mark 10:24-25; Jer 9:23-24; Eph 1:7; 2:7; Phil 3:8**

## Discussion Group Two - Chapter 1

### *Listen2endure*

**Wisdom/Double-mindedness (1:5-8).** This section shows how God is the only source of true wisdom. Having His wisdom will help us overcome our trials. We must be single-minded in our approach to God. What does it mean to be double-minded? How will this affect our attempts to endure trial? What are some ways we can practice becoming single-minded?

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Luke 16:13; Matt 7:7-11; Matt 21:21-22; Isa 57:20-21**

**Source of Temptation (1:13-16).** It is our own nature that causes us to sin. Discuss the process of temptation as explained by James. How did Christ overcome this? (see Luke 4 and Matthew 4) What are some of the main temptations for us as young people today? How can they be overcome in a practical sense? Take time to work through these!

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Mark 7:18-23; Matt 4:1-11; John 3:3-7; Rom 9:20; 1 John 2:15-17**

**Qualities of Our Father (1:17-18).** What does it mean to us to be “begotten with the Word of Truth”? How are we “born-again” like Nicodemus was told? Encourage any attendees from Sydney Conference 2011 to remember the lessons from 1<sup>st</sup> John (being born of God). What does this mean?

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**John 3:3-7; 1 John 3:7-14; Prov 2:6; Eph 2:5, 8**

**Response to His Word (1:19-21).** How do we respond to what God tells us in His Word? Do we believe that it is powerful to save us? If not, why not? If so, what are we doing about it?

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Isa 2:20; Ezek 18:31; Rom 13:12-13; Eph 4:22; Col 3:5-8**

**Being Doers of His Word (1:22-27).** Being the children of God means that we must show His character. God wants us to listen to his words but also to act on them. God doesn't want children that just listen, He wants people who will act on what He says. Contrast the difference in attitudes of the two men who look at the Word. Discuss the principles of “*visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction*” and “*keeping unspotted from the world*”. What do these phrases mean? How can we outwork these principles today? Show how part of “True Religion” is not to do a great outward show of false works like the Pharisees, but rather the little deeds that no one notices or other people don't like doing (visiting the fatherless).

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Matt 7:21-25; Luke 6:46; 11:28; Rom 2:13; Isa 1:17; 58:6-7; Matt 25:34-46**

## Discussion Group Three - Chapter 2

### *Listen2love*

**Respect of Persons (2:1-7).** What does James say respect of persons is? How do we show this today? Encourage the group to understand this happens a lot amongst young people today. What are some of the ways we judge people? (i.e. clothing, appearance, wealth, education, interests, speech). Highlight the danger of showing respect of persons and how this can prevent us from practising pure religion. Emphasise the point that respect of persons is not a quality of God. He hasn't selected us because of any special worldly characteristics we have, but because we can be moulded to become like him.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 2 Chron 19:7; Prov 24:23; Prov 28:21; Matt 22:16; 1 Tim 5:21; Matt 7:2; Psa 82:2**

**Faith Without Works is Dead (2:14-17).** How does the Bible define faith? Sometimes we talk about "becoming faithful". How can we actually achieve this? Get your group to decide on 5 specific ways we can try to develop personal faith. What are the works James is referring to? (Hint: remind people of the end of chapter 1). What are some practical examples of "works" we can do today? Try to encourage people to come up with specific examples and write down one each that they can practice during the week. Get people to share their "work" they want to develop during the week so we can encourage each other during the rest of Study Week.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Matt 7:21-23; 1 Cor 13:3; 1 Thess 1:3; Gal 5:6**

**Examples of Faithful Works (2:18-26).** Show the simple formula for faithful works, as illustrated by Abraham in Genesis 22: hear, believe, act. Why has James chosen two such different people (a faithful patriarch and an harlot) to illustrate his point here? (Hint: remember what the start of the chapter was about). Show how our faith needs to be active, not passive. Consider all the faithful people in Hebrews 11, and show how they were all "doing" something when they are mentioned in that famous chapter.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Rom 4:12; Heb 11:7-8; Matt 25:34-36; Deut 16:19**

## Discussion Group Four - Chapter 3

### *Listen2control*

**Responsibility of Teachers (3:1-2).** Get someone with an NIV version to read verse 1-2. Get the group to discuss both the responsibility and danger of being influential in our speech. Show how this applies to ourselves and to people around us.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Rom 2:21; John 3:10; Luke 12:47-48**

**Control of the Tongue (3:3-12).** Illustrate the power of the tongue and how it can have a great impact even though it is a small object. Highlight that the tongue is controlled by what we think. Show that inconsistency of speech is not a quality of a single-minded child of God. Get the group to come up with 3 to 5 practical ways to make a habit of controlling the tongue. Everyone probably has a personal experience of when their tongue has let them down. Give people a few minutes to meditate on their own experiences. If someone is willing to share, perhaps get them to share their mistake, and what they learned from it (no names please).

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Job 15:5; Prov 15:1-2; 17:28; Isa 3:8; Jer 9:3-9; Matt 12:36-37; Rom 3:13-14**

**Wisdom from Below and Above (3:13-18).** Remind people of the link to chapter 1:5-8 and what we learned from there. Contrast the way each type of wisdom is shown in chapter 3. How can we manifest each of the attributes of wisdom from above? Get people to think of some specific examples from Christ's life. If possible, get someone to write this down and then allow people to choose one for themselves to take away and practice.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Matt 7:16-20; 1 Cor 3:19; 2 Cor 1:12; 1 Kings 3:9; Isa 11:2**

## Discussion Group Five - Chapter 4

### *Listen2obey*

**Friendship with the World (4:1-5).** The focus of James' "Friendship with the world" section is showing how by allowing worldly influences into their thinking ("earthly wisdom" from 3:15-16) was affecting their relationships with each other. James makes his bold statement to remind us not to allow this thinking to manifest itself in us. Friendship with the world is very common today but we often don't understand when it is happening because the lines become so blurred. Show how by avoiding worldly situations and worldly people, we lessen the chances of us being affected by them. Try to get your group to outline where friendship with the world can occur, and how we can avoid this. How can being friends with the world lead us away from God? (The prodigal son is a good story to use here). Try to encourage people not to express their own opinion ("I think that"), but rather God's view ("the Bible says...") Show how these two approaches can dramatically change whether or not we understand where the line between Godly and worldly is.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**1 Pet 2:11-12; Rom 7:22-25; 1 John 2:15-16; Ezra 9:1-2; 1 Kings 18:21; Psa 26:4-11**

**Submission to God (4:6-10).** Discuss the process we need to go through to be acceptable to God according to James. Contrast the humility needed with the pride of the flesh. Get your group to decide on three practical ways we can control our pride.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Luke 18:9-14; 1 Sam 2:3; Psa 138:6; Prov 15:33; Isa 2:11-12; Matt 23:12; 1 Pet 5:5; Isa 57:15**

**Judging Others (4:11-12).** Show that acknowledging our own weakness should prevent us from pointing the finger at others. Try to link this in with the discussion on friendship with the world – we need to judge our own motives and actions before we do this to others. Explain that there *is* a time for judgment. Places like Matthew 7 are not telling us *not* to judge, just warning us that how we judge others is how we will be judged in turn. How often do young people judge each other? Remember the lessons from Respect of Persons.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Matt 7:1-5; Rom 2:1, 21-23; Isa 33:22**

**Presumptuous Speaking (4:13-17).** To what extent should we plan for the future? What is the balance between doing nothing and trying to plan out every detail (both extremes are wrong)? How do we show our dependence on God? Show the similarity of language between the people here in James and those who tried to build the tower of Babel.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Gen 11:3-4; Prov 27:1; Luke 12:15-21; Isa 56:11-12; Psa 39:5; 1 Pet 1:24; Heb 6:3**

## Discussion Group Six - Chapter 5

### *Listen2pray*

**Judgment to Come (5:1-6).** Judgment is certain for those who use riches for their own ends. Look at the dangers of placing too much emphasis on worldly wealth – remind people of chapter 1:9-12 and get them to share what they learned from that section (covered in the first discussion group based on the background)

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Luke 12:15-21; 1 John 2:17; Deut 8:11-19; Psa 49:6-12; 16-17; Prov 11:4; Matt 19:24; 1 Tim 6:9-10**

**Patient Waiting (5:7-11).** Show that Christ's coming is a cause for us to manifest long suffering in the face of trials. Highlight the strength that can be gained from considering the examples of others who have been through them all before. Remind people of chapter 1:2-4 and the lessons learned from enduring trials.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Rom 8:24-25; Gal 6:9; Heb 6:15; 10:36-37; 12:1-3; Lam 3:25-26; 1 Thess 1:10**

**Oaths (5:12).** Show that we need to be careful in how we express our feelings. Link this in with the next box on sickness and healing.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Matt 5:33-37; 23:22; 2 Cor 1:17-20**

**Sickness and Healing (5:13-18).** Our feelings should be expressed in uplifting ways. If we need help to enable us to overcome any problems we should seek those who can actually help. The true source of strength is God. It is through His Word and prayer that we can be strengthened. We also need to acknowledge that the flesh is weak. Show the power of prayer as it is illustrated throughout scripture in some of the quotes below. Encourage the group to brainstorm some ways to make prayer a) more regular; b) more powerful c) less daunting for all of us. If you need some pointers, see the book "Making Prayer Powerful" by Logos Publications as a starter.

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Psa 18:6; 2 Cor 12:8-10; Matt 17:20-21; 21:21-22; 1 Thess 5:17; Gen 20:17; Acts 12:5-8; Luke 11:11-13**

**Responsibility to Others (5:19-20).** Show the implications of our responsibility towards one another. Help everyone understand that we are all in this together – we are here to help each other get to the Kingdom. This is a very, very encouraging and uplifting point to finish on!

*Some key quotes to consider in this section:*

**Gal 6:1; 2 Tim 2:25-26; Jude :22-23; Heb 12:12-13; 1 Cor 9:19-22; Prov 10:12; 1 Pet 4:8**