

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

James – Living Rightly as God’s People

Sermon Series

02 January 2022	James 1:1-12	Living Rightly through Steadfast Faith
09, 16 January 2022	James 1:13-27	Living Rightly as Disciples
23, 30 January 2022	James 2	Living Rightly by Our Actions

02 January 2022

James 1:1-12

Living Rightly through Steadfast Faith

Share about a time when seeing things from another person's perspective made a huge difference in how you understood events. What happened, and why did it change how you thought?

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

James 1:1 tells us that the author of this letter is James, the brother of Jesus Christ, and that this letter was written primarily to the Jewish Christians in the Diaspora.

Read James 1:2-4.

1. James tells the believers to rejoice in their trials. Why does he say this? How is this different from how you would expect them to react? (vv.2-3)
2. James says that perseverance will complete the believers' spiritual development (v.4; see also Rom 5:1-12) - what aspects of Christian character cannot be developed other than through testing of faith in trials?

Read James 1:5-8.

3. James narrows down to wisdom as the thing we must have in order to be able to rejoice in trials. What is this wisdom? Why does wisdom allow us to rejoice in trials? (v.5)
4. How are we to ask God for this wisdom? (vv.6-8)

Read James 1:9-12.

5. Both the rich and the poor are told to boast in their spiritual reality of what God has done – what is the exaltation that the humble are to boast in, and what is the humiliation that the rich are to boast in? (vv.9-10)
6. Why does James make a point of stating that riches will fade away? (v.11)
7. Where is true blessing to be found? How does this encourage the believers to rejoice in their testing as James tells them to? (v.12)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

8. James is explaining to the believers that they need to change their perspectives – how do their perspectives need to change?

9. We also need to have the same change in perspective that James is talking about. Discuss what it means today to rejoice in difficulties, to be single-minded in our faith, and to rely fully on what God has done.

APPLICATION

10. Share an example of a trial you have faced. What did you learn from it? Based on that experience, would you agree with James that we should count it pure joy when we encounter trials of any kind?

REFLECTION

Write down a key lesson and a key verse from this study.

How should we pray and change in response to what we have learnt?

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY

- **Share, Reflect, and Pray:** Tell your group members what trials you are facing and why it is a trial for you. Ask them how God might be developing you towards spiritual maturity through this experience. Pray for perseverance for each other.
- **Testify:** Read Psalm 107 aloud as a group. Add your own stories of God's goodness and faithfulness – take turns to do this throughout January.

09, 16 January 2022

James 1:13-27

Living Rightly as Disciples

Most change campaigns start with increasing awareness and knowledge. Do you think this is effective? Why or why not?

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

Read James 1:13-18.

1. What does James say is the true source of temptation? How might we have been deceived about this? (vv.13-16)
2. What is the difference between a trial and a temptation? Why is this distinction important?
3. James emphatically states that our Creator God who has no darkness in Him gives only good gifts. How does recognising the goodness of God's character help us to recognise temptation and to rejoice in trials? (vv.17-18, also v.2)

Read James 1:19-27.

4. How does James tell us to act? What reason does he give for this? (vv.19-21)
5. James tells us that we deceive ourselves if we merely listen to the word and do not do what it says. Why is this the case? (vv.22-25)
6. What is the difference between one who looks then goes away, and one who looks and continues to look? How is this difference expressed in our lives? (vv.22-25)
7. What does James consider as proof of true religion? Why are these marks of true religion? How is our community (whether your small group or ORPC) doing in this area? (vv.26-27)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

8. What is the central message of James 1:13-27?

9. We are tempted to hear God's Word without doing it because doing God's Word inevitably leads to trials, difficult times in our lives. Why is obedience so hard for us? What areas of obedience to God's Word are particularly hard for you?

APPLICATION

10. What practices do you have (in your small group, and after corporate worship) to ensure that you are doing God's Word rather than only hearing God's Word?

REFLECTION

Write down a key lesson and a key verse from this study.

How should we pray and change in response to what we have learnt?

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY

- **Discuss:** Talk about what it looks like for your group to do God's Word by keeping a tight rein on your tongues, looking after orphans and widows in their distress, and keeping each other from being polluted by the world. Make a plan and commit yourselves to carry it out.
- **Testify:** Read Psalm 107 aloud as a group. Add your own stories of God's goodness and faithfulness – take turns to do this throughout January.

23, 30 January 2022

James 2

Living Rightly by Our Actions

Many of us have highly trusted people in our lives – who are these? How did you come to trust them?

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

Read James 2:1-13.

1. James tells the believers not to show favouritism and bases this instruction on their belief in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. (vv.1-4) Why is this a fitting basis for James' instruction? (Consider Christ's role and authority.)
2. Why has "God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him" (v.5) What standard of judgement is God using?
3. Read Leviticus 19:9-18. How are God's people to treat each other? In what way(s) is/are what James is saying new or different? (vv.1, 9,12-13)

Read James 2:14-26.

4. James says that faith without works is dead. Why is this so? (vv.14, 17, 24, 26)
5. Consider the example given by James of someone who needs practical help, only for the believer to say merely "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed." (v.15) What does James imply here about what should have been done? How does this convict us of the insufficiency of our own action(s) when fellow believers need help?
6. Abraham and Rahab are cited as examples of faith completed by deeds (vv. 21-25; cf. Gen 22:1-19 and Jos 2, 6:22-25). What do these two examples have in common, and why are they compelling examples for James' argument?

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

7. What is James 2 saying about the relationship between our beliefs and our actions? What significance does this have for our Christian discipleship, both individually and as a church?

8. During the time of the early church, there was little to no social mobility – wealth and other status markers were thus very important to people then. What are today's equivalents?

APPLICATION

9. Matthew 25:31-46 reminds us that Jesus requires his sheep to not only show no favouritism towards the rich and powerful, but to live out obedience through caring for the needy, the stranger, the sick, and those in prison. How do our lives of Christian discipleship compare to this model?
10. Many times, we judge people's value and worth by their worldly achievements and experiences. Making decisions about people's trustworthiness and abilities is an inevitable part of life – what characteristics should we look for instead of what's on their resumes?

REFLECTION

Write down a key lesson and a key verse from this study.

How should we pray and change in response to what we have learnt?

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY

- **Step Out:** This coming Sunday, make it a point to have a friendly conversation with someone who you would usually not speak to, or have never spoken to. This does not have to take place in church. Share your experience with your group.
- **Testify:** Read Psalm 107 aloud as a group. Add your own stories of God's goodness and faithfulness – take turns to do this throughout January.