



THE FOUNDATION SERIES

“The real proof of saving faith is a persistent mindset to obey what Jesus has taught us in His Word, the Bible.”—Anonymous



EXPOSITIONAL OUTLINE AND STUDY GUIDE

True Faith

Growing up in Christlikeness
The Epistle of James

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While all reasonable attempts have been taken to trace the literary and biblical sources used by the author, due to the nature of some of the original materials (old audio/radio or live preaching events), some have been impossible to locate. Any information regarding the origin of any unreferenced statements or quotations is welcomed and will be included in the next revision of the study.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.

Introduction

Not everybody who grows old, grows up. There is a vast difference between AGE and MATURITY.

Ideally, the older we are, the more mature we should be; but too often the IDEAL doesn't become the REAL DEAL which leads to some unnecessary ORDEALS. In a word: *problems!* Everyone faces *problems*, which a dear friend of mine called, "God's sanctifiers." Problems are no respecter of persons. We encounter them in our *personal lives*, on our *jobs*, in our *homes*, and in the *church*. Although the root of every problem we face can be traced back to sin in the human condition (*Rom.5:12*), how we respond to them determines whether we grow up emotionally and spiritually or just grow old.

The letter of James was written (theme) to help us understand and attain *spiritual maturity*. Chapter 1, verse 4 gives us the theme verse:

"...and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Beginning a study of a book of the Bible is something like preparing for a trip—we like to know three things ahead of time:

- 1) Where are we going?
- 2) What can we hope to see?
- 3) How do we get there?

Where are we going?

The context of chapter five in the book of James reads like the front page of The New York Times or Washington Post. The rich were fleecing the poor and the middle class, which included Christians. Therefore, the Apostle launched out in a bold attack against the spirit of covetousness condemned in Scripture, but especially concerning those who were taking advantage of the economic crisis of that day (*vv.1-6*).

Along with *economic pressure* came *spiritual persecution*. When the storm of persecution hit Jerusalem in A.D. 50, many of the Jewish believers were scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. Now living in hostile communities, these early believers were confronted with questions of two stark realities:

- 1) Was their faith real?
- 2) Was their faith sufficient to help them live for Christ, even during unfavorable circumstances?

The Apostle James says, there is a way that you can know. How? Your faith must be tested. In other words, *a faith that is not tested cannot be trusted*. With that, the Apostle sets forth a series of six tests throughout the book that help us to examine the reality of our faith:

- Test #1: True faith is *demonstrated* by its response to the Word of God. (*1:19-27*)
- Test #2: True faith is *revealed* by its reaction to social distinctions. (*2:1-13*)
- Test #3: True faith is *manifested* by its production of biblical works. (*2:14-26*)
- Test #4: True faith is *displayed* by its development of self-control. (*3:1-18*)
- Test #5: True faith is *discerned* by its reaction to worldliness. (*4:1-5:12*)
- Test #6: True faith is *proved* by its response to prayer under all circumstances of life. (*5:13-18*)

The goal of this book to encourage spiritual maturity. The original audience to whom this letter was written were facing many problems that we face today. Challenges like *impatience in difficulties* (1:1-4), *talking but not living the truth* (2:14ff), *controlling the tongue* (3:1ff), *fighting and coveting* [worldliness] (4:1ff), and *collecting material things* (5:1ff). Despite the battles we face as believers, *we can grow in Christlikeness with the Spirit's help*. Grace is needed. However, let us remember the words of Sinclair Ferguson who said, "Grace is not a thing. It is not a substance that can be measured or a commodity to be distributed. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor.13:14). In essence, it is Jesus Himself."¹

What can we hope to see on the journey?

Outline of the Book

1. Faith and Testimony (1:1)
2. Faith and Trials, Part 1 (1:2-4)
3. Faith and Trials, Part 2 (1:5-8)
4. Faith and Two Kinds of Trouble (1:9-12)
5. Faith and Temptation (1:13-18)
6. Faith and Truth (1:19-27)
7. Faith and Temperance (2:1-13)
8. Faith and Testing (2:14-26)
9. Faith and the Tongue (3:1-12)
10. Faith and the Tempter (3:13-4:12)
11. Faith and Tomorrow (4:13-17)
12. Faith and Treasures (5:1-6)
13. Faith and Trust (5:7-11)
14. Faith and Two-Facedness (5:12)
15. Faith and Transformation (5:13-19)

One of the popular TV shows when I grew up was "Dragnet," starring Jack Webb as Joe Friday, a detective with the Los Angeles Police Department. Joe Friday was a no-nonsense cop. His famous line was, "Just the facts, Ma'am." He didn't want to hear anything irrelevant to solving the case. If somebody went off on a tangent, he cut to the quick with, "Just the facts, Ma'am." James is the Joe Friday of the New Testament. He cuts to the bottom line without messing around. He's not really interested in hearing your profession of faith. He wants to see your practice of the faith. Several writers refer to James as *the least theological epistle* in the New Testament, except for Philemon. However, this is not true.

Douglas Moo points out that James addresses several key areas to theology.

- **God**—What is it about God that you need to know that will influence the way you live every day? How would you rate your knowledge of God? How would God describe your knowledge of Him? (1 Cor.8:1b-3)

James argues in this book that the kind of conduct that we are expected to live out is fueled, if you will, by our understanding of **the nature of God**. In chapter 1 verse 5, our confidence to ask God for wisdom is linked to our comprehension of **God's willing generosity**. In chapter 1 verse 13, our mind is to be strengthened by the knowledge that everything He gives is perfect and He is incapable of being enticed by evil and He is never the author of it. In chapter 1 verse 17, our conduct is to be examined because we understand that **God is good and His goodness does not fluctuate**. In chapter 4 verses 4-10, it is a

¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *Grace Alone: How the Grace of God Amazes Me* [Orlando, FL; Reformation Trust, 2010], xv

knowledge of **God's character and jealousy** that calls us to repentance and surrender, because to give our affections to the world is to commit *spiritual adultery*. However, because **God is so gracious**, if you've been "two-timing" God—as we called it when I was a kid—*God will take you back if you sincerely repent*. In chapter 2 verse 19, it is our understanding that there is only **one God**, and this God is both "**Lawgiver**" and "**Judge**" (4:12). In other words, He wrote the Book and He is the One who truly knows if you have kept the Book. The good news is that appellation (title) "Judge" is given to our Savior, Jesus Christ (5:7-9).

- **Eschatology**—if you knew the Lord's return was scheduled for tomorrow at 8:00am, what would you change about your current lifestyle? If you knew that He was about to knock at your front door in ten minutes, how would you prepare for His arrival?

What does James believe about the coming of the Lord? Chapter 5 verses 8-9 tells us that He considers it to be imminent—"the Lord is near...the Judge is standing right at the door." Although James affirms what the other writers do—namely, that the time of His return is unknown—James views the uncertain time as a reason for *holy living*. In verses 2:12-13; 3:1; and 5:1-6, 9, 12, James warns about the coming judgment, but he also draws attention to the reward that will be given to those who have proven faithful in service (1:12, 2:5; 4:10; 5:20). We will also discover in this book that James holds to the same kind of "inaugurated eschatology" typical of the New Testament perspective: the days of the fulfillment of God's promises have begun, but a climax to those days is yet expected. It is the "already but not yet" kingdom mindset that is the basis for James' ethics.

- **Faith, works, and justification**—which equation is true: *faith plus works equals justification*. Or, *faith equals justification plus works*?

To the untrained reader, it may appear that James and Paul are at odds about the relationship between faith, works, and justification. However, there is no controversy between these two servants of Christ, they just speak about the subject from different perspectives. James *compliments*, not contradicts, Paul's doctrine of justification by faith (Rom.3:28; James.2:24). Paul explains the *source of faith*, James explains the *expression of faith*. Paul deals with *inner faith* as God sees it, James deals with *outward fruit* as man sees them. Paul is like a miner, sinking deep into the shaft of theology to discover the origin of faith. James is like a jeweler, who sees the value of faith and now he examines it for clarity, cut, color, and carat.

Paul is combating a Jewish tendency to rely on *obedience to the law for salvation*. James is contending against an under-emphasis on works that turns faith into merely *head-belief*. Paul's argument is that no one is justified by works—for a person cannot be justified by God based on virtuous deeds (Rom.3:20). *Conversion precedes works*. James says, I agree—and if the *faith* and *conversion* are true, *works will follow*. Paul is looking at the beginning of Christian life. James is looking at the end. James' argument is that once a relationship and union with God through Christ is established by faith, there must be *works flowing from it that will be used by God at the last judgment as evidence of our genuine union with Jesus*.

It's not that James discounts the importance of sound doctrine, but rather that he wants to see that doctrine affecting *how we live*. Talk is cheap; James wants to see results. Of the 108 verses in the book, 54 (half) contain *imperative* verbs. James is like a crusty sergeant barking orders at the troops. He wants to see some action!

How do we get there?

How can we get the most out of this letter?

- **First, we must be *born again*.** Apart from spiritual birth there can be no spiritual maturity. James writes with the assumption that his readers have been born again (*1:18*). This is brought about by means of the Spirit of God and the Word of God (*1 Pet.1:22-23, Titus 3:5*).
- **Second, we must honestly *examine ourselves in light of God's Word*.** In this letter, James compares the Word of God to a mirror (*James 1:22ff*). As we study the Word, we are looking into the divine mirror and seeing ourselves as we really are. We must be honest about what we see and not merely glance at the image and walk away.
- **Third, we must *obey what God teaches, no matter the cost*.** We must be "doers" of the Word and not "hearers" only. The blessing does not come in studying the Word, but in doing what it says (*James 1:25*).
- **Fourth, we must be *prepared for some extra trials and tests*.** Whenever we are serious about spiritual growth, the enemy gets serious about opposing us. If we wish to develop patience, we must expect some trials (*James 1:3*). However, in the end it will be worth it (*James 1:12*).
- **Finally, we must *measure our spiritual growth by the Word of God*.** We should not measure ourselves by comparing ourselves with other Christians (*2 Cor.10:12*). We must use the Word of God, and the standard is the Son of God.

How This Study Guide Works

- **Expository Outline**—Expository is a multi-dimensional word arising from a Latin root (*expositio-onis*) which means “a setting forth, a laying open, or an uncovering.” However, this “laying open” is not about every real-life issue that we deal with like raising kids, managing finances, or building marriages. Exposition has to do with “magnifying the voice of God in the text of Scripture.” True exposition is not a verse-by-verse commentary on a passage. In exposition the aim is to crystallize the truth set forth and to focus on the main message of the passage or text. When true exposition happens, people should walk away saying, “So that’s what God means by what He says!” (Cf. *Neh.8:8; Luke 24:27*). The design of this study is to help you dig into the text, and the outline simply lays out the structure or the “bones” of the text. Interpretation clues will help you chew on the meat of each section.
- **Observation, interpretation, and application format** will help you go deeper into the text of Scripture.
- **Interpretative clues** will be woven throughout the outline in order to make you think through the text. Cross references will be added to support important points.
- **Applicational questions** will be strategically placed to help the readers to apply the truth of God to live like a fresh coat of paint in a room.
- **Applicable memory verses** will place us in a position to reclaim *the biblical art of meditation*. Robert J. Morgan says that “meditation is the process by which our thoughts come to mirror God’s thoughts...meditation gives peace when the world is upended, energy when work is unending, hope when the outlook is bleak, composure when the stress is great, and help when resources are low.”
- **Insights on various themes**—Here we will offer an illustration, reflection, comparison, or deeper theological angle with the goal of causing you to worship and praise the Lord.



In Lesson 2 of *The Fundamentals of the Faith Study Guide* by John MacArthur on *How to Study the Bible*, a suggested method of grasping the Bible is given—**hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating**. Compare those five methods of learning Scripture to the fingers on your hand. If you hold the Bible with only two fingers, it is easy to lose your grip. But as you use more fingers, your grasp on the Bible becomes stronger.

If a person *hears, reads, studies, memorizes,* and then *meditates* on the Bible, his/her grasp of its truths become firm; they are part of his life. As the thumb is needed in combination with the fingers to complete your hold, so meditation combined with *hearing, reading, studying,* and *memorizing* is essential for a full grasp of God’s Word.

Format of the Study Guide

OBSERVATION

What do I see?

Howard Hendricks—“So many people are trying to interpret the Bible, but they don’t study it. They don’t answer the question of ‘What do you see going on in the text?’ All of this wasted time is spent trying to figure out what the Bible means without a basic understanding of what it says. If you can’t understand the text, then ultimately you can’t communicate it.”

Seek to observe the text in these ways:

- Thoughtfully—Be a detective.
- Repeatedly—Read entire books at a time.
- Patiently—Spend quality time in each book you study.
- Selectively—Decipher the who, what, where, when, and how in the text.
- Prayerfully—Don’t copy others; ask God to reveal things to you.

INTERPRETATION

What does it mean?

Seek to grasp how the context fits with literary genres, history, and culture. Work to compare *words*, *themes*, *phrases*, and *styles* of the text with other biblical texts. This will tell you if your observations fit the culture. Hendricks warns, “Don’t lose sight of the value of consultation in the process—using other resources to ensure your interpretation is accurate.”

APPLICATION

How does it work?

Application is about what the text means FOR you. Before we can be certain our application is correct, each person needs to know the text, relate it to life, meditate on its meaning, and then practice it. Here are nine application questions to consider:

- Is there an *example* for me to follow?
- Is there a *sin* to avoid?
- Is there a *promise* to claim?
- Is there a *prayer* to repeat?
- Is there a *command* to obey?
- Is there a *condition* to meet?
- Is there a *verse* to memorize?
- Is there an *error* to mark?
- Is there a *challenge* to face?



Memorizing Scripture

Irene Johnson

"You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead."—Deuteronomy 11:18

What does it mean to fix God's words in your heart and mind? Among other things, it means to be continually conscious of the Bible's teachings as you go through your daily routine. One practical way to make sure that God's words are always close at hand is to memorize verses and passages from the Bible. At first glance, memorizing Bible verses might seem a strange activity. For many Christians, Bible verse memorization is something kids do in Sunday school, not something that serious adults do. And if you didn't grow up reciting memorized Bible verses to your Sunday school teacher, the idea of intentionally memorizing parts of a book—even *the Book*—might seem odd.

But there's power in the act of memorizing—of becoming so familiar with a word, phrase, or verse that it springs to mind instantly when something happens to trigger the memory. When you've truly internalized something, it can stay with you all your life—consider how easy it is to recall the lyrics to pop songs from your youth. If you can still remember the lyrics to a Bon Jovi album from the '80s, you're quite capable of committing a few Bible verses to memory!

To find out the best ways to memorize Scripture, we turned to a truly huge and committed resource—Bible Gateway users! We asked Bible Gateway fans to share their Bible verse memorization tips. We've combed through the hundreds of responses and picked out our favorite Bible memory tips. So without further ado, here are...

Tips for Memorizing Bible Verses

1. Choose a verse to memorize that speaks to something in your life right now.

A Bible verse that's relevant to what you're going through is easier to memorize than one that speaks to a topic that's abstract to you.

2. Start small.

Choose a short verse to start with and make it even shorter by breaking it down into pieces. Memorize the first five words in the verse first, and when you've got them down, add the next five. As you become more confident, you can add more words, sentences, and even entire verses—but don't add anything new until you've got the previous words down pat.

3. Write it down.

A vast majority of Bible Gateway fans suggested this simple strategy: *write the verse you're memorizing down on paper*. But don't just write it once; write it many times—five or ten times is a good start (and some people write out their memory verses up to 50 times!). Physically writing the words out is an extremely useful, tactile memory aid.

4. Say it out loud.

Just as writing a verse out can help in memorizing it, so speaking the words aloud is an excellent way to burn them into your memory. One person suggested turning the radio off during your commute to work or school each day and reciting your memory verse out loud instead.

5. Incorporate the verse into your prayers.

When you pray, include elements of the verse in your words to God. Pray that God will help you understand and apply the verse to your life. Pray for God's help in fixing the verse in your heart and mind.

6. Put it everywhere.

Many people suggested writing your memory verse out on multiple index cards or sticky notes (combine this with tip #3 above) and putting them all over the place, so that you'll see the verse many times throughout your day. Tape the verse to your bathroom mirror or computer monitor. Tuck it into your purse, lunch sack, car glove compartment, school textbook, pockets...anywhere you'll see it. One person suggested making the verse your computer desktop background, and another goes so far as to laminate the verse and hang it in the shower!

7. Use music to help.

Do you find it much easier to remember lyrics than spoken words? Try setting the Bible verse to a simple tune (perhaps repurposing a song you already know well) that you can sing to yourself. If this sounds like a strange suggestion, consider that many famous hymns and worship songs use Bible verses as their lyrics, and were written specifically as aids for Bible verse memorization.

8. Make it a game.

Turn the act of memorizing into a personal challenge! You might write the verse out on flashcards, leaving key words blank, and quiz yourself. Get some friends or family members to help quiz you, or even to memorize the verse along with you and encourage/challenge you.

9. Break the verse up in phrases and look for common words.

Look for phrases that give an individual thought. Contemplate the meaning of each phrase. Be aware of repeated words found in each phrase.

10. Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Repetition is a good teacher.

11. Keep in mind the benefits and promises of God that He gives to those who memorize/meditate and trust that they will come to fruition.

Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1, and Psalm 119:9-16 to name a few verses.