

Prayer & Study Groups:

The Letter of James - An Overview:

James is a general epistle, which means it doesn't seem to be written to any particular church. It is addressed to the 'twelve tribes,' and James probably had Jewish Christians in mind as his original readers. However, the topics it covers are universal and deal with issues that confront every believer and church. It is, therefore, a highly relevant and practical book for all Christians.

James has been called 'the Proverbs' of the New Testament as it is filled with exhortations to Christians about the way they should live their lives now that their life has been changed by Christ. There are many different and seemingly disconnected themes in James, but the primary message is that believers in Christ should not just hear the word and believe it, but they should also do what it says. The key verse is James 1:22 - *'But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.'*

Bible Study 1 - James 1:1-11

- James was the brother of Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph. How does this knowledge make the opening line so striking? What can we personally learn from these words?
- What is the connection between verse 1 and 2?
- Verses 2-4 are a chain argument in which one thing leads to another. Trace the chain that James describes. What is the end result of our trials?
- We need God-given wisdom to live as a Christian in this world of trials. What lessons do we learn from verses 5-8?
- The word translated 'doubt' in verse 6 is literally 'dispute.' James uses the word to refer to a person disputing within one's own self and who is failing to trust God. What are some strategies Christians can use to fight doubt?
- James has much to say in his letter about poverty and wealth. What is the Bible's general opinion of wealth - that it is evil, or that it is dangerous? What other passages of Scripture support your answer.
- What are the lowly and the rich exhorted to do in verses 9-11?
- What kinds of things besides wealth do we tend to rely on and boast in for a sense of well-being and security, rather than on God?
- What practical things can we do to follow these exhortations?