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# Study Series: James

## *Questions about the overall message of James*

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1. Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century Protestant reformer, had little regard for the Letter of James and considered it to be “an epistle of straw,” owing perhaps to the fact that the letter does not mention Christ or emphasize salvation. Over the years, however, many have come to disagree with Luther’s assessment, believing that the Letter of James is a powerful witness in its own right that speaks to the moral behavior that is to characterize Christian identity. What are your thoughts with regard to Luther’s assessment? How do you view the Letter of James?
2. Scholars have noted how some of the sayings in James parallel those of Jesus, including several from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7). Compare the following passages:
  - James 1.2 and Matthew 5.11,12
  - James 1.6 and Matthew 21.21,22
  - James 1.22 and Matthew 7.24-27
  - James 2.8 and Matthew 22.39
  - James 2.13 and Matthew 5.7
  - James 4.10 and Matthew 23.12
  - James 4.11,12 and Matthew 7.1
  - James 5.2 and Matthew 6.19,20
  - James 5.12 and Matthew 5.33-37
3. A number of passages in James also parallel verses from the book of Proverbs. Compare the following.
  - James 1.19 and Proverbs 10.19
  - James 2.15,16 and Proverbs 22.9
  - James 3.6 and Proverbs 16.27
  - James 3.8 and Proverbs 16.28
  - James 4.1 and Proverbs 20.3
  - James 4.2 and Proverbs 14.30
  - James 4.6 and Proverbs 3.34
  - James 4.10 and Proverbs 15.33
  - James 4.13 and Proverbs 27.1
4. How does your new understanding of James affect the way you understand other parts of the Bible?
5. What did you learn about God from your reading? About God’s expectations of us as humans? About our expectations of God?

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## *Questions about James*

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1. Apparently the letter of James was written to people who were having their faith tested (1.3). Name some ways the faith of the early Christians was tested. Does this kind of testing still occur today in the world? If so, where? What can be done to help those who are being tested or persecuted?
2. Read again the advice the writer of James gives about hearing and obeying (1.19-27). Which piece of advice do you find most challenging? Why?
3. The writer of James was aware that the church included both rich and poor people (1.9-11; 2.1-9; 5.1-6). What does he say about how Christians are to treat rich people and poor people? What warnings does he give to rich people?
4. The writer of James has much to say about how Christians are to speak to others (1.19; 3.1-12; 4.11-17). What are the dangers of speaking rashly or in anger? Of bragging? What are some positive ways in which Christians can speak out?
5. Re-read 2.14-26. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Why?
  - a. It is possible to have faith without doing kind deeds.
  - b. Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is dead.
  - c. Faith is trust in God and need not be proved by doing good deeds.
6. Compare the "wisdom that comes from above" with earthly wisdom (3.13-18). What are the results of each kind of wisdom? What can Christians do to receive the wisdom that comes from above?