



Faith that
WORKS

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J A M E S

GUIDE BOOK 1

Faith that **WORKS**

JAMES

At Christ Central our prayer is to see a flood of lifelong disciples of Jesus. As we think about what it means to be real authentic disciples of Jesus, the New Testament book of James is incredibly helpful. James has a 'straight to the point' style where he teaches on what Christians are supposed to 'do', and so in a good but piercing way this book helps to show what can be our sadly shallow way of living the Christian life. As we'll discover, Christians aren't supposed to be just thinkers, but doers. Christians are supposed to have a true knowledge of God which lead to true action. Christian faith should lead to getting our hands dirty in the pursuit of compassion, justice and godly living that sets us apart as belonging to Jesus and not to the world. Christian faith is supposed to be a faith that works!

James will be preached on Sundays and then in the following week our Growth Groups will look at the same passage. As you'll see, this Growth Group Guidebook contains the first four studies and so there will be two more studies to come that will take us up to the Easter break. The series will look like this:

Sunday 21 February *James 1:1-18*

Sunday 28 February *James 1:19-27*

Sunday 7 March *James 2:1-13*

Sunday 14 March *James 2:14-26*

Sunday 21 March *James 3:1-18*

Sunday 28 March *James 4:1-12*

EASTER



YOUR *Growth Group* COMMUNITY

In 2021 we desire that our Growth Groups keep growing as real communities where there is a developing sense of mutual desire to see each other grow in Christ on mission for Christ. To this end, a regular meal will now be a feature of our Growth Groups because we believe sharing food around a table can be a powerful and beautiful environment to share life and grow in affection for each other. How each group will logistically do the meal will be up to each group but as a member of the group you'll need to be part of the conversation and you'll need to be committed in your weekly attendance to make the meal a positive group experience for everyone.

You'll notice that these James studies have less questions than previously and this is a deliberate approach because we want groups to spend time with each other over a meal first before getting into the study. But though there are not as many questions, we think the ones we've chosen help to zero in on helping us to understand the passage and apply it in our lives. If our discussion on God's word isn't about how to live it out, then we'll be missing the point of James!

To help our Growth Groups have a good discussion in the actual bible study time, we think a regular question during the meal time could be:

What did you find helpful or interesting from Sunday's bible talk?

And if anyone was not there on Sunday for any reason, it would well worthwhile listening to the talk on our  **WEBSITE** or watching it on our  **YOUTUBE** channel.



2021

BIBLE READING PLAN

People across our church have the personal habit of reading the bible for themselves during the week. The discipline of personal Bible reading (sometimes called 'a quiet time') is part of nourishing a growing relationship with God. For many of us, keeping to this discipline is a struggle in the midst of a hectic life, but the continual effort to have this discipline is part of the journey of growth.

There are many bible reading plans available and you can find a myriad of great websites and apps. Some people like to read the bible through with some speed eg. read all of the bible in a year, but the church bible reading plan we're making available for the start of 2021 is much slower! This is five readings from Luke's gospel per week and also an extra optional reading of a Psalm. As you follow this plan it will take you up to Luke's account of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in the week leading up to Easter. We've placed this reading plan at the start of each study to make for easy reference for you.



LUKE & PSALMS BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 5: *February 22-28*

- Luke 9
- Luke 10:1-24
- Luke 10:25-42
- Luke 11:1-13
- Luke 11:14-54

Extra Reading

- Psalm 21
- Psalm 22
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 24
- Psalm 25

Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

- Choose a time in your day that can be your regular Bible reading time.
- Don't expect you can live like a monk in solitude. If the only time you have involves kids playing around you, or at the breakfast table with others, or during your commute, that's fine.
- Before you read the passage, pray to God for help in concentrating, understanding and applying God's truth to your life.
- Read the passage/s. If you have time, read it twice to help the words sink deeper into your thinking.
- Think about what this passage says about Jesus and your response to Him.
- Finish with prayer. A helpful approach to personal prayer is the 'ACTOR' approach

ADORATION - "I love you..." Praise God and express your love to him.

CONFESSION - "I'm sorry..." Admit to God how you've failed him.

THANKS - "Thankyou for..." Thank God for what He's done for you.

OTHERS - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

REQUEST - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.

STUDY 1

Consider it pure joy

JAMES 1:1-18

Please read the following passage:

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶ Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Welcome to the first week in our bible teaching series "James - Faith That Works". This short, but very practical letter was written by one of the actual siblings of Jesus, and is more directly connected with Jesus' teachings than any other New Testament book. The teaching style in the book is also similar to that of Jesus: a 'rapid-fire' set of proverbial sayings which guide the reader to an understanding of God and the way He wants us to live.

An important feature of the book is that, unlike other New Testament letters, its main purpose is not to correct wrong teachings or incorrect understandings. Instead, it was written mainly to tell believers how to behave like genuine followers of Jesus. The section we are looking at this week teaches us that believers should seek wisdom from God (James 1:5). We need God's wisdom so that we can remain faithful to Him through suffering, and reach spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4). We can have confidence that God richly rewards those who trust in Him throughout difficult times (James 1:12).

1. James addresses his letter to "the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" (James 1:1). Who might these recipients be? Why was James writing to them?

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2. The trials that believers face (which might include such hardship as poverty, persecution, illness, depression or grief) are not generally associated with joy. Re-read James 1:2-4. How do these verses encourage us to consider trials "pure joy"?

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The flow of James' thought in these verses is that when our faith is tested by hardship and suffering, the result is perseverance (James 1:3) (Paul made the same connection between suffering and perseverance in Romans 5:3). James continues: for the person persevering through trials, the end result is being mature, complete and not lacking anything (James 1:4). Believers in possession of God's wisdom who encounter trials, can genuinely rejoice knowing that the ultimate outcome of their suffering is spiritual wholeness.

3. James states *"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord"* (James 1:6-7). If a Christian has any doubts, is she or he able to receive anything whatsoever from God? Why, or why not?

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James is not stating that prayers can never be answered when there is any degree of doubt present. In our fallen, imperfect state, some degree of doubt seems inevitable, at least occasionally. The point James is making is that God responds to our prayer only when we live consistently faithful lives. Our personal walk with God should be the opposite of the habitual doubter, described in the very next verse, who *"is double-minded and unstable in all they do"* (James 1:8).

4. How might a believer address the problem of doubt in their walk with God?

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James characterises the believer who doubts as “*double-minded and unstable in all they do*” (James 1:8). One logical solution to this spiritual problem is to strive for single-minded devotion to God – as He commanded ancient Israel: “*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:5; see also Jesus’ words in Matthew 22:37). Later in his letter, James urges the double-minded to purify their hearts (James 4:8), indicating that repentance is a crucial strategy for dealing with doubt.

James is careful to ensure his readers understand that while God may bring or allow trials, He never tempts people to sin. The reality is that every trial brings with it temptation: Poverty might tempt God’s people to question His perfect provision. Harsh persecution and oppression might tempt them to question His justice – or even His very existence. James’ readers were at high risk of “*being dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed*” (James 1:14), but we shouldn’t think we are immune to temptation simply because our lives are so much safer and comfortable than those of the First Century Christians. Every time we face a trial (for example, sickness or injury, loss of a loved one, unemployment etc.) we face temptation to sin.

5. How would you explain to a non-believer the difference between being tested by God, and being tempted by Him (see James 1:13-15)?

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6. What is “*the word of truth*”, through which God chose to give us birth (James 1:18)?

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7. What are trials (big or small) you are facing in life for which you need a new mindset of joy and wisdom to see that it is our good Heavenly Father's means to grow you and make you spiritually mature?

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 **PRAY**

As a group, or in smaller groups, finish by praying for each other, and for the needs of others within our church family.

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LUKE & PSALMS BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 6: *March 1-7*

- Luke 11:33-54
- Luke 12:1-12
- Luke 12:13-34
- Luke 12:35-13:9
- Luke 13:10-21

Extra Reading

- Psalm 26
- Psalm 27
- Psalm 28
- Psalm 29
- Psalm 30

Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

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- Before you read the passage, pray to God for help in concentrating, understanding and applying God's truth to your life.
- Read the passage/s. If you have time, read it twice to help the words sink deeper into your thinking.
- Think about what this passage says about Jesus and your response to Him.
- Finish with prayer. A helpful approach to personal prayer is the 'ACTOR' approach

ADORATION - "I love you..." Praise God and express your love to him.

CONFESSION - "I'm sorry..." Admit to God how you've failed him.

THANKS - "Thankyou for..." Thank God for what He's done for you.

OTHERS - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

REQUEST - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.

STUDY 2

Do not merely listen to the word

JAMES 1:19-27

Please read the following passage:

¹⁹ *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

²² *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

²³ *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

²⁶ *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

The section of the Bible we are looking at this week makes up the second part of the introduction to the letter of James. Each paragraph in this section contains something of a preview of the themes that will be explored more fully in the remainder of the book (and which we will study throughout the rest of this teaching series).

The passage opens with the command for readers to “*be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*” (James 1:19). James is tapping into traditional Wisdom literature here, with several verses in the book of Proverbs incorporating these themes. Proverbs 17:28 for example states: “*Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues*” (see also Proverbs 11:12,

13:3 and 29:20 for other examples). Other verses in the Wisdom books of the Old Testament speak specifically about the importance of controlling one's anger (for example, Proverbs 14:17, 14:29, 15:18 and Ecclesiastes 7:9).

1. Think about a time when you spoke unkindly to a fellow believer, or when another Christian spoke unkindly to you. What impact did that interaction have on your relationship with them, or your thoughts toward them?

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2. How might being 'quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry' (James 1:19) help Christians in their relationships with each other? How might it help us point unbelievers to Jesus?

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3. Why in particular should Christians be slow to become angry (see James 1:20)?

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Having taught that human anger does not produce the kind of life that God wills for us, James goes on to instruct believers to *"get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you"* (James 1:21).

4. What might the "word planted in you" (James 1:21) be?

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The "*word planted in you*" refers to the "*word of truth*" from James 1:18, which we learned about in our last study. It is the message of Jesus, that is, the Gospel. Likewise, the "*perfect law that gives freedom*" (James 1:25) refers to the teachings of Jesus, who perfectly fulfilled the Old Testament law. A concise summary of the theme of verses 1:18-27 might be: **The person who has received new birth by God's word (v. 18) must accept that word (v. 21) by doing it (vv. 22-27).**

5. In typical James style, he uses a colourful and evocative illustration to really land his point. In verse 23-24 it's the one about a mirror. What make this illustration so powerful and personally cutting?

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6. What kind of people within the church might be the present day equivalent of "*orphans and widows in their distress*" (James 1:27)? How can we show love to these brothers and sisters in their time of need?

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7. As Christians, we are commanded by Jesus to actively participate in the world (see the Great Commission, recorded in Matthew 28:16-20). What can we do to keep ourselves from being polluted by it (James 1:27)?

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 **Pray**

As a group, or in smaller groups, finish by praying for each other, and for the needs of others within our church family.

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Put in in your diary now. Link up with others from church for a fun lunch where you won't actually know who'll be having lunch with until you arrive at the house!



LUKE & PSALMS BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 7: *March 8-14*

- Luke 13:22-35
- Luke 14:1-24
- Luke 14:25-35
- Luke 15:1-32
- Luke 16:1-18

Extra Reading

- Psalm 31
- Psalm 32
- Psalm 33
- Psalm 34
- Psalm 35

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REQUEST - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.

STUDY 3

You must not show favoritism

JAMES 2:1-13

Please read the following passage:

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not 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? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." [c] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

You may recall that the final verse of the reading for our last study was: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). The section of Scripture we are looking at this week provides Christians with some basic principles for conducting our relationships according

to God's design, and by doing so, avoid being polluted by the distorted values of the world.

1. Imagine you are at our church gathering and incredibly you notice a movie celebrity who's visiting. You also notice a homeless person who's come along too. What do you think you would be naturally inclined to do in that situation? What could you personally do to ensure there is no favouritism shown?

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2. Why would it be wrong for Christians to show favouritism to wealthy people (James 2:9)? What harm could come from doing so?

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3. What should the defining characteristic of relationships between Christians be (see James 2:8)?

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In verse 8, James is quoting a verse from the Old Testament book of Leviticus, which in full states *"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD"* (Leviticus 19:18). James may have referred to it as the *'royal law'* because Jesus taught that loving others as we love ourselves summarises God's entire will in relation to how we treat each other (see Matthew 22:35-40 and Mark 12:28-31).

4. What things can we all do (or perhaps stop doing!) to genuinely demonstrate our love for each other? This includes people in your Growth Group, and others within our church family.

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5. Do verses 12 and 13 teach that it is our words and actions that determine our salvation? Why or why not?

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James' command to "*Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom*" (James 2:12) is typical of his overall emphasis on demonstrating faith through action – otherwise we risk being those who merely listen to the word, and so deceive ourselves (see James 1:22). The '*law that gives freedom*' refers to the teachings of Jesus, therefore the lives of Christians will reflect these teachings, central to which is the obligation to love one another. In the next study we will look more closely at the relationship between faith and works.

6. What might James have meant when he wrote "Mercy triumphs over judgement" (James 2:13b)?

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In the context of the passage (that is, instructions on how Christians should relate to each other), James seems more likely to be referring here to **human** mercy, rather than God's. The mercy we show others demonstrates our desire to obey the "royal law" (James 2:8), and a heart made right by the grace of God. Our merciful actions are evidence of the presence of Jesus within us, which allows us to have confidence that we will in turn receive God's mercy – in Jesus' words: "*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*" (Matthew 5:7).

 **PRAY**

As a group, or in smaller groups, finish by praying for each other, and for the needs of others within our church family.

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LUKE & PSALMS BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 8: *March 15-21*

- Luke 16:19-31
- Luke 17:1-19
- Luke 17:20-37
- Luke 18:1-14
- Luke 18:15-30

Extra Reading

- Psalm 36
- Psalm 37
- Psalm 38
- Psalm 39
- Psalm 40

Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

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REQUEST - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.

STUDY 4

Faith without deeds is dead

JAMES 2:14-26

Please read the following passage:

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless[a]?

²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness;"[b] and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

The section of Scripture we are looking at this week is probably one of the most controversial sections in the entire Bible. If you've ever read this passage before and struggled to understand how our works relate to our salvation, you are in very good company: Martin Luther, the renowned sixteenth-century German theologian and reformer, questioned the legitimacy of James' letter due to its teachings on the subject. Although this week's section of James' letter appears

to be concerned with contrasting faith and works, it is actually comparing ineffective faith with faith that results in action.

It is probably helpful here to restate the purpose of James' letter, that is, to tell believers how to behave like genuine followers of Jesus. In our second study we read that "*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*" (James 1:27). We should keep in mind that James' intent is to teach Christians how to 'practice religion' in a way that pleases God: by showing practical love to vulnerable people.

1. Think about a situation in your own life where you needed help. What kind of responses to that situation were helpful? What kind were not so helpful (James 2:15-16)?

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Many of us would have been in a difficult situation at some time in our lives where we needed practical support (for example, money to pay an overdue bill, or help to clean or move house), only to have well-meaning Christian friends or fellow church members do nothing more than offer to pray for us. Of course, prayer can be very powerful and should be welcomed and encouraged, but usually it involves minimal effort or personal sacrifice, and probably often fails to even occur as promised. It means so much more to people when we attend directly to their immediate physical needs.

2. What sort of things can we do for members of our church family that would indicate our faith is alive, not '*dead*' (James 2:17, 26) or '*useless*' (James 2:20)?

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3. What are some ways that we can support the needy, that extends beyond our church family and local communities (this might include ministries or charities operating locally or globally)?

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4. How might we respond to the suggestion, or thought, that by actively living out our faith, we are somehow trying to earn our salvation?

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Anyone investigating Christianity will quickly realise that we are utterly unable to contribute anything to our own salvation. Salvation is achieved by Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf, and nothing else. We can do **nothing whatsoever** to earn our salvation. However, we must be careful to consider "*the whole will of God*" (Acts 20:27). This will prevent us from misusing Bible verses that appear to prove salvation can occur through 'simply believing', in order to justify ignoring Jesus' commands. James makes the powerful point that even demons have a form of faith, insofar as they 'believe' in God's existence and oneness (James 2:19), but this 'faith' certainly does them no good!

James declares faith which is devoid of action as being unable to save (James 2:14), dead (James 2:17, 26), and useless (James 2:20). But it is important to understand that James is not suggesting that works must be added to faith. Instead, it is by humbly accepting the implanted word (James 1:21) and experiencing the resulting transformation, that we are able to produce works that please God. So, when we are obedient to Jesus' teachings, we are not attempting to earn salvation – we are simply responding to the Gospel message precisely how a saved person would.

5. In Paul's letter to the Romans he states *"For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law"* (Romans 3:28). This would appear to be in tension with James 2:24, which states *"You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone"*. How might we reconcile these texts?

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6. Think about how you might explain the interaction between faith and works to someone who is struggling to understand it. Can you articulate an explanation?

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No human analogy can be perfect... However, it may be helpful to think of saving faith as being like a coin. On one side of the coin is **believing the Gospel message**, and on the other side is **responding to that message with acts of love**. No coin can have only one side: a one-sided coin would simply be a circle – a two-dimensional mathematical entity that exists only in theory! Just as a coin is a real object with real value, for Christian faith to be real and have value, it must consist of and incorporate both 'sides': **believing AND responding**.

 **PRAY**

As a group, or in smaller groups, finish by praying for each other, and for the needs of others within our church family.

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It's many months away but it's worth blocking out this weekend in you calendar now.



YOUR *Growth Group* COMMUNITY

In 2021 we desire that our Growth Groups keep growing as real communities where there is a developing sense of mutual desire to see each other grow in Christ on mission for Christ. To this end, a regular meal will now be a feature of our Growth Groups because we believe sharing food around a table can be a powerful and beautiful environment to share life and grow in affection for each other. How each group will logistically do the meal will be up to each group but as a member of the group you'll need to be part of the conversation and you'll need to be committed in your weekly attendance to make the meal a positive group experience for everyone.

You'll notice that these James studies have less questions than previously and this is a deliberate approach because we want groups to spend time with each other over a meal first before getting into the study. But though there are not as many questions, we think the ones we've chosen help to zero in on helping us to understand the passage and apply it in our lives. If our discussion on God's word isn't about how to live it out, then we'll be missing the point of James!

To help our Growth Groups have a good discussion in the actual bible study time, we think a regular question during the meal time could be:

What did you find helpful or interesting from Sunday's bible talk?

And if anyone was not there on Sunday for any reason, it would well worthwhile listening to the talk on our  **WEBSITE** or watching it on our  **YOUTUBE** channel.



2021

BIBLE READING PLAN

People across our church have the personal habit of reading the bible for themselves during the week. The discipline of personal Bible reading (sometimes called 'a quiet time') is part of nourishing a growing relationship with God. For many of us, keeping to this discipline is a struggle in the midst of a hectic life, but the continual effort to have this discipline is part of the journey of growth.

There are many bible reading plans available and you can find a myriad of great websites and apps. Some people like to read the bible through with some speed eg. read all of the bible in a year, but the church bible reading plan we're making available for the start of 2021 is much slower! This is five readings from Luke's gospel per week and also an extra optional reading of a Psalm. As you follow this plan it will take you up to Luke's account of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in the week leading up to Easter. We've placed this reading plan at the start of each study to make for easy reference for you.



LUKE & PSALMS BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 9: *March 22-28*

- Luke 18:31-19:10
- Luke 19:11-27
- Luke 19:28-48
- Luke 20:1-26
- Luke 20:27-47

Extra Reading

- Psalm 41
- Psalm 42
- Psalm 43
- Psalm 44
- Psalm 45

Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

- Choose a time in your day that can be your regular Bible reading time.
- Don't expect you can live like a monk in solitude. If the only time you have involves kids playing around you, or at the breakfast table with others, or during your commute, that's fine.
- Before you read the passage, pray to God for help in concentrating, understanding and applying God's truth to your life.
- Read the passage/s. If you have time, read it twice to help the words sink deeper into your thinking.
- Think about what this passage says about Jesus and your response to Him.
- Finish with prayer. A helpful approach to personal prayer is the 'ACTOR' approach

ADORATION - "I love you..." Praise God and express your love to him.

CONFESSION - "I'm sorry..." Admit to God how you've failed him.

THANKS - "Thankyou for..." Thank God for what He's done for you.

OTHERS - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

REQUEST - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.

STUDY 5

No one can tame the tongue

JAMES 3:1-18

Please read the following passage:

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

You may recall from our second study in this teaching series, we read in the first chapter of James that *“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless”* (James 1:26). In this week’s study we delve a bit deeper into why it is so important to keep a tight rein on our tongues, and how failing to do so can cause terrible destruction to the community of believers.

Also in the first chapter of his letter, James instructs believers to seek wisdom from God (James 1:5). God’s wisdom is necessary for us to remain faithful to Him through suffering, and reach spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4). In the second part of the section of James’ letter we are looking at this week, he returns to the topic of wisdom, comparing true wisdom (from God – v. 17), with false wisdom (which is earthly, unspiritual and demonic – v. 15).

1. Why might it be that those with a teaching role in the church *“will be judged more strictly”* (James 3:1)?

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As James often does in his letter, he may be repeating Jesus’ teaching here (Jesus is recorded in Mark 12:40 as saying that the teachers of the law *“will be punished most severely”*). However in the context of teaching about the tongue, another reason is possible: because the role of the teacher involves speaking, and the tongue is the hardest of all body parts to control, teachers can sin very easily and lead others astray at the same time. Believers should be diligent in upholding their pastors in prayer, that they will use their speech carefully when instructing others.

2. James 3:6 says that the tongue *“corrupts the whole body”* and *“sets the whole course of one’s life on fire”*. What examples of sin can you think of that result from us failing to control our tongues?

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3. What does James 3:6 tell us about where the tongue's destructive power comes from?

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Leading up to verse 6, James compares the tongue to everyday, neutral objects (a horse's bit in verse 3, the rudder of a ship in verse 4, a spark in verse 5). However, in verse 6 he uses much more direct language, stating that the tongue *"is itself set on fire by hell"*. In so doing, James is identifying Satan himself as the source of the tongue's destructive power. This is not to say that the devil makes people say things they don't want to! Instead, James is stressing the tongue's true character – *"a world of evil among the parts of the body"* (James 3:6), and *"a restless evil, full of deadly poison"* (James 3:8), and we must bear this in mind every time we open our mouths to speak.

4. Why is it important for us to remember that all people are made in God's likeness (James 3:9)?

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5. Being honest, what are the situations or relationships in which you struggle most to control your tongue?

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6. How should Godly wisdom be displayed in a Christian's life (James 3:13)?

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7. James 3:14-15 teaches us that false wisdom can include sin such as envy and selfish ambition. What does this kind of 'wisdom' lead to (James 3:16)?

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We can see from James 3:17 that God's wisdom is characterised by purity, peace, consideration, submission, mercy, good fruit, impartiality and sincerity. James states, however, that where false wisdom is – in the form of envy and selfish ambition – there will also be *"disorder and every evil practice"* (James 3:16). If such disorder and evil are the opposite of what true wisdom brings, false wisdom would therefore be expected to result in defilement, conflict, selfishness, rebellion, revenge, evil works, favouritism and dishonesty.

8. In light of James 3:18, what are some things that we can do to create peace in our Christian community and beyond?

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As a group, or in smaller groups, finish by praying for each other, and for the needs of others within our church family.

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EATONS HILL STATE SCHOOL P&C

Outdoor Family MOVIE NIGHT



\$2/PERSON \$8/FAMILY
PREPAY AVAILABLE WITH FLEXI SCHOOLS

**SATURDAY
27 MAR
5:30 PM**

- Bring picnic rug or camp chairs
- Sausage sizzle, ice-cream, popcorn and movie treats
- Face painting and fun games
- Community stalls eg cupcakes, honey and novelty toys

MOVIE STARTS AT SUNSET 6:15/6:30

Major Sponsor

Jonathan Wein
LJ Hooker Albany Creek

Other Sponsors

Tim Mander
Moreton Bay Council

Christ Central Presbyterian Church



COVID SAFE PLAN IN PLACE

Please register via the QR code on the night



LUKE & PSALMS BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 10: *March 29 - April 4* Extra Reading

Luke 21:1-38

Luke 22:1-62

Luke 22:63-23:25

Luke 23:26-56

Luke 24

Psalm 46

Psalm 47

Psalm 48

Psalm 49

Psalm 50

Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

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- Before you read the passage, pray to God for help in concentrating, understanding and applying God's truth to your life.
- Read the passage/s. If you have time, read it twice to help the words sink deeper into your thinking.
- Think about what this passage says about Jesus and your response to Him.
- Finish with prayer. A helpful approach to personal prayer is the 'ACTOR' approach

ADORATION - "I love you..." Praise God and express your love to him.

CONFESSION - "I'm sorry..." Admit to God how you've failed him.

THANKS - "Thankyou for..." Thank God for what He's done for you.

OTHERS - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

REQUEST - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.

STUDY 6

Come near to God

JAMES 4:1-12

Please read the following passage:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister (I) or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

1. Spend a moment thinking about any conflict you have experienced, or are currently experiencing, with other Christians. What do you think are the desires within you that contribute to that conflict (James 1:1)?

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2. After referring to his readers as *"brothers and sisters"* (James 1:2, 2:1, 2:14, 3:10, 3:12), *"fellow believers"* (3:1), and even *"my dear brothers and sisters"* (1:16, 1:19, 2:5), why do you think James suddenly refers to them as *"You adulterous people"* in verse 4, and then as *"sinners"* and *"double-minded"* in verse 8? What are some themes you can identify in verses 4-10?

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James 4:4 marks a shift in the letter to one of the strongest calls to repentance in the New Testament. By addressing his readers as *"adulterous people"* James is echoing Old Testament prophets, who frequently compared the relationship between God and His people to a marriage (see, for example, Isaiah 54:5-6 and Jeremiah 3:30). James is reminding his readers that when they seek friendship with the world, they are committing a form of spiritual adultery.

However, although this section is a call to repentance, it also offers hope to the *"sinners"* and *"double-minded"* in the church. If they will repent of their behaviours (vv. 8-9) and humble themselves before God, He will lift them up (v. 10). Humility resulting in being lifted up directly reflects Jesus' teaching: "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:14b).

3. What might *"friendship with the world"* (James 4:4) look like? How does someone *"who chooses to be a friend of the world"* behave?

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As we have seen throughout this study series, one of James' primary concerns is instructing believers on how to behave like genuine followers of Jesus. At the heart of such behaviour is *"the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself'"* (James 2:8). Friendship with the world is aligning oneself to a system that disregards the royal law, a system where wealth, status and pleasure is pursued at the expense of relationships.

4. What things can we all do to *"resist the devil"* (James 4:7)?

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5. What can believers do to *"come near to God"* (James 4:8)?

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6. Is it always wrong to contradict or rebuke a fellow Christian (James 4:11)? Why, or why not?

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The words translated “slander”, “speak against” and “judge” used in verse 11 are all very close in meaning, and refer to openly denigrating one’s neighbour, which is clearly behaviour contrary to the ‘royal law’ of love. While James is forbidding such unloving acts, he is in no way discouraging the proper and necessary wise discernment that every Christian should exercise. If we wisely discern that a fellow Christian requires correction, we should deliver such correction in love and with grace, just as we would like others to do to us.

7. Why is humbling ourselves before God the response that James is calling for? (James 4:6, 10)? How could our relationships be transformed if we exercised greater humility?

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Pray

As a group, or in smaller groups, finish by praying for each other, and for the needs of others within our church family.

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As a group also pray for the upcoming Easter Weekend and the Youth Camp (Y@C) being held over the school holidays.





We're constantly trying to fix our world with vaccines, medicines, the economy, technology, the environment, and politics. But join us at the special time of 930am on Good Friday and Easter Sunday as we focus on the much more radical thing when 2000 years ago Jesus sought to fix the world in just three days!

GOOD FRIDAY

2 April 930am

With hot cross buns

EASTER SUNDAY

4 April 930am

Followed by a bbq

Eatons Hill School Hall Apex Grove



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