

## Week 12: Summary and Conclusion

As we come to the end of our study of the book of James, it will be good for us to consider the big picture of the book as a whole. Then, we will take a final look at Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings in James, all with a view toward understanding James's letter in its entirety and hearing his heart and exhortation to us as Christians.

### The Big Picture of James

James is sometimes accused of having written a book that really has no internal organization—no structure and no driving point, but is rather a hodgepodge of unrelated issues thrown together haphazardly. Studying the book carefully, however, it's easy to see how false that charge is. James does have a driving point, and it is this: now that God has given us new life ([James 1:18](#)), we should live in such a way that this new life is reflected in our actions. We are to be doers of the word and not just hearers of it. Our faith is to be a living faith, which produces good works, not dead faith, which is really no faith at all.

James drives this point home throughout his book, holding up issue after issue for consideration in light of that main point. In [James 1](#), he talks about how a follower of Jesus will handle trials and temptations. In [James 2](#), he tells followers of Jesus how they should act in the presence of powerful people and weak people. In [James 3](#), he tells them how a Christian should control his or her tongue, and in [James 4](#) he discusses how Christians should handle conflict with other people. Finally, in [James 5](#), he reminds us to live as Christians in the eager anticipation and certainty of Christ's imminent return.

Read through the following three sections on Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings. Then take time to reflect on the Personal Implications these sections may have for your walk with the Lord.

### Gospel Glimpses

James has often been accused of not having a deep understanding of the gospel. It is sometimes argued that his is a sub-biblical understanding of Christianity, that it is a purely ethical or even moralistic conception of what it means to be a Christian. That could not be further from the truth!

Throughout our study of James, we have seen how deeply he understands the truth of the gospel. He affirms strongly that being a Christian is about being born again, not just doing good things ([James 1:18](#)). He agrees with the rest of the New Testament that a living faith saves ([James 2:14](#)), and that it was in fact faith that was credited to Abraham as righteousness ([James 2:23](#)). He looks forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ ([James 5:7–8](#)).

The desire of James's heart is simply to help believers think more clearly about how to live in light of all those things. If he doesn't give as full an explanation of the gospel as some other books of the New Testament, it is not because he doesn't believe it or understand it. It is because he understands it and believes it deeply and is focusing on the life of obedience that should flow from it.

Have you ever wondered why James doesn't contain as full and detailed an explanation of the gospel as other books of the New Testament? In your own words, describe James's focus in this book and how the gospel is crucial to that focus.

Has your understanding of the gospel changed at all during the course of this Bible study?

How has James helped you to understand the gospel better than you did before you started this study?

Are there any particular passages in James that have brought the gospel home to you in a fresh way?

### **Whole-Bible Connections**

James has been called the Proverbs of the New Testament, and it's easy to see why. As a Jewish man who came to faith in Jesus, James is steeped in the imagery and wisdom of the Old Testament. He also obviously learned deeply from the teaching of Jesus, his brother and his Savior. Therefore, his letter is filled with themes from and allusions to both the Old Testament and the teaching of the Lord Jesus. His warnings to the unbelieving rich and powerful about the coming judgment are deeply reminiscent of both the Old Testament and Jesus. His teaching about wisdom draws heavily on Old Testament Wisdom Literature, as do his exhortations about the tongue. And his teaching about prayer and oaths, among other things, show how much he learned from Jesus.

James is also quick to use Old Testament examples to make his points. He uses Abraham and Rahab in [James 2](#), the prophets and Job in [James 5:10–11](#), and Elijah in [James 5:17](#). James's mind is filled with the Word of God, and when he needs an illustration for his points, his mind naturally goes to the Scriptures to fill that need.

How has your understanding of the place of James in the sweep of the Bible's story been deepened through your study of this letter?

What are some connections between James and the Old Testament that you had not noticed before? What are some connections between James and the teaching of Jesus that you had not noticed before?

Has your understanding of the unity of the Bible been clarified through studying James? How so?

### **Theological Soundings**

James contributes a great deal to Christian theology, especially regarding how to practically work out the teachings of Jesus. Doctrines that are reinforced and clarified in James include regeneration, the doctrine of the Word of God, wisdom, divine sovereignty, prayer, and the relationship between justification, faith, and works.

Where has your theology been molded or corrected as you have studied James?

How might our understanding of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ be impoverished if we did not have James's letter?

How does James contribute to our understanding of Jesus?

How does he contribute to our understanding of the gospel?

How does he contribute to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian?

### **Personal Implications**

As you consider the book of James as a whole, what implications do you see for your own life? Consider especially James's exhortation that we are to be doers of the word, and not hearers only. More than anything else, this is the organizing center of James's letter. What are the ramifications for your own life of James's exhortation there?

### **As You Finish Studying James . . .**

We rejoice with you as you finish studying the book of James! May this study become part of your Christian walk of faith, day by day and week by week throughout all your life. Now we would greatly encourage you to continue to study the Word of God on a week-by-week basis. To continue your study of the Bible, we would encourage you to consider other books in the Knowing the Bible series, and to visit [www.knowingthebibleseries.org](http://www.knowingthebibleseries.org) for print copies or [www.thegospelcoalition.org/courses](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/courses) for reading online.

Lastly, take a moment again to look back through this book of James, which you have studied during these recent weeks. Review again the notes that you have written, and the things that you have highlighted or underlined. Reflect again on the key themes that the Lord has been teaching you about himself and about his Word. May these things become a treasure for you throughout your life—which we pray will be true for you, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.