

Have you ever heard James quoted when someone is sharing the Gospel? Probably not? Is it brought up when discussing doctrinal issues? Not usually? Is James a book that you see listed as a series of weekly Sunday sermons? You don't find it there either?

Then why do we even take the time to study it? It doesn't seem to be all that important! On the contrary! James should be a book that in a primary text for every new believer. It should be taught to our children in our Sunday schools. Every believer who longs to know what it means to live out your faith on a daily basis needs to study this book. James describes what true faith looks like. How it acts. What it does in a believer's life. It will show how vitally important it is to live out what you believe.

We have seen huge changes in our world over the last couple of years. We are careening down the path to destruction and the signs are evident. We are living in an age of apathy, apostasy, and anarchy (lawlessness)! Everybody does what is right in their own eyes, yet in God's eyes it is outright evil. Where are the Christian voices that shout out for truth? Where are the parents crying out to protect their children from Satan's attack on their God given sexuality? Our children go to war zones called schools. Here they are shot at, told they came from monkeys; they are nothing more than animals; they are confused about their sex; God is some dead, antiquated idea that needs to be suppressed; truth is up to each person's own interpretation. Then we wonder why our children are confused, upset, depressed, and anxious.

People, especially those in the church are so tangled up in the affairs of everyday life that they don't have time to study the Bible. Denying ones self and discipling our lives is a thing of the past. We all need to be able to express ourselves and make ourselves happy no matter who we may offend in the process. You just need to be tolerant of me (even though I don't need to be tolerant of you)!

We need truth restored in our lives. We need to see what God has to say about the world in which we live. We need to understand how we are to act in the midst of the perverse society of today. People are crying out for answers, but it seems like the watchmen on the walls are silent.

Let's ground ourselves in truth and shout it from the rooftops. Let God's Word richly dwell in your hearts and minds and become God's spokesman of truth. John 8:31 says, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine." We cannot call ourselves His disciples if we are not continuing (living according) in His Word.

DAY ONE AND DAY TWO

Remember that you have two days to complete this assignment.

Inductive Bible study is a process in which you use the Scripture to interpret Scripture. In order to do that, you need to take the time to overview the book. You need to get a feel for the flow of thought. You need to understand what the author's purpose is so you can know what he is communicating to you, and just as importantly, what he is not saying. We need to be able to put any portion or verse back into its context so you can truly understand it. There is only one interpretation for any Scripture. It must be interpreted according to the author's (who was inspired by God) intent and meaning. To interpret it any other way is to challenge the authority of Scripture.

You don't need a degree to understand God's Word. Each believe has been given the Holy Spirit who is our teacher and guide. He leads us to truth. God has given His Word to all of us, not just the scholarly. It is our guidebook to life so it has to be easy to understand. Our problems come when we try to rationalize and justify an ungodly life with Scripture. Then we begin to use convoluted reasoning, other interpretations, and looking to men's finite mind to explain God's infinite wisdom.

It is going to take time, but it will be so worth the effort. Join us as we begin to dig into the book of James.

1. Make sure you start every day of study with prayer. Allow God, through His Spirit, to work on your heart and mind. Clear out all that you heard, all you have been taught, all you think, and all that you want Scripture to say, and allow it to speak for itself. Pray that God will give you a blank slate, and that He will begin to fill it with His Word alone.
2. Now you begin with observation, observation, observation. When you are done, you will observe some more. There are three steps to inductive study: observation, interpretation, application. I know the propensity of man's heart is to skip right to the interpretation and application. What does it mean and how does that apply to me? That is why Christian bookstores sell hundreds of books telling us how to live the Christian life. The problem is that someone else spent precious hours in the Bible observing the Word of God and then tell you what they think you should believe and how you should act. If you skip the many hours of observing God's Word for yourself, you will not have your feet established solidly on the rock of Jesus Christ, someone else will.
3. You have been given Observation Worksheets of the book of James. This is the book of James double-spaced, with wide margins which will become your worksheets for this course. Take those pages, have a seat, and read the book of James. What is your overall impression of the book?

4. Read through the book of James again. As you read, you are going to mark every reference of the author. I use blue and underline every reference to the author. You can mark them however you would like. There is no right or wrong way to mark as long as you are consistent. Mark his name, a synonym referring to him, or a pronoun like I, me, my, etc. Don't worry about marking the plural forms of "we" or "us."
5. Look at each marking of the author, and on a separate piece of paper, list (recording chapter and verse) what you learn about the author by asking the 5 W's and H questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how). Just look for the obvious things that you observe.
6. Now read James one more time. This time you are going to look for the recipients of this letter and mark them. I underline mine in green. Mark any references of their name or synonyms and pronouns referring to them. This time you are going to look for pronouns like "you" or "your".
7. Add what you learn from each marking of the recipients to your paper with the author's information. Every time you mark a key word (author and recipient are always key in a letter), it is important that you make a list (including the reference) of what you learn. These lists will help you determine the purpose of the letter. Don't shortcut this step. It is a very important part of the observation process.
8. Read through James again. As you do, look for any mention of historical references. Does it mention a king or ruler? Does it mention a time of persecutions or sufferings and if so who is suffering and why? Does it mention feasts or festivals?
9. Read James one last time. This time look for and mark any geographic locations. I mark mine with a green compass. Also, as you read through the book, take notice of any words that are repeated throughout the book. List any repeated words below.
10. Committing Scripture to memory is an important step to transforming your mind. Why don't you begin memorizing James 1:2-8. Print it on a 3x5 card and carry it with you. Three to five times a day, take it out and read over it two or three times. You will have it memorized in no time.

DAY THREE

Remember to start your time in prayer and then read through James again. You should be getting comfortable with the book by now. The consistent reading will familiarize you with the content and the context of this letter. This is adding to the information you are collecting during this observation process.

You have now read through the book of James five or six times. As you have read, have you noted any words or phrases that have been repeated. These would be key words. As I said before, the author and the recipient in a letter are always key words. Any mention of the Godhead - God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit - are also key. Here are some guidelines to help you understand how to look for, mark, and utilize key words.

Studying inductively is like pulling back layers on an onion. You pull off one layer and it exposes the next. So far you have read through the book of James multiple times. You are beginning to acquire a sense of the book and certain topics may have already started to reveal themselves to you. To continue the overview process, we want to focus in on key words. You have already done some of that on day one and two. You marked and made lists of the author and recipients which are, in a letter, key words.

Introduction to Key Words

You are going to be looking for key words today. Let me explain what a key word is. A key unlocks a door. A key word unlocks the meaning of the book you are reading. So the question becomes, how do I find a key word? You have probably found some by now, and you are not even aware of them. A key word is an important word that is repeated throughout the book. If that word would be removed, you would lose a big part of the meaning and purpose of the book.

When you find key words, you are going to mark them on your observation worksheets. You want to use different colors and different symbols. There is no right way or wrong way to do this. I am not an artist so I tend to go with simple symbols and shapes like arrows, stars, triangles, squares, underlines, etc. There is a list of possible markings to help you get started on our website at <https://www.walkinlight.net/inductive-bible-study>, and you will find some handouts entitled **Marking Key Words** and **More Markings** which give sample pages of possible symbols. The important thing is that you use the same symbol and color for a particular word throughout your study. When you do, these key words will pop off the page at you.

When you read through the book looking at and marking one or two key words, you will find even more that strike you. When you do, read through again and mark those. One warning though. It is a key word to the book when it is mentioned all the way through the book. You may find a word that is repeated in one particular chapter and not the entire book. That word may be a key to that chapter but not to the book itself. We will

mark those at a later time. If you mark it now and then realize later that it was only key to that chapter, it's okay. Just don't list that particular word on your list of key words for the book.

Any mention of the Godhead (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit) is always key; however, depending on how many times they are mentioned and how much time you have to put into your study, it may be a bit overwhelming to mark them at this time. If you choose not to mark them now, you will mark them, and make lists about them when we go to the chapter studies later on.

With that background, I believe you are ready for your assignment for today.

1. Start with the list of words you made yesterday. Determine the symbols that you will use to mark these words. Write these words and their corresponding symbol on an index card that you can use as a bookmark.
2. Read through the book again and mark these key words. If, as you are marking, you see other words that are repeated, jot them down here and then read the book again and mark those.
3. Record your key words on the "At a Glance Chart" on page 9.
4. When you mark key words, it is important to make a list of what we learn about those words, just like we did for the author and recipient. On another piece of paper, record the key word and then list what you learn about that word remembering to indicate chapter and verse where you found that information. Do that for all the key words that you marked throughout James. If you run out of time, you can finish this tomorrow.

Some of you may be able to mark three or more words at a time. Some of you may only be able to mark one word at a time. Let me encourage you. If you are one that can only mark one at a time, it will take you longer to complete this assignment than other students, but think of the blessings you will have because you have read and struggled over this book many more times. You will be blessed by your effort.

DAY FOUR AND DAY FIVE

1. Remember to get into the habit of starting each day with prayer.
2. If you have not completed the assignment for key words, please complete that before you move on.
3. Read through the book of James. As you do, watch for any place the author may say, I am writing this to you because . . . If the author doesn't come right out and say that, then it is up to you to determine the purpose of the book you are studying. The way you do that is by observing the key words and the main topics that are discussed. That will be your mission for the next two days - to determine why James wrote this letter.
4. Let's use the "At a Glance Chart" on page 9 to help us with this task. Start by filling in the information you have already gleaned over the last three days. You know the author and the recipients, so fill those in. Note any historical references, and record the key words you have found. You can always add to the chart later as you continue to study, and you may want to change things here and there so I suggest that you do all your preliminary work in pencil.
5. Next, you are going to discover general subjects or themes covered in James. The subjects the author mentions center around those key words you found. One more layer of that onion is now exposed. Isn't this great? Read through James looking for these themes. Remember that right now you are just looking for things that are obvious.
 - a. Chapter 1 - main topics
 - b. Chapter 2 - main topics
 - c. Chapter 3 - main topics

d. Chapter 4 - main topics

e. Chapter 5 - main topics

6. Record these general topics on the chart on the “At a Glance Chart” on page 9 in the left-hand column entitled “Themes”. You are going to do this for each chapter.
7. Looking over what you recorded for step two, do the topics in each chapter tie together into one major theme that runs through that chapter? This would become a chapter title for each chapter. These can be recorded on your Observation Worksheets as well as the “At a Glance Chart.” I suggest that you record these in pencil because as you study more, observe more, you may discover you want to change your mind.
 - a. Chapter 1 - Title
 - b. Chapter 2 - Title
 - c. Chapter 3 - Title
 - d. Chapter 4 - Title
 - e. Chapter 5 - Title
8. You now know the important key words. You know the general topics covered in each chapter. You may have even found a major theme that runs through each chapter. Armed with all this information, read through James one more time and look for the author’s purpose in writing the book. In some books like Luke, John, I John, and Jude, the author plainly states the purpose of his writing. Look at Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31, I John 5:13, and Jude 3. Other books, the author doesn’t come right out and say it. You have to acquire that information from the key words and topics the author covers. When you can see the general theme running

through the entire book, you have caught a glimpse of his purpose. This is why he is writing to you! This is what he wants you to see! If you can find his purpose, record that on your worksheets on page 9.

9. If you are beginning to understand the purpose, and you know the main topics discussed, can you pull all this together to give a title to the book of Colossians? Give it a try and see what you can come up with.
10. Are there any questions that this book has raised in your mind? You can record these in the space below. We are not going to answer them right now, but if you have those questions written out, then as you study and wade deeper into this book, you may begin discovering the answers to your questions.

You have spent time this week laying an important foundation on which to build in the weeks to come. This time and dedication to studying the book of Colossians will help you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called.

James - At a Glance Chart

Book Title: _____

Themes and Titles Chart		
Themes		Titles
Author:	Chapter	
Recipient:	1	
Historical References (date):	2	
Purpose:	3	
Key Words:	4	
	5	

