

Manuscript Bible Study Guidelines

The following is a guide to getting stuck into James. The first week at SLOBS we will spend time working through James and dividing the book into sections and themes which we will use as the basis for the bible studies we will do. It would be really helpful if you could take some time to work through some of this before then. Remember James was a letter written by James to churches which would have been read out in its entirety and the Christians would have wrestled with it as a group – they didn't each get take home copies.

- ⇒ Set aside a decent chunk of time – 45mins to hour is a good guide
- ⇒ Pray and ask God to open up his word to you – this is his living and active word, through which God wants to speak and reveal more of himself to you.
- ⇒ Read through the whole book of James – it should take 15 minutes and note down your impressions -things that stand out, any general themes you picked up on.
- ⇒ Read through slowly a second time circling any words/sections you don't understand. Also note down any questions you have.
- ⇒ As you read through try and break the text into chunks – are there an obvious theme that then changes? Summarise what each chunk seems to be about with a title
- ⇒ Read through again with a set of coloured pencils and use one colour to highlight repeated words/phrases, and other to note cause and effect, another to note opposites – check out the following

Laws of Composition

- Repetition:** The repeated use of the *same* terms (In Leviticus the term "holy" is used many times)
- Continuity:** The repeated use of *similar* words, phrases, or ideas, including pronouns. (In Philemon, notice the terms "brother," "partner," "fellow-worker," etc.)
- Contrast:** The association of *opposites*. (In Psalm 1 we see the blessed man and the wicked man)
- Comparison:** The association of *like* things which vary in some way (The parable in Mark 4 describes four kinds of soil; they are all soil but receive the seed in various ways). The use of the word "*like*" (James 1 says, "He who doubts is like a wave of the sea).
- General to Particular:** The movement from a general idea or activity to particulars about that idea. (Psalm 23:1 says generally, "The Lord is my shepherd..." The verses which follow give particulars. An example is "He makes me lie down in green pastures).
- Particular to General:** The movement from a particular idea to a general idea or activity (In Mark 1:30 Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law; in the following verses he heals many people).
- Cause to Effect:** The progression from cause to effect (In Mark 1 the mighty acts of Jesus cause the crowd to flock to him).
- Effect to Cause:** The progression from effect to cause (Ephesians 5:21 has an example of this: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ").
- Explanation:** The presentation of an idea or event followed by its explanation (In Mark 4, Jesus presents the parable of the soils, then explains it).
- Prep/Intro:** The inclusion of the background or setting for events or ideas by which the reader is prepared to understand that which follows (In Mark 1 the quotation from Isaiah prepares the reader for the appearance of John the Baptist).
- Climax:** The arrangement of material in such a way as to progress from great to the greater and then to the greatest, with climax occurring at the greatest [In Psalm 23 the Lord is shown to meet everyday needs (great), then needs in times of crisis (greater), and then the needs of all the future, in this life and for eternity (greatest)].



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Means to End: The setting forth of the means to an end as well as the end itself. Often the words "that," "so that," or "in order that" are present (John 20:31: "These are written that you may believe..."). This is a planned cause to effect.

Interrogation: The use of a question (problem) followed by its answer (In John 9:2 the disciples question Jesus; in verses 3ff. He answers.

All the above will not be present but may help as you think about some of what you read.

There may be verses that jump out at you or speak to you as you read – this is about listening to God through scripture not just completing an exercise, so stop, write them down and take time to pray through those things.

So often we start small with God's word -taking verses without understanding the context of the book they sit in. This approach goes from big picture of the book then down to detail, and helps us understand the details better because we understand the flow and issues within the whole book better. The more you read it the more the text gets into your head and imperceptibly God's word will begin to shape you instead of us trying to shape it to say what we want it to.

As you look at each section and begin to understand what it is saying ask:

What did this mean for the people at the time?

What is God revealing about himself?

What promises are there to hold on to and believe?

Is there a principle being illustrated?

Are there examples to follow or avoid?

As you work through the book a few times and begin to notice new and different things –some of the questions you had at the start may be answered or it may bring new questions. A bible dictionary may prove helpful. Chat through your questions with each other and with Sam, John and Crooksy.

