The Epistle of James

A Study Guide

by Bobby Ozuna

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Scripture references based on the King James Version, Complete Jewish Bible and the New American Standard Bible.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy, Chapter 2, verses 16 & 17 (NASB)

Our Hope, Purpose, and Prayer for this Study Guide

It is our *hope* this study guide finds you in a place where you are ready to move beyond a simple reading of the bible, but dive deeper into the Word and the gospel message to further establish your relationship and intimacy with the Lord Jesus. We *hope* you use this study guide as a means to instill the habit of daily reading and studying of the holy scriptures, to discover the freedom from the bondage of sin and the redemption in the grace purchased at the cross.

Our *purpose* for this study guide is to provide an outline of prayer, reading and study, for those who are ready to step out the boat, and move to a more intimate understanding of the Lord Jesus. It is *purposed* to be used for personal growth and development, or in a group setting in fellowship and community with others. The objective is to offer a template for daily reading and studying of the scriptures, with questions designed to help you dive further into the truth of the gospel message.

We *pray* this study guide is an encouragement and blessing to your walk with Christ. We *pray* you humble yourself and offer your heart to the Lord to be enlightened, encouraged, inspired, transformed, and renewed in the image of the Lord Jesus. We *pray* you open your heart to the truth, to discover the true freedom that comes from serving and following the Lord Jesus. We *pray* these questions draw you closer to the Lord and bring you to a place of true understanding of the gospel message and we *pray* you share your story of redemption with others, to be a living testament to the freedom offered in Christ.

Your brothers in Christ,

—Bobby Ozuna, Jorge Gruver, Felix Cervantez and Armando Ozuna

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How you can use this study guide

This study guide is designed to be a companion to your personal study in the **Epistle of James.** It can be used for personal development or part of a bible group study.

Our recommendation:

• Pray:

- Before reading the chapter and questions—ask the Lord to reveal Himself in the words you read
- After reading the chapter and questions—ask the Lord to impart his Wisdom in the words you read.
- Throughout the days you use this study guide—ask the Lord for wisdom and understanding to reveal Himself in the passages you are studying.

Read:

- The first few times you read the chapter assigned, just read it. Don't focus too much energy on understanding or knowing everything the first time you read it
- You will read each chapter multiple times, over multiple days, answering questions for each day
- If possible, use multiple translations to expand on the context of the passages you read
- You can read various translations online if you only have one version of the bible

Journal:

- You can use the space provided, or capture your questions, thoughts, and responses in a separate iournal
- To capture any questions that arise while you are reading, including any areas of uncertainty and any areas of confusion
- To capture any scripture passages that really speak to your heart and encourage you
- To follow-up previous days notes as you work through each chapter over multiple days

Memorize

• Practice memorizing the daily scripture passages provided.

Individual Study Guide:

- Follow the daily guideline provided
- Use this study guide as a tool for learning how to read and study the bible daily
- Be completely honest with yourself—and your responses, knowing, you are being completely honest with the Lord
- Remember, confession means aligning or agreeing with the Lord—not condemning yourself

Group Study Guide

- Pray together before you begin
- Choose someone to facilitate the group and choose what questions you want to discuss together
- Use a roundtable, open format, to allow people time to share their responses
- Make it a safe place for people to share—encourage one another to share, but don't force people to participate. Remember—participating is part of the journey—the Holy Spirit does the work, not us
- Use the time together to encourage one another—NEVER to discourage or tear one another down
- Pray for one another when you complete a group session—Remember: iron sharpens iron!

OPHIBIT 2020 BOOK OTHING

Chapter 2

The Epistle of James

Week 2

Week 2, Day 1—Individual Study

Prayer: My Lord Jesus I pray you reveal yourself to me in this scripture; prepare my mind and heart to discover the truth of who You are in these passages I read, and grant me the courage to be transparent and honest in my responses, knowing and believing, that's where the true freedom begins. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2 aloud and answer the questions. 1) Have you ever felt singled-out, overlooked, disregarded, or judged? Have you ever felt insignificant by a person, group, or organization? If so, how did this make you feel? 2) Have you ever justified your actions or your sins against the actions or sins of someone else? In other words, have you ever said something like, "Well, at least I don't do this-or-that like so-and-so? 3) Do you believe there are levels to sin? Do you believe someone can sin and it be a greater or lesser sin than yours? Explain. 4) Do you think its enough to "believe in God?" Does believing in God make you a follower of Christ? Explain your answer. 5) If someone were to recognize you as a Christian—a follower of Christ—and then asked you to explain the meaning of faith, what would you say? What is faith? 6) Have you ever reached out to someone for help—a true need of help—and felt no one had anything to offer in your moment of need? How did that make you feel?

Memorize: James Chapter 2, verse 10: "What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" (NASB)

Week 2, Day 2—Individual Study

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, as I begin to dive into these questions, I pray you soften my heart and quiet my mind to hear You speak to me. Grant me the boldness to be vulnerable and honest with You, knowing, in true confession we begin to find and experience true freedom that comes through You. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2 aloud and answer the questions.

Verses 1-4

1)	What is the lesson in this passage of scripture? What am I	to learn from this lesson to establish my
	walk of faithfulness to the Lord?	

- 2) What do you picture in your mind when you think of the "rich man" and the "poor man?" Do you think this lesson applies only to socio-economic/financial status?
- **3)** Do you think a behavior of *partiality*—bias, prejudice, or favoritism—reflects the attitude of the heart? What is the source or motive for showing favoritism or partiality to one *type* of person or group of people?

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- Read the 1st book of Samuel, Chapter 16, verse 7
- Read the book of Romans, Chapter 3, verses 9—23 (emphasis verse 23)
- Read the book of Romans, Chapter 5
- Romans, Chapter 2, verses 11—16

Based on the passages above, how does/how will the Lord judge a person?

For whom did Jesus die on the cross? Explain your answer using the scriptures above.

Memorize: James Chapter 2, verse 14: "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" (NASB)

Week 2, Day 3—Individual Study

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, thank you for revealing the areas in my life where I am showing partiality, of favoritism over others; I pray you let me see people the way you see people—with love, kindness and compassion. Teach me to be a doer of your word today and act on my faith, remembering, you took the cross for all. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2 aloud and answer the questions.

Review Verse 4

1) As people, we tend to *naturally*, or comfortably, show favoritism or partiality towards those who seem to "have" more than others. What do you think is the source of this type of behavior?

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- 2 Timothy, Chapter 3, verses 1—2
- Philippians, chapter 2, verses 1—11

In the letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul explains that in the last days people will become "lovers of their own selves, covetous" and "proud." (KJV). Do you believe our desires to be partial towards others, based on what we think they have, or what we believe they could offer us—is an act of selfishness?

Do you believe partiality towards others, for any reason, is a reflection of the mind of Christ, as described by the Apostle Paul in the book of Philippians?

Review Verse 5

2) What is the Lord's perspective towards those the world has labeled as "poor?"

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 1—16
- Matthew, Chapter 7, verses 1—5 & 12
- Romans 3:23
- Job, Chapter 34, verses 16—19

If the Lord will judge us for the *heart* of who we are—not by what we have, but by who we are at our core—and if we are all made in the image of God, and we remember that Christ died for the sins of all mankind, then what should be our approach towards the treatment of others?

Review Verses 6—9

3) How would you define the word "neighbor?"

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- Leviticus, Chapter 19, verse 18
- Romans, Chapter 2, verse 11

The Greek word for neighbor is plēsion (pla-see-on)ⁱ, which means a "friend" or "any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet."

We have been called to love everyone (our neighbors)—and, like the Lord, show *no* "respect to persons" (KJV), "partiality" (NASB), or "favoritism" (CJB), because in doing so, we are harboring sinful pride in our hearts towards others. How can we, in deeds and actions, and more so, as followers of Christ, truly begin to love our neighbors as ourselves?

What can you begin doing today, to show love towards your neighbors?

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- Matthew, Chapter 22, verses 35—40
- Proverbs, Chapter 3, verse 27

How do you think your life would look, if you immediately began loving everyone you came into contact with, as if you were loving yourself, without partiality, favoritism or respect based on outward appearances or expectations?

How would life in your community look if this happened today?

Memorize: James Chapter 2, verse 19: "You believe that God is one. You do well, the demons also believe, and shudder." (NASB)

Week 2, Day 4—Individual Study

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, thank you for this day. Thank you for teaching me in your Word how to love everyone I come into contact with, and how to act on my faith in the expression of the love you are filling in my heart. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2 aloud and answer the questions.

Review Verses 10—11

- 1) Based on these two passages, do you believe one sin outweighs, or *deserves a greater punishment*, than any other sin? Explain your answer.
- 2) If there is no distinction between sin—with one being greater or less than the other—how do you feel the Lord views *your* sins in comparison to the sins of others?
- 3) Think a person (or people), an organization of people, etc., that have caused you harm or hurt you—do you understand that Jesus took the cross for their sins, just the same as He took the cross for your sins? How does it make you feel to know Jesus took the cross, not only for your sins, but for those who would have or have caused you harm?
- 4) Are you ready to let go of/release the hurts and pains caused by others? If so, explain.

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- Galatians, Chapter 3
- Romans, Chapter 6, verses 8—10
- Romans, Chapter 11, verses 25—32

In these passages we discover [that] "...no man is justified by the law in the sight of God," and "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The Apostle Paul goes on to say, "But the scripture has concluded all under sin." He also explains in the letter to the Romans that Jesus "died unto sin once." Knowing this, if the Lord Jesus took the cross one time, for all sin, of all mankind, and he took that punishment for all of us, even those who have hurt us—should we be judging the sins of others as greater or less than our own?

- 5) We know the Lord Jesus took the punishment for (all) sin on the cross—and for every sinner, no matter the level of sin. How does understanding this help you view people who have hurt you and more so, how you should respond to them despite their treatment of you?
- 6) As we begin to see and understand [that] we are all sinners in need of a savior—and Christ died for each of us, and none are worthy of that sacrifice, but in his great love for us, he chose us and called us to Him—how much easier will it be to view the heart of the sinner, and not focus on the sin?
- 7) Write a list of people/organizations of people, etc. you need to forgive.

8) Write a prayer to the Lord, asking Him to give you a heart to forgive them.

Memorize: James Chapter 2, verse 20: "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" (NASB)

Week 2, Day 5—Individual Study

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, give me a spirit of courage to act on behalf of my faith today. Let your Word be a lamp unto my feet, no matter how dark the road, and a guiding light to my path today. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2 aloud and answer the questions.

Review Verse 14

1) In your own words, what is *faith*, or what does it mean to *have* faith in the Lord?

EXPANDED READING: Read the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1.

The word *substance* (in the KJV) comes from the Greek word hypostasis (who-po'-stä-ses)ⁱⁱ which references something **concrete** (solid) or something you can have **confidence** in. After reading this biblical definition of faith—and learning that it is a *hope* in something you *haven't seen*, but yet have confidence in—how do you show/prove your faith in Christ outside of words or believing in your mind?

Is *having* faith in Christ the same as *believing in* Christ or "*believing in God*" as many people are fond of saying? Does it exist only in the mind or is it something actionable?

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

James 2:19 (devils <u>believe</u> in His existence and position)
 Matthew 8:28—32 (devils <u>acknowledged</u> Him as the Son of God)
 Mark, 5 1—19 (devils <u>acknowledged</u> His power)
 Luke, chapter 4, verses 40—41 (devils <u>acknowledged</u> Him as the Christ)
 Job, chapter 1, verse 6 (Satan <u>comes</u> to the throne of God)

After reading these passages and discovering how 1) even evil spirits/demons/principalities <u>also</u> believe in (or, acknowledge the <u>existence</u> of <u>Christ</u> and His <u>power</u> or <u>position</u> as the <u>Son of God</u>) and 2) the devil himself came to the throne of God—how does their belief differ than your belief? Is it enough to believe in God only? What actions set us apart from evil spirits/demons and principalities if they "believe" just like we do?

2) How does a follower of Christ *prove* his faith, if faith is more than just words or thoughts, but in deeds/work/actions?

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

Hebrews, Chapter 11

How many **action** words can you find in this chapter? Write down examples of the actions of faith displayed by the people in this chapter.

Was simply believing in God enough for these people?

Review Verses 15--18

3) What is the greater message James is trying to convey in these passages?

EXPANDED READING: Read these passages and answer the follow-up questions.

- Proverbs, Chapter 3, verse 27
- Matthew, chapter 7, verse 12
- Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31—40
- Luke, chapter 6, verses 38 & 46
- Colossians, Chapter 3, verse 17

Based on these example passages—how does Christ expect us to behave towards others in need? How does the Lord view our acts of kindness and charity, in relation to Himself?

Are these actions a representation of our faith in Jesus?

Memorize: James Chapter 2, verse 24: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." (NASB)

Week 2, Day 6—Individual Study

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, thank you for walking with me in my study and for revealing to me, the truth of walking in my faith and being a doer of the Word. I pray you begin using me to serve others, as you called me to, and so I can glorify you in heaven. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2 aloud and answer the questions.

Review Verses 17--26

1) James makes it clear in verse 17 [that] having "faith" without action, or deeds, on behalf of that faith, is dead. In verse 20, he again reiterates how "faith without works is dead." In verse 24 he says we are justified "not by faith alone" because there must be action associated to that faith. He finishes with "faith without works is dead" in verse 26.

Are you ready to begin acting on behalf of your faith in Jesus?

What are some ways you can begin stepping out, or acting on your faith, in honor of the Lord and the sacrifice he made for your salvation?

EXPANDED READING: Read the following passages:

- Genesis, chapter 22, verses 1—18
- Hebrews, chapter 11
- Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 1—2

After reading these passages—review the *actions* described in the passages above and consider the actions you can make, should have made, or are making, all in hope of the promises and calling of the Lord.

Genesis, chapter 22

- Verse 3—and Abraham rose up early, saddled, took, clave/split the wood, went
- Verse 4—He lifted
- Verse 5—go and will worship
- Verse 6—took the wood, laid it on Isaac, took the fire/wood/son, went/walked
- Verse 9—built an altar, arranged/laid the wood, bound Isaac, laid him on the alter
- Verse 10—stretch out/forth, took the knife
- Verse 11—and he (Abraham) said
- Verse 13—and Abraham lifted, look, went, took, offered

Abraham did all these things because the Lord **chose** and **told** him what to do and he responded with action (verse 2). He then reiterated to his own son Isaac [that] the Lord *will provide* based on his **trust/faith/hope** in those promises. In acting on behalf of his faith and trust in the Lord, he **received** a response, in God's perfect timing, not to harm his son (verse 12). For this, Abraham was **chosen** by the Lord God to be the bloodline for blessings [that] all nations of the earth will be blessed (verses 16—18). Abraham was obedient, because of his trust, and righteous, because of his faith.

2) What is the Lord calling you to do today? What has been/will be your response?

Hebrews, chapter 11

Write out this definition of faith.

Identify as many action words as you can in the examples of faith provided in Hebrews, chapter 11.

Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 1-2

The author calls us to "lay aside" our sin and charges us with running "with endurance the race that is set before us." Is the choice to walk away from (repent) from sin, a decisive action?

The author encourages us to look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" in verse 2. How does it feel to know, that your course of study, choosing to be vulnerable before the Lord in this bible study and in prayer, and responding with truth in your responses in this guide—is all directing you to the "author and finishers of our faith?"

Memorize: James Chapter 2, verse 26: "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (NASB)

Stepping out the boat:

Deeper questions for a more intimate relationship

"...And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus."

The Book of Matthew, Chapter 14, verses 22—32

Week 2, Day 7—Individual Study & Review

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, I thank you for walking this path with me and for strengthening my wisdom, knowledge and understanding in you. I pray you give me a heart to love everyone you put in my path and I pray you guide me in your word to act on my faith, in deeds and love towards others. Amen.

Read: The Epistle of James, chapter 2, aloud and answer these questions.

1) How do all these passages and scripture in this chapter speak to my sin struggle?

Think: Do they bring me to a place to face my inner sin struggles so I can experience freedom in Christ?

2) How can these passages and scripture in this chapter draw me closer to the Lord? Think: Should facing my sin struggles draw me closer to, or push me further away from the Lord?

3) Do these passages and scripture in this chapter speak to the gospel message?

Think: Is the message of redemption from a savior who took the penalty for my sins, exist within this scripture?

- 4) How can I start applying this scripture to develop my knowledge, wisdom, understanding and intimacy with the Lord?
 - Think: Where does faith come from? Where does my temptation to do evil come from? How can I grow in the knowledge of the Lord?

5) Is the Holy Spirit revealing my message of personal redemption I can share with others? Think: Is Christ bringing me to a place of greater understanding and is this message of salvation, and the change happening in my heart—worthy of sharing with others? Do you want the redemption to be felt by those you love?

6) Who can I begin praying for, so that they also learn of the redemption offered in Christ? Write: Create a list of people you can begin praying for today!

7) If you believe you are a sinner, saved by the gift of grace, chosen and redeemed by the Lord, and set free in Christ—are you prepared to walk further into deep waters with the Lord, to grow in your faith and become a living testament to the goodness of the gospel message?

Elaborate and write a prayer to the Lord, asking Him for greater intimacy.

Recite from memory: James Chapter 2, verse 10

Recite from memory: James Chapter 2, verse 14

Recite from memory: James, Chapter 2, verses 19—20

Recite from memory: James, Chapter 2, verse 24

Recite from memory: James, Chapter 2, verse 26

Summary and Commentary:

There is so much power to be uncovered in this second chapter of the book of James, and so much study can come from unpacking and expanding on this letter.

We open the first half of this chapter in verses 1 through 8 with a challenge to examine ourselves—the heart of who we are—in relation to whom we choose to show partiality, and more so, the condition of our heart to judge others. As Christians we love to recite the famous words of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son." We must be careful not to overlook the follow-up context to that statement in verse 17 where we are told, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world." It is easy, because of our human nature, to cast judgment because of sin, but it is imperative that we strive to align ourselves with the gospel, so much so, that we allow the Lord to begin working in us to see others the way He sees them—by the heart, as we are told in 1 Samuel, chapter 16, verse 7. The Lord God does not expose our sin to judge us—but to reveal to us where we are broken—so we can repent and splendor in the grace offered by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. The example provided by James is one of a multitude of occasions where we can represent our faith by choosing to see people as the Lord God sees them, not by what they seem to have, or by what they seem to be able to provide us in return for showing favoritism.

James leaves us with a reminder in verses 9 through 13, that should we examine our own hearts, and remember that Jesus died on the cross while *we* were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). How can we then judge others if all sin is equal in the eyes of the Lord? How can we judge others unless we forget we are sinners also? Jesus did not take the cross for variations of sin—but for all sin, and all people—once (Romans 6:10).

In the second half of this chapter in verses 14 through 26, we get a major call to action—pun intended! Here James outlines very clearly and numerous times that our faith should not exist solely in our mind, or in our words—but in our actions or deeds. Faith is comprised of more than just those two elements (thoughts and words) but it is triune—threefold: belief in the mind—by the words of our mouth—and by the actions we take. It is not enough to say we believe in something—if there is no action to justify it. It is not enough to profess to know of, or believe in, the Lord Jesus—without evidence of that belief. We who are called are chosen, and we all have the same message—to believe in our hearts (belief), confess with our mouths (speak) and share the gospel message with others (action), making disciples (action) and pursuing the heart of the Lord in prayer (action), reading of the Word (action) and studying the scriptures (action). Those elements combined are what set us apart from the very demons and principalities that are aware (believe) of God's existence and even reference him in speech (words).

I pray you step out the boat and pursue the Lord in uncharted waters—answering His call and acting on faith in the good works He has called you to.

Be a light to the world around you.

Your brother in Christ.

Bobby Ozuna | 2020

Contact

Bobby Ozuna

Bobby.ozuna75@gmail.com

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Endnotes / Reference Page

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