

 James



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A *Discover Together*  
BIBLE STUDY

# James

*Discovering God's Delight in a Lived-Out Faith*

Sue Edwards



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Publications

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## How to Get the Most Out of a Discover Together Bible Study

Women today need Bible study to keep balanced, focused, and Christ-centered in their busy worlds. The tiered questions in *James: Discovering God's Delight in a Lived-Out Faith* allow you to choose a depth of study that fits your lifestyle, which may even vary from week to week, depending on your schedule.

Just completing the basic questions will require about one and a half hours per lesson and will provide a basic overview of the text. For busy women, this level offers in-depth Bible study with a minimum time commitment.

“Digging Deeper” questions are for those who want to, and make time to, probe the text even more deeply. Answering these questions may require outside resources such as an atlas, Bible dictionary, or concordance; you may be asked to look up parallel passages for additional insight; or you may be encouraged to investigate the passage using an interlinear Greek-English text or *Vine's Expository Dictionary*. This deeper study will challenge you to learn more about the history, culture, and geography related to the Bible, and to grapple with complex theological issues and differing views. Some with teaching gifts and an interest in advanced academics will enjoy exploring the depths of a passage and might even find themselves creating outlines and charts and writing essays worthy of seminarians!

This inductive Bible study is designed for both individual and group discovery. You will benefit most if you tackle each week's lesson on your own and then meet with other women to share insights, struggles, and aha moments. Bible study leaders will find a free, downloadable leader's guide for each study, along with general tips for leading small groups, at [www.discovertogetherseries.com](http://www.discovertogetherseries.com).

Choose a realistic level of Bible study that fits your schedule. You may want to finish the basic questions first and then “dig deeper” as time permits. Take time to savor the questions, and don't rush through the application. Read the sidebars for additional insight to enrich the experience. Note the optional passage to memorize and determine if this discipline



would be helpful for you. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by women who have more time or who are gifted differently.

Make your Bible study—whatever level you choose—top priority. Consider spacing your study throughout the week so that you can take time to ponder and meditate on what the Holy Spirit is teaching you. Do not make other appointments during the group Bible study. Ask God to enable you to attend faithfully. Come with an excitement to learn from others and a desire to share yourself and your journey. Give it your best, and remember that God promises to join you on this adventure that can change your life.





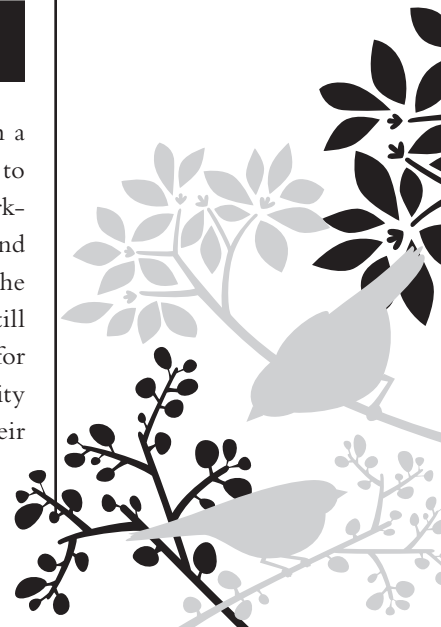
## Why Study James?

I've learned a lot talking with younger generations—those women who are walking away from churches in droves. A consistent theme concerns an indictment against older generations who know the Bible but too often fail to live it out. Younger women want to see Christians active in loving their neighbors and benefiting their communities. These younger generations volunteer more in soup kitchens and homeless shelters than their parents and grandparents. Of course, this indictment isn't true of everyone, but it's worth a heart-check.

I agree and disagree with their assessment. We must guard against the peril of the pendulum—the typical tendency to swing too far to correct an error. We must not focus all our energy on good works while neglecting the relationship with God through his Word that fuels those good works. Good works done in our own strength often do little more than make us feel good about ourselves. Yes, we are called to live out our faith, but without biblical literacy our works can easily ring hollow. James's first-century letter is all about good works—with the right motivation and for the purposes of growing us up and making God look good. James is a great intergenerational study! Together, discover the joy of living out a biblically literate faith!

### GET UP AND GO ACTIVITIES AND FOLLOW-UPS

To ensure you put what you learn into practice, each lesson ends with a Get Up and Go activity that relates to that lesson. You'll be challenged to actually use what you learn in your relationships, homes, churches, workplaces, and communities. Then the next lesson begins with a Get Up and Go Follow-Up to debrief what happened and what you learned for the benefit of the group. If you are studying on your own, the activity can still be helpful. Consider debriefing with a trusted friend or family member for the accountability. This added feature gives older women an opportunity to show younger women that they are serious too about living out their



faith. And younger women will see the necessity of living out their faith with the right motivation and God's empowerment. Use these activities as opportunities for bonding, growth, and showing the world our wonderful God.

## INTERPRETING JAMES THROUGH THE LENS OF GRACE

The letter can easily be misinterpreted to add works to salvation. If we are not careful, we eliminate grace and join the ranks of every man-made world religion; they're all based on pleasing God with good works to win his favor and approval. This motivation in the long run is counterproductive, leading to good deeds done out of guilt and shame. You can manipulate some children to do what you want with guilt and shame, but most adults ultimately rebel or become arrogant and judgmental. I've added notes throughout the study to help you interpret James through the lens of the grace of God. Yet the boldness and strength of James's demands are not lost. Our loving heavenly Father cares deeply about how we live, all for our own good and the good of others, to woo them to a saving faith.

When we live out our faith, we enjoy numerous benefits and rewards. We show ourselves as well as others that our faith is real. We experience a closer intimacy with God because we aren't doing things that interfere with our deep fellowship. We overcome bad habits and sinful patterns that drag us down and result in painful consequences. We are given opportunities to serve God that promise eternal joys beyond imagination, and we will experience even greater rewards in our eternal futures as we are welcomed home with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Welcome to the book of James. May it bless you as much as it has me.