

JAMES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Series Overview for Leaders

SERIES OVERVIEW

College-age people often feel overwhelmed by religious theology and can quickly resort to creating their own views in order to avoid the process of discovering truths in Scripture. The book of James offers a great start for Christians to learn practical steps for leading a Christ-like life, while still learning deep biblical truths. James is a small book containing five chapters packed with practical insight for all who are seeking to be more like Jesus. In these five lessons, we will cover everything from controlling our speech, to caring for the poor, to praying in every circumstance. If your group includes several new or young Christians, consider going through one of the Gospel books before launching this series in James.

There are several men named James mentioned in the New Testament, but the strongest evidence points toward the author of this letter being the brother of Jesus, note authors D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris in their book *An Introduction to the New Testament*. (More literally, Jesus and James were half-brothers because they had the same earthly mother but Jesus wasn't born from an earthly father.) This James would have grown up in the Jewish culture. Many letters in the New Testament were addressed to Christians living in specific cities or regions. James' letter isn't written to people in a specific location, but his audience is quite clear. He directly addresses followers of Christ with Jewish roots who are scattered throughout the region, and assumes that his readers would understand the Jewish law and see their faith in Jesus through that lens.

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- Week 5: Prayer in All Things (James 5:13-20)



SERIES OBJECTIVES

1. **WHAT:** The book of James offers a wealth of practical advice for living and growing as Christians.
2. **WHY:** Many college-age people are looking for practical ways to implement the truths of Scripture into their lives.
3. **HOW:** Participants will explore the book of James to see how the author offers practical advice and powerful truth that Christ-followers can immediately start putting into practice.



A Word About Translations: It is important to choose a readable Bible translation to use in your small groups. You don't want to add unnecessary confusion or spend all your time mastering pronunciation and trying to define unfamiliar words. Regardless of the translation you choose, it may be helpful for your own preparation to read the assigned passage(s) in a few different translations to get a broader depth to the text(s).

A Word About Media Clips: Some of our lessons include clips from movies, TV shows, and other media. Please know that these are put here as *suggested options*—they aren't vital for the success of the lesson. If you choose to use them, ***we strongly encourage you*** to review each clip prior to group time. We've done our best to suggest clips that will generate meaningful conversations, but we understand that using any type of media can be controversial. Because of that, we trust that you understand the dynamics of your congregation better than anyone else and will discern if our media selection will work with your group.

Your Feedback Will Be a Gift to Others: This small group curriculum is an evolving work-in-progress that will continue to take shape over many years. We know that together we can continue to make it better—**especially with your help**. Your ideas and feedback can improve this curriculum for other ministry leaders using this material in the future. If you have a good idea that would improve it, please send it to us (no matter how small the change/edit/idea might be). We understand that this will require more work on your part, but the team at Simply Youth Ministry would consider your input a gift to your ministry co-laborers. Send all thoughts and ideas to ideas@simplyyouthministry.com. Thanks so much!



SECTION DESCRIPTIONS

Each of our lessons has two sections. These sections include the:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

Let's explore these in detail.

1. LEADER PREPARATION

The first section—LEADER PREPARATION—is designed to give you, the leader, tools to help prepare for each lesson. To create a meaningful, impacting experience for participants, we encourage you to spend as much time as you can in preparation. No one better understands the value of a small group leader's time than the team at Simply Youth Ministry. Since day one we have been creating resources that save you time so you can spend more time with the members of your group. We've designed each lesson to be easy-to-use, but you'll still benefit from spending some prep time with this curriculum. Actually, **your preparation is vital to small group success**. For you to be effective with this curriculum, we believe it's important to do four things:

1. Pray! Ask God to give you his wisdom for facilitating this material.
2. Read the LEADER PREPARATION section for each lesson. (10 minutes)
3. Choose which teaching points and questions you want to use from the LESSON GUIDE. (10-20 minutes)
4. Determine a specific way that you will end the lesson. (10-20 minutes) We don't tell you how to wrap up each lesson—that's up to you and/or your ministry team.

Below, you will find a brief description of each component in the LEADER PREPARATION section.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This provides a “big-picture” perspective for the lesson. It's a quick summary that will prepare you for what you'll be discussing and sharing with your participants.



LESSON OBJECTIVES

There are three objectives for each lesson.

- The first objective answers the “what” question: *What* content will participants learn?
- The second objective answers the “why” question: *Why* is this content important to college-age people?
- The third objective answers the “how” question: *How* might college-age people apply this content when they leave small group?

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

This will be the main verse or section of Scripture used in each lesson.

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

This is a list of other selected Scriptures referenced in the lesson. Not all lessons will have secondary Scriptures.

TEACHING PREP

We offer some ideas and insights that might be helpful for each lesson that will help you gain a deeper understanding of the passage. You can pick and choose what you will share with your group. Or you may not share any of it and simply digest it for your own benefit.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

These are ideas you can use to get participants thinking about the lesson *prior* to your meeting and *after* the small group experience.

Text Message Questions

These questions can be sent prior to the small group time to get participants thinking about something that will be discussed in small group.

Continuing the Conversation

This is a short message the college pastor or small group leader can post after the lesson on a blog or a social networking site, such as Facebook® or Twitter® (though because of the 140-character limit on Twitter, the content will need to be condensed or broken into multiple tweets). It provides some follow-up thoughts that will keep participants thinking about what they learned in small group and how they can apply the truths they’ve discovered and discussed. You’re encouraged to personalize and modify this content to fit the needs of your ministry.



2. LESSON GUIDE

This is the content part for your small group lesson. Please feel free to (1) personalize the illustrations, (2) rephrase the teaching points, and (3) pick-and-choose what content you feel like you will be able to use during your particular small group time.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND: We provide more material than you can probably use during your small group time. **You will need to be the editor of the content.** Don't try to use all of it. [NOTE: If you're a volunteer small group leader, we recommend you submit to the teaching strategy/desires of the ministry leader. He/she may or may not give you the freedom to make changes within the lesson. Please seek unity and support his/her leadership.]

You'll want to review the LESSON GUIDE before each of your meetings to get a clearer idea of the activities, teaching points, discussion questions, and overall purpose of the lesson. In each LESSON GUIDE you'll find the following:

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

This includes a quick illustration, an activity, or a few opening questions to warm up, prepare, and focus your small group time. You understand the dynamics of your participants better than we do so please adapt this section, modify it, change it, delete it, or use as is. Some of the ideas require a little extra preparation prior to your small group meeting.

You'll also notice that the GETTING THINGS STARTED section is not included in every lesson. We've only included it when we feel it's beneficial. Again, if you create an activity of your own, please send it to us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com so we can evaluate it and potentially include it in future versions of this product to help other ministry leaders.

TEACHING POINTS

This part of the lesson provides you with an intentional interactive component. We don't believe that small groups should be lecture-driven. The best small groups are the ones where the participants are talking and the small group leader is facilitating conversation and discovery. When participants talk more than leaders, that's a good thing!



Please understand, **this material is NOT intended to be lecture**. We've included several questions designed to generate conversation. You'll quickly notice that we aren't fans of closed-ended questions—you know, the ones that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” That's why we offer questions that should cause participants to think, discuss, and debate. We encourage you to insert your own insights during this discussion time as well, but primarily as a facilitator who is challenging people in the group to learn/think. It's sort of like a dance—let your college-age people lead the discussion a bit by wrestling with the teaching point, then insert your own insights to help get the main teaching point across. There may be times when it's best NOT to give your own insights. Your small group doesn't have to be like a sitcom where all the problems are solved in 30 minutes. Most of the questions don't have right or wrong answers but will serve as a platform to help participants learn better.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

This is an opportunity to continue the conversation by asking more open-ended questions about the selected Scripture for this lesson. Or if you have a more spiritually mature group, you could send people home to think about and/or journal and/or message board their answers to these questions. [NOTE: Most groups won't have time for more questions since we've already provided several during the teaching points.]

APPLICATION

We have provided some “first step” ideas and/or questions that challenge participants to put what was discussed into immediate action (or in the days following). The retention of a lesson will be dramatically increased when college-age people—and you—move into action immediately following the small group.

SUMMARY

We have intentionally designed this curriculum to be so flexible that the summary or the close of each lesson is dependent on the small group facilitator. We believe that good curriculum provides a foundation for healthy dialogue, but that the summary or take-home challenge relies on the insight and wisdom of the facilitator who (1) knows the content, (2) has heard all the dialogue, (3) knows the hearts/issues/struggles of the individuals involved, and (4) understands the big picture of your ministry and what the leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching/discussion time.

THIS IS BIG! We've given you a lot of material and questions to ask, but the most important part in all of this is narrowing down the questions you'll ask to those that



best fit your group. This is where the caring, spiritually sensitive, personally growing small group leader really makes a difference in people's lives. After doing this a couple of times, it becomes easier, and when this curriculum was used in real, live ministry settings, this proved to be the leaders' favorite part—feeling empowered to figure out a way to close out the session with wisdom, sensitivity, and challenge.

SCRIPTURE TO PROCESS

This is a selected verse or passage that participants can be challenged to engage with following the lesson. We encourage you to return to these passages throughout the series to illustrate their point of connection to God's story. We also encourage you to join participants in engaging with these verses. They'll follow your lead. Again, because this curriculum is adaptable and editable, you may choose to have people engage a different verse or passage—that's great.

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