

TEA lifegroups

study guide

Week 1

Session 1: James 1:1–18

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

What's the best meal you make?

What are the ingredients, and how do you make it?

Leader Note:

This connects to an illustration Francis Chan uses in the video, so listen for it.

READ

Read James 1:1–18 aloud. (Have one person read the scriptures aloud or split the scriptures amongst 2-3 people)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

Watch Sessions 1 and 2: James 1:1–18 (*Approximately 15 min.*)

DISCUSS

1. What to Do When Life Gets Hard.

Read James 1:2–4 again.

(Trials can strengthen our faith and make us more mature. We don't have to enjoy suffering. But we can have joy in knowing that God can use difficult circumstances to grow us.)

Ask:

- Why would he tell us to consider trials “joy”?
- Do we sometimes expect God to make our lives easier or happier?

2. What About Doubt?

Read James 1:5–8.

(James tells us to ask God for **wisdom** when we face difficulties.)

Ask:

- Why do we need wisdom when we're going through trials?
- What does it look like to trust God when we don't understand what He's doing?

3: Temptation is like fishing.

Read James 1:14-15.

(There's something in us that longs for the things God says are wrong or evil. You have a choice then. Just like a fish that's being lured away, either I go and I grab it, or I swim away.)

Ask:

- Does "evil desire" always bring forth "death"?... What examples could you give?
- In light of this, what's the best way to deal with our "evil desires"?

Key Point

When life gets difficult, don't run away from God—run toward Him.

We may have questions and doubts. James encourages us to **keep coming to God, ask Him for wisdom, and trust Him through the process.**

LAST WORD — Personal Reflection

Leader: Encourage everyone this week to reflect on these questions during their personal devotion time.

Ask:

Where might God be "smelting" or refining you right now:

- What is He teaching you?
- What might He be removing from your life?
- How are you growing through the difficulty?

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Week 2

James 1:19-27

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

Think about a product in an ad that you really like. Have you ever purchased it from the ad?

What's the difference between liking a product in an ad and acting on it?

Leader Note:

It makes a difference, doesn't it? Today Pastor Chan is going to talk to us about being doers of the Word, not just hearers.

READ

Read James 1:19-27 aloud. (You can split up the reading between life group members.)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

**Watch the Week 2 video on the TFA Website (Session 3 on Right Now Media) :
James 1:19-27**

Approximately 12:05 minutes

DISCUSS

1. James instructs, "be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." (James 1:19)

Ask:

- How does his instruction challenge you?

Key Point

Everyone wants to be heard.

The Scriptures here teach us instead to be a listener & to receive the Word with meekness.

2. Pride vs Humility

It's an important distinction that James makes when he says "human anger" in verse 19. He's not talking about a righteous indignation. He's talking about the selfish side of the emotion. We know anger is a natural emotion, but it's what we do with it that matters. When we stop and really think about it, most of the time, we become angry because we are not getting *our* way (pride). In contrast to that, in verse 21 James says, "... humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."

Ask:

- How can we allow the Word of God to help us respond appropriately when we are angry, instead of sinning in our anger?
- What do you think would be the result of “listening to understand” others rather than always having to express our own thoughts?

Leader Thought

Everyone’s “on edge.” We can slow down and take things in, really listening and seeking to please God in our response.

3. Be doers, not just hearers

Francis Chan emphasizes the importance of James’ teaching on being doers of the Word, not just hearers. James notes that to *not* be doers of the Word is like looking in the mirror then walking away forgetting what you looked like. It’s not only pointless, but it’s dangerous, because to be hearers of the Word only but not doers is to deceive ourselves.

Ask:

- What are some ways that we can be doers of the Word, not just hearers?

According to the text here, to be doers of the Word is to be obedient by abstaining from sin (verse 21 & 27) as well as actively ministering to others (verse 27), especially the most vulnerable and helpless.

Pastor Chan talked about how we can give globally, which is extremely important. Think also about your own sphere of influence & your community.

Ask:

- How are some ways you can serve or minister on a practical, daily and consistent basis within your own sphere of influence and within in your community?

Key Point

We’re called to be doers of the Word, not just hearers only. A life of authentic religion will include obedience to God’s Word through purity and service.

LAST WORD — Personal Reflection

Leader: Encourage everyone during the week to reflect on these questions during their personal devotion time.

Ask:

- **Where can I become a doer of the Word?**
- **How can I submit my feelings of anger to God?**

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Week 3

James 2:1–26

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

Who's the most famous person you've ever met? How did you meet them, and how did you react?

READ

Read James 2:1–26 aloud. (Have one person read the scriptures aloud or split the scriptures amongst 2-3 people)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

Watch the Week 3 video on the TFA Website (Sessions 4 & 5 videos on Right Now Media): James 2:1-26

DISCUSS

1. Favoritism

Read James 2:1–9 again.

Ask:

- Why are we sometimes tempted to treat people differently?
- What does it mean to you to love your neighbor as yourself?

Key Point

God doesn't measure people by their appearance, wealth, status, or what they can offer us.

As followers of Jesus, we're called to treat people with equal love and dignity.

2. We Need Mercy

Read James 2:10–13 again.

Ask:

- What is the difference between judgment and mercy?
- How should receiving God's mercy affect the way we treat other people?

Key Point

We have received mercy from God, so we should be people who show mercy to others. We don't earn God's mercy by being good enough. We receive it from Him—and then we're called to extend that same mercy to others.

3. Faith and Action

Read James 2:14–20 again.

Ask:

- What is wrong with faith without action?

- James talks about two kinds of faith: Faith without works and faith demonstrated by works. What is the difference between these two?
- What's the difference between knowing facts about God and actually trusting God?

Key Point

Faith that never shows up in the way we live is dead. James isn't saying that good works earn our salvation. He's saying that genuine faith produces a changed life.

BIG IDEA

A body without breath is dead. James says faith without works is the same way. Faith and works belong together. We don't do good things to earn God's love or salvation; however, our faith should naturally begin to change the way we live.

LAST WORD — Personal Reflection

Leader: Encourage everyone during the week to reflect on these questions during their personal devotion time.

Ask:

- If someone watched the way I live, would they see evidence of my faith?
- Is my faith mostly something I believe, or is it something that affects how I live?
- Is there an area where God is asking me to put my faith into action?
- Who around me has a need I can respond to?

TAKEAWAY

We are saved by faith, not by earning our salvation through good works. But genuine faith produces a changed life.

One Question to Take Home:

What is one way I can put my faith into action this week?

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Week 4

James 3:1-18

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

Think about a time when someone said something to you that was encouraging or helpful in some way. It doesn't have to be life-changing, but helpful, good advice, encouraging.

What was so helpful about it? Why do you think they said it?

READ

Read James 3:1-18 aloud. (You can split up the reading between life group members.)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

Watch the Week 4 video on the TFA Website (Session 6 & 7 Videos on Right Now Media): James 3:1-12 & 3:13-18

Approximately 16 minutes total

DISCUSS

In the beginning of James chapter 3, James really hits hard on the importance of “taming the tongue.” We’ve all experienced the destructiveness of words unchecked. He says, “...consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.” (James 3:5)

Ask:

- What are some areas or examples of where we are tempted to use destructive words?
- What can be the results of destructive words unchecked?
- Conversely, what can be the results of life-giving words?

The Christian is called to a life of sincerity. Sometimes people get flattery confused with true spiritual kindness.

Ask:

- What's the difference between flattery and true spiritual kindness? Why is it important to be sincere, and to avoid flattery?

2. What's on the inside?

Pastor Chan really challenges us to reflect on a sobering thought: what's on the inside? James says (paraphrase) that with our tongues we bless God, but also curse man. How can this be? Can fresh water & salt water flow from the same spring? Does a fig tree produce olives?

Pastor Chan says we can analyze ourselves: If whatever is coming out of our mouths is constantly destructive, what does that say about what's on the inside? Do we truly have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us?

Ask:

- How does this truth challenge you?
- How can we cultivate a spiritual maturity that produces life-giving, God-honoring speech?

Leader Thought

We can surrender our words daily to the Lord and ask God to help us glorify Him in our speech.

3. Worldly wisdom vs. Godly wisdom

In verses 13-18, James talks about wisdom. He notes the difference between worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom. The world strives and strains: bitter, envious, and in pursuit of self-ambition. But Godly wisdom is demonstrated by actions that are characterized by meekness, humility, peace & mercy, good fruit, and sincerity

Ask:

- Have you ever been in an environment that was dominated by “worldly wisdom”? What were the results?
- Why do you think James says that Godly wisdom is characterized by humility, peace & sincerity?
- Do you know someone who walks in Godly wisdom, and what stands out to you about them and how they deal with situations?

LAST WORD — Live it out

This week:

- **Memorize** James 3:9-10
- **Stop-Shift:** When you find yourself speaking negatively about someone or something, stop yourself midway, think on James 3:9-10, and shift your thoughts and words to something God-honoring.
- **Encouragement:** Think of someone you can encourage this week; be specific & let your words be life-giving, even faith-building.
- **Thanks:** Think of someone who has encouraged you in the past and thank them for their encouragement.
- **Media fast:** Engage in fasting from media that negatively influences your thoughts and words.
- **Seek:** Seek God this week for the wisdom that you need and demonstrate your trust in Him by honoring Him with your actions.

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Week 5

James 4:1–12

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

Have you ever had a humiliating or humbling experience that you can laugh about now?

READ

Read James 4:1–12 aloud. (Have one person read the scriptures aloud or split the scriptures amongst 2-3 people)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

Watch the Week 5 video on the TFA Website (Session 8 on Right Now Media): James 4:1–12

Approximately 10 minutes

DISCUSS

1. Conflicts and Prayer

Read James 4:1–3 again.

Ask:

- According to verse 1, where do fights and quarrels come from?
- What do these verses teach us about our heart?
- What should our attitude be when we come to God in prayer?

Key Point

Many conflicts begin with what we want rather than what God wants.

When we become focused on getting our way, our desires can lead to frustration, arguments, jealousy, and conflict.

2. God Gives Grace to the Humble

Read James 4:4–6 again.

Ask:

- What do you think he means by being a “friend of the world”?
- Why do you think humility is so important to God?
- How does God's grace change the way we respond when we recognize our sin?

Key Point

We don't have to defend our failures or pretend we're doing everything right. We can humble ourselves, admit where we've fallen short, and receive God's grace.

3. How to Respond to God

Read James 4:7–12 again.

Look at the actions in James 4:7-8

- Submit to God
- Resist the devil
- Draw near to God
- Cleanse our hands
- Purify our hearts
- Turn back to God
- Humble ourselves

Ask:

- What is one of these areas God may be challenging you in right now?
- Why can judging others become dangerous?

Key Point

The answer to pride and selfishness is to humble ourselves and draw near to God.

LAST WORD — Personal Reflection

Leader: Encourage everyone during the week to reflect on these questions during their personal devotion time.

- Is there a selfish desire that is creating conflict in my life?
- Am I trying to get my way instead of seeking God's way?
- Is there an area where I need to humble myself?
- Do I need to ask someone for forgiveness or make peace?
- Am I spending enough time drawing near to God?
- Am I judging or speaking negatively about someone I need to show grace toward?

Final Thought

The answer isn't to prove that we're right or that someone else is wrong. **The answer is humility.**

Admit where we've fallen short, draw near to God, receive His grace, and allow Him to change the way we treat others.

Key verses:

James 4:7–8

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

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WEEK 6

James 4:13-17

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

Have you ever had plans that got waylaid by unforeseen circumstances?
How did you react?

READ

Read James 4:13-17 aloud. (You can have a life group member read aloud.)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

Watch the Week 6 video on the TFA Website (Session 9 on Right Now Media): James 4:13-17

Approximately 7:43 minutes

Ask:

In these verses, is James telling us NOT to make plans?
What is he dealing with?

DISCUSS

Pastor Chan notes that we live in a very arrogant culture & that God hates pride. Americans see goal-setting & planning as diligence and something to be admired, but pastor Chan notes that when we make plans ***apart from God***, we are operating in arrogance. James says, "...What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it's the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (James 4:14-15)

Ask:

- How can we take a humble, God-honoring approach to our life-plans?
- What philosophy or ways of thinking can help us with this?

2. Pastor Chan talks about:

- The sovereignty of God
- Submission to God

The sovereignty of God is the truth that God is ultimately in control of everything; we are not. Our every breath comes from God.

Submission to God is praying like Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but Yours be done," & asking the Lord, "What do You want me to do, Lord?"

Ask:

- How is it helpful to remind ourselves that God is sovereign?

- What are some personal practices that you do to consistently to submit yourself and your ways to the Lord?

Read:

Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 29:11–13; Luke 12:22–26; Matthew 6:33

Ask:

- What do these verses say about our plans and God’s plans?
- Next time your plans fall through, how might these verses help you?

Leader Thought

Jesus Himself affirmed the value of planning (Luke 14:28–32). The key here is that God’s plans trump our plans. We need to be humble enough to recognize that God might have different priorities from ours, and we should be obedient enough to make plans with His priorities in mind.

The business world talks about making a “pivot,” or being flexible when plans have to change. Changing course is often part of success. The same may be true in the personal lives of believers. God guides us today, and He may lead us to make certain plans, but we need to keep listening to him and be willing to “pivot” and follow new directions as He directs us.

3. Sin isn’t just submitting to temptation...

James talks about being proactive about what God’s will for our lives is. He says in verse 17, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”

Pastor Chan brings out the truth that sin isn’t just submitting to temptation, but also resisting God’s will, when He is clearly telling us to do something.

Ask:

- Can you share a time in your life when you knew God was asking something of you, and you obeyed?
- What was the result? Was it difficult to step out in faith?
- What would your advice be to someone who is wrestling with something they feel like God is asking them to do?

LAST WORD — Live it out

This week:

- **Pray** about your life, your family, your home, your business, your church. Talk with God about these and then listen. What does He think about all this?
- **Seek counsel:** As you consider plans for the future, find a wise Christian friend to consult with. Pray with them and ask their advice on determining the direction where God might be leading you.
- **Dare:** Is there something God has been nudging you to do for Him that you’ve been resisting? Maybe you’re worried about what people will think, or you might

consider the action dangerous in some way. Keep tuning in to God's direction here. Get appropriate advice from others who are close to God, but then dare to do it.

- **Repent & surrender** if there's been something you know God has been asking you to do and you've been obstinate.

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Week 7

James 5:1–12

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

- What was the first job you ever had outside your home?
- How much did you get paid?
- How did you feel about your pay?

READ

Read James 5:1–12 aloud. (Have one person read the scriptures aloud or split the scriptures amongst 2-3 people)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

**Watch the Week 7 video on the TFA Website (Session 10-11 on Right Now Media):
James 5:1-12**

Approximately 15 minutes

DISCUSS

1. Money and Our Hearts

Read James 5:1–6 again.

Ask:

- What's wrong with living only for ourselves?
- How can we use the resources God has given us to help others?
- What might reveal that money has too much control over our hearts?

Leader Point

James is not simply criticizing people for having money. However, God cares about how we use our money and resources.

The issue isn't simply **what we own**. The deeper issue is **what owns us**.

Leader Note:

Keep the conversation focused on what God is teaching us rather than turning it into a political discussion about wealth, taxes, government, or class.

2. Be Patient While You Wait

Read **James 5:7–9** again.

James tells believers to be patient and stand firm as they wait for the Lord's return.

Ask:

- What example does James use to describe patience?
- How is waiting for a harvest similar to waiting for Jesus?
- Why do difficult circumstances sometimes cause us to take our frustration out on other people?

Leader Note:

A farmer plants, waits, and trusts that the harvest will come. We may not know when Jesus will return, but we can remain faithful while we wait.

3. Persevere Through Difficult Times

Read **James 5:10–12** again.

Ask:

- What does James say about those who persevere?
- How can God use difficult experiences to grow our faith?
- James tells us to let our “yes” be yes and our “no” be no. What does this teach us about being honest and trustworthy?

Leader Note:

The goal isn't that we enjoy suffering. God can use trials to develop perseverance and make us more like Christ.

Final Thought

James doesn't try to answer the question of **why** suffering happens. Instead, he teaches us how to respond when suffering comes:

- **Be patient.**
- **Stand firm.**
- **Don't grumble against one another.**
- **Persevere through difficult times.**
- **Look to faithful examples like the prophets and Job.**
- **Remember that God is compassionate and merciful.**

LAST WORD — Personal Reflection

Leader: Encourage everyone during the week to reflect on these questions during their personal devotion time.

Ask:

- Do my spending habits reflect my faith and priorities?
- Am I content with what I have?
- What would it look like to store up more “treasure in heaven”?
- **What is one area of my life where God is asking me to be patient and persevere?**

Memory Verse:

James 5:11 — “The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.”

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WEEK 8

James 5:13-20

Small Group Leader Guide

OPEN — Icebreaker

Ask:

Share about a time when you had a specific prayer answered, it doesn't have to be "mountain-moving."

Looking back, was there anything special about the way you prayed that prayer?

How did you feel when it was answered?

READ

Read James 5:13-20 aloud. (A volunteer can read it out.)

Ask everyone to follow along and listen for the main ideas.

WATCH

Watch the Week 8 video on the TFA Website (Session 12 on Right Now Media): James 5:13-20

Approximately 9:34 minutes

Ask:

What is prayer & is there a specific way we are supposed to do it?

If prayer is, essentially, talking with God, then there must be many ways to do it.

Certainly we want to speak respectfully to the Creator of the Universe, but our prayer tone doesn't have to be formal and elegant. It's a conversation with God who loves us & the Bible teaches us that God already knows what we need before we ask. With that in mind, we can talk with God in simple, meaningful and authentic ways.

A helpful outline is what Jesus gave us in Matthew 6:6-13, we call "The Lord's Prayer."

DISCUSS

Pastor Chan connects James' statement in verses 13-14, *is anyone in trouble, pray; is anyone happy, praise; is anyone sick, call on the elders to pray*, with intimacy with God. He says we should be in such relationship with God, that our first response in all circumstances is to go to Him first.

Ask:

- Why do you think we don't always go to God first? As Pastor Chan says, we seek comfort elsewhere. We try to figure things out on our own.
- How do you think our lives would change if we went to God first always: If we sought Him first in trouble, if we praised Him first for good things, if we called upon our brothers and sisters to pray in times of need?

2. Verse 5:16 says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

Ask:

- Why do you think James talks about confession here?
- What are some powerful results of confession?
- Why do you think “confessing your sins to each other” is so important for healing and answered prayers?

3. Elijah, a person just like us

17“Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” James 5:17-18

Ask:

- Why do you think James wrote verses 17-18?
- How can we allow this to build our faith as we pray?

Leader Thought

Pastor Chan says that we often look at people in the Bible as if they were different than us; but they weren't. We, too, can encounter God. Faith comes from intimacy with God. These are not unattainable experiences.

Do you believe that God can answer your prayers like these?

4. A living faith

James ends with the admonition to look out for each other's spiritual well-being, "...remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins."

Pastor Chan notes it's the greatest miracle to see others turn back to God. It's an amazing thought that we can have an impact on someone's eternity! It reminds us that we have a ***living and active faith***, which is really the underlining theme of the book of James.

Ask:

- Have you ever been used to turn someone away from sin, and back to the Lord?
- Have you been on the receiving end of someone holding you accountable to sin and helping you to turn back to the Lord or let go of sinful habits?
- Share your testimonies of these experiences & the impacts they made.

LAST WORD

Earlier, James challenged his readers to humble themselves before the Lord. In this last part of his letter, he shows what that looks like. The church community is praying together, confessing their sins to one another. They accept the fact that they're "only human," but they still expect great things from God when they pray. And when someone strays from the faith, they pray, speak truth in love, they forgive, & they restore.

Live it out

This week:

- **Prayer Journal:** Begin keeping a prayer journal, in which you record the things you pray for. Look back periodically to see how God is changing the situation and how He's changing you.
- **Group Prayer:** Connect with other believers for prayer. Talk with a few friends about getting together on a regular basis to pray for the needs of your church and community.
- **Care for the sick:** Pray for them, believing for healing. Do you know anyone who is sick? How can you help them? Are there practical matters -errands to run – you could attend to? How could you encourage them?
- **Connect with a Wanderer:** Do you know anyone who is wandering from the faith? What can you do to reach out to this person? Pray & listen for God's direction, and remember James' cautions about the tongue. Make sure your motives are redemptive, full of love and concern, as you speak truth in love.