

Bible Reading Notes

June 2019 – James

These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets.

Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'subscribe to online feeds' and 'Devotional'. It's called St Philemon's Bible Notes. If you have any problems, email alicecornes@gmail.com

How to use these Bible reading notes

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you dig into God's word and allow it to change your life. 'A little and often' is a good motto. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever the notes have got to. Here's a guide to get the most out of these notes:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
2. Ask God to help you understand.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the passage:
 - *'Read' sections get you thinking for yourself about the verses.*
 - *'Apply' sections suggest how they make a difference to you and how to pray in response.*
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for an opportunity to share with someone what God has told you.

Saturday 1st June

This month we're looking at the letter of James. James' concern was how his readers were living their lives - did their life and faith match up? Be prepared to be fired up and challenged by the Holy Spirit to live a genuine life of faith in Jesus Christ that pleases God the Father.

Read James 1:1

James was probably one of Jesus' brothers and a leader in the early church (Acts 15:13).

- How does James introduce himself?
- What's important to him?
- Who is the letter written to and where did they live? (NB: the 'twelve tribes of Israel' is a name for ethnically Jewish people)

Apply

- How do you think of yourself as a Christian?
- The name 'Jesus' means God saves. Christ means God's king. How do you think of Jesus? Is he your Lord and Saviour and King?

Pray

- Wherever you are, whatever your circumstances, thank God today for Jesus, your Lord and Saviour and King.
- Ask God to help you humbly love and serve him today.

Sunday 2nd June

Read James 1:2-4

- What is James' concern for his brothers and sisters in Christ?
- What does he command? v2, 4.

Apply

- How do you usually respond to hard times in your life?
- How do these verses change the perspective on the trials of life for the Christian?
- How could you respond with 'pure joy' to your trials?

Pray

- This seems unnatural!
- Ask God to help you see the trials of life from his perspective - to choose to respond with joy because the outcome is a faith that keeps going and growing stronger to the end.

Monday 3rd June

Read James 1:5-8

Wisdom is how to live as a godly person - how to put knowledge into practice.

- If anyone lacks wisdom, what should they do?
- How should they ask? Why?
- What is the encouragement and warning of these verses?

Apply

- What kind of things do you pray about and ask for? Is wisdom one of them?
- How do you ask?

Pray

- Thank God that he is a generous and gracious Father who answers prayers asked in faith.
- Say sorry for times when you've 'worried' your prayers.
- Ask for a single-minded faith that believes and does not doubt.

Tuesday 4th June

Read James 1:9-11

Many of James' readers would have been poor and on low incomes.

- How does verse 9 encourage these believers?

Chapter 2:5 helps us understand these verses: '...has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?'

- What should rich believers be mindful of? Verses 10-11.
- How are both poor and rich to view their circumstances?

Apply

- How do you view your status in the world?
- How does God view your status in the world?

Pray

- Thank God that he gives us a rich inheritance.
- Pray for humility to be able to live with a heavenly perspective whatever your circumstances.

Wednesday 5th June

Read James 1:12

Today's verse takes us back to the theme of v2-4.

- What will happen to the one who perseveres under trial?
- What do you think James means by 'the crown of life'?
- Who receives this reward? Why?

Apply

- What trials, tests or temptations are you facing at the moment?
- How will this verse encourage you to keep going today?
- Who else can you encourage with this verse today?

Pray

- Thank God that King Jesus wore a crown of thorns for you so that you might receive the crown of life in his kingdom.
- Thank him for his love, and for the promise of his word.
- Ask that you might love Jesus more and live for him today.

Thursday 6th June

Read James 1:13-15

- Whilst God might test the believer's faith (verses 2-4 and 12), what does he *not* do? Why not?
- Where does wrongdoing - sin - come from?
- What happens when temptation is given in to?

Apply

- Have you ever blamed God for tempting you to sin?
- Where does the blame and responsibility really lie for yours and my sin and rebellion against God?
- What excuses do you come up with?

Pray the Lord's Prayer today:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

(Matthew 6:9-13)

Friday 7th June

Read James 1:16-18

These verses follow on from yesterday where we saw that God does not tempt anyone to sin.

- How is God described here?
- What does he give?

With a whole New Creation to come, Christians are described as the 'firstfruits' – the start of a whole crop of new life.

Apply

- Sin gives birth to death (v15) but the word of truth - the gospel - gives birth to life (v18).
- Praise God now for your new life in Christ that you received through repenting and believing in the good news about Jesus.

Saturday 8th June

Read James 1:19-21

- What does James command of the believers?
Why?
- What will make the difference?

Apply

- When do you have trouble controlling your tongue and temper?

Pray

- Ask for forgiveness for times when you've given in to these temptations to sin.
- Ask God to help you get rid of these sins in your life and to increasingly live humbly by his word instead.

Sunday 9th June

Read James 1:22-25

- What is the proof that a Christian has truly heard and grasped the truth of God's word?

Apply

- In what area of your life do you need to obey God's word today?
- When have you experienced the blessing of obedience to his word?
- Is there anything distracting you from really listening to and doing God's word at the moment?
- How could you help yourself be less distracted?

Pray

- Thank God for his grace that has saved you (v18).
- Ask God to help you to not only listen to him but also to obey him and put his word into practice every day.

Monday 10th June

Read James 1:26-27

- v26 picks up the theme of verses 19-21 again.
- What does a loose tongue reveal about the person who claims to be religious?
- Instead, what is pure and faultless religion?

Apply

- True Christians will care for the least and most vulnerable in society. They will also make sure they live in God's ways, not influenced by the culture around them.
- How can you act on one or both of these today?
- Pray and ask God's help to action this.

Tuesday 11th June

Read James 2:1-4

- How is Jesus described? (it's similar to 1:1). Why is this important to James' argument?
- What are the believers commanded not to do? Why? (**Look back to 1:9-11.**)
- Where does discrimination stem from?

Apply

- Are you ever tempted to show favouritism to some at church and not others based on their appearance? Why?
- How will these verses help you address this heart attitude?
- Who can you welcome to your church this coming Sunday?
- The cross is the great leveller. God does not discriminate, and sent Jesus for all people everywhere who would love and believe in him, regardless of their race, social status or background.

Pray

- Thank God for his grace.
- Repent of any discrimination on your part.
- Ask him to help you live a life consistent with the gospel of Christ.

Wednesday 12th June

Read James 2:5-7

There seems to have been a situation where rich unbelievers were taking advantage of poor Christians.

- What is God's attitude towards the poor?
- How have the believers been responding to the poor?
- What is odd about this?

Apply

- Our felt needs are real and important to God.
- How can these verses help you live in a way that's honouring to God in your situation without compromising on what you know of God and his gospel?

Pray

- Bring your needs now to God in prayer, the giver of every good gift (1:17).
- Thank him for choosing you to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him.
- Ask him to help you trust him more and not to compromise with what the world has to offer.

Thursday 13th June

Read James 2:8-13

- Why is favouritism a sin according to verses 8-9?
- What point is James making in verses 10-11?
- What evidence will there be in a believer's life that they are living by 'the royal law', v12-13?

Apply

- Are you ever tempted to treat some sins as less serious than others?
- Are you ever tempted to pick and choose which commands you will keep from God's word?
- What do these verses have to say about that?

Pray

- Praise God for his 'royal law', 'the law that gives freedom'.
- Ask for forgiveness for the ways that you have not loved your neighbour as yourself this week.
- Ask for help to live by 'the royal law' and experience life as Jesus taught: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy", (Matthew 5:7).

Friday 14th June

Read James 2:14-17

These verses today begin to get to the heart of James' argument.

- How would you answer the rhetorical questions in verses 14-16?
- What does true, living faith include according to James (post-conversion)?
- How does his example in verses 15-16 show this? Does anyone benefit from Christian faith without works?

Apply

These are searching verses.

The Message translation puts verse 17 like this: 'Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?'

- Where are you in danger of talking good God-talk but without the God-acts?

Pray

- Ask God to grow your love for Christ so that your actions are increasingly motivated by and demonstrate your faith in him.

Saturday 15th June

Read James 2:18-26

Yesterday James said 'Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by actions, is dead.'

- What other examples does James give to illustrate his point from yesterday?
- How do they help?

Apply

- Christian faith and action should go hand in hand. This is about a whole life lived for Christ in word and deed.
- How can you demonstrate your faith today?

Sunday 16th June

Read James 3:1-8

- Why should no-one rush to be a teacher in the church?
- What do teachers and all believers have in common?
- What does James compare the tongue to?
- Verses 6 and 7 use strong imagery and language. Spend a few moments thinking on the pictures and language he uses, imagine what he means.

Apply

- Is James' description of the use of the tongue and its effects shocking to you? Why? Why not?
- Have you ever experienced the damaging effects of a loose tongue used to gossip, slander, or lie?
- Can you think of other examples?
- Why is the tongue so powerful?

Pray

- Pray for your teachers in the church that they would do their duties faithfully and responsibly, being godly and careful in what they say.
- No-one uses their tongue perfectly. Seek forgiveness today for things you've said that have been sinful.

Monday 17th June

Read James 3:9-12

- Who receives what with our words?
- What is wrong with this?
- What do our words reveal about us?

Apply

Jesus said, “the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them” (Matthew 15:18).

- What do your words reveal about you? Where do you need to change?
- Spend some time examining your heart before God today.

Pray

- Ask God for a clean and pure, undivided heart that produces speech that is ‘fresh water’.

Tuesday 18th June

Read James 3:13-16

- If someone is truly wise among the believers, how will this be seen?
- In contrast, what do 'disorder and every evil practice' (v16) reveal?

Apply

- Why is personal selfish ambition so destructive in the church?
- How can you be growing in godly wisdom and humility and encouraging others to do the same?

Pray

- Pray for yourself and your church in light of these verses today.

Wednesday 19th June

Read James 3:17-18

- Where does true wisdom come from?
- Imagine having this wisdom in your own life and in the church!
- What does this wisdom produce?
- What do you think 'a harvest of righteousness' is?

Apply

- Choose one of the attributes of wisdom - what would it look like to know more of this in your life?
- Are you someone who likes to get their own way? How do these verses challenge you?
- Where can you be a peacemaker for Christ today?

Pray

- Ask God to give you this wisdom to live well for him as you follow Jesus today.

Thursday 20th June

Read James 4:1-3

- How would you answer James' question in v.1?
- What answer does James give?
- What is shocking about his description of the results of unrestrained desire? And this is amongst believers in the church!
- What reason does he give for the believers not having what they want?

Apply

- What might fights and quarrels be about in any church? Here are three to get you started:
 - Position - I'm the ... so you should ...
 - Money - spend it this way.
 - Authority - no one can disagree with me.
- Can you think of any others?

Pray the Lord's Prayer.

- You might like to especially dwell on God the Father's holiness, his kingdom, his will being done.

Friday 21st June

Read James 4:4-10

Yesterday, James talked about fights and quarrels among Christians which come from our desires.

- How does James describe this more? v4.

'Adultery' picks up the Old Testament picture of relationship to God. God was always a faithful 'husband' to them, but his people were often a faithless 'wife'.

- What does friendship with the world make a Christian?
- Why is God's jealousy a good thing?
- This is a severe rebuke. Is there any hope? v6.
- What is the remedy? v7-10.

Apply

- Does your sin ever cause you to grieve?
- This section calls for deep and sincere repentance of worldliness and disloyalty to God.
- Take heart in God's response to those who humbly turn back and draw near to him.

Saturday 22nd June

Read James 4:11-12

- What does James command the brothers and sisters in these verses?
- Why?
- Whose place are we taking if we judge others?

Apply

- A judgmental and critical spirit does not glorify God and breaks the royal law of love.
- Do you recognise this in yourself?
- How will you respond if you hear a Christian brother or sister bad-mouthing another?

Pray

- Ask to know more of God's heavenly wisdom (3:17-18) so that you might know self control in what you say, a right attitude towards Christian brothers and sisters, and ultimately towards God.

Sunday 23rd June

Read James 4:13-17

- What assumptions are the people in v13 making?
- What is their attitude? v16
- Instead, how should they think about their lives? v14
- Who have they omitted to take into consideration in their planning? v15

Apply

- How, according to these verses, are Christians (and all people) to view and make plans for their lives?
- How will this perspective change how you make your plans each day?

Pray

- Ask God to help you honour him and act on these verses.

Monday 24th June

Read James 5:1-6

- Who is James writing to in these verses?
- What does he condemn?
- Why? What perspective does he have in mind?
 - ‘Misery that is coming’
 - ‘In the last days’
 - ‘In the day of slaughter’
- How might this shake up a hoarding rich believer?

Apply

Jesus said, “You cannot serve both God and Money”
(Matthew 6:24).

- Do you believe this?

Pray

- Thank God that the misuse of money and power and the oppression of the poor will not be overlooked on the day of judgment.
- Pray that God would help you to serve him, not money.

Tuesday 25th June

Read James 5:7-9

Yesterday, James said that rich oppressors of the poor will be punished 'in the day of slaughter'.

- In light of that, how are the believers (perhaps particularly the poor) to live?
- What/who are they waiting for?
- What difference would this make to their waiting?

Apply

- Has the situation changed for us, nearly 2000 years later?
- How does waiting patiently for Jesus's return help us when we face sorrows, temptations and trials?
- How are you at being patient? Are you ever tempted to grumble whilst you wait for something?

Pray

- Ask God to help you wait patiently, to stand firm in your faith, and be ready for Jesus' return.

Wednesday 26th June

Read James 5:10-11

Patient endurance in the face of suffering is hard.

- Who does James encourage the believers to look to for inspiration?
- Why? If you can, think of some examples of the prophets, as well as Job.
- How would you describe the Lord's work in their lives?

Apply

The lives of Christians who endured suffering and didn't give up still encourage us today. Corrie ten Boom's life story made a big impact on me.

- Who inspires you?

Pray

- Thank the Lord that he is in control when things seem out of control.
- Thank him for his compassion and mercy.
- Thank him that he will ultimately bring about good for us as we wait patiently on him.

Thursday 27th June

Read James 5:12

- What do you think James means by swearing in this context?
- Why does he prohibit this? What sort of speech does he encourage instead?

Apply

- How might saying, for example, 'God is my witness' be misused in everyday conversation?
- Why might someone feel they need to say it?
- Why is this not appropriate for a Christian?

Pray

Psalm 51:6 says, 'Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.'

- Ask God to help you be true to him, and truthful in your speech.

Friday 28th June

Read James 5:13-16

- In times of trouble and in times of happiness, what is the believer to do? v13
- What is the sick person to do? v14

Anointing with oil is a symbolic act, often associated in the Bible with setting apart a person or an object for God's service.

- What will make the sick person well? v15
- Is sickness always the result of sin? v15
- Think back over the rest of James' letter. What understanding is implicit in 'the prayer offered in faith' v15?
- Why is confessing sin to another Christian a good thing to do in this context? v16

Apply

- What is to be the habit of Christians in all circumstances?
- Where is the Christian's confidence to be placed?

Pray

- Ask that you would increasingly make prayer your habit in all circumstances, good and bad.
- Pray that you would be able to trust God for the healing of those who are sick - to pray in faith for healing in the Lord's will and timing.

Saturday 29th June

Read James 5:17-18

Elijah was an Old Testament prophet. (You can read about Elijah and this event in 1 Kings 17-18.)

- Why does James give Elijah as an example?
- Look back to the second half of verse 16.
- Is 'powerful and effective' prayer limited to only certain believers?
- How did Elijah pray, according to James? V17
- What does that mean? What will it be like?

Apply

'What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!'
By Joseph M. Scriven

- Bring your concerns and needs to the Lord in prayer.
- Ask him to help you learn to pray more earnestly.

Sunday 30th June

Read James 5:19-20

- What is James' final warning and encouragement?
- How does this fit with a repeated message of the letter that Christians are to love our neighbours (2:8)?
- What's the link between understanding the truth of the gospel and our behaviour?

Apply

- Imagine you have a friend who used to be regular at church, but has not been for several weeks. You're worried for them. How might these verses begin to help you follow that friend up?
- What will motivate you?

Pray

- Pray that you would be a Christian who puts their faith into action, who loves their neighbour as themselves.
- Pray for any known to you who have 'wandered from the truth.' Ask the Lord to bring them back, and for wisdom as you seek to draw alongside them.