

New Series: The Epistle of James

Scripture and Background Information for May 17-23.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

This week, we'll be looking at **James 1:1-5**. The Epistle of James can be summarized as "theology in practice." On occasion, the epistle can be confusing, seeming to indicate justification by works. A closer look shows us that James is not emphasizing the way one finds salvation; he assumes his readers are already Christians (James 1:2; 2:1; 3:1). James' focus is on how salvation effects the life of the believer. *Faith* is not seen as an abstract concept. James' premise is: *Right faith leads to right thinking, and right thinking leads to right actions.*

Background for James 1:1-5

James, the half-brother of Jesus, writes to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad. The Jewish connection of the Epistle indicates an early writing of the letter. Nevertheless, James writes to Christians as they existed during his time; it is also a letter for Christians today. James writes to encourage fellow believers to continue to press on with their faith, no matter their circumstances. Christians should anticipate various trials. If they face the trials, they can encounter them with joy. Verses 3-5 give the reasons for a joyful encounter of the trials.

- Verse 3a shows that trials are *tests* (the word means proof) of faith. When a Christian comes into trials, it shows him the trueness/proof of his faith

Note, the term, translated as *trial*, can also mean *temptation* (like in 1:13). Here, the term seems to mean *trials, Christians encountered by other people*. Remember, James writes to people who are scattered abroad. No matter what Christians face from the outside, they should press on because it helps them to grow in their faith.

Scriptures for upcoming weeks:

May 24

James 1:19-25

June 7

James 2:1-10