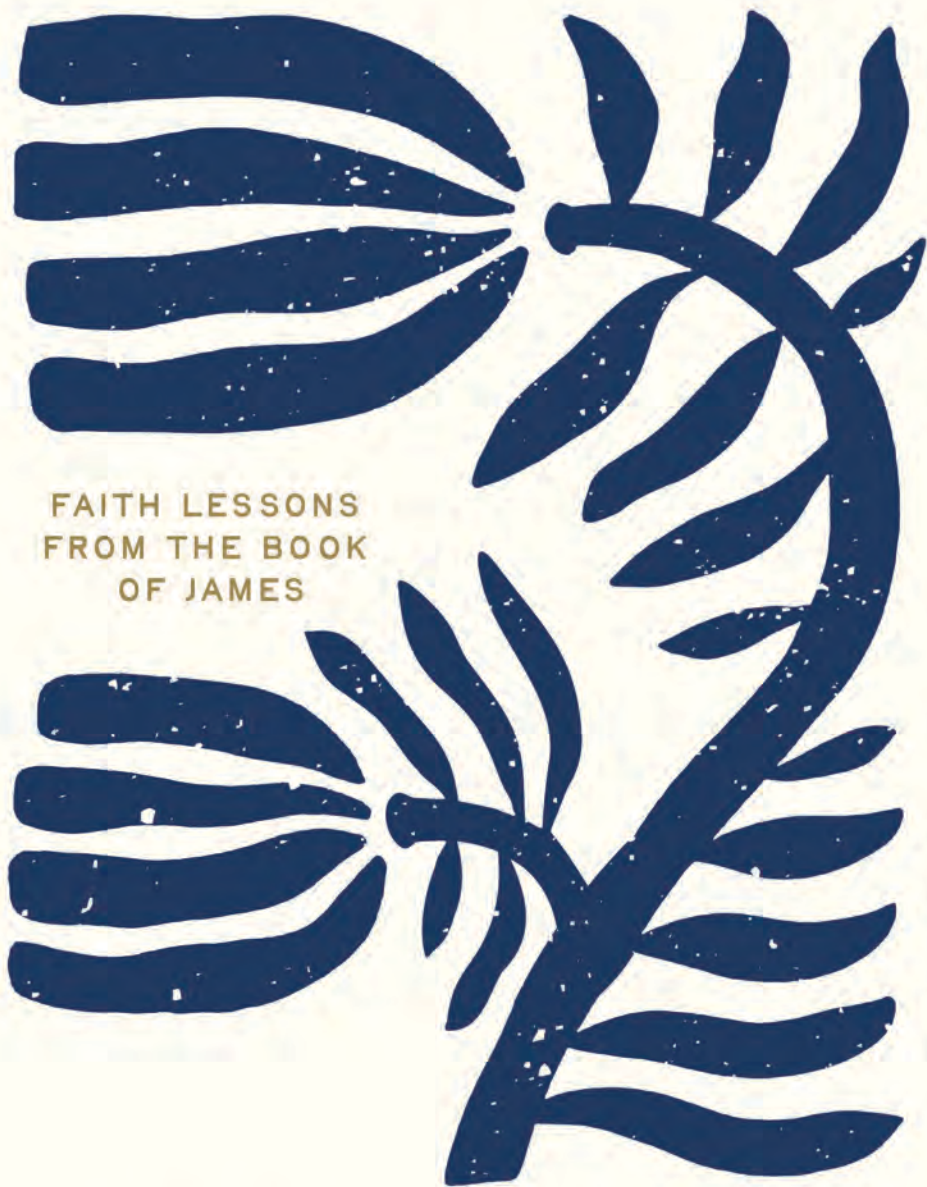


GROWING UP

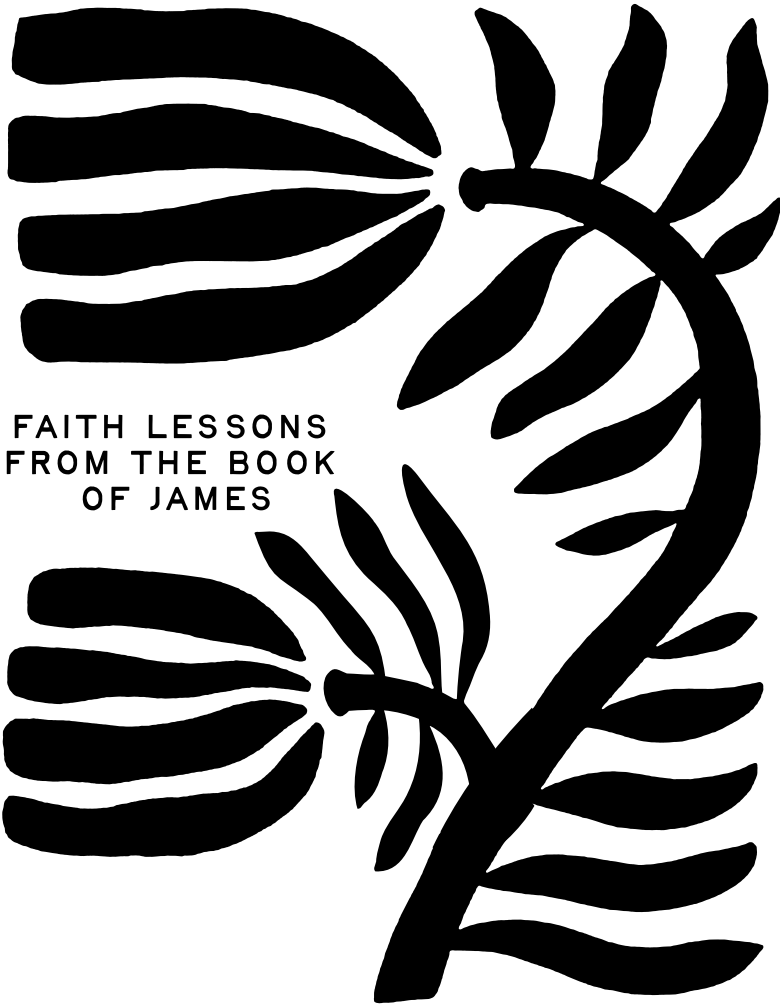


FAITH LESSONS
FROM THE BOOK
OF JAMES

LUANN RILEY

A SEEDBED WOMEN'S STUDY

GROWING UP



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OF JAMES

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MEET THE AUTHOR

I grew up in Alabama, a down-home girl who liked to clog on the weekends. I may have even wandered into a pageant or two in my day. I grew up in the church, every Wednesday and Sunday, yet I never really knew Jesus. So at the ripe old age of eighteen, I decided I would go my own way.

Spoiler alert: I made a big, huge mess of it.

Back then, if you had bet my momma that I would one day spend my life opening the Word of God and telling people about Jesus, she would have taken your bet and lost the house.

If we could grab a cup of coffee together, you would probably hear more about that season. You would hear how Jesus showed up and changed everything, top to bottom. What God has redeemed and restored in my life is nothing short of a miracle, and it is a story I never want to stop telling.

Somewhere along the way, God took a life that had gone sideways and gave it purpose. I went back to school, studied theology, and kept saying yes to the slow, holy work of becoming the kind of woman who believes Jesus can actually make all things new. I speak with the gentle kind of confidence that only comes from knowing what it is like to make decisions gone bad, to hurt, to wait, to lose, and to be met by God anyway.

A few fun facts: I am a twin mom and my boys are the best gift God has given me, and I'm passionate about hoodie sweatshirts, nondairy creamer, thriller books that make my heart race, and Alabama football.

It is so nice to meet you. Pull up a seat. Let's open the Bible together and see what God wants to grow in us.

Dear friends,

Thank you for joining me for this study of James. My deepest hope is that, as we walk through this book, you'll fall more deeply in love with God and His Word as the Holy Spirit meets us on every page, in every question, and in every conversation.

The book of James is full of honest and challenging truths. Some, I admit, are hard to hear, but these truths are meant to help us live out our faith in our everyday lives as we become who God calls us to be. I pray that this study will stretch you in all the right ways through your willingness to lean in, be present, and commit to growing over the next seven weeks.

Before we get started, I want to pray over you:

Father,

Thank You for everyone who has committed to this study.

Speak through Your Word over the next seven weeks.

Soften our hearts and open our ears to hear Your Word for us.

Help us to grow our faith with joy,

to find wisdom where we need it.

Give us the courage to obey,

to have the kind of faith that reflects Jesus.

Implant Your Word in our hearts.

May we encounter you in a fresh and new way as You meet us here.

Amen.

I'm honored to open God's Word with you. Let's grow up in faith together.

With gratitude,
Luann

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This study aims to be both impactful and doable. Each week, you'll have about thirty to forty-five minutes of Bible study to complete in the workbook. You can do it all in one sitting with your coffee and a cozy blanket, in the car rider line (I've been there!), on your lunch break, or spread over a few days. Do whatever works best for your rhythm.

Each week, you will walk through the book of James with Scripture, insights, and reflective questions to help you apply the text. These questions aren't about having the right answer. Don't stress. This isn't a test; it's a journey. The questions are designed to encourage you to think deeply, listen for God's voice, and allow His Word to take root in your heart.

Each week is completed with video teaching and a video notes page to jot down ideas, questions, or thoughts that stand out to you. You should complete each weekly lesson before your group meeting. Note anything that God highlights for you to share with your group or a friend.

One important note: If you miss a week, no big deal. Seriously. Grace abounds. Just jump back in the next week, no guilt, no catching up required unless you want to.

God meets you right where you are. It's not about doing it perfectly. It's about showing up, being open, and being willing for God to grow something in you.



WEEK .01

INTRODUCTION

As you watch the video, listen for the key phrases and Scripture connections that shape our understanding of what it means to grow up in faith. Use the fill-in-the-blank prompts to help you stay engaged and track the main ideas and jot down any additional notes, questions, or personal reflections in the space provided. This section is meant to capture what the Holy Spirit highlights for you, not just information to remember but truth to live.

VIDEO NOTES

1. It is one thing to _____ we have faith; it's another to _____ it out.

2. The word _____ refers to Jews living outside the ancestral land of Israel, dispersed among the _____.

WEEK 1 CONVERSATION STARTERS

1

When you were a child, what did you imagine being a grown-up would be like? How does that compare to your reality now? (If you are studying in a group, use this for your introduction ice breaker.)

2

What do you think it means to have a grown-up faith? How might that look different from a childlike or immature faith?

3

Warren Wiersbe wrote: “Not everybody who grows old, grows up.” In what areas of your faith do you sense God inviting you to grow up?

4

Faith isn't just something we believe, it's how we live. What's one way you want your faith to show up more in your everyday life this week?





WEEK .02

THE MAKING OF MATURE FAITH

JAMES 1:2-21

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

⁹Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

¹²Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown

of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

¹³When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

STEPPING INTO JAMES

Take a moment with me to step back into the first-century world of James, a land full of tension and hope. Rome's influence could be felt everywhere, from the heavy taxes to soldiers marching through dusty roads between olive trees and villages to the guards posted near the temple gates. And the people were weary of the injustice and poverty that were effects of occupation.

In Jerusalem, the temple courts were full of priests, pilgrims, and merchants. But even there, life was fractured. The religious leaders and sects, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, all taught their preferred way, and rebellion brewed with the Zealots. And in the midst of this division, a growing group quietly claimed that the long-awaited Messiah had come, not with armies, but with mercy and salvation.

In this group was a man named James, Jesus's brother. Once an unbeliever, he was now the leader in the church in Jerusalem. He wrote a letter to the believers scattered throughout the ancient world due to persecution. It is brief, direct, and practical to those who were struggling under the weight of an empire. A letter of instruction and encouragement to a people whose faith was tested through the daily grind of economic hardship, trials, and temptations.

The world of James was not tidy or easy. It was loud with political tension, sharp with social inequity, and charged with spiritual hunger. And yet, in the middle of it all, James spoke of a faith that wasn't just believed but lived.

To step into James's world is to step into our own. A world still aching for wisdom, still tested and tempted, and still learning to live what it believes.

Life has a way of testing what we believe.

Sometimes it's a diagnosis, loss, or a difficult relationship that brings on a crisis. Other times, it's the ordinary stress of our lives that wears us down. The recipients of James's letter were tested not only through personal hardship, but also by the world around them.

Greek Hellenism had a profound influence on the world in the first century. Hellenism refers to the spread and influence of Greek culture, language, and philosophy throughout the Mediterranean

world, particularly after Alexander the Great's conquests in the fourth century BC.

By the first century AD, Hellenism had profoundly shaped every aspect of life in the Roman Empire, encompassing religion, ethics, education, politics, and daily practices. Although James wrote primarily to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora, these believers were scattered beyond Judea throughout the Roman world, living in cities shaped by Greek language, philosophy, and social customs.

The temptations James addresses in his letter—favoritism toward the rich, competing for teaching roles, and speech—arose in a culture that prized honor, status, wealth, and rhetorical skill. Diaspora Jews lived among diverse religious practices, including pagan worship and philosophical schools. Greek ideals surrounded the believers, who sought to practice the teachings of Christ and live in a manner distinct from the world around them. James's letter addresses the challenge and demands of living faithfully in a complex culture.

James writes in some of the best Greek in the entire New Testament. While his letter is rooted in Jewish life and tradition, it is written in polished, sophisticated Koine Greek. It's better than most of the twelve disciples ever used. This points to two interesting facts about James: One, he must have been highly educated in both Hebrew and Greek. And, two, he intentionally wrote in a way his scattered, Greek-speaking readers would understand.

It's like he's saying, "I'm going to meet you where you are, right in the middle of the culture you live in."

How does understanding the pressures of the Hellenistic world help you approach and study the letter of James?

GROWING UP

How does the culture around us influence how we think, speak, and live, just as the Hellenistic culture shaped early believers?

Where do you see similarities between their world of competing values, diverse influences, and social pressures, and the world we live in today?

JOY THAT GROWS UP

James begins this letter by surprising us with a challenge: Consider it joy when you face trials (1:2). Is James asking us to feel good about our troubles? James is actually urging us to view life's trials with a different perspective.

He isn't telling us to feel joy in suffering; he's calling us to find joy within suffering because of what God is doing through it.

James is not the only New Testament writer to encourage joy in life's trials and hardship.

READ ROMANS 5:3-5 AND 1 PETER 1:6-9.

Why does Paul say we glory in our sufferings? What does it produce?

What comforting word does Peter give us when we face trials? Why does he tell us to rejoice?

From what you read, where can you find joy in suffering?

WISDOM FOR TRIALS

READ JAMES 1:5-8 AND PROVERBS 9:10.

Wisdom literature is an important genre within Jewish literature. Scholars often identify James's letter as a Christian version of Proverbs. It resonates with themes found in wisdom literature, including practical instruction, popular sayings, and faithful living.

Both texts portray God as the source of wisdom.

What is highlighted to you about what kind of attitude one needs to have to receive wisdom?

How do these two texts describe the difference between trusting God for wisdom and trusting one's own understanding? What similarities do you see between the two authors' definitions concerning where wisdom begins?

As James shows us how to seek God's wisdom with an undivided heart, he illustrates what this wisdom actually looks like. Wisdom affects how we perceive ourselves, what we value, and where we place our sense of identity.

Let's examine how James redefines status, success, and security.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON OURSELVES

READ JAMES 1:9-11.

The poor possessed very little power and were frequently ill-treated by those with more wealth. Yet within Jewish tradition, the poor were considered especially devout. The poor were often more faithful than those rich who compromised with the surrounding Greek culture. "Poor" didn't merely denote those with little money, but those loyal to God.

James employs imagery about grass drying up and falling flowers to describe wealth.

What is James conveying here, and how does this affect the meaning of the passage?

How does James redefine honor and status within believers? What does this reveal about how the values of the kingdom of God differ compared to the values of the world?

After shaping our understanding regarding status, security, and what matters most, James returns our attention to our inner life. Wisdom teaches us to see ourselves with clarity, but it also helps us understand what lies at the root of our struggles.

WHERE TEMPTATION REALLY COMES FROM

Underline every word connected to temptation, desire, deception, and birth.

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. (James 1:13-18)

Where does James say temptation actually comes from? How is this different from a trial?



OFF THE SCRIPT(URE) THE CROWN OF LIFE

A “crown” (Greek: *stephanos*) in the ancient world meant much more than a tiara studded with precious gems. A crown was a victor’s wreath worn by both runners who crossed the finish line first and by soldiers who were rewarded for their courage, endurance, honor, and victory. James wants believers to remember that their endurance is noticed, appreciated, and honored by God. The “crown of life” represents the fullness of life God gives now and forever. It is the strength and joy one experiences when putting complete trust in God during life’s difficulties. God crowns the perseverance produced in you.

Why does James use birth imagery? What is he trying to communicate?

How does James contrast what comes from within us with what comes from above?

What does “every good and perfect gift” reveal about God’s character?

EXPLORE KEY TERMS

Tempt (Greek: *peirazō*)—to entice or lure toward sin; never used of God in this context

Desire (Greek: *epithymia*)—more than a feeling; an inner pull carried toward action

Deceived (Greek: *planaō*)—to be led off the right path

Perfect gift (Greek: *teleios*)—complete, whole, lacking nothing



OFF THE SCRIPT(URE) PERFECT? JAMES HAS THOUGHTS

James uses the Greek word *teleios*, meaning “perfect” or “complete,” more frequently than any other writer within the New Testament, although he doesn’t use it to mean flawlessly perfect. He uses it to describe faith that is shaped through real choices and endurance. James doesn’t call for perfection. He calls for growth.

THE PROCESS OF TEMPTATION

(James 1:14-15)



WHAT COMES FROM ABOVE

(James 1:17-18)



Being firstfruits is being the very first and best part of the harvest. We, as believers, are the evidence of God's redemption through new life, and we are set apart from the world. For this to happen, there is a posture we must have if we want to see God's Word take root in our lives. James spoke about what keeps us from God, now he talks about what draws us to Him.

SLOW DOWN, LISTEN UP

In the introduction video to the study, we noted James's use of imperatives and commands. As you read, circle every command and underline each action word.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1:19-21)



OFF THE SCRIPT(URE) Y'ALL ARE MY PEOPLE

James loves to call his audience “brothers and sisters.” Alongside the apostle Paul, James uses this affectionate greeting frequently throughout his letter—and it’s not just a polite greeting. It offers an insight into James’s heart and his pastoral style. To the early church, this was a language of identity. It says this is “who we are.” The scattered needed this reminder: *You belong. You are important. You are not alone.* James’s teaching is firm, yet always in a family-style manner. His strongest commands start from a place of love.

Why do you think James begins with listening instead of anger?
What does this reveal about his flow of thought?

What does it mean to “humbly accept the word planted in you”?
How is this different from merely hearing the Word?

VIDEO NOTES

1. He doesn't say "_____ you face trials," he says
"_____ you face trials."
2. Consider it _____ .
3. Know the _____ of trials.
4. Let _____ complete its work.
5. Ask God for _____ .
6. Being _____ means
trying to manage two _____
wills.
7. God may _____ our faith, but He will
never _____ us.
8. Temptation comes from our own _____
pulled in the wrong _____ .
9. _____ and slow down.

WEEK 2 CONVERSATION STARTERS

1

James gives four imperatives: *consider it joy; know the purpose; let endurance complete its work; and ask God for wisdom.* Which of these is easiest for you to practice and which is hardest and why?

2

Luann compares “potato-chip faith” and “beef-jerky faith.”


- a. Which one describes you right now?
- b. What helps you develop more spiritual durability when life presses in?

3

Where do you most need God’s wisdom right now? How will you practice asking for it in faith without doubting or double-mindedness?

4

When you think about your current season of life, what trial, temptation, or inner battle might God be using to mature your faith?



CONSIDER IT PURE JOY, MY BROTHERS
AND SISTERS, WHENEVER YOU FACE
TRIALS OF MANY KINDS, BECAUSE YOU
KNOW THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR
FAITH PRODUCES PERSEVERANCE.
LET PERSEVERANCE FINISH ITS WORK
SO THAT YOU MAY BE MATURE AND
COMPLETE, NOT LACKING ANYTHING.

JAMES 1:2-4

Across seven weeks, readers will walk through one of the most practical and transformative books of the New Testament, discovering that spiritual growth isn't about striving harder but allowing God's Word to shape every part of your life. *Growing Up: Faith Lessons from the Book of James* is an invitation to explore the kind of faith that doesn't just believe—it lives. Through teaching, workbook study, reflection, academic notes, and historical context, you'll learn to:

- PERSEVERE THROUGH TRIALS WITH PURPOSE
- ALIGN YOUR DESIRES WITH GOD'S DESIRES
- TAME YOUR TONGUE AND STEWARD YOUR INFLUENCE
- NAVIGATE WEALTH, JUSTICE, AND INTEGRITY IN A COMPLEX WORLD
- PLAN WITH HUMILITY, PATIENCE, AND TRUST
- PRAY WITH CONFIDENCE AND EXPECTATION
- RESTORE OTHERS WITH COMPASSION AND GRACE

James challenges us to a grown-up faith. One that matches belief with action and roots everyday life in the wisdom of God. This study will stretch you, steady you, and strengthen you as you grow into the person God created you to be.

Whether you're new to Scripture or longing to go deeper, this journey offers honest questions, helpful insights into Scripture, and space to encounter God in meaningful ways. Come discover a faith that matures, a community that restores, and a life that flourishes as you grow up in Christ.

LUANN RILEY is an Alabama girl who grew up in church, went her own way, and made a big, holy mess until Jesus showed up and changed everything. She is a pastor and Bible teacher at The Woodlands Methodist Church with a master of arts in theology, known for opening Scripture with clarity, warmth, and hospitality. Her seasons of infertility, chronic illness, and loss have formed a steady, gentle voice for the hurting, the overlooked, and the worn out. With a background in business and decades of leadership experience, she equips disciples and leaders through transparent community and intentional relationships.



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