

# Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH  
THE STORY OF GOD

## Week 11 | We Live in the Hope of Future Glory | James, 1-2 Peter

### The Epistle of James: *Practical instructions for wise living when life is hard*

Christians throughout the ages have experienced distress, injustice, and often a sense of helplessness. The book of James is a book that gives God's people practical wisdom for living—especially in situations of suffering. Life is hard. We have all questioned why adversity has come into our lives, and this book gives us a broader perspective of *our purpose* in God's plan, and also *God's purpose* for the trials we encounter.

We read in Acts 8 that after the stoning of Stephen, there was intense persecution against Christians in Jerusalem. Christians in Jerusalem were forced to leave the city; they were scattered into the countryside of Judea and Samaria. These former Jews were exiles. They had lost everything. They were poor; they were oppressed; they needed godly wisdom to handle their trials. This letter was written to give direction to these suffering believers.

#### 1. Read James 1:1-8, 1:12

#### *Our trials bring maturity*

- a. How are we able to handle the trials of life with confident joy? (1:2-4)
- b. What is the end result of a faithful life shaped by the trials and challenges we face? (1:4, 1:12)
- c. What resource do we have for responding to our trials with godly integrity? (1:5)
- d. How are we to request and receive wisdom regarding our trials? (1:5-8)
- e. *Personal reflection:* Have you ever experienced a time of hardship that brought about personal growth and maturity? Have you been able to see God's hand at work through a difficult time? Share with your group if you feel comfortable doing so.

There are strong, practical instructions in the book of James—teaching about how we can live as people of faith in a world that is far from God. This book is rich in wisdom for living.

#### 2. Read James 1:27 and 2:1-17

#### *We are to love one another proactively and affirmatively*

- a. What sorts of actions characterize those whose lives reflect a true love for God? (1:27 and 2:8)
- b. In James 2:1-4, the Bible warns against showing favoritism (2:1) and discriminating among ourselves (2:4). What is God's assessment of this behavior? (2:4)

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**Take Note:** When we give greater honor to the rich over the poor, the strong over the weak, the powerful over the downtrodden—then we are insulting and devaluing those for whom Christ died.

- c. *For deeper thought:* Why do you think that discrimination, disrespect, and condescension is especially offensive to God?
- d. **Read Mark 12:28-31.** How does Jesus summarize the greatest commandments in the Law?
- e. Our love for others is to be tangible and life-giving. What example does James give in (2:15-16)?

## 3. Read James 3:1-10

*Recognize the deadly power of the tongue*

- a. Summarize James' assessment of the danger inherent in our words (3:3-10)
- b. How does James 1:19-20 give us guidance for the task of taming the tongue?

## 4. Read James 4:1-10

*Let go of anger and submit to God*

- a. How does a strong desire (even for a good thing) lead to resentment and sinful anger? (4:1-3)
- b. God calls us to set aside our selfish ambition. What attitude are we to pursue instead? (4:6)
- c. What specific steps are we to take? (4:7-8)

*The book of James teaches us that the trials of life produce maturity in us  
as we carefully **guard our words**,  
**love our fellow believers**,  
**resist worldly passions**,  
and **draw near to God each day***

- d. *Personal reflection:* How does this summary exhortation from the book of James challenge you?

***Life is hard, and a godly life requires godly wisdom***

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## The Epistle of 1 Peter: *Stand fast in suffering, living as children of light*

The epistle of 1 Peter is a letter which was commissioned by the apostle Peter and written to be circulated among several churches in the region of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The purpose of this letter is to encourage believers to remain strong in faith even though they will encounter suffering in this present evil age.

### 1. Read 1 Peter 1:1-9. *We have been born again into a living hope.*

- a. Peter refers to Christians as God's "*elect*"—God's *chosen* people. How has God demonstrated His mercy towards us? (1:3)
- b. What is our hope for the future? (1:4-5)
- c. *Personal reflection:* In our earthly life, we were born into a human family, and we can expect an inheritance based on that family's assets. Some of us are rich; some of us are not. 1 Peter 1:3-4 teaches us that through Jesus, we have been born again into a *new* family—God's family. We can look forward to an eternal inheritance in God's future Kingdom. How does this concept give you comfort in the present? How does this hope help you deal with the troubles of this life?

God has *chosen* us by His grace; He has *caused us* to be born again into a new family with the assurance of eternal life. What is to be our response? How should we then live? The book of 1 Peter addresses this important issue.

### 2. Read 1 Peter 1:13-2:3 *Our new birth into a new family results in a new kind of life*

- a. How should our lives be different from the cultural norm of the city where we live? (1:13-16)
- b. What was the cost of our redemption? What was required to be completed before we could be born again into this new family? (1:18-21)
- c. What is to be our spiritual nourishment as we grow in our life experience of salvation? How should we value this nourishment? (1:23-25 and 2:1-3)
- d. *Personal reflection:* As you think about a newborn baby's need for milk, how does that resemble your need for spiritual nourishment? What practical steps can you take to satisfy this ongoing need?

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## 3. Read 1 Peter 2:4-10 *We are the people of God, a new Temple, and a new Priesthood*

In the Old Testament, the temple in Jerusalem was the place where God's presence dwelled with His people, and the Levites were the priests in the temple who presented sacrifices to God on behalf of His people. Let's explore how that has changed with the sacrifice of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Who are the new priests of God? (2:5,9)
- b. What is the new temple of God? (Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:4-6)
- c. How does God inhabit this temple? (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
- d. What is our purpose as a new people of God? (1 Peter 2:9b)
- e. How are we to conduct ourselves as the people of God? (1 Peter 2:11-12)
- f. *Personal reflection:* God has called us out of the darkness of despair into His wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9) How did that happen in your life? Perhaps you may be willing to share your grace experience as an encouragement to others at the end of today's discussion time.

Suffering will be a reality in all of lives because we live in a world that is hostile toward God. We will encounter unjust treatment just as Jesus did. Peter has a great deal of wisdom to teach about the prospect of suffering.

## 4. Read 1 Peter 3:8-16 *We live in peace in the presence of suffering*

- a. How are we to respond to unkind and unjust treatment? (3:8-9)
- b. What qualities should characterize our lives in this fallen world? (3:10-12)
- c. How do we respond when we are challenged or questioned? (3:15)

## 5. Read 1 Peter 5:5-11 *We cultivate humility and hope in the presence of suffering*

- a. Our culture promotes pride; Jesus models humility. What is God's response to humility? (5:5)
- b. **Read Philippians 2:3-4.** What does humility look like in interpersonal relationships?
- c. What is the unseen enemy that is at work promoting evil? (1 Peter 5:8-9)
- d. What is our confidence of ultimate vindication? (1 Peter 5:10-11)

*Stand fast in suffering, and remember the hope of future glory*

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## **The Epistle of 2 Peter: *A final word: continue growing in godliness; hope in Christ's return***

The apostle Peter wrote this epistle during the last weeks of his life. Paul had been killed, and Peter knew that his own death was imminent. There is urgency in this letter; Peter has written it as a final word to the churches in Asia Minor.

Peter had three concerns:

- Peter wanted to challenge Christians to continue growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.
- Peter warned his readers about false teachers who would encourage them to abandon godly living.
- Peter challenged Christians to remember that Jesus will return as He promised. He will return to expose evil and to bring a new Kingdom of righteousness.

### **1. Read 2 Peter 1:1-11     *Jesus' followers should never stop growing***

- a. What astounding assertion does Peter make in 2 Peter 1:3?
- b. What seven traits are we challenged to cultivate? (2 Peter 1:5-7)
- c. *Personal reflection:* Notice that these character traits are not presented as a simple list; rather, each one is added to the previous one. Explain your understanding of how this should work.
- d. If these character qualities are progressively increasing in us, then what is the result? (1:8)
- e. What is the ultimate result of a lifelong faithfulness in tending to the growth of our Christian character? (1:11)

### **2. Read 2 Peter 3:1-13     *Jesus' Kingdom will be a new earth—the home of perfect righteousness***

- a. Why does God continue to delay the Day of the Lord (*the return of Christ*)? (3:9,15)
- b. How should we live in anticipation of Jesus' return? (3:11)
- c. What is our certain future? (3:13)
- d. *Personal reflection:* How does the certainty of the coming eternal kingdom enable you to live with more contentment, gratitude, and self-control in the present?

***There's a new world coming!***

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