



JAMES

FAITH THAT WORKS

Small Group Notes - 'James: Faith that Works'
St Mary's and Sale West
January 2026

JAMES: FAITH THAT WORKS

A bold call to live what we believe

A new year invites us not just to dream big, but to live deep. It's a moment to pause, reflect, and ask: What kind of life are we really building? Are we rooted in God or just rushing through? Are we pursuing Jesus and His kingdom or settling for comfort and convenience? As we step into this new season, we're turning to the book of James.

James is a letter for those who want faith that's more than words. It's a wake-up call to live what we believe not just on Sundays, but in the everyday grit of life. Written by James, the brother of Jesus and a pillar of the early church, this letter speaks with the clarity of someone who has seen the risen Christ and been transformed by Him. James writes to scattered believers facing pressure, poverty, and persecution. They're tempted to give up, drift, or divide. Into that tension, James speaks with pastoral boldness: Let your faith show up. Let it work.

This is a book for those who want to be deeply rooted in God, not swayed by every storm. For those who long to passionately pursue Jesus and His kingdom not just in belief, but in behaviour. For those who are ready to choose the narrow road of sacrificial living, to build authentic community and to step out with bold faith that actually changes things.

James doesn't offer easy answers. He asks hard questions:

- What do you do when life gets hard?
- How do you speak when no one's watching?
- Do you treat everyone with the same dignity?
- Does your faith move you to action?

Through this series, we'll explore what it means to be a people of integrity who persevere in trials, speak with grace, seek wisdom from above, and care for the poor. We'll be challenged to examine our hearts, our habits, and our relationships. But more than that, we'll be invited to rediscover the joy of a faith that's alive, active, and anchored in Jesus.

This isn't just about personal growth. It's about becoming a community that reflects God's heart in a fractured world. A people who pray like it matters, love like it costs, and live like Jesus is Lord.

So let's begin this year not with performance, but with purpose. Not with shallow goals, but with Spirit-filled grit. Let's ask God to shape us into people whose faith works because it's rooted in Him.

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When Life Hits Hard

INTRODUCTION

Life doesn't always go the way we planned. Trials, setbacks, and disappointments can shake our confidence and test our faith. But James opens his letter with a radical invitation: consider it pure joy. Not because pain is pleasant, but because God is present and He's doing something deeper. Today's passage explores how trials refine us, perseverance matures us, and how wisdom anchors us. As we begin this journey, we're invited to be deeply rooted in God, trusting that even in hardship, He is shaping us for something greater.

When life gets tough, what's your natural response: push through, pull back, pray...?

READ

Read James 1:1-18

DISCUSS

1. What is the big picture of this passage, can you summarise it together? Which bits stand out to you, why?
2. What does James say about trials, testing, and perseverance (vv.2-4)? Why do you think he links joy with hardship?
3. What do verses 5-8 teach us about asking for wisdom and what gets in the way?
4. How does James describe temptation and the process that leads to sin (vv.13-15)?
5. How did Jesus respond to trials and testing during His life on earth? What does His example teach us about trusting the Father in suffering? How does Jesus' victory over temptation give us hope when we feel weak?
6. Where are you currently facing pressure, disappointment, or uncertainty? What would it look like to choose joy in that situation, not fake happiness, but deep trust?
7. How can we support one another to stay rooted in God when life hits hard?

PRAY TOGETHER

- Invite the Holy Spirit to strengthen those in your group who are facing trials.
- Pray for wisdom to respond with faith, not fear.
- Ask God to deepen our roots in Him and renew our joy as we pursue Jesus together.

JAMES: FAITH THAT WORKS

Don't Just Hear It - Live It

INTRODUCTION

A faith that stays in your head never changes the world. It's easy to nod along to truth and never let it change us, how many sermons or Christians books have you read and 'enjoyed' them but a few days later they have made no difference to your life at all? James challenges us to move beyond passive listening into active obedience. God's Word isn't just information it's transformation. This week, we'll reflect on how we respond to Scripture, how we treat others, and how our faith shows up in everyday choices. We're called to passionately pursue Jesus not just in belief, but in behaviour, to live sacrificially, love authentically, and reflect His heart in how we speak, act, and serve.

What's a piece of advice you've heard but struggled to follow? Or advice you give but don't listen to yourself?

What is one way you have seen faith put into action recently?

READ

Read James 1:19-27

DISCUSS

1. What is the big picture of this passage, can you summarise it together? Which bits stand out to you, why?
2. What does James say about listening and doing (vv.19–22)?
3. Why is it important to control our tongues (v.26)?
4. How does pure religion relate to caring for others (vv.27)?
5. How did Jesus demonstrate faith through His actions? How does Jesus challenge us to live out our faith daily?
6. By "religion" James is talking about the outward expression of our faith. Our religion often appears to be a matter of going to church, listening to sermons, reading our Bibles etc. How does what James writes here challenge us?

7. In what areas of your life is God calling you to put faith into action? How can you better align your words, thoughts and deeds?

PRAY TOGETHER

- Pray for courage to live out faith boldly.
- Ask God to help you listen well and act wisely.
- Pray for opportunities to serve and love sacrificially.

JAMES: FAITH THAT WORKS

Faith That Shows Up

INTRODUCTION

Real faith doesn't play favourites, it rolls up its sleeves. Faith isn't just a private belief it's a public witness. James confronts favouritism and challenges us to love without bias, to serve without hesitation, and to act with justice. This week, we'll reflect on how our faith engages the margins, how we treat the poor and the overlooked, and how we embody the mercy of Jesus. We're called to build authentic community that reflects God's heart, a place where everyone is seen, valued, and invited to belong.

What's one way someone made you feel truly seen?

READ

Read James 2:1-27

DISCUSS

1. What is the big picture of this passage, can you summarise it together? Which bits stand out to you, why?
2. What's the issue James confronts in the first part of this passage? If he was writing to the church today would he be saying the same things, if so what examples would he point out?
3. If we are saved by faith and not works, what is the relationship between faith and works in this passage?
4. If someone said to you, 'prove to me you are a Christian' what would you say?
5. How is your faith different to that of the demons who also believe in God?
6. What's one way you can put your faith into action this week?
7. How did Jesus treat the poor, the outsider, and the overlooked? What does His life teach us about mercy and justice?
8. Our faith should not be a theoretical faith but faith in action. What is one way our faith can show up for someone this week?

PRAY TOGETHER

- Pray for eyes to see people as God sees them.
- Ask for boldness to live out your faith.

JAMES: FAITH THAT WORKS

Watch Your Mouth

INTRODUCTION

Words matter. They can heal or harm, build up or tear down. James reminds us that the tongue, though small, has enormous power - and that power must be stewarded with wisdom and grace. This week, we'll examine how our speech reflects our spiritual maturity, and how we can speak life in a world full of noise. As a community, we're called to build one another up, to speak truth with love, and to let our words echo the voice of Jesus.

How do you usually handle conflict or criticism?

READ

Read James 3:1-18

DISCUSS

1. What is the big picture of this passage, can you summarise it together? Which bits stand out to you, why?
2. What does James say about the tongue and its power?
3. What's the difference between earthly and heavenly wisdom?
4. Why is controlling our speech so challenging? How can we use our words to bring life and healing?
5. If you were to list the different areas of godliness with which you struggle, where might you have ranked how you use your tongue?
6. James seems to imply that having proper control of our tongues will influence our whole behaviour for good but a lack of control of our tongues will have a profoundly destructive effect. How might that be so, for others, and for ourselves?
7. How can we become more aware of our speech habits?
8. What will be different this week if you intentionally set out to speak life into others this week? What is holding you back from doing that?

PRAY TOGETHER

- Ask God to purify your speech and motives
- Pray for wisdom in your conversations.

JAMES: FAITH THAT WORKS

Check Your Heart

INTRODUCTION

James doesn't pull punches, he calls out pride, compromise, and spiritual drift. But he also offers a beautiful invitation: draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. This week is a call to wake up, lay down pride, and live with kingdom urgency.

What's something small that helps you 'reset' when life feels busy or overwhelming?

READ

Read James 4

DISCUSS

1. What is the big picture of this passage, can you summarise it together? Which bits stand out to you, why?
2. What is the root cause of conflict and quarrels?
3. What do you think he is talking about when he says 'friendship with the world'? How does it oppose friendship with God?
4. How can we know when our desires are godly or ungodly?
5. Looking at verses 7 & 8 what does it look like to draw near to God? How conscious are you of actively taking steps to draw near to God?
6. What can we learn from Jesus about guarding our hearts? How does Jesus' example empower us to resist temptation and draw near to God?
7. Why do you think James says boasting about tomorrow is problematic?
8. How can you live with kingdom urgency and surrender?

PRAY TOGETHER

- Pray for a heart that seeks God above all else.
- Invite God to realign your heart with His

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Faith That Doesn't Flinch

INTRODUCTION

Faith isn't just for the easy days. It's for the moments when life feels unfair, when answers are slow, and when someone you love is drifting. James wraps up his letter with a call to gritty, Spirit-filled perseverance, a faith that doesn't flinch. This week is about staying rooted in God when things get tough, praying like it matters, and being the kind of people who show up for others.

What's something you've stuck with even when it was hard and what helped you keep going?

READ

Read James 5

DISCUSS

1. What is the big picture of this passage, can you summarise it together? Which bits stand out to you, why?
2. What emotions come up when you read James' warning to the rich? What do you think he would write about to believers today, would he need to say anything different? (*What about to you individually?*)
3. How does patience relate to suffering in this passage? What helps you stay patient when you don't see change? How can we encourage each other when someone's stuck in a long season of waiting?
4. Are you anticipating Jesus' return? What do we learn from the farmer, Job and the prophets as we wait for Christ's return?
5. Verse 13 might feel too simplistic, what is the basic principle underlying this verse?
6. What does it look like to be a community that prays with faith and vulnerability?
7. Have you ever had to gently call someone back to faith or been called back yourself? What makes it hard to reach out when someone's struggling or drifting? How can we be people who restore, not shame?

8. Where do you need to “not flinch” right now, in prayer, in patience, or in someone’s life?

PRAY TOGETHER

- Pray for endurance and hope in places where people feel weary or stuck
- Invite the Holy Spirit to stir up bold, expectant prayer amongst you

