

Theme Class:

A Study of James



Background for the Teacher

- James is one of seven letters called the “General Letters”: First and Second Peter; James; First, Second, and Third John; and Jude. It was written with a specific message for a wide group of people rather than a specific audience.
- James is not like a real letter; but is more like a sermon, sometimes called a homily. It begins with the standard Greek opening, but after the opening all traces of the letter form vanish. There are no personal greetings anywhere in this book. It does, however, address congregational situations facing the early Christians, such as social inequity and inward strife.
- It is believed to have been written between 70 and 90 AD—two or more generations after the time of Jesus.
- Traditionally, this book has been attributed to James the brother of Jesus, although many modern biblical scholars think it may have been a disciple of James and not Jesus’ brother who wrote it.
- James gives lots of advice about how to live a Christian life: He tells about the danger of double-mindedness and pride, enduring trials, equality of rich and poor, the importance of doing the word, and the danger of loose talk. The book of James is also about justice.
- James was written to Jewish Christians—Jews who followed the teachings of Jesus—under the rule of the Roman Empire.
- The distinction between faith and works in James has at times been pitted against Pauline theology of being “saved by grace.” It is important to remember that for Paul, justification is about how Gentiles are “saved” and “made right with God.” James is addressing Jews who were already “right with God”; therefore, his concern is not about “getting in” but is instead about how one “stays in” and lives as an effective Christian by the things they do. And for James that means doing works of justice and charity.
- The role of James in the canon: keeps Christian faith anchored in the faith of the Old Testament. James’s God is the God of the law, prophets and writings. It bridges between the Old Testament wisdom and prophetic traditions and the New Testament. It links to the Jesus tradition (both sayings and practices) and provides an intracanonical conversation with Paul. James is a New Testament peace and justice text.

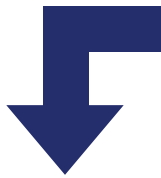
Theme 1 Finding Joy

Class James 1:1–4

Class Introduction

Over the next few days we will be exploring the Bible through a “scripture study.” This study will combine learning and fun activities. We will be looking at the text. This involves trying to find out the answers to questions about the “who, what, where, when, and why” of the writing. We will also explore how the text relates to our own experiences. You will be doing some individual thinking, working in groups, and sharing with the whole group.

Even though the scripture writings come from a long time ago, there are some important lessons to be learned and applied to our lives today. So, we will also be walking with the words and looking for what important lessons we can learn and apply to our lives today.



Answer these questions in cabin groups; then share answers with the whole group:

- Even though times are hard, what is helpful about this letter?
- Who does James say he is?
- What writing format does the author use: poem, letter, lesson,

Dear Friends,

Greetings. This is James, your friend and teacher, writing from Jerusalem. I know we are far apart, but because I love and serve Jesus Christ and God, I want to remind you of a few things.

First, I know you have been putting up with the rules of the Roman government. The soldiers are trying to make you pledge allegiance to the Roman emperor. They want you to pay money to Caesar. When you don't, they hurt you or your friends and family.

It is hard to not follow the Roman rules. Life would be easier if you did. So, I want to remind you what Jesus wants you to do.

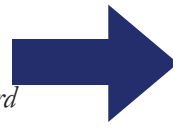
To be continued . . .

In cabin groups read the letter above.

Hear the Word . . . James 1:1 NIRV

Read aloud.

I, James, am writing this letter. I serve God and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sending this letter to you, the twelve tribes that are scattered among the nations.



- Who does James say he is?
- Who do you know that teaches about Jesus Christ?
- What writing format does the author use? poem? letter? other?
- To whom is the writer sending the letter?

Post these questions on a flip chart, newsprint, or powerpoint slide:

- When have you, or someone you know, been separated from family and friends?
- When you were separated, was it hard to do what your parents/guardians would have wanted you to do?
- What made it hard? easy?
- What would have helped you?



Looking with . . . James 1:1

Have children turn to someone sitting next to them to form pair partners. Read questions aloud, then instruct children to share what their experiences were like with their partner. Next have each pair connect with another pair to form a small group of four. Share one of your two experiences with the group of four. Finally, ask each group of four to select one of their four experiences to share with the whole class. Record key responses on the flip chart as experiences are

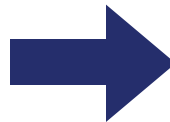
Walking with . . . James 1:1

In small groups of four (formed in previous activity) decide on one action/activity you can do to follow Jesus. Using modeling clay, make a model of the action/activity. Allow up to ten minutes for project completion. Ask each group to explain their activity model to the whole class.

Looking at . . . James 1:2–4 NIRV

Read aloud.

My brothers and sisters, you will face all kinds of trouble. When you do, think of it as pure joy. Your faith will be put to the test. You know that when that happens it will produce in you the strength to continue. The strength to keep going must be allowed to finish its work then you will be all you should be. You will have everything you need.



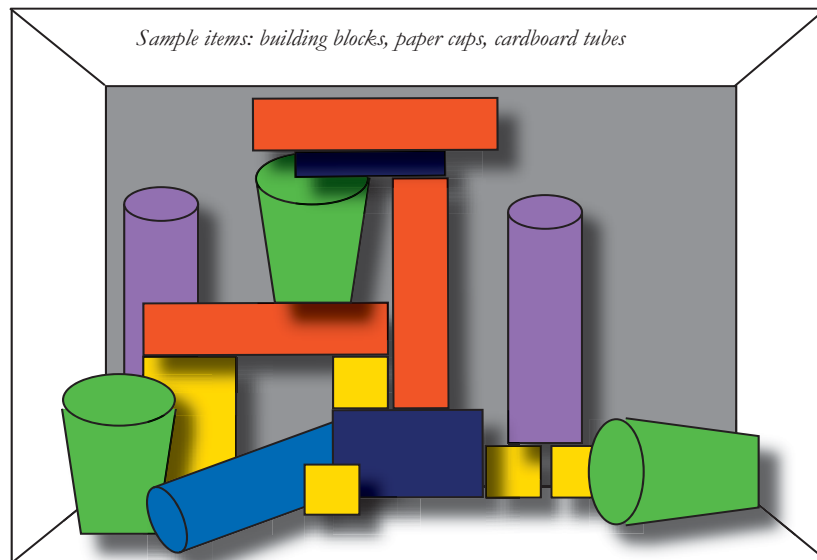
Discuss in large group.

- What is the author asking the people to do when they face troubles?
- What makes you feel joy?
- How can trouble be joy?
- Joy comes in sharing together and supporting each other, especially through hard times.

Finding–Joy Challenge

Set-up: Set a large box on its side, the open side turned away from the class. Inside the box build a structure or arrangement using the exact same items each cabin group will collect. Spread out enough supplies on a table for each cabin to collect the required amount. Use signs next to items to identify the number they need to pick up. Have each cabin group choose a messenger. After necessary supplies are picked up, the messenger may check out the arrangement inside the box. They will then return to their cabin group and explain how to recreate an exact duplicate, one step at a time. The messenger may not place any items; they can only explain with words how it should be done. The messenger may return to look at the arrangement as many times as necessary. When a group believes they have recreated the exact arrangement they should shout, “We’ve got the joy!” If upon comparison with the original the group has created an exact duplicate, stop and compare all the other groups as well. If the group’s arrangement is not the same, continue building.

For consistent accuracy and ease of moving, glue or tape the original model of items in place.



Discuss in cabin groups and then with class:

- How frustrating was it to try to follow a plan without being able to see the model?
- How important was the messenger in communicating the plan?
- Despite frustrations, what helped to bring joy to the activity?
- When have you been able to have or find joy when you were facing trouble?
- What or who brought you strength when you were facing the trouble?
- Who is the example or model that you try to follow?

The writer of James reminded the people to follow the model of Jesus. Even though the people were away from Jerusalem, they still needed to remember and follow Jesus’ guidelines. This would be difficult. The people needed to share together, learn through their frustrations, and support each other through difficulties. In summary, you do not need to see the model—Jesus—to be able to follow his example.

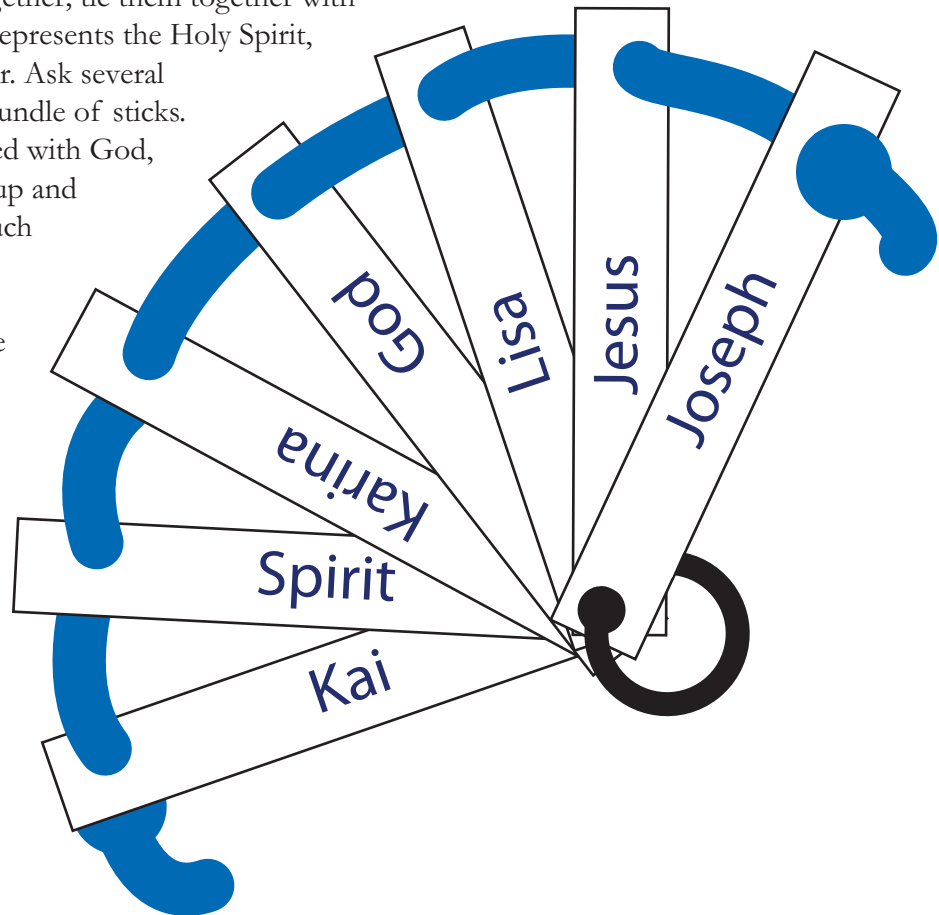
Stronger Together

Hold up a small twig or craft stick. Identify the stick as a representation of one individual. Show how easily the stick can break when it is alone. Identify other sticks as God, Jesus, and individuals from their group. Gather all the sticks together; tie them together with string. Explain that the string represents the Holy Spirit, which binds the group together. Ask several children to try and break the bundle of sticks. Explain that when we are joined with God, Jesus, and others, all wrapped up and guided by the Spirit, we are much stronger individuals.

Have campers write their name on one stick and “God,” “Jesus,” “Holy Spirit,” and names of family and friends on others. Glue the sticks together into a fan shape as a reminder of the importance of following God and Jesus. The wind created by the movement of the fan is a reminder of the spiritual motion throughout our lives.

Option:

Pre-drill wide craft sticks or paint sticks to make a fan. Join with ribbon and a brad or ring.



The Spirit Guides

Ask the following questions for campers to consider:

- What will you do the next time you face trouble?
- How will you find joy?

Music Ideas

“I’ve Got the Joy, Joy,
Joy, Joy Down in My
Heart”

Lead the group in the responsive reading of Doctrine and Covenants 162:3a–b; 4b.

Leader: Do not be discouraged.
Girls: You have not been promised an easy path,
Boys: but you have been assured
ALL: that the Spirit that calls you will also accompany you.
Leader: That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within.
Boys: Many others will respond
Girls: if you are persistent in your witness
ALL: and diligent in your mission to the world.
Leader: It is for divine purpose that you have been given
Girls: the struggles as well as
Boys: the joys of diversity.
ALL: So must it always be in the peaceable kingdom.

Theme **2** TRUST the SPIRIT

Class **2** James 1:5–16

Class Introduction

Welcome to “day two” of the scripture study. We will continue looking at, looking with, and walking with the words. What important lessons did you learn yesterday?

Examples

- Even through difficulties, God is present in our lives.
- Jesus’ example serves as a model for our lives.
- We can find joy even when facing difficulties.
- Learning from the scriptures can help us cope with our life.

In cabin groups read the next part of the letter. Answer questions in cabin groups; then, share answers with the whole group.

- What would be a good way to ask God for guidance?
- How can you show your trust in God?

Dear Friends,

... continued

Sometimes you may have questions about what you want to be, where you want to go, or what you should do. God promises to be your guide. You just need to ask God. You also need to trust that God will be there to help you.


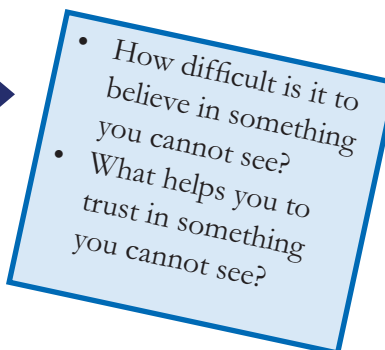
Some people ask for help but do not trust God will respond. They talk about faith but do not help their neighbor. Some think they don’t need God because they know what is best. Some even blame God when things go wrong.

Please remember, God’s help is freely given to you. And God especially helps those whose circumstances are poor or difficult. Just ask and believe.

Looking at ... James 1:5–8

Read aloud James 1:5–8 NIRV. Record key points of discussion on flip chart.

If any of you lack wisdom, ask God for it. He will give it to you. God gives freely to everyone. He doesn’t find fault. But when you ask, you must believe. You must not doubt. People who doubt are like waves of the sea. The wind blows and tosses them around. People like that shouldn’t expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can’t make up their minds. They can never decide what to do.

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- 
- How difficult is it to believe in something you cannot see?
 - What helps you to trust in something you cannot see?

Investigating the Words

God gives us wisdom and requires us to be “single-minded,” to “trust” rather than be “double-minded” or “wavering” in our belief. Make copies of the puzzle below for each camper. In cabin groups, decode the words and message below to determine the KEY message of James 1:5–8. (*Answer: When you trust and believe, God will guide you.*)

Decode the Message

Each of the words has extra letters added.
Mark out the extra letters to find the words
hidden within. Then arrange the words into
the KEY message of James 1:5–8.

hbelievex

hwhenn

syouu

dGodo

yguiden

llwilli

dandn

uyous

ntrustb

_____ ,

_____ .

Music Ideas

Pass the Present—A Lesson in Trust

Divide into groups of six to ten campers. Provide each group with one or more wrapped gifts. Gifts should be small (e.g., candy or gum with enough pieces for all) with many layers of tape and paper wrapped around it.

Pass the Present is adapted from Alanna Jones. *Team-Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, Washinton: Rec Room Publishing, 1999), 49.

Have the groups form circles. Start playing music and hand the gift to one person in each group, who then passes the gift to the right. The gift continues around until the music stops.

When the music stops, the person holding the gift may begin to unwrap it. When the music restarts, the passing of the gift around the circle continues until the music stops again. Keep going until someone's unwrapping reveals the gift.

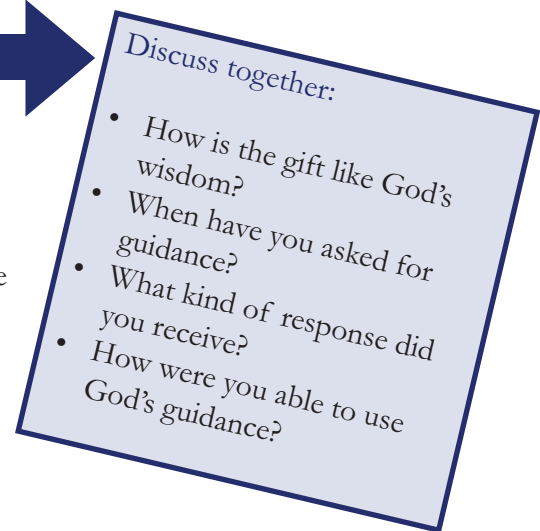
As the contents of the gift is shared with the group, debrief the activity together.

When you open a present, you “expect,” “trust,” and have “faith” that there will be a gift inside the wrapping. God's gifts of wisdom and guidance are wrapped in love for each person. All are eligible to receive God's gifts. We are asked to trust in God's presence, to pray for guidance, and to believe that God will respond.

“Awesome God” NS 4

“Lord, Help Me to Know Your Presence” NS 31

“One in the Spirit”



Looking at . . . James 1:9–11

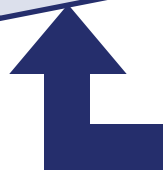
Read aloud James 1:9–11 NIRV.

Believers who find themselves in a low position in life should be proud that God has given them a high position. But those who are rich should take pride in their low position. That's because they will fade away like wild flowers. The sun rises. Its burning heat dries up the plants. Their blossoms fall. Their beauty is destroyed. In the same way, rich people will fade away even as they go about their business. Blessed are those who keep on going when times are hard. After they have come through them, they will receive a crown. The crown is life itself. God has promised it to those who love him.

One of the tests of faith in God can be how we live. The author of James suggests that those who are in “low positions” can proudly show their faith by continuing to believe through their hardships. God actually blesses and rewards them. They are closer to God because they do not have other things to depend upon.

In contrast, those who have an easy life have a harder time. They depend on their status or wealth rather than depending on God. The writer of James says other things will tempt them. When this happens, they forget about God. They are lost in their own ways and lose out

- Was it easier to get across the room doing the “crab walk” or the “speed walk”?
- Which way would you have preferred to walk the relay?
- Who felt the greater sense of accomplishment when getting across the room—“crab walkers” or “speed walkers”?
- When have you felt like a “speed walker”? “crab walker”?



Low or High Relay

Divide into equal-numbered teams. Number off each team: 1, 2, 1, 2, etc. The “1s” are to crab walk. The “2s” are to speed walk. The first member of each team crosses the room doing a crab walk and rings the bell. The next member crosses the room doing a speed walk. This continues until the first team gets all their team members to the other side.

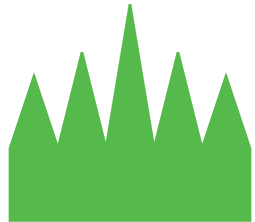
It is easier to cross the room by speed walking than crab walking, giving the speed walkers a position of superiority over the crab walker. We often avoid the harder way of conducting our lives, choosing instead the easier way. Yet, God advises us to value lowly/harder positions. The crab walkers, even though they were in a lowly position, have the greater sense of accomplishment. The struggle actually makes them stronger. The author of James referred to the group of people who were facing trials and temptations. In the next verses, the writer is asking the reader to think about their personal trials and temptations.

Looking at . . . James 1:12–18 NIRV

Blessed are those who keep on going when times are hard. After they have come through them, they will receive a crown. The crown is life itself. God has promised it to those who love him. When you are tempted, you shouldn't say, "God is tempting me." God can't be tempted by evil. And he doesn't tempt anyone. But your own evil longings tempt you. They lead you on and drag you away. When they are allowed to grow, they give birth to sin. When sin has grown up, it gives birth to death. My dear brothers and sisters, don't let anyone fool you. Every good and perfect gift is from God. It comes down from the Father. He created the heavenly lights. He does not change like shadows that move. God chose to give us new birth through the message of truth. He wanted us to be the first and best of everything he created.

The crown of life was a headpiece that was worn by the royalty, priests, and other special people of honor. The early Christians thought that they would be given a similar crown as a reward for remaining steadfast in their faith (2 Timothy 4.8; 1 Peter 5.4; Revelation 2.10).

The promise of the reward helped people to focus on doing good and avoiding the temptations and evils of the world/society in which they lived. The crown represents God's gifts of wisdom, truth through Jesus Christ, stability through change, and new life for believers.



Crown of Life

Do the following in cabin groups:

1. Give each camper a crown (*pattern next page*) and access to markers/crayons.
2. Using James 1:12–18, have group identify key words in the message.
3. Have campers draw pictures on crowns showing the promises God made for them. (Examples: love, gifts, light, etc.)

Doing the Word

In cabin groups, consider the following:

- When have you felt like you have disappointed yourself, your family, and/or God?
- When have you faced tough times?
- When have you shared your caring with another person?
- What helps you stay focused on living a good life?
- Who in your life needs to hear the message about God's love, wisdom, and presence?
- Who do you know that is facing tough times and needs to hear God's promises?
- What and how will you share with them?

Continue sides to form crown band. Tape to fit child.

Crown of Life Pattern

Have campers write the name(s) of people with whom they would like to share their crown of life.

A Message for Today

Close this class by reading words from Doctrine and Covenants 162:1a–b; 2e.

1a. Listen to the Voice that speaks from beyond the farthest hills, from the infinite heavens above, and the vast seas below.

b. Listen to the Voice that echoes across the eons of time and yet speaks anew in this moment. Listen to the Voice, for it cannot be stilled, and it calls you once again to the great and marvelous work of building the peaceable kingdom, even Zion, on behalf of the One whose name you claim.

2e. The spirit of the Restoration is not locked in one moment of time, but is instead the call to every generation to witness to essential truths in its own language and form. Let the Spirit breathe.

Continue sides to form crown band. Tape to fit child.

Theme 3 Listen & Do

Class 3 James 1:19–27

Class Introduction

Welcome to “day three” of Theme Class. We will continue looking at, looking with, and walking with the words as they relate to learning self-discipline. What important lessons did you learn yesterday?

- When you trust and believe, God will guide you.
- We are to carefully listen and respond to God’s direction.
- Our lives should follow the example of Jesus Christ.

In cabin groups read the next part of the letter and answer the following questions. Share answers with the whole group.

- How can you be a good listener?
- What can you do to show God that you are a good follower?
- What happens if you do not follow God’s guidance?

Dear Friends,

... continued

The best way to show that you are listening to God is to do what is written. This means you need to be a really good listener. You should not talk about what you are going to do. Instead you need to do the right things.

It is also important that you not get angry over little things. You need to look at your life, consider what you need to do to be better, and go through with your promise to follow Jesus’ example.

If you do not follow God’s guidelines, you are fooling yourself. God’s guidance is essential to living a free and perfect life.

To show you are doing God’s work, you need to take care of the poor and not pollute the world.

Looking at ... James 1:19–21

Read aloud James 1:19–21 NIRV.

My dear brothers and sisters, pay attention to what I say. Everyone should be quick to listen. But they should be slow to speak. They should be slow to get angry. Human anger doesn’t produce the kind of life God wants. So get rid of everything that is dirty and sinful. Get rid of the evil that is all around us. Don’t be too proud to accept the word that is planted in you. It can save you.

The verses from yesterday focused on God’s words. Today’s verses emphasize human words, behavior, and character. The emphasis here is on the self-discipline of communication—quick to hear and slow to speak—and avoiding anger. Discuss.

Telephone

1. Have campers sit on the floor in a line.
2. Give a card to the first person in the line with the following verse written on it:

Pay attention. Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

3. Have the first person read the verse to themselves and give back the card.
4. Without reading, whisper the verse to the next person in line.
5. Continue to end of line.
6. Ask the last person to share what he/she heard.
7. Have first person read the card aloud.



- What happened to the initial verse?
- Why did the verse change?
- What makes it so hard to hear what others say?
- When have you wished that someone had listened to you?
- When could you have been a better listener?

Large Class?
Split into smaller groups of 10–15.

- During the remainder of camp, how will you be a better listener?
- Who do you know that needs you to carefully listen to them?
- How could your listening make a difference in someone's life?

Charades

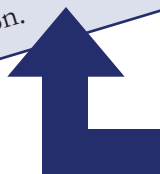
Play a short game of charades.

Discuss what it's like to communicate without using words. What besides words is important in conveying a message? Remind campers of James's words, "be quick to listen and slow to speak." When would it be important for you to be slow to speak? How will you follow the directions to be slow to speak at camp? at home? with friends? at school?

Looking at . . . James 1:22–27 NIRV

Don't just listen to the word. You fool yourselves if you do that. You must do what it says. Suppose you listen to the word but don't do what it says. Then you are like people who look at their faces in a mirror. After looking at themselves, they leave. Right away they forget what they look like. But suppose you take a good look at the perfect law that gives freedom. You keep looking at it. You don't forget what you've heard, but you do what the law says. Then you will be blessed in what you do. Suppose you think your beliefs are right because of how you live. But you don't control what you say. Then you are fooling yourselves. Your beliefs are not worth anything at all. Here are the kinds of beliefs that God our Father accepts as pure and without fault. When widows and children who have no parents are in trouble, take care of them. And keep yourselves from being polluted by the world.

- James 1:22–27 includes the main message of James. Discuss. We are told to
- be doers and not just hearers;
 - show our commitment to God by learning more about the scriptures and living a good life;
 - take care of the poor (orphans and widows); and
 - avoid doing behaviors that are contrary to God's direction.



Doing the Word

James explains in his letter that it is not enough to just listen to the word. You must also do what the word says! Discuss what this means.

- When were you able to help someone less fortunate than yourself?
- How have you been able to “do” something helpful rather than just “hear” or “talk” about what needs to be done?
- How might you help someone less fortunate than yourself upon returning home?

Work on a project that will help to benefit the less fortunate. With a little preplanning, items to be used in the service project can be donated by community businesses, family, friends, and/or congregational members.

Make items for children in the hospital.

- Make cuddly stuffed pillows or stuffed toys.
- Make and/or decorate tote bags. Fill with fun items like paper, pencils, playing cards, books, etc.

Create care packages for the homeless.

toothbrush, toothpaste
soap, shampoo, deodorant
hat, gloves, scarf, socks
dried food/nuts, candy gum
phone cards, gift certificates
bus tokens, book, journal
money

A Message for Today

Close this class by reading words from Doctrine and Covenants 162:4a; 5a–c.

4a. Listen carefully to the many testimonies of those around the world who have been led into the fellowship of the Community of Christ. The richness of cultures, the poetry of language, and the breadth of human experience permit the gospel to be seen with new eyes and grasped with freshness of spirit. That gift has been given to you. Do not fail to understand its power.

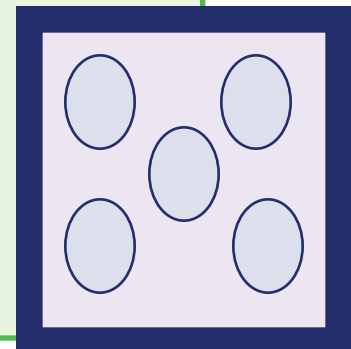
5a. Do not be defined by the things that separate you but by the things that unite you in Jesus Christ.

b. Again the Spirit counsels the church to not allow the forces of division to divert you from your witness.

c. Listen together to one another, without judgment or predisposition. . . . There is much labor to be done. Reason together in love, and the Spirit of truth will prevail.

Make items for people in a nursing home.

- Make “have a nice day” cards.
- Make tote bags that can hang on the back of wheelchairs.
- Decorate a collage picture frame. A picture of the child who decorated the frame might be left in one of the picture slots.



Theme 4 LOVE in MOTION

Class 4 James 2:1–7

Class Introduction

What important lessons did you learn yesterday?

- Listen.
- Be slow to speak. Think about what you say before you speak.
- Avoid anger.
- When you “do the word” others observe faith in action.

Lead the class in singing the song “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself.”
(Sing it as a round to the tune of “Rose.”)

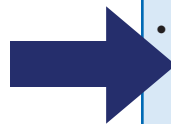
Love, love, love, love.
Love your neighbor as yourself.
Love your brother; love your sister.
God is love.

Follow with a prayer.

All God’s Children

Give each camper a copy of the mixer game (next page) and a pencil. Allow five minutes for mingling with one another and filling in blanks. Following the activity, sit down and discuss.

- No two people are exactly alike.
- Although we are here together now, our past experiences are all very different.
- Good things and bad things happen to everyone.
- God loves us no matter what has happened to us or how we choose to live.



Dear Friends,

... continued

If you really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then why do you continue to show acts of favoritism? Do you not ask the poor person in dirty clothes to sit at your feet or stand in the corner while giving the person dressed in fine clothes the best seat in the room?

Listen, brothers and sisters, God has chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith. God has promised the kingdom to all those who love him.

Let your actions—no matter where you are or whom you are with—reveal in every way your love of Jesus Christ.

In cabin groups read the next part of the letter. Answer questions in cabin groups; then, share answers with the whole group.

- Do your actions reflect your belief in Jesus Christ?
- What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?
- How did Jesus treat the less fortunate?



All God's Children

Find someone who can sign each of the situations described below.

I have lived in at least two houses.

I have never flown on a plane.

I like to eat peas.

I have traveled to another country.

I have lived in two or more states.

I do not get an allowance.

I can stand on one foot while saying "God loves everyone."

The weirdest food I have ever tasted is _____.

My favorite subject is science.

I have red hair.

I have a pet named _____.

My parents give me an allowance.

There are children at school less fortunate than I am.

I know Jesus loves me.

Looking at

Review the following basics about the book of James.

- James is one of seven letters called the “Catholic Epistles” or General Letters.
- Traditionally, this letter has been attributed to James the brother of Jesus, although many modern biblical scholars think it may have been a disciple of James and not James himself.
- The book of James is not like a real letter, but is more like a sermon, sometimes called a homily written for many people to hear or read.
- It give lots of advice about how to live a Christian life: It tells about the danger of double-mindedness and pride, enduring trials, equality of rich and poor, the importance of doing the word, and the danger of loose talk.
- James was written to Jewish Christians under the rule of the Roman Empire.

Time Line

Have the children stand in a line, holding a long rope. Identify the rope as the “Time-Line Rope.” Position children along the rope at points representative of Jesus’ birth, death, and other appropriate dates for your country/ culture. Also include points that represent the birth years for a grandparent, a parent, and a student. At each point use paper signs with a clothespin to identify the event in time. You may have to open the classroom door to allow for the length of the rope to be pulled taut. This is GOOD! Finally, pin a tag onto the rope that marks the approximate date James was written: 75–85 AD. Make a point showing the relationship between Jesus’ life and the writing of James.

If class is large, break into three smaller groups and rotate through each activity on this page.

On the Globe

Show the children the area of Palestine during first century AD. Read the text: Use a Bible and have the children follow along and/or take turns reading: James 2:1–7 NRSV.

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there, or, “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

Two Visitors

Recruit the following volunteers to act out “Two Visitors” based on James 2:1–4.

Rich Man (dress up for part) Greeter #1

Poor Woman (dress up for part) Greeter #2

The rest of the class will be part of the congregation. Encourage the class to play the parts impromptu. Invite the students to help set up the classroom prior to the drama. Read the story “Two Visitors” as the class acts out the parts. You may want to encourage them to act out the various behaviors of the congregation as described in the story.

TWO VISITORS

by Robin Linkhart

There once was a little white church on a corner not far from a school. The school was brick and had lots of swings in the playground. The little white church had some pretty stained glass windows and a big rose bush by the front door.

One Sunday morning most of the people were sitting in the pews listening to the organ play and waiting for the service to begin. Two people stood by the front door. Their job that morning was to hand out bulletins and greet folks. A couple kids had just finished eating snacks and were running up the stairs from the fellowship hall to find a seat in the sanctuary.

On this particular Sunday a new person, which no one in the congregation knew, drove up in a bright shiny car and parked right in front of the church. A man in a brand new navy blue suit got out of the car and made his way to the front door of the church. He wore a silk tie with a diamond tie tack. He had a big gold ring on his right ring finger and a heavy gold bracelet on one wrist. He was wearing flashy gold designer eye-glasses.

The greeter was very happy to see this visitor and rushed up to

say hello. The greeter shook the man’s hand and gave him a bulletin and a brochure that told about all the activities of the church. Then the greeter took the visitor into the sanctuary and pointed out a great place to sit, right next to the richest people in the congregation and close to the air conditioner. Everyone in the congregation smiled at the man; some even nodded a kind welcome.

Meanwhile, a rickety old car pulled up outside, and the other greeter looked out the window to see what was making all the awful car sounds. The engine was loud, the brakes squeaked, and big puffs of smoke came out of the rusty tailpipe. The lady who was driving the car had two big snarls in her hair, and when she got out of the car, she had to pull her socks back up because they had fallen down. None of her clothes matched and some of them even had holes. Her blouse had some stains on the front and she didn’t have the buttons on her sweater buttoned just right. She walked slowly up to the front door of the church.

The greeter made a face like he had just taken a big bite out of a lemon; then, he quickly walked

over and started straightening up all the hangers on the coat rack. The odd-looking lady carefully opened the front door and slipped quietly inside. She stood in the foyer and looked around. She saw the greeter and waited for him to notice her. Finally she coughed so he would know she was there.

The greeter got that lemon look again and then looked over at the lady. He had a gruff voice when he asked the lady what she wanted. The lady said she wanted to attend the worship service. The greeter went over to the door of the sanctuary and told the lady to go in and sit at the very back, right next to the back wall, where no one else was sitting. As she walked into the sanctuary, some people flinched a little bit and then turned away. Two people sitting near the back of the sanctuary got up and moved towards the front of the room. One kid pinched his nose closed like he smelled something bad. When the congregation sang hymns, the lady didn’t know which one to sing because no one had given her a bulletin. After awhile, no one looked at her at all. In fact it seemed like she was invisible to the whole congregation.

Talk About It: “Two Visitors”

- How was our drama like the scripture we read earlier?
- How did it feel to be the rich person? (Encourage the student who played the part of the Rich Man to share.)
- How did it feel to be the poor person? (Encourage the student who played the part of the Poor Lady to share.)
- How did it feel to be part of the congregation and treat these two people the way you did? (Encourage various students to share their feelings.)
- Tell about a time in your life when people have been treated differently because of what they had or didn't have? How has this happened in your congregation?
- Another word to describe this type of behavior is discrimination. What other kinds of discrimination do we have in our world today? What makes someone “acceptable” or “unacceptable”?
- In the scripture passage we read before we acted out the story, it said, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” How does that relate to our story “Two Visitors”?
- Sometimes it seems like it is easy to love others and sometimes it seems like it is difficult to love others. Tell about a time when it was hard for you to act lovingly toward someone else.

A Message for Today

Listen to what modern-day scripture says about how we treat others. How does the modern-day scripture, Doctrine and Covenants 162:6a–c, help us hear God's voice in the scriptures we talked about today?

6a. From the earliest days you have been given a sacred principle that declares the inestimable worth of all persons. Do not forget.

b. The One who created all humankind grieves at the shameful divisions within the human family. A prophetic people must work tirelessly to tear down walls of separation and to build bridges of understanding.

c. You hold precious lives in your hands. Be gentle and gracious with one another. A community is no stronger than the weakest within it. Even as the One you follow reached out to those who were rejected and marginalized, so must the community that bears his name.

Walking with

Hand out strips of colored paper and pencils/pens. Read the following to class, pausing and instructing them to write their responses.

Think about someone in your life who might not be valued or treated well by most of the people they meet, because of how they look or what they have. (pause)

Think about how you see that person. (pause)

Now think about how you can let the way Jesus sees this person change the way you see them. How can you show them through your actions that they are a person of worth?

Take a few moments to think and then write this person's first name on your colored strip. If you want to, you can also write down how you plan to show love towards them.

When everyone has finished, staple the strips to form an interlocking paper chain. Position the writing towards the inside. Use a dark marker to write the words “Love your neighbor as yourself” on the outside of the paper chain lengths using several chains for the words and letters. If you skip every other link, all of the words/letters will be easy to see from one side.

Have the class form a closed circle, hold the paper chain around the circle, and close with a prayer. Hang the paper chain on the wall in your classroom to remind the class of their commitment to love your neighbor as yourself.