

The Letter of James 1:1 – 11

English Standard Version (ESV)

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
 2 To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:
 3 Greetings.
 4 ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various
 5 kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces
 6 steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that
 7 you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
 8 ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives
 9 generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
 10 ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who
 11 doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by
 12 the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will
 13 receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man,
 14 unstable in all his ways.
 15 ⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich
 16 in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will
 17 pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and
 18 withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So
 19 also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Observation (What does it say?):

Consider the observation questions on the back of this page. What do you notice in this passage?

- Connect repeated or related words or ideas.
- Connect contrasting words or ideas.
- What else do you observe in this passage?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

After observing the passage:

- How would you title each paragraph (no more than three words)?
 v. 2-4 _____
 v. 5-8 _____
 v. 9-11 _____
- What connections (if any) do you see between the first three paragraphs in the letter?
- What questions come to mind as you read?

Application (What does it mean for me?):

- Which of the three paragraphs seems most related to your current life situation? How?
- Which paragraph would be most challenging for you to apply? Why?
- How might this passage affect your understanding of who God is and what He is doing?
- What would be different (attitudes, behavior) if God used this passage to change you?

Additional questions for thought and discussion:

- Consider the introduction to this letter.
What are the possible meanings of “the twelve tribes”?

What are the possible meanings of the “Dispersion”?

Could the letter be only to Jews? Only to Jewish Christians? To all Christians? Why do you think this letter applies to you? Or do you?

For more suggested methods of study: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/methodical-bible-study/>

For examples of inductive studies: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/inductive-bible-study-examples-2/>

Inductive Bible Study

(A few general ideas)

Observation
(What does it say?)

What facts do you **observe** about the passage that help bring out the writer’s thought process?

- Who are the people involved?
- What action takes place?
- What type of literature is it (poetry, history, didactic, etc.)?
- What details are included or left out?
- Are any unusual words used?
- Is there symbolic language?
- What is the grammar of the passage (pronouns, prepositions, verb tenses)?
- Are words or ideas repeated?
- Any comparisons or contrasts?
- Any cause and effect?
- Are there indications of purpose (“in order that...”)?
- Are there conclusions (“Therefore...”)?
- Are there explanations?
- Does the passage logically break into sections?
- How would you summarize the passage?
- What would be a good “headline” for the passage?

Interpretation
(What does it mean?)

What questions come to mind about the facts that would help you **interpret** the meaning?

- How would the original readers have understood the passage?
- What is the main emphasis?
- Why does the writer use repetition, or contrast, or unusual words?
- What does the grammar or structure of the passage reveal about the writer’s thought pattern?
- Is there a logical sequence in the passage?
- How are different ideas in the passage connected?
- Are there any new ideas or concepts presented?
- Are there difficulties in the passage?

Application
(What does it mean for me?)

What is the impact on your life? What **application** does the Holy Spirit want to show you?

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to be thankful for?
- Is there an attribute of God to worship?
- Is there an example to follow?

**Read nothing into the Scriptures, but draw everything from them, and suffer nothing to remain hidden that is really in them.
J.A. Bengel (1687-1752)**

For a much more detailed description of the methodology, see Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*. Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1952.