

The Epistle of James 1:1 - 8

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.

Observation (What does it say?):

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

- Read through the entire (short) passage once, then go back and underline words or phrases that are unusual, unfamiliar, or confusing.
- Circle words or phrases that are repeated or seem related.
- What other observations do you make?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

After observing the passage:

- What do you think are some of the key terms in this passage that need to be defined?
How would you define those words to help someone understand the passage?
- After the greeting what, if anything, connects the two opening paragraphs (v. 2-4 and v. 5-8)?
- What is the difference (if any) between “trials” (v.2) and “testing” (v.3)? Compare several alternate translations on the back of this page.
How might that difference affect your understanding of the passage?
- What questions come to mind as you read?
- How would you title this passage?

Application (What does it mean for me?):

- What has been your experience of trials, testing, and steadfastness? How does that relate to joy?
- What would the “full effect” of steadfastness (v.4) look like in your life?
- Who are people in your life who help you remember the connection between trials and joy?

For further thought and discussion:

James 1:3 (other translations)

- knowing that the **proving** of your faith worketh patience. - American Standard Version
- You know these **prove** your faith. It helps you not to give up. - New Life Version
- You know this, that when you **prove** you believe, you become stronger to take troubles. - Worldwide English (New Testament)
- knowing that the **proof** of your faith doth work endurance, - Young's Literal Translation

Also, see 1 Peter 1:7 (using the same word – noun and verb forms)

- so that the **tested genuineness** of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is **tested** by fire

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.