

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>EPISTLE TOOL KIT - STUDYING THE BIBLE</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 1 - JAMES 1:1-8</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 2 - JAMES 1:9-18</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 3 - JAMES 1:19-27</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 4 - JAMES 2:1-13</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 5 - JAMES 2: 14-26</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 6 - JAMES 3:1-12</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 7 - JAMES 3:13-18</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 8 - JAMES 4:1-12</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 9 - JAMES 4:13-5:6</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 10 - JAMES 5:7-12</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 11 - JAMES 5:13-20</u>	<u>36</u>

Epistle Tool Kit – Studying the Bible

Before you begin the study initially, read through the whole letter. Ask yourself questions such as: Who wrote it? Who is it written to? Why did he write it? Is there a particular problem?

Before you begin:-

*First read the passage.

*Then pray, asking God to help you understand and obey what He is teaching you. Remember this is His Word and He wants to speak to you through it.

*Next, refrain from looking at the footnotes in your Bible and consulting commentaries until you have done the complete toolkit! We want you to grow as a lover of God's word and these tools aim at helping that!

Step 1

Write or type out the text, using the 'line by line' method. That is, allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.

Step 2

What kind of literature is this? An epistle is a letter...usually just this one kind of literature.

Step 3

Underline the words that are unclear, repeated or very important.

Notice:

- words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas
- words connecting ideas: like "therefore", "so that", "because", "for".
- contrasting words or phrases: "but", "or"
- big Bible words, things you don't understand, or that are surprises

Step 4 - Establish context - What went before? What comes next?

How does the immediate context inform this passage?

Step 5 - Work on the structure or shape of the passage.

Outline the structure of the text in a way that represents the author's organization of the text. (for eg. Look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making?) Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks for each unit and provide headings for each. To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone etc. ***Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.***

Step 6

What does it all mean? How does it relate to the gospel? Ask the following questions.

What does my passage uniquely contribute to the message of God's word?

How does the passage relate to Christ, (his life death, resurrection, ascension)?

What does it tell me about God and his purposes in the world?

What does it reveal about humanity and how we relate to God?

Step 7

Clarify the main theme: write down the 'big idea' of the passage in **one concise sentence**. Are there sub-themes?

Step 8

Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the

relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. Ask yourself:

- What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text?
- What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for?
- What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What gives me encouragement?
- Why does it matter for me and for others

Introduction

As the brother of Jesus, James experienced misery, majesty and in his view, mental insanity.

As a child and well into adulthood, he likely heard taunts and slurs about his mother's respectability. Everyone knew Joseph, James' father, had not fathered Jesus. Jesus himself was hard to fathom. As a boy he'd debated and taught his religious leaders and claimed God was his Father (Luke 2:49). Then he'd become a carpenter, and we can imagine the jeering James may have heard: "So God did all this, so that his son would be a carpenter?"

The adult Jesus was difficult as well. He wandered around the country proclaiming that he was indeed the Son of God. As proof, there were miracles. On one occasion, James and his family tried to take Jesus by force, so concerned were they about his mental sanity (Mark 3:20-21). When they tried to see Jesus and have time with him, they were shut out (Mark 3:31-33). Only after the shame of the crucifixion and the incredible resurrection, did James come to know majesty and magnificence. In a private meeting (1 Cor. 15:7), he finally believed that Jesus was his Messiah and Lord.

He then became a key leader in the early church (Acts 15). Sometime later, between AD 40-62, but most likely the middle 40's, he wrote a letter to Jewish Christians, these "twelve tribes in the dispersion" of 1:1, who had left Jerusalem.

As a writer, James loved using strong images to drive his point home: a forest fire raging out of control; people peering into mirror but then forgetting what they look like; a sea-vessel, straining in strong winds but holding steady under the control of a tiny rudder. James weaves eternal truths with vivid everyday images. Then he drives the truths home with searching applications. He's not just interested in making an impact though. He clearly expects his readers to be changed by what they're reading. "Be doers of the word and not hearers only," 1:22) he writes and later he takes aim at fraudulent Christianity. "Do not be deceived" is a constant, strong refrain.

Perhaps his own close proximity to Christ without the reality of faith made a deep impression, because he's anxious that his readers don't have the same blinkers on about the status of their own faith.

Pray that your time studying this letter will deeply transform both your life in Christ and your friendship with God. For this to happen, each of us must ask God to make us willing to be transformed as we look into the mirror of scripture. This may well involve pain, "Be wretched and mourn and weep...humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." (James 4:9-10)

So, even though *James* contains truths that are deeply comforting, such as "God gives (wisdom) generously to all without reproach"(1:5), don't expect his letter to be comfortable.

Like the Book of Proverbs, *James* is full of practical advice concerning the shape of a life of wisdom, and this is called the New Testament's book of wisdom. At first glance, *James* may seem to lack a cohesive thread that holds the whole letter together and read like a random collection of practical advice from a wise apostle. It does have more commands per word than any other New Testament book and some feel it doesn't say much about the grace of God.

However, as we look more closely, the grace of God is woven carefully throughout the whole letter. James uses different images and language to some of the other New Testament writers. Nevertheless, his letter is saturated with the gracious character of God, and all of his commands are based on the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ. From 1:1 we see that James acknowledges whose servant he is, and through whom the grace of God the Father, has come.

Behind his teaching too, is the direct teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ which we find in the gospels, particularly from chapters 5-7 of Matthew's gospel containing the Sermon on the Mount, which is full of the wisdom, love and grace of our Lord and Saviour. We can imagine the post-resurrection James feeling the full weight and impact of Jesus' teaching for the first time. He longs for his readers to have this same experience and to stop being shams like he was.

So as we begin to absorb the whole letter, we find one of the connecting threads is the character and grace of God. James illuminates our struggle for wisdom in a huge array of difficult circumstances, he helps us find steadfastness and real faith when the pressures of the world squeeze out our faith and obedience. He takes us through all sorts of circumstances that would cause us to wander from the truth. He brings wisdom to bear on the reality of anything--internal and external--that would take us away from the grace of God.

This is true Biblical wisdom. It's deeply practical, but grounded on and saturated with the knowledge of who God our Father is, and what he has done for us in Jesus Christ. This is why James has such a deep concern for his readers to "receive with meekness the implanted word."(1:21) He wants us to be transformed by God's word in all the nooks and crannies of our whole lives, and our self-deceit exposed and repented of. James knows we will need humility to hear and obey what is taught, so he writes a great deal about arrogance towards God and others.

Let's commit to reading humbly, with open hands and hearts. Let's ask God to give us the wisdom we need to have his word planted deeply and that His Spirit will transform every area of our lives.

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 1 – James 1:1-8

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.

(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ’s mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the ‘big idea’ of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author’s intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. What do you think he means by “let steadfastness have its full effect”, and why would steadfastness be something worth having?
2. Share the challenges/encouragement James has given regarding how you face trials when they inevitably come?

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 2 – James 1:9-18

It appears both here and later in James, that part of the suffering the scattered Christians are enduring is economic and social disparity, even within the churches. James is anxious that they know how to live wisely in the light of the trials they face.

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.

(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ’s mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the ‘big idea’ of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author’s intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. How are trials (v2, 12) and temptations (v13-15) connected, but very different?
2. Share the times when you are tempted to think that God does NOT give you what is good and perfect. What has James taught that will help you deal with this temptation?

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 3 – James 1:19-27

James continues to write about things that would cause us to wander from God. He moves to examining the interior of our lives, picking up a thread he has already introduced in v16, “do not be deceived.”

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the ‘line by line’ method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.
(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in *one concise sentence* state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. Read Isaiah 40:6-8 and 1 Peter 1:24-25, which James has already alluded to in v10-11. What is at stake when we fail to rightly receive and respond to God's word? (See also Luke 6:46-49 on how we hear his word.)

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 4 – James 2:1-13

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.
(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in *one concise sentence* state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. How have you been guilty of showing partiality in the gathering? Confess and pray together concerning what God has convicted you of from this passage.

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 5 – James 2: 14-26

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.
(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?*)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – *in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.*

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

A few comments on this passage:

One of the key principles we need to follow when we read the Bible is to not read one part of it against another part. God is one God, and he cannot speak with a forked tongue. We need to be ready to think about how what may appear to contradict, actually works together. For example, some have used this text to claim James and Paul had different gospels. It's more accurate to say, they have different things to say about the same gospel. In their letters, when discussing justification, for example, Paul and James are tackling a different issue. Paul has in mind the person that thought he was justified by his works and lets them know in no uncertain terms, that this is an utterly fruitless and hopeless endeavour. We are justified by faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone. James, however, has in mind the person who is 'orthodox in faith' yet whose life bears no change or evidence of the reality of that faith, who is in fact, self-deceived and whose faith is dead. Both Paul and James agree that faith **MUST** demonstrate itself in obedience and good works (ie for Paul see Titus 3:8. That whole letter is a call to sound life that flows from sound doctrine.)

It is important to remember, the Bible authors are all unique and different and sometimes use words and terms differently. There is great diversity between Peter and Paul, and John and James and Luke for example, but great unity in the one gospel, passed on to them by Christ.

For more help with understanding the relationship between faith and works here is a great quote from Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's *Short Declaration of the True, Lively and Christian Faith*.

“The first entry to God, good Christian people, is through faith, by which we are justified before God. So that no-one should be deceived for lack of right understanding of this, you must note diligently that faith is taken in the Scripture in two ways. There is one faith which in Scripture is called dead faith, which brings forth no good works, but is idle, barren and unfruitful. The holy apostle James compares this faith to the faith of devils, who believe God to be true and just, and tremble for fear, yet they do nothing well, but all evil. This is the faith of the wicked and ungodly Christian people, who confess God (as Paul says) with their mouth, but deny him in their deeds, and are abominable, and without the right faith, and in all good works reprehensible. This faith is a persuasion and belief in man's heart, which means that he knows that there is a God, and assents to all truth of God's most holy word, contained in holy Scripture, but it consists only in believing that the word of God is true. This is not properly called faith.

There is another faith in Scripture, which is not idle, unfruitful, and dead like the previous faith. It works by love as Paul declares (Galatians 5). As the other, false faith is called a dead faith, so may this be called a living faith. This is not only belief in the doctrines of our faith, but it is also a sure trust and confidence in the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a steadfast hope of all good things to be received from God's hand. It trusts that, although through weakness or temptation by our spiritual enemy we fall from him by sin, yet if we return to him with true repentance, he will forgive and forget our offences for his Son's sake, our Saviour Jesus Christ. He will even make us inheritors with him of his everlasting kingdom. In the mean time, until that kingdom comes, he will be our protector and defender in all perils and dangers, whatever may happen. Though sometimes he sends us sharp adversity, yet he will always be a loving father to us, correcting us for our sin, but not withdrawing his mercy from us. So we must trust in him and commit ourselves wholly to him, hang only upon him, and call upon him, ready to obey and serve him.

This is the true, living, and unfeigned Christian faith. It is not in the mouth and outward profession only, but it lives and stirs inwardly in the heart. This faith does not exist without hope and trust in God, nor without the love of God and of our neighbours. It does not exist without fear of God, nor without the desire to hear God's word, and to follow it in avoiding evil and doing all good works gladly. This faith, as the Bible describes it, is *‘being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see’*.

And later it says: *‘anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him’*.

And nothing commends good men to God so much as this assured faith and trust in him.

Three things should be especially noted about this faith. First, this faith does not lie dead in the heart, but is lively and fruitful in bringing forth good works. Second, without it no good works can be done that will be acceptable and pleasant to God. Third, we should note what kind of good works this faith brings forth.”

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 6 – James 3:1-12

Throughout his letter, James makes the case that our speech is a true barometer of our heart.

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.

(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?*)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – *in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.*

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. James then reminds them of Jesus' teaching in both Luke 6:44-45 and Matthew 12:33-37. What is the point being made when they talk about fruit trees, springs of water, heart's treasure?

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 7 – James 3:13-18

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.
(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?*)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – *in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.*

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. Think of a time when you thought you were 'wise', but your behaviour proved otherwise. What is James saying is at the root of this behaviour?

2. Biblical wisdom is always deeply practical. It is living our lives in the light of who God is, often in very complex and difficult circumstances. Discuss and pray together about how James has brought to bear, the truth of who God is, on some of the your real-life issues.

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 8 – James 4:1-12

James continues to shed searching light on what is real and what is self-deception when it comes to our faith and claims to being wise.

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated or very important.

(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ’s mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the ‘big idea’ of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author’s intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help thinking it through:

1. Trace the steps James leads us through in response to seeing how sinful and self-deceived we really are.
2. Job 28:28 teaches “the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.” What has James taught that has explained why this is true?
3. Notice how James ties several threads from his letter together. According to James in v11-12, how is speaking against our brother/sister an act of arrogance towards God?

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 9 – James 4:13-5:6

In 5:1-6 James uses the language of prophetic lament. Jesus and the OT prophets used it. Its purpose is two-fold, to comfort those who are suffering at the hands of the people he addresses, and to warn those who are guilty of inflicting that suffering. (The guilty are not necessarily in hearing range of the letter). He takes them into the future...showing the final outcome of their behaviour. (v1-3)

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.
(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like therefore, so that, because, for; contrasting words or phrases: but, or; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ’s mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the ‘big idea’ of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author’s intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. At the very centre of these two passages is a definition of sin (v17). How does this challenge your view of what sin is? In the particular context of these two examples from James, what does it mean to “know the right thing and fail to do it”?

2. In the light of this study, have you been convicted of the need to repent of something you’ve failed to do? Pray together with your group.

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 10 – James 5:7-12

With the “therefore brothers” of v7, James ties this passage to the last two passages and addresses his fellow Christians who live with the reality of the circumstances he has discussed. He returns to the issue of steadfastness in suffering.

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the ‘line by line’ method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.

(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like *therefore, so that, because, for*; contrasting words or phrases: *but, or*; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. *Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover*); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. How do we reconcile the compassion and mercy of the Lord with our suffering?

2. James refers to Jesus' words in Matthew 5:33-37 in this passage. Why might he put this here in the context of facing suffering?

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 11 – James 5:13-20

James' last words are on the subject of prayer and particularly in the context of suffering. There are some surprising lessons here that challenge our usual prayer practices. Remember he started with the subject of prayer in 1:5.

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text - using the 'line by line' method. (ie: allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.)

Underline/circle/mark the words that are unclear, repeated, or very important.

(Notice: words or phrases that are repetitions, or repetitions of ideas; words connecting ideas: like *therefore, so that, because, for*; contrasting words or phrases: *but, or*; key ideas; big Bible words (eg. *Salvation, redemption, atonement, OT references, Passover*); surprises.)

Step 4: Establish Context: What went before? What comes next? *How does the immediate context inform this passage?*

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. *For example, look for the natural breaks or sections in the author's thinking. Is there a particular argument he is making? Provide an outline that clearly indicates verse breaks. (To help find the structure: make observations that consider grammar, repetition, key terms, sequence, sudden grammatical/topical changes, tone, etc.) Ask yourself what emphasis the structure reveals.*

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (*i.e.* What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (*Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text? What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for? What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What encourages me? Why does it matter for me and for others?*)

Questions to help think it through:

1. Why does James conclude his whole letter with a strong encouragement to be seeking out others who are wandering from the truth? (v19-20) How does this key theme hold the whole book together?

2. Are there ways you should change your prayer practice and care for others' spiritual welfare in the light of this chapter? Is there someone wandering from the truth who you need to seek out?