

Investigating God's Word...

Year Seven

Epistles (Part 2)

Sunday School Curriculum

Spring Quarter

Lesson Sequence

Spring Quarter

The **Lesson Sequence** gives the teacher an overview of the entire quarter.

The central goal of the ***Investigating God's Word...*** curriculum is to enable children the opportunity to read and study the entire Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—by the time they “graduate” from 6th grade.

Week One	I Timothy
Week Two	II Timothy
Week Three	Titus
Week Four	Philemon
Week Five	Hebrews 1:1-6:12
Week Six	Hebrews 6:13-10:39
Week Seven	Hebrews 11-13
Week Eight	James 1-2
Week Nine	James 3-5
Week Ten	I Peter
Week Eleven	II Peter
Week Twelve	I John
Week Thirteen	II John, III John, Jude

Summer Quarter: Revelation, Ecclesiastes



Suggested Schedule

Welcome <i>Psalm 98:1-2</i>	2-3 min.
Drill Time <i>Solomon's wisdom</i>	5 min.
W.O.W! <i>Humility</i>	5 min.
Historical Context <i>Timeline</i>	2-3 min.
Bible Investigation <i>James 3-5</i>	25-30 min.
Lesson-At-Home <i>James 3:13</i>	2-3 min.

Lesson Nine

James 3-5

Overview

The second half of the Book of James is filled with instructions on how to live a life of faith in Christ. James 3 begins by dealing with the problem of the tongue—how it is totally evil, being connected to the corruption of our hearts. Even though we cannot totally tame our tongues, we are responsible to grow in our use of them. James then turns to a brief comparison of true wisdom versus worldly wisdom. Ultimately, the difference is that true wisdom is connected to humility, while earthly “wisdom” is full of pride.

James 4 deals with the subjects of fighting and quarrelling, submission to God and others, slander, and boasting about the future. Again, James demonstrates how the sins of quarreling, slander, and boasting are in opposition to a life of faith-filled humility. Our problem is that we rely on ourselves instead of drawing near to God!

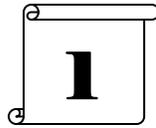
James 5 begins by addressing rich people who use their wealth for self-indulgence and the oppression of others. Then, James teaches on the need for patience in suffering, using the examples of the prophets and Job. Finally, James gives instruction on faith-filled prayer that is effective. We are to earnestly seek God in prayer during troubling times!

Preparation

Read and meditate on James 3-5 this week.

Teaching Encouragement

Humility is so sorely needed in our world today. Your children are constantly bombarded with “self-esteem” messages that typically only serve to build up their pride. Moreover, they are driven internally by hearts that want to serve self instead of God and others. So as you read the various exhortations from the Book of James, continue to bring your children back to the need for humility. Ultimately, point them to Jesus who is a perfect model of humility—never acting in pride or self-centeredness. Help them see their own pride and arrogance, and how it will only cause them to be in conflict with God and man. Challenge yourself to grow in humility as well!



Welcome

Greet the students. Welcome visitors. To prepare the students for class today, read Psalm 98:1-2.

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ² The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

Say: *How do we know where our salvation comes from? From the Bible alone! Those who do not learn God's Word do not know what His salvation is all about. So we have the great privilege to study the Bible and learn even more about our great salvation!*



Drill Time

Now, it's time for DRILL TIME, our weekly opportunity to review what we have learned in the past. Are you ready?

Today's questions: *Who became king of Israel after David? When the LORD appeared to Solomon at Gibeon, what did He tell Solomon? What did Solomon ask for? What did God give Solomon? What was Solomon's first opportunity to use the gift of wisdom he received from God?*

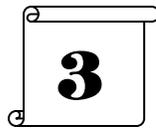
Call on volunteers or select students to make attempts.

Answers:

1. Solomon.
2. "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."
3. A discerning heart (wisdom).
4. Wisdom, as well as riches and honor.
5. In a case where two prostitutes claimed to be the mother of one baby.

Say: *Solomon knew that he could not rule the nation of Israel in the right way without wisdom. He also knew that wisdom was a gift from God—not something that he could obtain on his own. In our reading today we will learn more about wisdom...*

The answers to today's Drill Time questions are found in **I Kings 3**.



W.O.W!

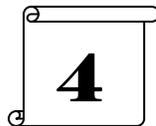
*Our Word of the Week this week is **HUMILITY**. Write it on the board. Who can tell me what this word means? Allow answers.*

The easiest way to define HUMILITY is to reference its opposite. HUMILITY is the opposite of what? [Pride.] So, HUMILITY is the state of NOT being proud or NOT being arrogant.

A person who exhibits HUMILITY is one who submits to authority, serves others, and is willing to put himself aside. So, HUMILITY is also the state of NOT being selfish!

Can you think of someone in your life who exhibits a lot of HUMILITY? Unfortunately, most people walk in pride and tend to be self-centered. Our sinful nature is to be proud and arrogant and self-serving. So, HUMILITY can only be exhibited by the grace of God in our lives.

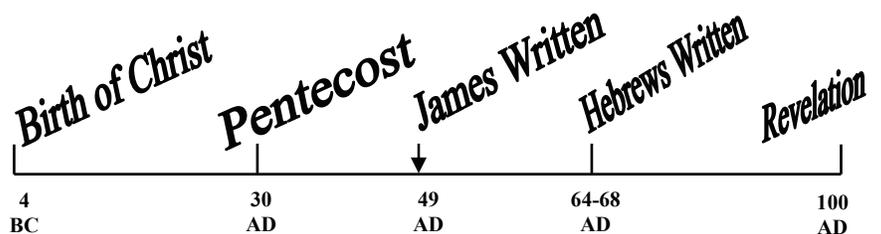
James will discuss HUMILITY in our reading today. Watch for how HUMILITY is so important in our relationship to God as well as in our relationships with other people!

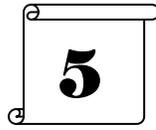


Historical Context

If necessary, draw this timeline on the board. Remember that the students need to understand God's Word in its historical context.

A James Timeline





Bible Investigation

Have your students open their Bibles to James 3.

Introduction: *Remember that the Book of James was written by the real life brother of Jesus. It is full of practical instruction about how to live out our faith in Jesus Christ.*

Let's continue our investigation. Read James 3:1-2.

¹Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ²We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

Discussion: *Think about that last sentence for a moment. Can someone be perfect in all that he says? [No!] James is telling us how our words simply display what's in our hearts. We say so many sinful things every day because of the sin in our hearts. If only we could control our tongues!*

Listen to more about our tongues. Read verses 3-6.

³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

Discussion: *Wow! Do you think of your tongue like that? James says that the tongue—in a sense—controls the whole person. What else does he say about the tongue? [It is evil. It is set on fire by hell.] This small part of our body does great damage, doesn't it?*

Let's read more. Read verses 7-12.

⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My

brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Application: *So James makes it VERY clear that our tongues are full of evil and cannot be tamed. Does that mean we can say anything we want? [No!] You are still responsible to work on taming your tongue, even though you will never do it perfectly. Your tongue should be used only to bless and honor God, instead of hurting other people. Ask God to guard your tongue and help you speak words that glorify Him!*

Now on to another subject. Read verses 13-18.

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Discussion: *Now James teaches us about wisdom. What is the difference between true wisdom and worldly wisdom? Allow answers. True wisdom is connected to HUMILITY and selflessness. Worldly wisdom is full of pride and selfishness. So do you understand how important HUMILITY is? Only things done out of HUMILITY are pleasing to God and helpful to others.*

Now on to Chapter Four. Read James 4:1-3.

¹ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Discussion: *Have you ever thought about the real cause of our fights and quarrels? God's Word says it is our own selfish desires. You fight with your brother or sister or friend because you cannot have what you want! According to these verses, what's the solution to the problem? [Ask God with right motives.] Next time you are fighting or arguing, stop and ask God for your desires, instead of fighting for them. But make sure your motives are right!*

Let's read more. Read verses 4-6.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Discussion: *These are some great verses that we have memorized in the past. Did you catch our Word of the Week? If we walk in HUMILITY, what will happen? [God will give us more grace.] Out of pride, it is tempting to walk in the ways of the world. But James says that friendship with the world causes us to be what? [Enemies toward God.] God is a jealous God—He demands that we love Him first and foremost!*

Let's continue. Read verses 7-10.

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Application: *There's our Word of the Week again! What happens if we HUMBLE ourselves before God? [He will lift us up!] Unfortunately, we often try to lift ourselves up. We resist submitting to God. So these verses are very important to us. As long as you and I are walking in pride, we will not come near to God, and we will end up walking with the devil. Instead, we are to resist the devil and draw near to God. Watch out for double-mindedness! Serve God alone in HUMILITY.*

Let's read on. Read verses 11-12.

¹¹Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Discussion: *What does it mean to "slander" another person? [To speak lies about him or her.] Slander is wrongfully judging another person. Who is the only one who can really judge a person's heart? [The LORD.] If we are slandering other people, are we walking in HUMILITY? [No!] It is our pride that often causes us to wrongly judge another person.*

Let's finish this chapter. Read verses 13-17.

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Discussion: *Now James is showing us the opposite of HUMILITY again. What does he say is wrong to boast about? [What we will do in the future.] It is tempting to boast about all the things we think we will do in our future. Yet God's Word says that you and I may not even be here tomorrow! How are we supposed to think about the future? [We are to submit ourselves to God's Will for our lives.] True HUMILITY submits our futures to God!*

Now on to the last chapter. Read James 5:1-6.

¹ Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

Discussion: *Who is James writing to now? [Rich people.] What have these rich people done with their wealth? [They have lived in luxury and self-indulgence, abusing others with it.] What is God's judgment on people who use their wealth to self-indulge and hurt others? [Misery! Loss of wealth.]*

Application: *Wealth is a great gift from God. He expects us to use money with HUMILITY—serving others with it and not just ourselves.*

Let's read another section. Read verses 7-12.

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is

standing at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. ¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned.

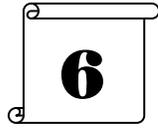
Discussion: *James now writes about patience. Impatience is a big problem for most of us! Much of our grumbling and complaining is because we are not being patient. Who are we to take as examples of patience? [Farmers; prophets; Job.] God’s blessings certainly come to those who are patient. Patience is another aspect of HUMILITY!*

Now let’s read this last section. Read verses 13-20.

¹³ Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. ¹⁹ My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Discussion: *What is James writing about now, as he ends his letter? [Prayer.] What are some things he says about prayer? [We should pray if we are in trouble or sick; we should pray in faith; we must confess our sins as we pray.] Prayer is another amazing gift from God that must be connected to faith as well as HUMILITY. We cannot pray pride-fully! Prayer itself is a HUMBLE act of submission before God. It is only effective as we trust in God to act for His glory and our good.*

Conclusion: *I hope that you will return to the Book of James over and over again as you grow in Christ. It has so much instruction in it that we could study it for a year! This week, think about your own need to walk in HUMILITY and how it affects all areas of your life.*



Lesson-At-Home

Distribute the “Lesson-At-Home” bookmarks. Read the Scripture Memory verse (James 3:13) together.

James 3:13 (NIV)

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Say: *We just read this verse that connects wisdom and HUMILITY. Can you be proud and wise at the same time? No! You must grow in HUMILITY as you grow in wisdom. Always keep those two Christ-like qualities together!*

Review the verse a couple of times.

Direct the students’ attentions to the bottom half of the bookmark. It includes reminder points of today’s lesson that can be discussed with their parents and reviewed during the week.

Close in prayer and dismiss the students.