

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on James by John Calvin, Kent Hughes, Simon Kistemaker, Gordon Fee/James Stuart, and James Smith, and notes from the HCSB Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

Reading James 2:1, 2:1 Don't show favouritism if you are a Christian

Notes (See back page for authors)
James is a proverbs-like book. James covers many subjects as a general letter to Jewish Christians, scattered in various places (1:1). James himself is the half-brother of Jesus. Although an unbeliever during Jesus' life, he came to faith and, as Hughes notes, he *had become the leader of the Jerusalem church when Peter was released from prison (Acts 12:17), and eventually he chaired the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13ff.; 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12).*

Chapter 2 in James's letter deals with faith at work in the life of the Christian. The first half of the chapter deals with the sin of favouritism. But notice the gospel right from verse 1. *Don't show favouritism as you hold on to the faith...*

These who have come to believe in the glorious Lord Jesus are saved so that they will live a life of His righteousness. Hold on to your faith in Jesus and because of your faith in Jesus live in obedience. This particular aspect of "faith at work" – not showing favouritism – covers half of the chapter and then the general teaching of "faith that works" completes the chapter.

Questions (see back page for explanation of symbols)

- To whom is James written? Are you included? Why/not?
- Who was James and what do we know of him?
- Which comes first, faith or works? Why does it matter?

4.     

Praise Pray Psalm 119a²

- Commit in prayer to holding on to faith that works, by God's help
- Pray for a member of your church
- Pray for your family
- Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord's Day you review the previous week's readings and/or the previous or current week's sermons and pray together

² Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading James 2:21-26 Faith without works is dead (3)

Notes (See back page for authors)
Now James illustrates how true faith is known by 2 Old Testament people – Abraham and Rahab. And, in doing so says, three times!, something that may cause confusion – namely that Abraham, "a man", and Rahab are justified by works.

The RSB helpfully explains, *James appeals to Abraham as his chief exhibit of one who is justified by his works. This involves no conflict with Paul who also appeals to Abraham as the chief exhibit of one justified by faith. Note that James appeals to Gen. 22, while Paul appeals to Gen. 15. In the sight of God Abraham is justified in Gen. 15, long before he offers Isaac on the altar. God knew Abraham's faith to be genuine. Abraham is justified to us, to human eyes, in Gen. 22 when he shows his faith through his obedience. Jesus used the same verb in Luke 7:35 when he declared "wisdom is justified by all her children" (i.e., shown to be genuine wisdom by its results). Here, to "justify" does not mean to be reconciled to God but to demonstrate the truth of a prior claim. Just as true wisdom is demonstrated by its fruit, Abraham's claim to faith is justified by his outward obedience. Yet his works were not the meritorious cause of his salvation; they added no merit to the perfect and sufficient merit of Christ.*

Is your faith living and active?

Questions (see back page for explanation of symbols)

- In what way was Abraham justified by works?
- In what way was Rahab justified by works?
- What is true, saving, faith?

4.     

Praise Pray Psalm 119a

- Pray for true faith proven by faithful works, with God's help
- Pray for your family
- Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
- Pray for the reading and preaching of God's word tomorrow

Reading James 2:18-20 Faith without works is dead (2)

Notes (See back page for authors)
James continues to illustrate how true faith is known. He presents two people – one claims to have faith only, the other claims to have works only. But, as Kistemaker comments, *James refuses to accept a division between faith and works. True faith cannot exist separately from works, and works acceptable in the sight of God cannot be performed without true faith.*

Hughes notes how *James' divine brother, the Lord Jesus, agrees. In his Parable of the Sower the first three soils (the hard soil, the rocky soil, and the weed-infested soil) yielded no fruit. But as Jesus concludes, "what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown" (Matthew 13:23). True living faith produces fruit—living action.*

By contrast, merely intellectual assent is not Biblical faith. The RSB notes that *To believe that God is one can be a mere intellectual assertion. To believe "in" God requires personal trust. To believe that He is, is to assent to a proposition even the demons acknowledge. Saving faith includes cognitive knowledge but goes beyond it to personal trust and submission.*

Is your faith living and active?

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. What is wrong with both "faith without works" and "works without faith"?
 2. What do the demons believe about God?
 3. What is true, saving, faith?

4.     

- Praise Pray** Psalm 119a
1. Rejoice in prayer that God grants true, living faith
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading James 2:1-7 Don't be judges with evil thoughts

Notes (See back page for authors)
James begins this exhortation to avoid sinful favouritism with an illustration. And I suspect many of us feel guilty reading that illustration. We want new people to come to our churches. We care about visitors. But it's easy to want the nice, clean, rich visitors. Not the down and outers, dirty, poor. So, if both of these visitors came to our church we would be tempted to act just as James suggests happened. Hughes notes that *well-respected scholars such as Ralph Martin say that the language of verses 2 and 3, as well as the context, indicates an actual happening in the early church. James probably witnessed this tragic event himself.*

Yet showing such favouritism is to be judges with evil thoughts. The RSB notes that *though God calls us to discern and to discriminate between good and evil, discrimination based on mere externals such as economic status, racial or ethnic differences, and the like is considered an evil form of judgment.*

James points out this is not only evil, but also that it doesn't make much sense since rich people often disdain others and cause trouble for those they view as lesser. By contrast, God has chosen the poor (v5). James doesn't mean that the poor are naturally more spiritual, simply that God, in His electing grace, is very content to choose those who are poor and weak (cf 1 Cor 1:28-29).

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. Why is the favouritism that James exposes evil?
 2. Why is the favouritism that James exposes foolish?
 3. Why does God choose whom He chooses to save?

4.     

- Praise Pray** Psalm 119a
1. Commit in prayer to turn away from favouritism, with God's help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading James 2:8-13 Judged by the law of freedom

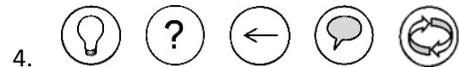
Notes (See back page for authors)
Now James returns to the sinfulness of this favouritism. It is a direct violation of the 2nd greatest commandment – Love your neighbour as yourself. Kistemaker points out that *by being partial (Deut. 1:17) they stand convicted by the law of love*. Would we want to be shunned if someone richer received more favourable treatment in church than us? Of course not!

And, lest we think it's just a little command to break – not so serious, James reminds us that to break God's law is to be guilty of breaking God's law. 99.44% pure is not good enough as we stand before the righteous Judge. As Calvin puts it, James *means ... that God will not be honoured with exceptions, nor will he allow us to cut off from his law what is less pleasing to us*. James doesn't mean that all sins are equal. Rather that all sins make us equally guilty of breaking God's law.

James then says to live in the context of the law that gives freedom. Kistemaker notes that *the law is perfect and complete. It comes to expression in the "perfect love" that flows from God to man and from man to God and fellow man. In the freedom of the law of love the child of God flourishes. Therefore, the Christian lives not in fear of the law but in the joy of God's precepts. As long as he stays within the boundaries of the law of God he enjoys complete freedom*.

Questions (see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How does showing favouritism break God's law?
2. What does every sin deserve?
3. How does God's law bring freedom?



Praise Psalm 119a

- Pray**
1. Commit in prayer to living in God's law of freedom, with God's help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading James 2:14-17 Faith without works is dead

Notes (See back page for authors)
The Lite Church: 24% fewer commitments, home of the 5% tithe, 15-minute sermons, 45-minute worship services. We have only 8 commandments—your choice. We use just 3 spiritual laws. Everything you've wanted in a church ... and less! That is the stained-glass experience of so many in the modern church today—no quickening of the conscience, no feeding of the mind, no opening of the heart, no commitment—no real faith. So Hughes introduces this section.

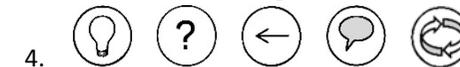
James will not – God will not – allow a claim to faith without works to support that claim. This is so critical that a foundational doctrine of Christianity – saved by faith – actually falls if works are missing. James does not mean what some (including the roman catholic gathering) say – namely that we have to have faith and we have to add our works to our faith and our faith plus our works will save us. Instead, as Kistemaker comments, *faith in God through Jesus Christ is a certainty that flows from our hearts, emanates from our minds, and translates into deeds. Vibrant faith of word and deed, spoken and performed out of love for God and our neighbor, saves us*.

Dead faith or word-only faith is useless. As the RSB notes, *"Dead" faith does not mean a faith that has perished. Rather, the image suggests a faith that never had any true life in it.*

Is your faith living and active?

Questions (see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Why are we tempted to prefer faith without works?
2. Why are we tempted to trust faith plus our works?
3. What is true, saving, faith?



Praise Psalm 119a

- Pray**
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer that true faith saves
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member