

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

es-sen-tials (ĭ-sĕn'shĕlz) – *noun* – those things that are necessary and basic to life. In biochemistry essentials are substances that are required for normal functioning but cannot be synthesized by the body and therefore must be included in the diet. Essentials are those things that are fundamental to the spiritual health of the professing Christian.

The Letter of James

A BIBLE STUDY

Setting the Agenda:

The purpose of *The Letter of James: A Bible Study* is

1. to aid us in developing a clearer understanding of *The Letter of James* (clear, accurate exegesis of the scriptural passages),
2. to help us experience the true nature and meaning of the writing of *The Letter of James* (God's truth),
3. to explain to us how *The Letter of James* speaks to us as individual Christian believers and as Christ's body, the church (contemporary relevance and significance to life's issues), and
4. to illustrate to us how *The Letter of James* shapes our lives and faith as twenty-first century Christians (to make the truth of God and the issues of life collide violently at the intersections of the consciousness)¹.

The structure of the course will be interactive and participatory. Weekly assignments will include the students' answers to questions on prepared handouts. Students' answers will be based on the selected reading assignments for the week.

Students will need a good study Bible with references and notes. The instructor will be using the *NIV (New International Version)*, drawing occasionally from other versions such as the following:

- the *NASB (New American Standard Bible)*,
- the *NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)*,
- the *NKJV (New King James Version)*, or
- other contemporary versions are acceptable for this course (p. 6).

For us to honor the time of the students participating in this course, we will make every effort to limit our class time to between *sixty* and *seventy-five* minutes.

¹ Jim Andrews, Senior Pastor – Lake Bible Church – Lake Oswego, Oregon. 1991 - Present.
DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.

MATTHEW 7:13-14

Outline of the Major Divisions

SESSION ONE

- I. Introduction to *James*
 - A. James's Place in Biblical Studies
 - B. Probable Authorship of *The Letter of James*
 - C. Origin, Audience, and Date of Composition
 - D. Theology and Purpose of the first of the General Epistles

SESSION TWO

- II. Salutation (1:1)
- III. Trials and Temptations (1:2-18)
 - A. The Testing of Faith (1:2-12)
 - B. The Source of Temptation (1:13-18)
- IV. The Practice of the Word (1:19-27)

SESSION THREE

- V. The Condemnation of Partiality (2:1-13)
- VI. The Relation of Faith and Action (2:14-26)

SESSION FOUR

- VII. The Control of the Tongue (3:1-12)
- VIII. Two Kinds of Wisdom (3:13-18)

SESSION FIVE

- IX. The Worldly Attitude (4:1-10)
- X. Faultfinding (4:11-12)
- XI. Arrogant Self-Sufficiency (4:13-17)

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

THE PASTOR'S ESSENTIALS®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.

MATTHEW 7:13-14

SESSION SIX

XII. Denunciation of the Wicked Rich (5:1-6)

XIII. Miscellaneous Exhortations (5:7-20)

A. Concerning Patience (5:7-11)

B. Concerning Oaths (5:12)

C. Concerning Prayer (5:13-18)

D. Concerning the Wanderer (5:19-20)

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304

Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Selected Bibliography

Achtemeier, Paul J., gen. ed. *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1996.

American Heritage Dictionary, The: Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed. New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.

Barclay, William. *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of James and Peter*. Louisville, Kentucky: The Westminster Press, 1976.

Barnes, Albert. *Barnes Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews to Jude*, edited by Robert Frew. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2005.

Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, The, edited by Neil M. Alexander. Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016.

Burdick, Donald W. "James: Introduction, Text, and Exposition." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation – Volume 12*, edited by Frank E. Gæbelein, 159-205. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981.

Easton, Burton Scott and Gordon Potat. "The Epistle of James: Introduction, Exposition, Text, and Exegesis." In *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume XII – James through General Articles and Maps*, edited by Nolan B. Harmon, 1-74. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957.

Freedman, David Noel. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

HomileticsOnline.com. Communications Resources, Inc., 2021.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. "The Letter of James: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." In *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes - Volume XII – Hebrews through Revelation*, edited by Leander E. Keck, 177-225. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Kirby, Robert Wingfield III. *The Basic 7: Our Seven Responses to God's Love for Us*. 2021.

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

THE PASTOR'S ESSENTIALS®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Books and Chapters of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966.

United Methodist Hymnal, The: Book of United Methodist Worship, edited by Carlton R. Young. Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.

Wesley, John. *The Works of John Wesley: Third Edition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996.

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Biblical Selections

Apologetics Study Bible, The – Understanding What You Believe: Holman Christian Standard Bible, edited by Ted Cabal. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007.

Common English Bible, The: With Apocrypha, edited by Joel B. Green. Nashville, Tennessee: Common English Bible. 2013.

ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version (ESV), edited by Lane T. Dennis. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008.

Fire Bible: Global Study Edition, New International Version, edited by Donald Stamps. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2010.

Holy Bible: King James Version. Lake Wylie, South Carolina: Christian Heritage Publishing Company, Inc., 1986.

Holy Bible: The New Open Bible - The New King James Version. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.

Maxwell Leadership Bible, The: New King James Version, edited by John Maxwell. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2002.

Message, The: The Bible in Contemporary Language, edited by Eugene Peterson. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress Publishing Group, 2002.

New Interpreter's Study Bible, The: New Revised Standard Version Bible, edited by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003.

New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, The: Revised Standard Version, edited by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition: New American Standard Bible, edited by Charles Caldwell Ryrie. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1995.

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

THE PASTOR'S ESSENTIALS®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Wesley Study Bible, The: New Revised Standard Version, edited by Joel B. Green and William H. Willimon. Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 2009.

Zondervan NIV Study Bible: The Holy Bible - New International Version, edited by the International Bible Society. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995.

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

SESSION ONE

Introduction to James – General Statements

“*The Letter of James* is one of the books which had a very hard fight to get into the New Testament. Even when it did come to be regarded as Scripture, it was spoken of with a certain reserve and suspicion, and even as late as the sixteenth century Luther would gladly have banished it from the New Testament altogether.”²

“Traditionally included as the first of the ‘general’ or ‘catholic’ epistles, *The Letter of James* is as clear and forceful in its moral exhortations as it is difficult to place within the development of earliest Christianity. Although its formal canonization was relatively late, there are signs that *The Letter of James* was used by some writings before the middle of the second century CE.

“Largely through the enthusiastic endorsement of Origen, it became part of the church’s collection, first in the East and, by the end of the fourth century, in the West. Martin Luther’s distaste for *The Letter of James* is well known, but [it] was not widely shared by other reformers. Luther considered that James 2:24 contradicted Paul’s teaching on righteousness in Galatians 2:16.

“Luther’s view dominated much of the scholarly approach to the letter until very recently. Most readers through the ages, however, reached a position like that of [many of the early church fathers] and the opposite of Luther’s [stance]: (1) James and Paul do not contradict each other, because they are not addressing the same point; (2) when read on its own terms, *The Letter of James* is a powerful witness to both the diversity in early Christianity and the moral imperative of Christian identity in every age.”³

“*The Letter of James* is written in a clear and even somewhat elegant *koine* [the common Greek that replaced classical Greek and flourished under the Roman Empire] Greek...[presenting] itself as a letter, although after the greeting it lacks many of the elements of a letter. The situations portrayed in *The Letter of James* are better thought of as general and typical rather than actual and local.”⁴

² William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of James and Peter* (Louisville, Kentucky: The Westminster Press, 1976), 3.

³ Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Letter of James: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes - Volume XII – Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998), 177.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 177-8.

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.

MATTHEW 7:13-14

James's Place in Biblical Studies

“As moral exhortation (there are some 59 imperatives in its 108 verses), *The Letter of James* can be compared to other ancient writings whose concern is the practical wisdom of right behavior.

“*The Letter of James* resembles the popular moral philosophy of the Greco-Roman world in its insistence on control of the passions and of speech and on the demonstration of verbal profession in practice, as well as in its perception of envy and arrogance as destructive vices.”⁵

“As a kind of wisdom literature, *The Letter of James* naturally bears a certain resemblance to the wide range of wisdom writings that were produced in the ancient Near East.

“Wisdom has an international character, not only because human behavior does show some constants across cultures, but also because wisdom literature was produced by scribes in ancient bureaucracies who borrowed freely from other cultures in shaping wisdom of their own.

“*The Letter of James* most resembles certain Jewish writings that shared its commitment to the world of Torah within the wider cultural setting of Hellenism.”⁶

It has been suggested that “*The Letter of James* contains a great deal of pre-Christian Jewish material; that it is most likely an adaptation by a Christian editor or the work of a Jewish author.

“The fact that a Christian editor considered the Jewish material appropriate to Christian purposes suggests that early Christianity and Judaism were not so far apart as in later centuries they have unfortunately tended to become. The Jewish Scriptures were the only Bible the Christians had when this letter was written.”⁷

⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, 179.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Burton Scott Easton and Gordon Poterat, “The Epistle of James: Introduction, Exposition, Text, and Exegesis,” in *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume XII – James through General Articles and Maps*, ed. Nolan B. Harmon (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957), 19.

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Probable Authorship of The Letter of James

“The writer of this epistle, which we may group with the wisdom literature of the Bible, was known as ‘James the Just,’ because of his unusual piety. He was a striking example of the graces that he presses upon others in his letter. He wore ‘the white flower of a blameless life’ that he urges the saints to exhibit.”⁸

“Even though this epistle names its author, it does not specify his actual identity. James was a common name in the first century. Indeed, there are in the NT four men called James. Of these, only two have ever been seriously suggested as possible authors of this epistle. A very few scholars have understood the writer to be James the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles. Most scholars, however, have recognized that he was martyred too early (A.D. 44) to have written the epistle (Acts 12:1-2).

“Since at least the third century, the most prominent view has been that James, the Lord’s brother (Mark 6:3) wrote the book. This was the belief of Origen (c. A.D. 185-253), Eusebius (265-340), and Jerome (c. 340-420). The evidence of the epistle itself favors the traditional identification of the Lord’s brother as author.”⁹

⁸ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Books and Chapters of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 280-1.

⁹ Donald W. Burdick, “James: Introduction, Text, and Exposition,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation – Volume 12*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), 161.

DR. BOB KIRBY, TIIMS, PCC | SR. PASTOR | MORRIS MEM. UMC | 4615 MACCORKLE AVE., SE | CHARLESTON, WV 25304
Website: centerchannelcoaching.com | Mobile: 302.588.7878 | e-Mail: drbobkirby@gmail.com

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Origin, Audience, and Date of Composition

“Written by a Jew to Jewish Christians and having much that is distinctively Jewish in style and spirit, *The Letter of James* is reckoned to be the first of the New Testament to be written. Although Martin Luther had little use for it, calling it, ‘a right strawy epistle,’ yet it is most valuable as a manual on holy living.

“Exceedingly practical, James, the Lord’s brother, is short on *doctrine*, but long on practice and morals. Here we are presented with a vindication of Christian works, not as a ground of salvation, but as the test of the genuine Christian. Paul stresses *faith*—James stresses *works*, and the one is complemented to the other for *The Letter of James* simply gives us the morality side of justification by faith Paul preached. There is no conflict between the two.

“Paul and James stood back-to-back, beating off common foes. Somewhat stern and severe, akin to some of the Old Testament prophets, and with a style curt and bold, James seems to have a love of metaphors.”¹⁰

“Some writers, *not* accepting the view that James the Lord’s brother wrote the epistle, have dated it either late in the first century or sometime between A.D. 100 and 150. But, if the Lord’s brother is identified as author, the book must have originated prior to A.D. 62, when, according to Josephus, James was martyred.”¹¹

¹⁰ Herbert Lockyer, 280.

¹¹ Donald W. Burdick, 162.

THE PASTOR'S *ESSENTIALS*®

OUR LIVES IN THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.
MATTHEW 7:13-14

Theology and Purpose of James

“If it is correctly assumed that James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, wrote this epistle to believers who had been dispersed from Jerusalem in the persecution following Stephen’s death, the occasion for writing is fairly clear.

“Jewish Christians, scattered throughout the area east of the Mediterranean Sea, no longer had contact with the apostles, nor was James among them to instruct and exhort them. [1] Difficulties—perhaps persecutions—were confronting them; [2] the ungodly rich were oppressing them; [3] the religion of some was becoming a superficial formality; [4] discriminatory practices revealed a lack of love; and [5] bitterness in speech and attitude marred their fellowship.

“Apparently reports of such problems among the scattered brothers had reached James in Jerusalem. In response, he wrote as pastor in absentia to urge his people to make the needed changes in their lives and in their corporate relationships.”¹²

“*The Epistle of James* is without a doubt the least theological of all New Testament books, with the exception of Philemon. In fact, one of the reasons for the delay in canonical recognition of the epistle was its lack of theological content.

“Having recognized this, however, one must hasten to insist that the book is not without theological value. The practical emphases of *The Letter of James* rest on a solid theological foundation, which is often explicitly revealed and perhaps more often assumed or implied.

“Three doctrines come to the surface more often than any others, and of these the most prominent is the *doctrine of God*. In keeping with the ethical nature of the epistle is the repeated stress on the *doctrine of sin*. And, surprisingly, the third most prominent theological theme is *eschatology* [which is the study of the end times].”¹³

Copyright © - Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min. - 2021

¹² Donald W. Burdick, 163.

¹³ Ibid., 164-5.