

Authentic **Faith**

HOW WE LIVE MATTERS

THE BOOK OF JAMES

WELCOME

Welcome to **Authentic Faith: How We Live Matters.**

The book of James was written by James, the brother of Jesus, one of the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem. Like the wisdom books of the Old Testament, James is deeply practical. Again and again, he echoes the teachings of Jesus, inviting us to discover what genuine faith looks like in everyday life.

James tells us that God has given us new life through Jesus so that we might become "a kind of firstfruits of all He created." In other words, our lives are meant to be a glimpse of God's coming Kingdom.

Over the next six weeks, we hope this booklet helps you not just study James, but live it. Whether you're using it on your own, with your family or in a Connect Group, our prayer is that God would continue to shape you into someone who reflects His love in everyday life.

We'd also love to hear your stories as we journey through this series together.

Share what God is teaching you, the ways you're putting your faith into practice, and who God has placed on your heart as your For One (keep reading on the next page!).

If there are places where you're intentionally seeking to live out your authentic faith like a local café, your workplace, school, neighbourhood, sporting club or around your dinner table **we'd love to see them!** Send your reflections or photos to b.wilkinson@gwac.org.au and let us know how we can encourage and equip you as you continue following Jesus.

Let's become a people whose lives give our community a glimpse of God's Kingdom.



Scan the QR code to share your reflections
or to tell us about your **For One**

FOR ONE

ONE PERSON. ONE PRAYER. ONE STEP

Throughout James we'll be reminded that authentic faith isn't just something we believe it's something we live out. James says God has given us new life through Jesus so that we might become "a kind of firstfruits of all He created" (James 1:18).

The firstfruits were the first sign of a much bigger harvest to come.
In the same way, our lives are meant to be a glimpse of God's coming Kingdom.

Through our words, generosity, hospitality, forgiveness and love, people should experience something of Jesus.

So here's our invitation for this series:

WHO IS YOUR ONE?

Ask God to place one person, one household or one group of people on your heart.
Someone who doesn't yet know Jesus.
Someone who God may be inviting you to intentionally love over the coming weeks.
This isn't about having all the answers or forcing awkward conversations.
It's about faithfully reflecting Jesus in everyday life.



Pray for them



Care for them



Listen to them



Serve to them



Look for opportunities
to point them to Jesus

We invite you to pray;
Lord, who is my one?
Open my eyes to the people You are already drawing to Yourself.
Help me love them well.
May my words and actions give them a glimpse of Your Kingdom.
Give me courage to take the next step when the time is right.
Amen.

WHO IS YOUR ONE?

WHO: Who has God placed on your heart?

PRAY: Write a short prayer for your One

LISTEN: What have you learned about them recently?

NOTICE: Where have you seen God opening doors?

ONE STEP: How could you show them God's love?

AUTHENTIC FAITH

Big idea

God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. Through Jesus He has given us new life and made us the firstfruits of His new creation. As followers of Jesus, our lives are meant to give the world a glimpse of the Kingdom God is bringing.

DISCOVER

Imagine walking through a supermarket and being offered a free sample. It isn't the whole meal. It's just enough to give you a taste of what's coming.

James says we are the firstfruits of God's new creation the first glimpse of the world God is making new.

That means our lives should make people curious about Jesus. The way we love, forgive, speak, serve and persevere isn't about earning God's love. It's about revealing the kind of King He is.

When people think about Christians today, what do you hope they experience?

Read James 1:1–18

Discuss

What's interesting here? What do you learn?

What don't you understand?

- What does this section of James teach us about God's character?
- James tells believers to ask God for wisdom. Why do you think wisdom is so important when we're facing trials?
- James begins this chapter by telling believers to consider it joy to go through trials. What encouragement is given for believers to persevere? How does he encourage them to pray?
- What does this passage teach us about God's generosity?
- What does it mean that every good and perfect gift comes from Him?
- Why is it significant that God "does not change like shifting shadows"?
- James says we are "a kind of firstfruits of all He created." What images or ideas come to mind when you hear the word firstfruits?
- How might Christians become a "preview" of God's coming Kingdom?

NURTURE

James reminds us that our confidence isn't found in our circumstances, but in God's unchanging character. Even in seasons of trial, God remains good and faithful.

Discuss

- Which description of God in this passage do you most need to hold onto at the moment? Why?
- James says every good and perfect gift comes from God. Where have you experienced His goodness recently?
- What trial or challenge are you facing right now? How might God be inviting you to respond with trust rather than fear?
- James says we are the firstfruits of God's new creation. If your life is meant to be a glimpse of God's Kingdom, where do you already see that happening?
- How do you think God is using your current circumstances to shape your character?
- What is one area where you need to ask God for wisdom this week?

ACT

This week, choose one intentional way each day to reflect God's goodness through generosity, encouragement, forgiveness or kindness.

You may also like to begin each day by praying:

"Father, thank You for every good gift. Help me to reflect Your goodness today, so that others may catch a glimpse of Your Kingdom through my life."

When your group gathers again, share one moment when you noticed God's goodness and one moment when you were able to reflect it to someone else.

AUTHENTIC FAITH: WE LISTEN

Big idea

Authentic faith doesn't simply hear God's Word it allows it to transform the way we live. James invites us to receive God's Word and let it sink deep into our lives.

It's not enough to hear the truth on a Sunday; God wants His Word to keep shaping us throughout the week as we become more like Jesus.

DISCOVER

James reminds us that God's Word is like a mirror. It shows us who we really are and who God is calling us to become. Looking in the mirror is only helpful if we're willing to respond to what we see.

Authentic faith isn't measured by how much Scripture we know, but by how willing we are to let God's Word transform our lives.

*What is something you've learnt how to do recently? How did you learn it?
Is it easier for you to listen or to speak? Why?*

Read James 1:19–27

Discuss

Which verse would you like to spend more time understanding?

What surprises you?

- James encourages believers to be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." Why do you think these three commands belong together?
- Which one do you find most difficult?
- Why can anger make it difficult to hear God or others well? What are we encouraged to do instead?
- James contrasts two different responses to God's Word. What is the difference between merely hearing God's Word and doing what it says?
- Why do you think James calls hearing without obedience "self-deception"?
- Jesus spent time with people very different from Himself, yet remained completely faithful to God. How can we be deeply present in our workplaces, neighbourhoods and friendships without allowing the values of our culture to shape us more than Jesus does?
- From everything you've read in James 1 so far, what would you say authentic faith looks like? Is there someone in your life you think models this well?

NURTURE

Every time we read Scripture, we're invited not only to learn something new, but to let God reshape our entire lives! Authentic faith could look like being willing to listen, humble enough to be changed, and courageous enough to put God's Word into action.

Discuss

- Which section of this passage do you most need to hold onto at the moment? Why?
- When you read the Bible, how do you tend to approach studying it?
- James says we should be "quick to listen." Who in your life do you need to listen to more carefully this week? God, a family member, a colleague, a friend, or someone you've struggled to understand?
- James describes caring for vulnerable people as part of genuine religion. Who might God be inviting you to notice or care for?
- What usually makes it difficult for you to respond when God's Word challenges you?

ACT

Before reading the Bible, pray that God would show you one thing He wants you to live out

As you finish reading, write down one practical step of obedience for that day.

It might be:

- offering forgiveness
- encouraging someone
- choosing patience
- helping someone in need
- changing the way you speak

As you intentionally put this into practice, keep your **For One** person in mind.

Ask yourself:

- How can I demonstrate the love of Jesus to them this week?
- How can I intentionally listen to them?
- Is there a practical way I can serve or encourage them?
- Is God opening a door for a deeper conversation?

Let God's Word shape your life so your For One sees Jesus in you

AUTHENTIC FAITH: WE LOVE

Big idea

When God's grace takes hold of our lives, it changes the way we see and respond to the people around us.

DISCOVER

It's easy to say everyone matters. It's much harder to actually live that way. Without even realising it, we can judge people by their appearance, status, wealth, education or what they might offer us. We naturally gravitate towards people who are like us and can overlook those who seem different, difficult or invisible.

James reminds us that God's Kingdom doesn't work like that.

When have you walked into a place and immediately felt either welcomed or overlooked? What made you feel that way?

Who's someone that always makes people feel welcome? What do they do that makes such a difference?

Read James 2

Discuss

What stands out or challenges you in this chapter?

Is there a familiar section that you are hearing differently today?

- What kind of judgments are being made in verses 1–4? (for example judgments of character, ability, etc)
- James calls loving our neighbour the "royal law" and says "mercy triumphs over judgement." (vv.8–13) Why do you think James connects love, mercy and impartiality?
- James says that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (vv.14–26) What do you think James means by this?
- Why are good works an important part of authentic faith if we are saved by grace through faith?
- What is the difference between simply believing facts about God and placing your trust in Him?
- James contrasts two very different kinds of faith. What is dangerous about the kind of faith James describes in verse 19? How is Abraham's & Rahab's faith different from the kind of faith described in verse 19?

NURTURE

The good news of the gospel is that we are saved by God's grace, not by our own efforts. But God's grace doesn't leave us unchanged. As His Spirit works within us, our faith begins to bear fruit. This chapter isn't calling us to earn God's acceptance. He's inviting us to see people as He sees them and to reflect the mercy we've already received.

Discuss

- When you think about the people around you, who do you naturally find easiest to notice and value? Who is easier to overlook?
- What assumptions or judgements can stop you from seeing people as God sees them?
- James says, "Mercy triumphs over judgement." Where might God be inviting you to replace judgement with mercy this week?
- James challenges us to ask whether our faith is visible. What part of this passage has challenged or encouraged you the most?
- As you think about your ***For One***, what do you hope they learn about God's character through you?

ACT

Practice Honour

This week, intentionally honour someone who might otherwise be overlooked. It could be someone at work, at your retirement village, a neighbour, another parent at school or even someone new at church.

Look for simple ways to communicate their value:

- Learn and use their name.
- Make time for an unhurried conversation.
- Invite them to join you for coffee or a meal.
- Speak words of encouragement.
- Listen without needing to fix or advise.

At the end of each day, ask: did my actions communicate mercy and welcome today?

AUTHENTIC FAITH: WE SPEAK

Big idea

Our words reveal what is happening in our hearts, and God's wisdom shapes us into people who bring peace rather than division.

DISCOVER

James begins by speaking to teachers, but his concern quickly expands beyond those who stand at the front of the church. Every one of us uses words that have the power to build up or tear down. Our words reveal something deeper about our hearts.

The chapter finishes by contrasting two very different kinds of wisdom. One leads to selfish ambition and conflict. The other produces peace and lives that bear good fruit.

What's the best piece of advice someone has ever given you?

Read James 3

Discuss

Which verse would you like to spend more time understanding?

Which section is speaking to you afresh as you read the passage?

- Why do you think James begins a chapter about words and wisdom by speaking specifically to teachers? What responsibility comes with influencing others?
- In what ways are we all teachers or influencers through the way we speak?
- What images or metaphors does James use to describe the tongue? What is James trying to communicate through these illustrations?
- James says our worship of God should shape the way we speak to and about others. Where do you see the greatest disconnect between these two things in yourself, the Church, our community or our wider culture?
- James contrasts two kinds of wisdom. How would you describe worldly wisdom? How is it different from the wisdom that comes from God?
- What fruit does each kind of wisdom produce?
- Which characteristic of God's wisdom (vv.17-18) do you find most compelling or most challenging? Why? Where do you see Jesus modelling this kind of wisdom?

NURTURE

Our words reveal what is happening in our hearts. As we follow Jesus, God forms in us a wisdom marked by humility and peace, shaping us to reflect His character in all we say and do.

Discuss

- Who are the people who shape the way you think and live? Whose voice has most shaped the way you speak to yourself and others? How has that influence been helpful or harmful?
- How have you experienced someone whose words and actions didn't match? What impact did that have on you?
- When you're tired, stressed or frustrated, what do your words tend to reveal about what's happening in your heart?
- If someone spent a week with you, what fruit would they experience most often?
- What part of this chapter do you sense God inviting you to grow in most?

ACT

Practise Wise Words

This week, pay close attention to your words.

Before responding in conversations, emails, messages or online, pause and pray: *"God, let my words reflect Your wisdom."*

Each day, intentionally choose one way to use your words to bring life.

Perhaps you could:

- encourage someone
- thank someone
- apologise quickly
- choose not to join gossip or criticism
- speak hope into a difficult situation
- pray with someone who is struggling

Come back next week ready to share:

- Where was it hardest to speak with wisdom?
- Where did you see God helping you grow?
- How you share a word of encouragement or hope to your ***For One***?

AUTHENTIC FAITH: WE SURRENDER

Big idea

Authentic faith lets go of pride and continually turns back to God, trusting His way over our own.

DISCOVER

Conflict rarely begins with other people.

James says it begins much closer to home, in the desires, ambitions and pride that live within us. Throughout this chapter he invites us to honestly examine our hearts and recognise the ways we try to take control instead of trusting God.

James reminds us that "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble." No matter how far we've wandered, God longs to draw us back to Himself.

When was the last time you had to admit, "I was wrong"? Was it easy or hard?

Read James 4

Discuss

What's interesting here? What do you learn?

What don't you understand?

- James begins by asking what causes fights and quarrels (vv.1–3). Where do they really begin? How much do you agree or disagree with this?
- How do selfish desires contribute to conflict in our relationships?
- What do you think James means by "friendship with the world"? Why is James so strong in his language here?
- What does it mean to submit ourselves to God?
- What promises does God make to those who humble themselves before Him?
- James warns against judging others and boasting about tomorrow. What do these two warnings have in common?
- In verses 11–16 James then discusses Christians who slander, judge, and boast. Why might James 4:11 follow after v10?
- Verses 4–6 use strong language to describe divided loyalty. What do these verses reveal about God's desire for our wholehearted devotion?

NURTURE

Pride often hides beneath the surface. It can look like insisting on our own way, relying on our own plans, judging others or believing we are in control. But James offers a beautiful invitation: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. It's recognising our need for God and living with open hands before Him.

Discuss

- What do you think humility looks like in everyday life?
- Which invitation in verses 7–10 speaks to you most personally: submit, resist, draw near, cleanse, or humble yourself? Why?
- Is there an area of your life where pride or self-reliance makes it difficult to trust God?
- James says our desires can lead us away from God. Are there comforts or plans that compete for first place in your heart?
- James warns us not to be overly-confident about our future plans. How then should we plan for the future?
- What makes it difficult for you to admit your need for God or receive correction from others?
- What hope is there in this chapter for us today?

ACT

One of the most beautiful invitations in this chapter is God's promise:
"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

This week, create space each day to simply be with God.

Spend ten minutes reading James 4:6–10 slowly.

Then sit with your hands closed.

Name one thing you are holding tightly.

As you pray, open your hands and surrender it to God.

Finish with:

"God, I receive Your grace and trust Your way today."

AUTHENTIC FAITH: WE PRAY

Big idea

Authentic faith continually turns to God in prayer and walks alongside others with grace, knowing God is at work even in suffering.

DISCOVER

James closes his letter the same way he began with people experiencing the realities of life. Some are suffering. Some are joyful. Some are sick. Some have wandered from their faith.

Rather than offering different solutions for each circumstance, James repeatedly points God's people towards prayer and community. Whatever season we find ourselves in, we are invited to bring it before God and to walk alongside one another with hope.

When something significant happens (good or bad) who is the first person you usually tell?

What's one habit that has helped you stay connected to God?

Read James 5:13–20

Discuss

What's interesting here? What do you learn?

What don't you understand?

- James mentions several different situations people might experience (vv.13–15). What are they? What do they all have in common?
- What does this chapter teach us about the role of prayer in the everyday life of a follower of Jesus?
- James encourages believers to confess their sins and pray for one another. Why do you think confession and prayer belong together?
- James points to Elijah as an example of prayer. What encouragement does his example give ordinary followers of Jesus?
- Why do you think James finishes his entire letter by talking about restoring someone who has wandered? What does this teach us about the kind of community Jesus wants His Church to be?

NURTURE

James finishes his letter by reminding us that authentic faith isn't lived alone, we are invited to keep turning towards God in prayer and towards one another in love. As we pray together, confess honestly and gently restore one another when we wander, God forms us into a community that reflects who He is.

Discuss

- When do you find it easiest to turn to God in prayer? When do you find it hardest?
- James describes "the prayer of a righteous person" as powerful and effective. Because of Jesus, we have been made righteous before God. How does that shape your confidence when you pray?
- How can we pray faithfully for healing while continuing to walk alongside someone when the answer is slow, unclear or different from what we hoped?
- How can we become the kind of people who lovingly restore others rather than judging or giving up on them?

ACT

Keep Praying

As this series finishes, don't let these practices finish too.

Choose one habit from the James series that you want to continue over the next month.

It might be:

- praying every morning
- encouraging one person each day
- showing honour to someone overlooked
- reading Scripture before checking your phone

As you finish this study, take a few moments to reflect:

- What has God been teaching you through the book of James?
- Where have you seen Him changing you?
- How is God inviting you to continue loving your **For One?**

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

James 1:17-18

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

A Taste!

JAMES 1

Big Idea

God gives good gifts, and He invites us to share His goodness with others.

Wonder Together

- What's the best gift you've ever received? Why did you love it?
- Imagine someone had never tasted ice cream before. How would you describe it?



Around the Dinner Table

- What are some good gifts God has given us that money can't buy?
- What could our family do this week so someone experiences God's love through us?



Experience Together

Supermarket Samples

Set out tiny samples of different foods around the house.

As everyone tastes them ask:

Does one tiny bite tell you everything about the food?

Noooo. But if it tastes good it makes you want more!



James says our lives are like that. We can't show people everything about God, but we can give them a little taste through our kindness and love.

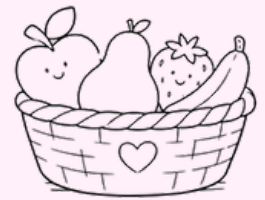
Create Together

A Taste of God's Kingdom

Make a fruit bowl.

You'll need:

- A bowl or basket
- Pens
- Cut out paper fruit.



On each fruit write or draw one way your family could help someone experience God's Kingdom this week.

Examples:

- Share a toy.
- Help Mum or Dad.
- Invite someone to play.
- Say sorry.
- Pray for a friend.



Put all the fruit in a basket.

Each family member picks one fruit and tries to do it during the week.

Pray Together

God, thank You for loving us. Help us show Your kindness so others can get a taste of Your Kingdom. Amen.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Everyone Matters

JAMES 2

Big Idea

Real faith means loving others and treating everyone with kindness.

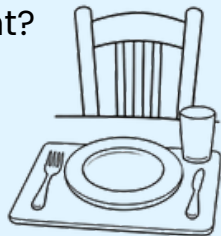
Wonder Together

- Imagine someone new came to your school or church what could you do to be a friend?
- Show me your biggest, friendliest welcome smile!



Around the Dinner Table

- The Book of James says we should treat everyone with kindness, not just our friends. Why is that important?
- Who could we invite over to our house or a playground?



Experience Together

Open Door Challenge

Throughout the day, every time someone walks through a doorway, they have to welcome the next person through with a smile, a joke, high five or encouraging words.

See how many different welcomes your family can invent.

How can we make people feel this welcome everywhere we go?



Create Together

Welcome Banner

You'll need:

- Paper or card
- Pens, pencils or crayons
- Stickers or decorations
- String or tape

Write a welcome message across your banner.



Decorate it together and hang it somewhere everyone can see.

As you create, talk about:

What helps people feel welcomed, and included?

Pray Together

God, thank You that Your love is for everyone. Help us to notice people and share Your kindness wherever we go. Amen.

Choose Kind Words

Big Idea

Kind words make a big difference. God wants us to use our words to help others and show His love.

Wonder Together

- What's the nicest thing someone has ever said to you?
- How would it feel if someone laughed at you instead of helping you?

Around the Dinner Table

- How can our words help someone have a better day?
- What can we do when we are angry and feel like saying something hurtful?

Create Together

Encouragement Cards

You'll need:

- Paper or card
- Pens, pencils or crayons

Make a card for someone who could use some encouragement. Draw a picture and write one kind sentence inside.

Ideas:

- Thanks for helping me.
- You're a great friend.
- God loves you.

Deliver your lovely card to that person this week.



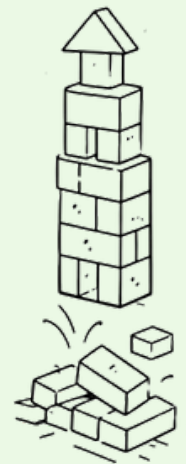
Experience Together

Build Up Challenge

You'll need:

- LEGO, blocks, cups or playing cards.

Work together to build the tallest tower you can...then KNOCK it down!



It takes time to build something, but only a moment to knock it down.

The book of James reminds us that our words are the same.

*Kind words help build people up.
Unkind words can quickly hurt someone.*

Challenge everyone to say three encouraging things to different people before the end of the day.

Pray Together

Dear Jesus, when we're angry or frustrated, help us choose kind words. Help our words show Your love every day. Amen.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Trust God

JAMES 4

Big Idea

God invites us to stay close to Him and choose His way.

Wonder Together

- If you could spend a whole day with anyone, who would you choose?
- Have you ever needed help but tried to do it yourself?



Around the Dinner Table

- What helps you remember God is always with you?
- How can our family spend time with God this week?

Experience Together

Follow the Leader

Choose one person to be the leader. Everyone else has to copy exactly what they do.

Try:

- walking
- spinning
- balancing
- dancing

Swap leaders.

Then ask:

- Was it easier to lead or follow?
- Why is following sometimes hard?



James reminds us that following Jesus means choosing His way instead of always choosing our own.

Create Together

Walking in Jesus' Footsteps

You'll need:

- Paper or card
- Pencils or crayons
- Scissors

Take turns tracing one of your shoes (or your feet) onto a piece of paper. Cut it out and decorate it to make your very own "Walking with Jesus" shoe! Inside your shoe, write or draw 3 ways you can follow Jesus this week.



When everyone has finished, line all the shoes up across the floor to make a family path.

Walk along the shoes together and let each person share one way they want to follow Jesus this week.

Pray Together

Dear God, thank You that You are always close to us. Help us follow You and remember that You are with us every day. Amen.

Keep Praying

Big Idea

We can talk to God about anything. He hears us and is always with us.

Wonder Together

- Who do you love talking to?
- If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
- Show me your favourite place to be quiet and pray.



Around the Dinner Table

- Is there anything you're worried about that we could pray for together?
- Who could we pray for this week?



Experience Together

Prayer Walk

Go for a walk around your neighbourhood. As you walk, pray for different things you see.

- Houses → Pray for the families who live there.
- Schools → Pray for teachers and students.
- Parks → Thank God for His creation.
- Cars → Pray for people to be safe.
- People you meet → Ask God to bless them.



Create Together

Prayer Paper Chain

You'll need:

- Coloured paper
- Scissors
- Glue or sticky tape
- Pens

Cut strips of paper.

On each strip, write or draw:

- someone to pray for
- something you're thankful for
- something you need God's help with

Link the strips together to make a prayer chain.



Hang it somewhere you'll see it during the week. Each day, choose one link and pray for what's written on it.

Pray Together

Dear God, thank You that we can talk to You anytime. Thank You for listening when we're happy, sad, excited or worried. Help us remember to pray every day. Amen.

