

# James – Things are not always what they seem

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## Session 1: God's rich list

**Series:** James – Things are not always what they seem

**Themes:** being in God's family, Christian's inheritance, wealth

**Bible Passage:** James 1

**Suggested age group:** 11-14's

**Session aim:** To gain an understanding of the Christian inheritance and a Godly view of wealth

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## Way in 1 - Looking at things differently

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** resource sheet 1 'Optical Illusion'

1. Give out resource sheets.
2. Discuss what pupils see in the image – some may see the word 'OPTICAL', but perhaps some will see the word 'ILLUSION' first. Have a chat about why some people saw one thing and others another. If you would like to look at other optical illusions there are loads on <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/illusion/illusions.htm>
3. Draw their attention to the verse – can anyone read what it says?
4. Comment that sometimes we have to look at things differently – things are not always what they seem.
5. Comment 2000 years ago James wrote to Christians to encourage them to view life from God's perspective. It meant having to trust God, hold their nerve and often swim against the tide. Today, we face the same sort of issues and the same challenge. Are we prepared to look at life from God's point of view?

## Way in 2 - Attitudes to wealth

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** resource sheet 2 'James 1'

1. Give out resource sheets
  - Ask pupils to complete first activity, numbering the statements between 1 and 7, with 1 being most true and 7 being least true.

## Way in 3 – Famous family names

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** the following list of names displayed on a whiteboard, flipchart or powerpoint

1. Write the following list of family names on a board or somewhere where they can be seen:
  - The Branson family (Virgin owner)
  - The Lawson family (Nigella's family)
  - The Murdoch family (Media mogul)
  - The Dyson (successful inventor)
  - The Windsor (i.e. the royal family)
  - The Abramovich family (the mega rich owner of Chelsea FC)
2. Ask the group which family they would rather be in and why, ie. what would be the obvious benefits (apart from just wealth)?

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3. Encourage tongue in cheek answers (see below) which show what the families are famous for:

- The Branson family (free air travel, cola etc)
- The Lawson family (amazing packed lunches)
- The Murdoch family (free sky subscription)
- The Dyson family (clean floors)
- The Windsor family (living in large houses, nice crowns)
- The Abramovich family (own your own football team)

4. Ask the group if they can think of any more families and their benefits?

5. Comment that in John 1:12 we read that 'to all who did accept him and believe in him, Jesus gave the right to become children of God.' Christians are those who have believed in Jesus and been given the right to become part of his family.

5. Point out that James writes about Christians being part of God's family and they need to understand what that will mean for them.

## Connecting - God's Rich List

*Time: 20 mins*

**Bible knowledge:** *limited or some*

**With:** *Bibles or resource sheet 2 'James 1'*

1. Read out James 1: 9-12. Point out the fact that James seems to have gotten things mixed up. The poor person is in a high position? The rich person is low?
2. Explain some of the background to this letter:
  - James was writing to people who knew what it was to be persecuted – they were scattered (1:1)
  - Probably Jewish believers who were under pressure.
  - They were in 'humble circumstances' (v.9)
  - Many of them will have left their family's religion to follow Jesus.
  - Some of them have left everything behind. These readers would, for the most part, be poor – materially poor.
  - Hand in hand with persecution and poverty comes a low spirit.
3. Ask the following question:
  - What sort of feelings might these Christians have about their circumstances? What might they be saying to each other when they met? (There could have been a feeling that all was lost – life was rubbish – 'what's the point of following Jesus?' They may have been suffering from low self esteem – feeling that they are worth nothing because they have nothing.)
4. Explain that James saw things differently - in the light of their circumstances James needed to remind his readers to see how God viewed them they were the 'RICH POOR' – the 'HIGH LOW'
5. Explain that:
  - Being part of God's family is one of the great themes of the Bible – people from all over the world, every background, every circumstance can be called children of God and have an inheritance laid aside if they believe in Jesus.
  - this is why we should boast, take pride in our new circumstances.
  - There is an inheritance when you are in this family - v.12 '...the crown of life.
  - Use the following verses alongside v.12 (print out or just read them out – they are on the resource sheet, 'James 1').  
1 Peter 1:3, 4; Romans 8:17

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6. Discuss with the group the differences these verses show between heavenly riches and the riches in this world? What do you think a 'crown of life' might be?
7. Explain at least some of the following points:
  - Heavenly riches are lasting, and secure
  - Our Christian inheritance is not affected by the credit crunch, falling exchange rates, varying valuations, etc. Those are consequences of not living according to God's wisdom (although the effects might be felt by Christians as well as those who don't believe)
  - Heavenly riches are ours because we are connected by faith to Jesus
  - Faith in God's promises is required to hold on
  - You have to be prepared to wait and trust that the heavenly riches are real
  - Once we are part of God's family, our difficulties do not just melt away – day to day poverty and pressure can be crippling. James knows this, that is why he says '*persevere!*'
  - It is like being in exile...you are actually a child of God, but here in this world it counts for nothing.
  - James says, 'keep going – persevere' – don't give up on who you really are and what is really yours.
  - James encourages us to take the long view - think of the receiving the crown of life.

## Responding - Help me serve God not money

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: limited or some

With: Bible passage Matthew 6:19, 20 or resource sheet 2 'James 1'

1. Encourage the group to write out and memorise these verses from Matthew 6: 19, 20 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."
2. Ask them to make the verses into short prayers each day, ie. 'Father, help me to value things you love, like fairness and kindness' and 'Father, I want to realise each day that the things around me will pass away but I can be with you forever, please help me to do this.'
3. Comment that two sets of values have been shown in this passage – those who make money 'king' and believe it is the route to happiness, and those who make God king and believe that living his way is the route to pure joy. There is a distinct choice that has to be made here.
4. Challenge the pupils, if they want to live God's way, to commit to praying these short prayers regularly.

# James

## Looking at life from God's angle

# 1

### Study 1: Who's rich and who's poor?



Number the following list 1=the most true 7=least true.

- Having lots of money will make you happier
- Having lots of money will make you healthier
- Having lots of money will make it hard to follow God
- Having lots of money will get you more friends
- Having lots of money makes you feel more safe and secure
- Having lots of money makes it easier to give it to charity
- The more money you have the better life you will have

#### James 1

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10 But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.

11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

James was writing to people who knew what it was to be persecuted - they were scattered (1:1), probably Jewish believers who were under pressure. They were in 'humble circumstances' (v.9) Hand in hand with persecution and poverty comes a low spirit. James tells them to see things from another perspective - God's!

Look at verse 12 and these verses together:

1 Peter 1:3,4;

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade kept in heaven for you.

Romans 8:17

'Now if we are children, then we are heirs heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory'

Cut this out and memorise the verses. Make the verses into short prayers.

ie. ' , ie. 'Father, help me to value things you love, like fairness and kindness'

This is what Jesus said about riches - it's from Matthew 6.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Matthew ch6 v19,20



# James

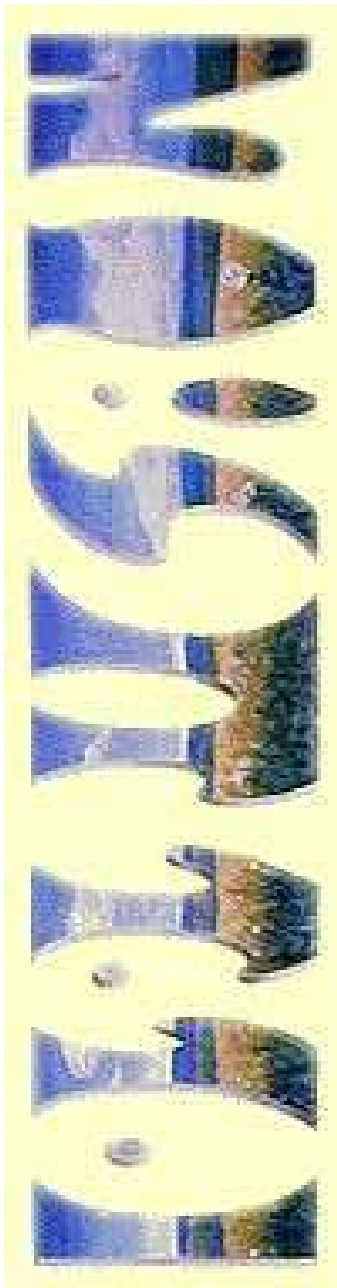
## Looking at life from God's angle

# 1

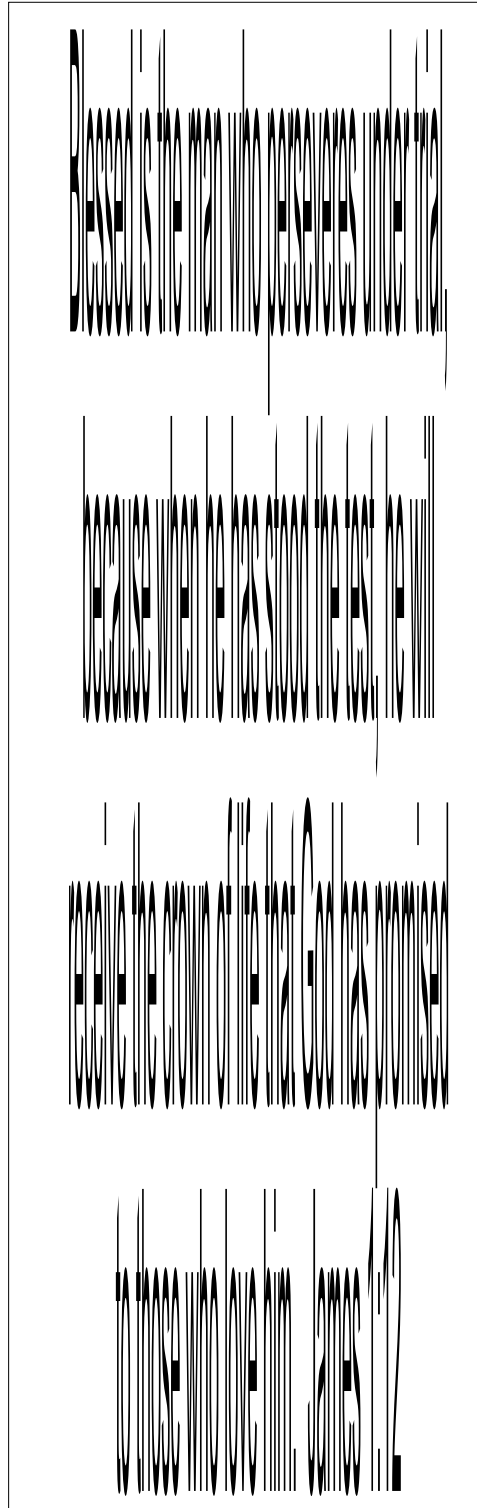
### Study 1: Who's rich and who's poor?

The book of James teaches us to view life from a different angle - from God's angle. How does God want us to look at life and how does He want us to react to the things that go on around us daily.

Here are a couple of optical illusions. Can you see what they are?



You'll need to look at this one this way up





# James – Things are not always what they seem

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|           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| Denmark   | Krone            |
| Hong Kong | Hong Kong Dollar |
| Japan     | Yen              |
| Pakistan  | Rupee            |
| Russia    | Ruble            |
| Belgium   | Euro             |
| Poland    | Zloty            |
| Iran      | Rial             |

2. Invite people to come up and draw lines between each country and its currency.

## Connecting – It's an illusion

**Time:** 20 mins

**Bible knowledge:** limited or some

**With:** Bible passage James 1:10-11 or resource sheet 2 'James 2'

1. Read the verses (comment that although these are part of the passage looked at last week, we will look in more depth at them this week.)
2. Ask the following questions:
  - What do you think James sees as the danger for the rich man?
  - 'Do you think James is saying that having wealth means you can't be a proper Christian?
  - What are the dangers for us rich Christians in the UK today? How might our money distract us from following Jesus?
  - What sort of actions would demonstrate that we have the right attitude to wealth and materialism?
3. Ask if anyone has memorised the verses from Matthew 6 from the first Bible Study in James.
4. Read out or display the following words from Matthew 6: 21&24 (on worksheet 2)  
“...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”
5. Ask: What do you think it means to serve money? (see v.24) Is this different from just having money? During the discussion the following points are important to bring out:
  - James warns his readers that riches won't last and are not worth putting their trust in. Their riches were just an illusion – it really wasn't valuable at all, it couldn't last– not through God's eyes.
  - It's hard to value something that is *not* here and now – valuing the crown of life takes faith and a belief that life with God is more valuable than things on earth.
  - Rich people will perish in the same way that all their 'stuff' perishes - in other words – you can't take it with you!
  - If we have money we may rely on that and forget to rely on God – we become self-sufficient and ungrateful
  - If we put all our trust in riches we will end up very poor indeed - no crown of life.

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## Responding 1 – Who can I help?

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Challenge the group to give some money to someone this week that they think might need it.
2. Discuss who that might be - a friend who mentions needing gloves, someone selling Big Issue, an advert on television, a charity shop you pass every day.
3. Encourage them to pray that they might get direction as to who it should be.
4. Remind them to give with a cheerful heart not through clenched teeth and to thank God they serve Him not money.
5. Discuss whether the group as a whole could give money to a particular project. (SU International may be able to give suggestions such as funding a child from a poorer country to go on an SU camp or leadership conference, providing resources for an SU group leader in a poorer country, etc.)

## Responding 2 – Taking up the challenge

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Ask the pupils if they took up the challenge from last week to pray about their attitudes to money.
2. Ask whether they have been able to keep up the commitment.
3. Have any seen any changes as a result of their prayers?
4. Challenge them to continue praying about this.



# James

## Looking at life from God's angle

# 2

### Study 2: Money can't buy me love...for God

## RICH LIST

Here's a recent top ten rich list - it's mixed up - what order should they be in?

- Jay Z
- The Police
- Angelina Jolie
- Brad Pitt
- David Beckham
- Beyonce Knowles
- Tiger Woods
- Johnny Depp
- Oprah Winfrey
- J K Rowling

James writes a lot about money and riches in his letter - since we are one of the richest countries in the world it would make sense to listen to what he has to say!

James 1

9The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

12Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.



**Here are some questions to think about:**

1. Do you think James is saying that having wealth means you can't be a proper Christian? What does he mean?
2. What are the dangers for us rich Christians in the UK today? How might our money distract us from following Jesus?
3. What sort of actions would demonstrate that we have the right attitude to wealth and materialism?

Cut this out and memorise the verses.

Make the verses into short prayers.

ie. 'Father, help me to use my money wisely'. Thank you. You rule in my life not money'

This is what Jesus said about riches - it's from Matthew 6:21, 24

"...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

What is the difference between having money and serving money (see v.24)



# James

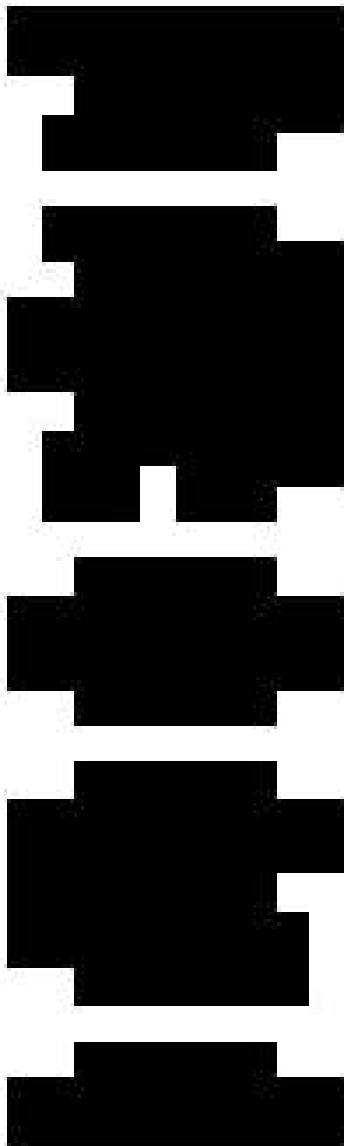
## Looking at life from God's angle

# 2

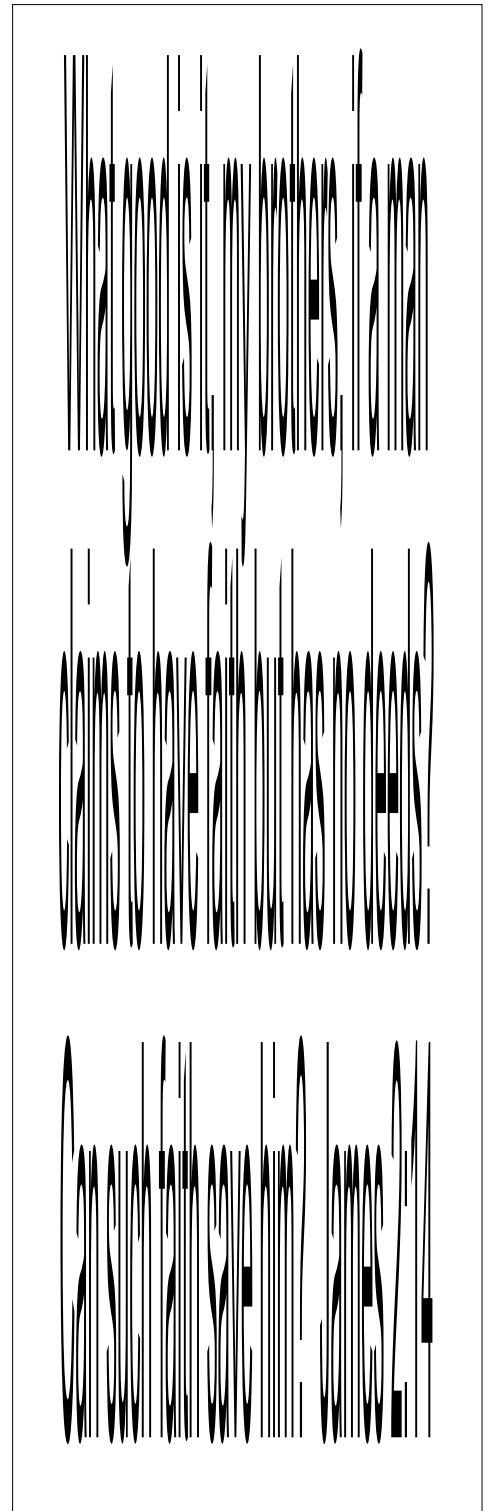
### Study 2: Money can't buy me love...for God

The book of James teaches us to view life from a different angle - from God's angle. How does God want us to look at life and how does He want us to react to the things that go on around us daily.

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# James – Things are not always what they seem

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**Session 3: God's view on how we treat others**

**Series: James – Things are not always what they seem**

**Themes: favouritism, judging others**

**Bible Passage: James 1:10-11**

**Suggested age group: 11-14's**

**Session aim: To consider how our beliefs shape our behaviour towards others**

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## Way in 1 - Looking at things differently

*Time: 5 mins*

*Bible knowledge: n/a*

*With: resource sheet 1 'Optical Illusion'*

1. Give out resource sheets.
2. Discuss what pupils see in the picture – is it a picture of an old lady or a young lady? Allow time for everyone to see both views. If you would like to look at other optical illusions there are loads on <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/illusion/illusions.htm>
3. Draw their attention to the verse – can anyone read what it says?
4. Comment that James encourages us to look at life from God's perspective, not a merely human one.

## Way in 2 – Actions speak louder than words

*Time: 10mins*

*Bible knowledge: n/a*

*With: the following list displayed on a whiteboard, flipchart or powerpoint, or copies of resource sheet 2 'James 3'*

1. Explain that they are going to think about how beliefs inspire certain actions. In other words people can see what we believe in or think highly about by what they see us do.
2. Read out the following statements and ask the group to discuss how the sentences should conclude:
  - Because I'm a Scotland Supporter, I...
  - Because I'm an animal lover, I...
  - Because I watch my weight, I don't...
  - Because I hate getting my hair wet, I...
  - Because I want to have my own teeth when I'm older, I...
  - Because I care about the environment, I...
  - Because I respect my parents, I...
  - Because I think school is boring, I...
  - Because I think God created everyone equal, I...
3. Make the point that what we believe in or are passionate about **MUST** affect our actions and attitudes.

## Way in 3 – What I believe in

*Time: 10 mins*

*Bible knowledge: some*

*With: the list below displayed on a whiteboard, flipchart or powerpoint, bibles or the following verses printed out*

1. Explain that James teaches that belief in Jesus must affect our actions and attitudes.

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2. Show the following list and ask for actions to fit the statements:
  - As someone who believes that God has forgiven me, I.....
  - As someone who believes that God has created every person in his image, I...
  - As someone who believes God is my Father, I.....
  - As someone who believes that God gives me all I need each day, I.....
3. Take feedback from the group. There may be, of course, more than one answer for each statement. (Ask pupils to read out the following verses to help the group see that the Bible is calling for a proper response in the light of what God has done for us – Phil 2:2-5; Matthew 5:21-22,43-44; Matthew 6:19 ; Matthew 7:7-11)

## Way in 4 – Everyone has a story

**Time:** 15 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** newspapers and magazines

1. Cut some photos of people out of the newspaper/magazine. It would be better if they were not people who are famous – the more obscure the better. (e.g. people in suits, workmen, hoodies, glamorous, ordinary etc.)
2. Stick each cutout onto an A4 piece of paper
3. Ask the group to write around the picture of the person a 2/3 sentence story about each person based on nothing other than what they look like. Depending on space on the sheet two or three people may write something different about the same person on different parts of the sheet.
4. Then ask how they came to their conclusions.
5. Ask which people, if they came into the room, would be more welcomed than others.

## Connecting – Actions speak louder than words

**Time:** 20 mins

**Bible knowledge:** limited

**With:** Bibles or resource sheet 2 'James 3

1. Read out James 2:14 - 'what good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Ask the group to briefly discuss what this means.
2. Comment that our passions and beliefs about everyday things make us act in certain ways. It is important to remember that Christian behaviour is based on what we believe about Jesus. It's a response to who we believe He is, how important we believe his words are and what we believe he has done for us.
3. Ask the group to each write out James 2:2-4 in their own words – putting it into the context of their own group. (This is on the resource sheet 'James 3')
4. Read James 2:1-9 together
5. Ask the group the following questions,
  - a. Why would some of the believers want to show favouritism to the rich people?
  - b. In what way were these people breaking this 'law of love'?
6. Use the following points to help with the discussion:
  - It seems that there was a tendency amongst some of the persecuted Christians to try to keep in with the rich and powerful (perhaps some of them had been rich and powerful before they were scattered (see 1:1))– to James this just seemed crazy as it was from amongst this powerful group that the persecution was coming.

# James – Things are not always what they seem

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- Showing favouritism was a sign that they didn't rely on the all powerful God – they wanted to rely on being 'in' with the powerful people.
  - James accuses those showing favouritism of breaking the 'royal law' – 'love your neighbour as yourself' (vs.8,9) This word 'Love' in the Bible suggests activity towards others which is for others' benefit, even at cost to ourselves – it's sacrificial.
  - Explain that their actions were not loving – they were self seeking.
  - As with the study 1 and 2 (God's view on money) it is so hard to think differently from the way our society thinks – and yet this is what we are called to do.
7. Discuss together:
- Is this group the most welcoming in the school?
  - How does what we know and believe about Jesus affect how we treat people in our classes, in the street, at home?
8. (Note: there is no contradiction between James with his emphasis on the practical details of Christian living, and other New Testament writers who emphasise that a relationship with God is based on what Jesus has done on the cross and accepted by faith, not our efforts. **Paul** was dealing with people who thought that they could earn God's favour by their religious good deeds, and pointed out that it is not by our "works"(=our efforts) but by faith that we have a relationship with God, but that when we have a living relationship that will lead to a changed operational lifestyle. **James** was dealing with a completely different situation, where people said that they believed in God, but it made no difference to the way in which they lived. James points out that even the demons believe that there is one God – and shudder! Accepting information without a life transforming relationship which shows in the practical details of lifestyle is not real faith at all! (James 2.14-19)

## Responding – Favourites?

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: resource sheet 2 'James 3', bible or the following verses printed out

1. Remind the group that beliefs go hand in hand with action.
2. Get them to look up the following verses, or have someone read them out:  
Genesis 1:27; John 13:34; Colossians 3:12,13
3. Ask them to complete one of the following sentences after each verse is read out.  
I believe.....so I don't have favourites  
I believe.....so I don't have favourites  
I believe.....so I don't have favourites

# James

## Looking at life from God's angle



### Study 3: Actions speak louder than words

What you believe affects your actions - people can see what we believe in or think highly about by what they see us do.

*If the following were true what would the outcomes be?*

- ⇒ Because I'm a Scotland Supporter I...
- ⇒ Because I'm an animal lover I...
- ⇒ Because I watch my weight I don't...
- ⇒ Because I hate getting my hair wet...
- ⇒ Because I want to have my own teeth when I'm older...
- ⇒ Because I care about the environment...
- ⇒ Because I respect my parents...
- ⇒ Because I think school is boring I...
- ⇒ Because I think God created everyone equal I...

James tells his readers that if they say they believe in Jesus Christ their attitudes and actions better match up!

Write out ch 2 vs 2-4 in their your words - in the context of your own group. (Use back of sheet if you need to)

#### James chapter 2

*1My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

*5Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?*

*8If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.*

*14What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

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**I believe...**  
**Why shouldn't we show favouritism? - check these verses to see God's point of view on things. Look up Gen 1:27; John 13:34; Romans 3:23; Col 3:12,13 to help you fill out the following sentences.**

I believe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ so I don't show favouritism

I believe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ so I don't show favouritism

I believe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ so I don't show favouritism

# James

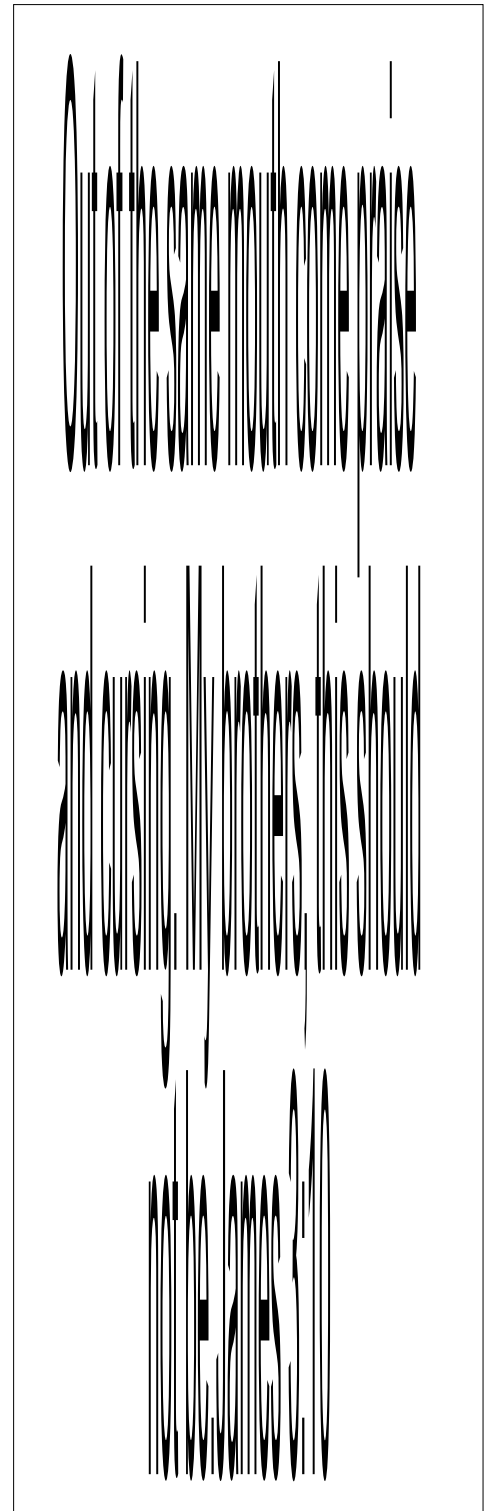
## *Looking at life from God's angle*

# 3

### Study 3: Actions speak louder than words

The book of James teaches us to view life from a different angle - from God's angle. How does God want us to look at life and how does He want us to react to the things that go on around us daily.

Here are a couple of optical illusions. Can you see what they are?





# James – Things are not always what they seem

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**Session 4: The power of the tongue**

**Series: James – Things are not always what they seem**

**Themes: words, gossip, control**

**Bible Passage: James 3:2-12**

**Suggested age group: 11-14's**

**Session aim: To consider the power for good or bad of the words we use**

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## Way in 1 - Looking at things differently

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: resource sheet 1 'Optical Illusion'

1. Give out resource sheets.
2. Discuss what pupils see in the image - some may see the word 'GOOD' but some may see the word 'EVIL'. Have a chat about why some people saw one thing and others another. If you would like to look at other optical illusions there are loads on <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/illusion/illusions.htm>
3. Draw their attention to the verse – can anyone read what it says?
4. Comment that James encourages us to look at life from God's perspective, not a merely human one.

## Way in 2 – Animal Training

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Ask the group what animal displays they have been to.(ie. Circus, wildlife parks, safari)
2. What animals were involved?
3. What was impressive about the displays?
4. Are there any animals they think are untameable? (Bring out the fact that huge whales can be trained to jump; wild animals, like lions and tigers can be tamed and made to cower; eagles can kill their prey and then land gently on their master's arm)

## Way in 3 – Sticks and Stones?

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: the following list written on a whiteboard, flipchart or powerpoint, or copies of resource sheet 2 'James 4'

1. 1. Display the following list and
  - 'Check your shoes, they're totally lame!'
  - 'I like your jacket'
  - 'What happened to your hair – you look ridiculous'
  - 'Well done'
  - 'I love you'
  - 'You know you can call anytime if you need help'
  - 'That's hopeless, pass me the ball next time'
  - 'Go away'



# James – Things are not always what they seem

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2. Ask the group to discuss which is the most powerful, which would have the most effect on a person, either good or bad.

## Way in 4 – Horses

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** video clips of horses (from Youtube)

1. Take a clip from You Tube of horse show jumping or a dressage clip from the Olympics.
2. Sum up this illustration with these words:  
A horse can sit with a 500 pounds on its back and hardly snort. Unburdened it can sprint a quarter of a mile in 25 secs. A half ton of power! Yet, a young person could sit on its back and make it dance with a bridle and bit in its mouth.
3. Explain that they will be looking at something which James said could never be tamed by people.

## Connecting – Watch your mouth!

**Time:** 15 mins

**Bible knowledge:** limited

**With:** Bible passage James 3:2-12 or resource sheet 2 'James 4'

1. Introduce the topic: 'Seeing things from God's angle: This time James points out that what we thought was one of the smaller parts of the body packs quite a punch'
2. Read through the verses again – if someone can read it dramatically that would be great.
3. Comment 'Could James be any more graphic and powerful in his presentation of just how destructive the tongue can be? James calls us to think carefully about what we say and how we say it'
4. Emphasise James' teaching about the small spark starting a fire by reading this quote from Kent Hughes:  
*'At 9.00am one Sunday morning, October 8, 1871, poor Mrs O'Leary's cow kicked over the lantern as she was being milked, starting the great Chicago Fire, which blackened three and one half miles of the city, destroying over 17,000 buildings before it was checked by gun powder explosions on the south line of the fire. The fire lasted two days and cost over 250 lives.'*
5. In twos or threes look at James ch3:2-12 - note down and discuss what James teaches about the tongue:
  - 1) How is it described? What words show how destructive it can be? (look for answers for the first question: 'a fire, corrupts, world of evil, restless evil, poison. The second question: the image of water and the trees revealing what type of source or plant they are.)
  - 2) How does James show that what we say shows what the 'real us'? (v9-12)
6. Allow time to feedback into the group.
7. Summarise by reading verses 9-12. Emphasise 'This should not be'. In study 2 we looked at how what we believe must affect our behaviour (see ch2:1 ie. 'As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ don't show favouritism'.)
8. Ask for suggestions for a similar statement based on ch3:10.  
'As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ...'

# James – Things are not always what they seem

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## Responding – Untameable?

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited or some*

**With:** *Bible, pens, paper*

1. Look again at James 2:8. Point out that as we realise that the tongue is untameable it should drive us to God to ask for help.
2. Ask the group to write down an honest prayer to God about way they speak to people and about people. Ask for help. Ask for forgiveness.

# James

## Looking at life from God's angle

# 4

### Study 4: Watch your mouth!

Read the list below - which phrase is the most powerful and which would have the most effect on a person, either good or bad?

- ♦ 'Check your shoes, they're totally lame!'
- ♦ 'I like your jacket'
- ♦ 'What happened to your hair - you look ridiculous'
- ♦ 'Well done'
- ♦ 'I love you'
- ♦ 'You know you can call anytime if you need help'
- ♦ 'That's hopeless, pass me the ball next time'
- ♦ 'Go away'

#### James chapter 3

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.

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.



Look James ch3:3-12 - note down and discuss what James teaches about the tongue:  
1) How is it described?  
What words show how destructive it can be?

2) What image does James use to show us that what we say reveals the 'real us'?

#### *'This should not be'.*

In study 2 we looked at how what we believe must affect our behaviour (see ch2:1 ie. 'As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ don't show favouritism'.) Finish off a similar statement based on 3:10.

'As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ...'

.....

.....

.....

As we realise that the tongue is untameable by people it should drive us to God to ask for help. Speak to God honestly about way you speak to people and about people.  
Ask for help. Ask for forgiveness.

# James

## Looking at life from God's angle

# 4

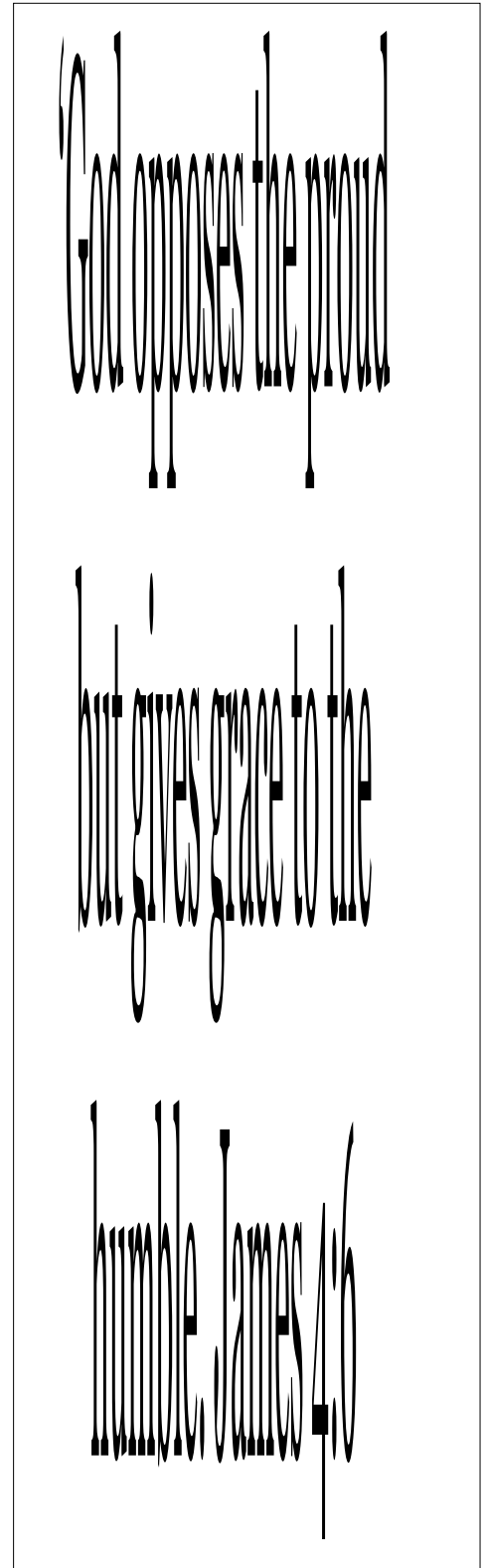
### Study 4: Watch your mouth!

The book of James teaches us to view life from a different angle - from God's angle. How does God want us to look at life and how does He want us to react to the things that go on around us daily.

Here are a couple of optical illusions. Can you see what they are?



You'll need to look at this one this way up



# James – Things are not always what they seem

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**Session 5: What are we relying on?**

**Series: James – Things are not always what they seem**

**Themes: relying on material possessions, trust in God**

**Bible Passage: James 4;13 – 5:9**

**Suggested age group: 11-14's**

**Session aim: To examine the depth of our trust in God**

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## Way in 1 - Looking at things differently

**Time: 5 mins**

**Bible knowledge: n/a**

**With: resource sheet 1 'Optical Illusion'**

1. Give out resource sheets.
2. Discuss what pupils see in the image - some may see the word 'ME' but some may see the word 'YOU'. Have a chat about why some people saw one word first. If you have time give out some paper and see if the group can create their own illusions.
3. If you would like to look at other optical illusions there are loads on <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/illusion/illusions.htm>
4. Draw their attention to the verse – can anyone read what it says?
5. Comment that James encourages us to look at life from God's perspective, not a merely human one.

## Way in 2 – It can't sink!

**Time: 5 mins**

**Bible knowledge: n/a**

**With: A clip from 'Titanic'**

1. Ask the group, 'What sorts of things did the chief engineer see as he walked around the ship?' 'What did he realise as he saw people getting on with their partying?' (Look for answers which pick up on the fact that people were carrying on as if everything was fine – didn't take warnings seriously – thought they were untouchable)

## Way in 3 – Up-to-date? (1)

**Time: 5 mins**

**Bible knowledge: n/a**

**With: various 'old fashioned' items (Items such as, vinyl LPs, cassettes, 8 track, old mobile, clothes from another era, pictures showing old hair styles or old cars)**

1. Bring in some items which are unfashionable. If you can ask the group to bring in things before hand the discussion will go better. (Items such as, vinyl LPs, cassettes, 8 track, old mobile, clothes from another era, pictures showing old hair styles or old cars)
2. Discuss how things which seemed to be so up to date and cool very quickly are worthless or embarrassing.

# James – Things are not always what they seem

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## Way in 4 – Up-to-date? (2)

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: : the following list written on a whiteboard, flipchart or powerpoint, or copies of resource sheet 2 'James 5'

1 What are the up-to-date versions of these items?

- Sony Walkman (ipod)
- Beta Videos (blu ray)
- Ford Escort (Ford Focus)
- Liberal Party (Lib Dems)
- ZX spectrum (Windows Vista)
- Atari Console (Wii or PS3)
- Wireless Radio (Digital Radio)

## Connecting – What do you rely on?

Time: 15 mins

Bible knowledge: limited

With: Bibles or resource sheet 2 'James 2'

1. Read the James 4:13- 5:3  
Ask the following questions:
  - Do you think James is warning people against making any plans for the future?
  - If so, what about holidays, exams, weddings?
  - Do you think James is being unfairly harsh to rich people?
  - What do you think is the main point from this passage?
2. Print off for each person (on James Worksheet 5) or read out the following quote from John Dickson's book *'If I were God I'd make myself clearer'*.  
'...this makes me wonder how the Creator...feels about being replaced in the hearts of men and women by mere created things. We often think that what upsets God most are our individual vices – swearing, getting drunk, illicit sex and so on – but one of the grand themes of the Bible is that God is disturbed most by the way human beings suppress their hunches about his presence in favour of an approach to life that pretends he is not there after all; knowing were mortal but living as if we're immortal; agreeing there's more to life than material possessions but settling for them all the same. This...is at the heart of what the Bible means by that unnerving theological term 'sin'.
3. Take a few minutes to discuss this quote with the group, asking: 'What sort of things do we do (or not do) that show we are living as if God doesn't and this world is all there is?'
4. Read out Luke 17:26,27 (see James worksheet 5) Ask what the connection is between the John Dickson quote and the words of Jesus here.  
Point out that there is nothing wrong with marriage or having meals. Jesus was making the point that people in Noah's day lived without listening to God and never considered that things would come to an end.
5. If you have used the Titanic illustration comment on how it wasn't that there was necessarily anything sinful happening on the boat – but the point was that people lived as if nothing could happen or would happen to them – they trusted in their lavish lifestyles and relied on the protection of their wealth.

# James – Things are not always what they seem

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## Responding – Depending on God alone

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Briefly talk about this quote (on James worksheet 5):  
‘But the essence of prayer is the expression of our dependence on God through requests’ John Piper.  
It is encouraging Christians to see prayer as a way to express how their confidence is in God rather than boasting (4:16) in their own talents or bank balance.
2. Encourage the group to think about this quote during the week and to pray in a way which acknowledges that God gives them all they need throughout the week.

# James

## Looking at life from God's angle

# 5

### Study 5: What are we relying on?

**James warns of the dangers of putting confidence in things that are here and now - and putting trust in our own abilities. Why do we put so much time into things that will just rot away?**

**What are the up-to-date versions of these items?**

- Sony Walkman \_\_\_\_\_
- Beta Videos \_\_\_\_\_
- Ford Escort \_\_\_\_\_
- Liberal Party \_\_\_\_\_
- ZX spectrum \_\_\_\_\_
- Atari Console \_\_\_\_\_
- Wireless Radio \_\_\_\_\_
- Post \_\_\_\_\_



James 4. 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." 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. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

James 5. Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 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.

**'But the essence of prayer is the expression of our dependence on God through requests'**

This quote from John Piper encourages Christians to see prayer as a way to express that their confidence is in God rather than boasting (4:16) in their own talents or bank balance.

How will you pray this week?

'...this makes me wonder how the Creator...feels about being replaced in the hearts of men and women by mere created things. We often think that what upsets God most are our individual vices swearing, getting drunk, illicit sex and so on but one of the grand themes of the Bible is that God is disturbed most by the way human beings suppress their hunches about his presence in favour of an approach to life that pretends he is not there after all; knowing were mortal but living as if we're immortal; agreeing there's more to life than material possessions but settling for them all the same. This...is at the heart of what the Bible means by that unnerving theological term 'sin'.

John Dickson's book *'If I were God I'd make myself clearer'*.

What sort of things do we do (or not do) that show we are living as if God doesn't exist And that this world is all there is?

Luke 17:26,27

Just as it was in the days of Noah so also it will be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

Can you see a connection between Jesus' comment and the article above?



# James

## *Looking at life from God's angle*

5

### Study 5: What are we relying on?

The book of James teaches us to view life from a different angle - from God's angle. How does God want us to look at life and how does He want us to react to the things that go on around us daily.

Here are a couple of optical illusions. Can you see what they are?

