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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Letters of Sts. James, Peter, and Jude

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THE LETTER OF SAINT JAMES

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:5.** To what does *wisdom* refer? To whom is it given?
2. **1:8.** Who is the “double-minded” person? How does such a person relate to God? What effect does double-mindedness have on prayer?
3. **1:13.** What difference is there between a testing from God and a temptation? If God does not tempt us to sin, what does draw us into sin?
4. **1:19–25.** What activity characterizes the two types of hearing that James mentions here?

For application

1. **1:2–4.** What does it mean for faith to be *tested*? How might suffering produce steadfastness? What is the worst suffering you have ever experienced, and what was your response to it?
2. **1:5–8.** If you ask for wisdom, how long do you think it might take for that prayer to be answered? According to the note on 1:5, for what are you really asking? Why do you think someone might not want the wisdom that God offers or be only half-hearted in asking for it? By contrast, why do you think God would be eager to answer that prayer?
3. **1:19–20.** How do you handle yourself during disagreements and quarrels? How quickly do you get angry, and how do you manage your speech and actions when you do? How can you use a disagreement so as to “work the righteousness of God”?
4. **1:22–27.** If, as Paul says in Rom 10:17, faith comes by hearing, how is faith strengthened by action? Why would James say (in v. 26) that an unbridled tongue deceives the heart and renders religion vain?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Assembly (2:2).** To what can the Greek word *synagōgē* refer here? To what does it refer in the Greek OT? Where were synagogues built? For what were they used?
2. **2:8.** What is the “royal law”? To what does the precept of Lev 19:18 refer, and what is its significance in the Torah? What other allusions does James make to Lev 19 in his letter?
3. **2:18.** What is the teaching style called “diatribe”? What assumption can we *not* make from James’ use of the diatribe technique?
4. **Topical Essay: Faith and Works.** How does what James presents to readers of the Bible differ from what Paul says on the subject of faith, works, and justification? How might we account for those differences? What do many scholars believe James is trying to refute when he insists on the necessity of works in the Christian life?

For application

1. **2:1–7.** How do you behave when the opportunity arises to meet someone famous or

wealthy? What association do you have with the poor? Of the two, whose company do you prefer? According to Scripture, what advantages do the poor have that the rich lack?

2. **2:12–13.** How would you describe the “law of liberty” (v. 12)? How would you reconcile the paradoxes in these verses—that is, of *liberty* as related to *law*, of *judgment* as related to *liberty*, and of *merciless* judgment under that law? To whose mercy does v. 13 refer as setting the standard of judgment?
3. **2:14–18.** To illustrate the necessity of putting faith to work, James mentions an opportunity for service that confronts a person unbidden. What similar situations have you faced in the last year? How did you address the need you observed? Granted that no one can meet the needs of everyone who comes along, how do you decide which ones you can—and will—meet?
4. **2:19–23.** James distinguishes between dead faith and active faith. Which was Abraham’s? How might Abraham’s example apply to difficult decisions you face? For example, how much do you trust God for your family’s welfare?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** For what do Christian educators bear great responsibility? Why are they at greater risk than most people? What should restrain them from uttering careless words?
2. **3:6.** Of what is the tongue a microcosm? What does James mean by the “cycle of nature”?
3. **3:9.** What contradicts our use of the tongue in worship? What does our cursing do to our relationship with the Father?
4. **3:13–18.** What is the subject of these verses? What is the state of the teacher who claims to be wise but is ruled by jealousy and selfish ambition? What does true wisdom do? How is it manifested?

For application

1. **3:1–5.** When have you taught or given advice that you thought was good but that resulted in something unfortunate? What responsibility did you take for the consequences of what you said? What responsibility *should* you have taken?
2. **3:8–10.** Examine what you say as it affects those closest to you. On the one hand, how often do you criticize, call names, express anger or irritability, or joke at their expense? On the other hand, how often do you praise, compliment, or express approval of and delight in your family members? Which of the two patterns predominates?
3. **3:13–16.** What is the difference between wisdom and shrewdness or cunning? Which description would you apply to someone who uses others to get ahead, advertises his own abilities, flatters, is insincere, or tells stories about others’ stupidity? What effect on relationships does such behavior have?
4. **3:17–18.** Now ask the same questions about the sort of wisdom James describes in these verses. Whom do you know who acts this way? How might you learn to act this way?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:4.** What is the literal meaning behind the translation “unfaithful creatures”? For what do the Prophets use this epithet? For what does James use it? How does friendship with the world contrast with Abraham’s friendship with God?
2. **4:5.** Where is this saying found in the OT? According to the RSV translation, of what is God intolerant? What would an alternative translation be, and what meaning would it give the saying?
3. **4:8.** By inviting them to “Draw near to God”, what is James calling his readers to do? Why does he tell them to cleanse their hands?
4. **4:11.** In what two kinds of speech are believers forbidden to engage? What is the difference between them? Why is such behavior injurious? To what OT passage does James probably allude?

For application

1. **4:3.** Since prayer goes unanswered when we ask wrongly, what is the right way to ask for something? How appropriate is it for you to ask God for something specific, such as for a job? How can you ask “rightly” for something that satisfies a need of your own?
2. **4:4.** Refer to the note for this verse. How might friendship with the world show itself in your own life? What impact has it had on your relationship with God as you experience that relationship now (for example, on your prayer life)?
3. **4:7.** How seriously do you take the existence of the devil? How would you recognize the devil’s influence in your life? How do you resist the devil?
4. **4:17.** Look up paragraph 1853 in the *Catechism* on sins of omission. What are some of your own failures—especially consistent or habitual failures—to do what you should do? Have you repented of these failures? If your failure has caused trouble for someone else, have you tried to repair the damage?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:3.** To what does the expression “last days” refer? What can the world expect at the end of the last days? What were the rich doing for themselves before the last days?
2. **5:7.** To what does the expression “the coming of the Lord” refer here? Of what might the image of the Judge “standing at the doors” (5:9) be an echo? What is the background for James’ reference to the early and late rains?
3. **5:14.** What could oil be used for in Jewish antiquity? How did the Council of Trent interpret this verse of James? What is the purpose of this anointing? Where in the Gospels do we find a hint of the institution of this sacrament?
4. **Word Study: Elders (5:14).** What are some of the meanings of the word “elder” in Jewish tradition? What did the word mean in first-century Judaism? How is this usage carried over into Christian tradition?

For application

1. **5:1–6.** How have you used your personal resources—such as money, influence, talent, or time—for the benefit of others? How might you seek God’s wisdom to learn

how you should use your resources?

2. **5:12.** How well would your friends say you keep the promises you make? How reliable are you in fulfilling your commitments? Since reliability or faithfulness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Gal 5:22), how might you improve in this respect?
3. **5:13–16.** How willingly do you ask others to pray for you when you are ill? How willing are you to request the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in case of serious illness? How regularly do you use the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
4. **5:19–20.** Have you ever wandered away from the practice of the faith? If so, what did friends or relatives do to call you back to it? If you know of anyone who has strayed, what have you done to help bring him back?

THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PETER

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:2.** What three aspects of redemption does Peter coordinate with the three Persons of the Trinity? What rites of the OT does the expression “sprinkling with . . . blood” recall? What does this OT background anticipate in Peter’s letter?
2. **Word Study: Born Anew (1:3).** For Peter, what does the rebirth of Jesus from the dead give believers? What idea is Peter trying to communicate? What benefits does he have in mind?
3. **1:13.** What is Peter calling his readers to do, here? To what did the expression “gird up” originally refer?
4. **1:19.** What did Ex 12:5 stipulate about the Passover lamb? How does Peter apply this stipulation to Jesus? What Passover traditions does Peter seem to have in mind?

For application

1. **1:3–5.** What do you think Peter means by a “living hope”? What is the difference between hope in this sense and wish fulfillment? What is the cause of this hope, according to Peter?
2. **1:13.** Where does Peter want you to focus your hope? In speaking of the “revelation of Jesus Christ”, is Peter speaking of a future event or an ongoing one? If the latter, how do you recognize it?
3. **1:14–17.** What is the model of conduct that Peter proposes here? How can you conduct yourself according to it, given the circumstances of your life? What do you think Peter means by telling you to “conduct” yourself “with fear”? (Hint: Reflect on the biblical meaning of “fear of the Lord”.)
4. **1:20–21.** How does the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead become a source of confidence, faith, and hope for you? Without subscribing to a doctrine of “eternal security” (“once saved, always saved”), how can you still be confident of your salvation?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:6–8.** What three OT texts does Peter assemble that refer to a messianic “stone”? What point does each make? Who else makes similar use of these passages?
2. **2:10.** To whom was the prophet originally speaking in Hos 2:23? What context did Hosea have in mind? How does this relate to the ingathering of the nations through the proclamation of the gospel?
3. **2:12.** What is the “day of visitation”? How is this expression used in the Bible? How did Jesus use it?
4. **2:17.** Who was ruling Rome at the time of Peter’s writing? What importance does the exhortation to “honor the emperor” have for the dating of Peter’s letter? Explain.

For application

1. **2:1.** How do sins such as envy, insincerity, and slander offend against “obedience to the truth” and a “sincere love of the brethren”, to which Peter refers in 1:22? To which of these three sins do you find yourself most frequently tempted?
2. **2:9–10.** Whether you are a ministerial priest or a member of the laity (exercising the “priesthood of the faithful”), what does the fact of your priesthood mean to you? How do you exercise it? What kinds of “spiritual sacrifice” (see v. 5 above) do you offer?
3. **2:13–17.** What is your involvement in the political process? For example, do you take advantage of your right to vote? What is your attitude toward the police? Do you express disagreement with government policies? If so, in what way? Why should a Christian obey traffic laws?
4. **2:18–25.** What kinds of on-the-job (or in-the-home) suffering do you most frequently face? What responses do you give to colleagues or family members who criticize, manipulate, or impose on you? How do you use that suffering as a way of following in Christ’s steps?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** What kind of submission does Peter envision for Christian wives? What is the social context within which he gives this counsel? How does Peter’s instruction on the subject compare with Paul’s?
2. **3:7.** What does Peter recommend to husbands? What point is Peter making in referring to women as the weaker sex? What might cause a husband’s prayers to go unanswered?
3. **Topical Essay: Christ and “the Spirits in Prison”.** What are some of the different ways 1 Pet 3:18–20 has been interpreted over the centuries? Summarize the interpretation offered in the essay. What modern discovery paved the way for this new understanding of the passage?
4. **3:21.** What does this verse affirm about Baptism? Explain the correspondence between the biblical flood and the Sacrament of Baptism. What makes it certain that Peter is referring to water Baptism? How might he also be alluding to circumcision?

For application

1. **3:1–6.** What is the difference between *manipulating* one’s spouse and *influencing*

one's spouse? In what ways might one overtly or subtly manipulate one's spouse so as to get what one wants? How might a "gentle and quiet spirit" be more in line with the respect proper to the marriage relationship? What does Peter want one spouse to influence (as opposed to manipulate) the other spouse to do?

2. **3:7.** What are some of the ways one might *dishonor* one's spouse (for example, by criticizing weaknesses)? What are some of the ways one might show honor? What is the relationship between honor and respect for one's spouse and the way one prays?
3. **3:8–12.** What is a tattletale? How do adults behave as tattletales? Have you ever retaliated against others in the way you speak about them? Even if you are "just telling it the way it is", how does that contribute to peace with the person to whom—or about whom—you are talking?
4. **3:21.** What difference does it make to you whether you are baptized or not? What *practical* difference does Baptism make in your life? For example, what effect does your Baptism have on the state of your conscience?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:3.** What does Peter urge his readers to shun? What might their efforts to live upright and holy lives cause? Why?
2. **4:6.** What is implied by the RSV translation of this verse? How else might this verse be translated? What difference would this make at the level of interpretation?
3. **4:8.** What is the source of the passage Peter quotes? What two effects does it contrast?
4. **4:17.** To what might the expression "household of God" allude? How does St. Bede understand the reference to "judgment" in this verse?

For application

1. **4:3–5.** Has your conversion or your ongoing life in Christ caused or provoked the breakup of personal relationships? What have you done to restore them? If the results have not been successful, what do you think God wants you to do next?
2. **4:8–11.** Of the gifts (charisms) Peter mentions here, which do you think you exercise? What are the reasons Peter gives for exercising charisms?
3. **4:12–14.** The "fiery ordeal" of which Peter speaks may take any number of forms. What form has suffering for the name of Christ taken in your life? If you do not think you have suffered for your faith, how might you support those who have? How might you prepare for the possibility of some form of suffering in the future?
4. **4:17–19.** How might it be a benefit for the Church to have judgment begin with her? What verdict do you think God might pronounce, and with what result? As a member of the Church, do you think God's judgment should apply to you?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1.** Who are the "elders" Peter is addressing? What does their pastoral authority include, and from where do they derive it? What does Peter warn them about?

Explain how Peter's authority is both like and unlike theirs.

2. **5:5.** What must the flock entrusted to the elders do? About what does the citation from Prov 3:34 speak? How does Peter use it in this context?
3. **5:8.** Who is the unseen perpetrator of Christian persecution? What did the image of a lion mean to people in the ancient world?
4. **5:13.** Who is "she" in this verse? To what does the name "Babylon" refer? Who is the Mark mentioned by Peter?

For application

1. **5:2–3.** What responsibilities do you have for the activities or welfare of others, such as in a family, church group, or social or service organization? To what extent might your exercise of responsibility be characterized by constraint or a desire for gain (financial or otherwise) or for control?
2. **5:5.** What is your understanding of humility? As one under authority, how do you exercise humility in your relationship with those over you?
3. **5:7.** How are anxiety and trust opposed to one another? About what areas of life do you tend to be most anxious (such as your health, your relationships, your career)? What does it mean for you to "cast" your anxieties on God? How do you do that?
4. **5:8–11.** About what kind of attacks by the devil do you think Peter is talking here? Assuming the devil's attacks take the form of some kind of suffering, how might you be watchful and resist him?

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PETER

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:4.** What is the aim of Christian living, according to this verse? What does Peter mean by saying that we are "partakers of the divine nature"? How does Paul describe this participation in God's life? On what truth is this doctrine grounded?
2. **1:20.** Who is able to interpret the meaning of OT prophecies? How is this proper understanding communicated to the Christian faithful?
3. **Word Study: Moved (1:21).** How is the term translated "carry", "bring", or "move" used in the New Testament? How does Peter use it here? How does he apply it to the inspiration of the Prophets?
4. **1:21.** What does Peter affirm about prophetic inspiration? What might Peter's stress on this point suggest about his concerns? What, for example, did the Ebionites believe?

For application

1. **1:3.** According to this verse, what resources do you have to become a saint? What does "knowledge of him" mean?
2. **1:5–9.** How do the characteristics in vv. 5–7 build on one another? According to v. 8, what makes you an effective disciple of Christ? According to v. 9, what makes you an ineffective disciple? How many of these characteristics do you think you need, and how might you acquire them?

3. **1:16–18.** What ensures that Christianity is a historically based religion? How can you be sure that the claims about Jesus Christ are true? Why would you still need faith, even if all the details of Jesus' life could be historically and scientifically verified?
4. **1:20–21.** If “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation”, how are you to apply Scripture to your daily life? How might the Church's interpretation of Scripture help you in doing this? Why is it a good idea to spend some time in prayer both before and after reading Scripture?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1–22.** In these verses, about what does Peter warn Christians? From what other work, according to scholars, is Peter drawing in these verses? Does the answer have any bearing on the authorship of the letter?
2. **2:1.** Give some possible meanings of the Greek term *hairesis*. What does Peter have in mind?
3. **2:4.** To what is the reference to “the angels” probably an allusion? What does “hell” mean here? What OT background does Peter seem to have in mind?
4. **2:15.** What is “the way of Balaam”? To what incident in Numbers does this expression refer? In what way is the figure of Balaam a prototype of Peter's opponents?

For application

1. **2:1–3.** What is heresy? Why does Scripture consider heresy destructive? How might heresy be allied with “licentiousness”? Can you think of any examples?
2. **2:4–10.** What kinds of sinful behavior are included in the examples Peter provides in these verses? (Hint: Look at v. 10.) Why do you think he singles these out for special condemnation? For example, what kinds of damage can they do to a community or a parish?
3. **2:11–16.** Peter now turns his attention to those who *actively revile* authority (not merely despise it). What sins does he connect with persons who revile proper authority? Why these? Following up on the previous question, what kinds of damage can such sins do to a community or a parish?
4. **2:19–21.** What kinds of freedom do licentious people promise? What do they actually deliver? Why would it be better for such people never “to have known the way of righteousness” than to have embraced righteousness and then to have turned their backs on it?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:3–5.** Who are the “scoffers” in these verses, and what is the target of their skepticism? What argument do they produce to prove that the apparent delay in Christ's return will never happen? How does Peter answer it?
2. **3:8–13.** What does Peter foresee in these verses? To what is it a prelude? Why did the Prophets often paint scenes of cosmic disaster, and what are some examples? How does Peter use apocalyptic language differently from the Prophets?

3. **3:10.** For Peter, what is the “day of the Lord”? How is this expression used in the OT? What does the simile “like a thief” actually mean, and from where does it come?
4. **3:16.** What do some interpreters think about the “letters” of Paul mentioned here? Is there sufficient evidence to support the claim? Who, especially, might be liable to misinterpret Paul’s letters? Explain.

For application

1. **3:3–4.** Have you ever faced the temptation to become one of the “scoffers” about whom Peter is talking? Have you ever entertained doubts about the Second Coming of Jesus? For example, do you respond with hope or with cynicism when reminded that Jesus will come soon?
2. **3:8–9.** How does the Lord’s sense of time apply to the way you view events in your own life? If, as Peter suggests, the Lord is willing to take time with you, how willing are you to allow him time, even if it means temporary suffering?
3. **3:11–12.** How can the holiness of the Church—which includes your own holiness—hasten the coming of the Lord? How much do you *want* that coming to be hastened?
4. **3:18.** Since Peter’s encouragement to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of God follows his warning not to be taken in by misinterpretations of Scripture—especially of St. Paul, who is the subject of much ideological dispute nowadays—what can you do to avoid being misled? How would a sound reading of St. Paul in particular help you to grow in grace and knowledge?

THE LETTER OF SAINT JUDE

For understanding

1. **v. 3.** Explain what Jude means by “the faith” in this context. What does it mean to say that the faith was delivered “once for all”?
2. **v. 4.** Who were the false teachers targeted by Jude? To what does the word “designated” refer? What is *antinomianism*, and how does this term apply to the perpetrators about whom Jude is talking?
3. **v. 9.** Who is the archangel Michael? From where does the story of the dispute between Michael and the devil come? When a biblical writer quotes from a non-biblical book, what is he *not* endorsing or implying? Generally speaking, why are non-biblical sources used in the Bible? Where in the Old Testament is a similar rebuke to Satan uttered?
4. **Word Study: Blemishes (v. 12).** To what can the Greek word here translated as “blemishes” refer? How does it relate to 2 Pet 2:13? To what may it refer in Jude’s context?
5. **vv. 14–15.** How do many ancient traditions describe the figure of Enoch? With what do these verses credit Enoch? What effect did this non-biblical citation have on the canonical status of Jude’s letter? How were misgivings about it laid to rest?

For application

1. **v. 3.** What does “to contend for the faith” mean to you? How prepared are you to contend for it, especially in an environment where the faith is ignored, relativized, ridiculed, or considered outdated or unimportant?

2. **vv. 6–7.** How seriously do you take the Church’s belief in the existence of demons and of an eternal hell? Assuming that heaven can begin even here on earth, how might hell also begin here? If either doctrine in the “faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3) causes a problem for you, what is the nature of the problem, and what are you doing to resolve it?
3. **vv. 8–10.** What association have you had with others who reject or revile authority? How has your own attitude to Church authority developed, especially concerning any teaching or issue you may have had trouble accepting? Where do you stand in relation to it now?
4. **vv. 20–21.** What does it mean to “pray in the Holy Spirit”? What does such prayer have to do with building yourself up in faith and keeping yourself in the love of God?