



NT5313 General Letters

Prerequisites: None

Martin Culy, PhD
Winter 2018 – March 5-9 module
at Horizon College and Seminary, Saskatoon

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3 credit hours

About the Instructor

Marty Culy is the Director of Cypress Hills Ministries and has been a Bible translator, college and seminary professor, pastor, and church planter over the past 30 years. He is the founding editor of the Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament commentary series and has authored many articles and eight books, the most recent being *The Book of Revelation: The Rest of the Story* published in October 2017. Marty graduated from California State University Fresno (B.A.), University of North Dakota (M.A.), Grace Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and Baylor University (Ph.D.).

Course Description

The course focuses on the New Testament books of James, 1 and 2 Peter; and Jude. These letters, called General Epistles, give a picture of the challenges early Christians faced in the Roman Empire. Each letter reflects a distinct situation and has its own message; but the General Letters as a group also provide a voice that stands beside the Pauline Letters. Challenges addressed in the General Letters involve issues of ethics in the church community, warnings to believers against the influence of false teachers, and the call to persevere in the faith.

Course Texts

Blomberg, Craig L. and Mariam J. Kamell. *James*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
Davids, Peter. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
Jobes, Karen. *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Course Objectives

Students will demonstrate familiarity with:

- a) The main themes of James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude;
- b) The interpretive challenges in these books and how they might be resolved;
- c) The theology and message of these letters to their original audiences and in the context of the first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish world; and
- d) How these books should shape the belief system and lives of followers of Jesus today.

Course Outline / Class Schedule

Date	Topics	Workshops/Presentations
Monday, March 5	Introduction to the General Epistles Whole Counsel of God Preaching & Teaching 1 Peter 1—Preaching and Exegesis Leading a Small Group James 1—Small Group Style	Workshop: WCGPT Workshop: Small Group Questions
Tuesday, March 6	1 Peter 2-5	
Wednesday, March 7	James 2–5	
Thursday, March 8	2 Peter 1-3	SGs: James 4:13 –5:20
Friday, March 9	Jude	SGs: James 4:13 –5:20 Sermons: 1 Peter

Course Work

Use the *Horizon Format Guide* (rev Sept 2017) for setting up your assignments. It is available on the course website.

BEFORE THE MODULE

1. Reading and Research

- Carefully read through James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude at least two times each.
- As you read, make a list of at least six questions related to *each* of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter that arise as you read these books, and at least two questions related to Jude (*a minimum of 20 questions in total*). What don't you understand in these letters that you would like to check in a commentary? For example: "How does the person's actions in James 5:20 'cover a multitude of sins'?" This part of the assignment only requires you to

think carefully as you read and notice features of the biblical text that are not clear to you.

- Use the commentaries by Blomberg/Kamell, Jobes, and Davids to find answers to your choice of *ten* questions from your list, with at least two questions coming from each book. Submit your questions and a *very brief* summary of the answers you found in the commentaries on the first day of class.

Length: 4 pages maximum

Due Date: March 5, 2018

DURING THE MODULE (March 5-9, 2018)

2. Preaching or Teaching 1

Towards the end of the module week you will practice exegetical and ministry skills you have learned for *either* preaching a portion of a passage from 1 Peter *or* leading a small group discussion on a portion of a passage from James. These assignments will be discussed and modeled on the first day of class and each class member will choose or be assigned a passage. Make use of class notes, commentaries, and other resources for this assignment.

Sermon Option.

Prepare a mini-sermon (10 to 15 minutes in length) on a portion of 1 Peter. Follow the process that is described on the first day of class. Content and spiritual edification are more important than a “polished” presentation. Assessment will focus on evidence that you have:

- a) identified the primary teaching points that God was communicating through the passage;
- b) recognized how those teaching points relate to one another and to the passage as a whole;
- c) crafted a presentation that draws attention to those teaching points; and
- d) clearly highlighted how those teaching points apply to Christians’ lives today.

Small Group Option.

Lead the class through a small group discussion (10-15 minutes in length) of a portion of James 4:13 –5:20 following the instructions given on the first day of class. Assessment will focus on evidence that you have:

- a) properly understood the passage;
- b) clearly identified where you need to give to your small group background and other information to guide them through the passage;
- c) carefully crafted questions that promote discussion of the most important aspects of your passage and help members of your small group to reach appropriate conclusions about the passage “on their own;” and
- d) effectively interacted with your fellow students in a manner that promotes learning and spiritual edification.

AFTER THE MODULE

3. *Reading and Insights.*

Read a minimum of 600 pages total in Blomberg/Kamell, Jobes, and Davids (including the reading you do for other assignments). Your goal in this assignment is to use these tools to better understand James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude, not simply to read 600 pages. To assist you in reaching that goal, as you read make a running list of insights that you gain into these four biblical books through reading the commentaries. These should be in point form (bullet points) and should not exceed four pages total. Limit your list to what you consider the most helpful insights. Although the list of insights should be clear and grammatical, your grade will be based primarily on content not polished writing.

Length: 4 pages maximum

Due Date: TBA

4. *The Book of James and a Christian View of Wealth.*

Required textbooks:

- Sider, Ronald J. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. Fifth edition. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.
- Yohannan, K. P. *Revolution in World Missions*. Revised edition. Carrollton, TX: GFA, 1998. *Note: This book is available for free at http://www.gfa.org/offer/freebook/?cm_sp=Free-Book-_-Homepage-_-Creative-A. You can also download it in pdf format from the Gospel for Asia website.*

While neither *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* nor *Revolution in World Missions* is a commentary on James, both are closely linked to some of the most important themes in James. Read the three textbooks in their entirety *in the following order*: Blomberg/Kamell, Sider, Yohannan, with each subsequent book serving as a conversation partner to the earlier one(s).

- I. As you read Blomberg/Kamell, pay particular attention to their comments on a Christian view of wealth in light of James. (Do not be concerned if you do not understand the discussion of the Greek text in Blomberg/Kamell. Students with no Greek background should generally be able to follow their arguments by focusing on their English translations.)¹
- II. As you read Sider's book, reflect on how his view fits with the view of Blomberg/Kamell.
- III. As you read Yohannan's book, think about how his view fits with the views of Sider and Blomberg/Kamell.

Throughout this process, you should carefully consider the degree to which each of the views fits with what you think James is actually saying on the topics of wealth and active faith. In a brief essay, summarize your findings. Begin by (1) identifying Sider's key thesis or theses and (2)

¹ Those interested in what the various grammatical labels mean may want to consult Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InverVarsity, 2001).

critiquing his claims in light of your understanding of Scripture (esp. James). Then, (3) identify Yohannan's key thesis or theses, (4) critique his claims in light of your understanding of Scripture (esp. James), and (5) discuss the degree to which his view complements or is in conflict with Sider's view. Finally, (6) using Blomberg/Kamell and your own knowledge of Scripture, attempt to briefly articulate what you view as a biblical perspective on wealth and ministering to the needy. Here you might consider the degree to which you agree with the following statement: "Only feeding the poor without any effort to share the Gospel message with them runs the risk of merely making people more comfortable on their way to Hell."

Be sure to quote each book appropriately to support your analysis and include page numbers in parentheses: (Sider, 122). *In a footnote on the first page of your essay, confirm that you read each textbook in its entirety or note the percentage completed.*

Length: 1500 words maximum

Due Date: TBA

5. Preaching or Teaching 2.

After the module, continue to practice skills you have learned for preaching or leading a small group. Choose one of two options:

Sermon Option.

Prepare a 30-minute sermon manuscript on an approved passage from James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, or Jude. The sermon must follow the approach that is discussed in class. It should show evidence, through the use of footnotes, that you have utilized the relevant textbooks (commentaries) and at least five other commentaries from the bibliography as well as any other credible sources you identify on your own.

Also make use of class notes for this assignment.

Assessment will focus on evidence that you have:

- a) identified the primary teaching points that God was communicating through their passage;
- b) recognized how those teaching points relate to one another and to the passage as a whole (e.g., through making use of a clear outline that is shown in their sermon points);
- c) crafted a presentation that draws attention to those teaching points (e.g., through appropriate illustrations); and
- d) clearly highlighted how those teaching points apply to Christians' lives today.

This assignment will also be assessed based on the degree to which it is a carefully polished presentation.

Length: 3500 words maximum

Due Date: TBA

Small Group Option.

Prepare small group leaders' notes for one of the following passages: 1 Peter 2, 1 Peter 3, 1 Peter 4, 1 Peter 5, 2 Peter 1, 2 Peter 2, 2 Peter 3, Jude. Draw on your class notes, Jobes commentary, and at least five other commentaries from the bibliography below to help identify material that the small group leader should share during the session. Carefully construct discussion questions that help to focus attention on the key teaching points in each part of the chapter. Each question

should be accompanied by a brief paragraph explaining the answer(s) you are looking for from the small group. Assessment will focus on evidence that you have:

- a) properly understood the passage;
- b) clearly identified where they need to give their small group background and other information to guide them through the passage;
- c) carefully crafted questions that promote discussion of the most important aspects of their passage and help small group members to reach appropriate conclusions about their passage on their own;
- d) shaped their small group session(s) in such a way that spiritual growth is clearly promoted; and
- e) identified through the answers they provide to their list of questions what the key teaching goals are for the passage.

Length: 10 pages maximum

Due Date: TBA

RECOMMENDED REFERENCE WORKS

GENERAL

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990.

Jobes, Karen. *Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Wilder, Terry L., J. Daryl Charles, and Kendell Easley. *Faithful to the End: An Introduction to Hebrews through Revelation*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007.

JAMES

Blomberg, Craig L. and Mariam J. Kamell. *James*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Dauids, Peter H. *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Dorani, Daniel M. *James*. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *James*. Chicago: Moody, 1992.

Kent, Homer A. Jr. *Faith that Works: Studies in the Epistle of James*. Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH, 1986.

Martin, Ralph P. *James*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1988.

McCartney, Dan G. *James*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

McKnight, Scot. *The Letter of James*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Moo, Douglas J. *James*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Moo, Douglas J. *James*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

Motyer, J. A. *The Message of James*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1985.

Nystrom, David P. *James*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

1 PETER

- Abernathy, C. David. *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Peter*. Dallas: SIL, 1998.
- Dauids, Peter H. *The First Epistle of Peter*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Dubis, Mark. *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010.
- Goppelt, Leonard. *A Commentary on 1 Peter*. Translated by John E. Alsup. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Grudem, Wayne. *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, Ill.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Helm, David R. *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008.
- Jobes, Karen H. *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2005.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *The Epistles of Peter and Jude*. Black's New Testament Commentary. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1969.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *1 Peter*. IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1991.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1988.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. New American Commentary. Nashville: B&H, 2003.

2 PETER/JUDE

- Bauchham, Richard J. *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1983.
- Dauids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Green, Gene L. *Jude & 2 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Helm, David R. *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008.
- Hiebert, D. Edmond. *Second Peter and Jude: An Expository Commentary*. Greenville, South Carolina: Unusual Publications, 1989.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *The Epistles of Peter and Jude*. Black's New Testament Commentary. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1969.
- Moo, Douglas J. *2 Peter, Jude*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. New American Commentary. Nashville: B&H, 2003.