

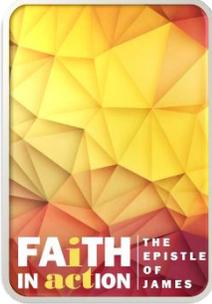
Adult Workbook

Woodlands Church of Christ
Fall, 2021

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SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Lesson	Date	Lesson Title	Scripture
1.	9/7	Introduction to James and his Epistle	1:1
2.	9/14	Faith and trials	1:2-11
3.	9/21	Faith and its rewards	1:12-18
4.	10/5	Faith and the Word	1:19-28
5.	10/12	Faith and the royal law	2:1-13
6.	10/19	Faith and works	2:14-26
7.	10/26	Faith and the tongue	3:1-12
8.	11/2	Faith and conduct	3:13-18
9.	11/9	Faith against worldliness	4:1-12
10.	11/16	Faith and the future	4:13-17
11.	11/30	Faith and wealth	5:1-6
12.	12/7	Faith and patience	5:7-12
13.	12/14	Faith and prayer	5:13-20



Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION

The Epistle of James is the first in a group of epistles customarily called General Epistles, which includes James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. They are designated as general or “catholic” epistles in the sense that they are universal, not being addressed to any particular individual or church, but to the church as a whole.

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The Setting. It is clear from the letter by James that the early church was experiencing significant problems: divisiveness (1:19-20,26; 4:1), intolerance and favoritism (2:1-7), a uncharitable heart (2:15-16), a complaining and criticizing spirit (4:11; 5:9-11), and the worldly pursuit of wealth and status (5:1-6). He will ultimately tell everyone who wants this world and the kingdom too are nothing more than doubleminded people (4:4; 1:8).

Authorship: There is no question that James wrote the Epistle of James, but which James was the author? Some find at least six men by the name of James in the New Testament. I believe that you can find three who are clearly identified:

1. **James, the brother of Jude** (Jude 1).
2. **James, the father of Judas, not Iscariot** (Acts 1:12)
3. **James, the son of Alphaeus, called “James the less”** (see Mark 3:18, 15:40). He is mentioned in the list of apostles, but very little is known concerning him.
4. **James, the brother of John and one of the sons of Zebedee.** These two men were called “sons of thunder” by our Lord (see Mark 3:17). That he was slain by Herod who at the same time put Simon Peter into prison (see Acts 12:1-2) likely excludes him.
5. **James, the Lord’s brother.** He was a son of Mary and of Joseph, which made him a half brother of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 13:55 we read: “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?” In the beginning, the Lord’s brethren did not believe in Him at all, but the time came when James became head of the church at Jerusalem. This is equally affirmed in the many references to an influential James in Jerusalem in the writings of Paul (1Cor 9:5, 14; Gal 1:15-2:12).

In Acts 15, this latter James is one of the leaders who has presided over that gathering in Jerusalem. He made the summation and brought the council to a decision under the leading of the Holy Spirit. I believe it was this James whom Paul referred to in Galatians 2:9, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” This James, the Lord’s brother, is the man whom we believe to be the author of this epistle.

Date of Writing: c. A.D. 45–50. There have been those who have said that James wrote his epistle to combat the teachings of Paul; they argue that James emphasizes works while Paul emphasizes faith. However, the earliest of Paul’s epistles, 1 Thessalonians, was written about A.D. 52–56. Therefore, *even Paul’s first epistle was not written until after the Epistle of James*, which was the first book of the New Testament to be written.

The Key Theme: The following are what I consider to be the two key verses of this epistle. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). And “is not faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20). It is not that James is trying to establish a doctrine – or a

teaching. It is the fulfillment of such an idea of living for Christ that he affirms. And from that, James shows that justification by **faith is demonstrated by works**; it must be poured into the test tube of works (ch. 1–2), of words (ch. 3), of worldliness (ch. 4), with his start a warning to the rich (ch. 5). In other words, faith in action is the way a Christian lives – and ultimately like Abraham – will be justified. But he builds those ideas around the themes of:

1. Suffering (1:12-15). In this is the matter of personal character development to make us complete. While the wicked do suffer (Prov 10:1-6) and his friends do affirm the same (Job 4:7-8), Job has shown that life is not simple and neat and that the righteous do suffer. Even Daniel and his friends did (Daniel 2-5). James will show that in suffering, we are purified and proved (1:12).
2. Christ (5:9; 2:8). Fill in the blank:
 - a. Declares himself a “_____ of God and the _____ Jesus _____” (1:1).
 - b. Says that the _____ gives (1:7).
 - c. Described “our” _____ as _____ (2:1).
 - d. We praise our _____ and Father (3:9).
 - e. Humble ourselves before the _____ (4:10).
 - f. Be concerned about the _____ will (4:11).
 - g. Serve the “_____” (5:4).
 - h. Says that the _____ will return (5:7) and that His coming is _____ (5:9).
 - i. Prophets spoke in the _____ of the _____ (5:10).
 - j. The _____ is full of _____ and _____ (5:11).
 - k. We should pray in the name of the _____ (5:14).

The Message of the Book: The Epistle of James deals with the very practical, but he will not get away from the subject of faith. James was evidently a very practical individual. Tradition says that he was given the name “Old Camel Knees” because he spent so much time in prayer.

Because the book deals with the most practical expression of the ethics of Christianity, the epistle has often been called the Christian’s “Book of Proverbs.” Of course, it does not replace the wisdom of the book in the Old Testament since such divine wisdom is timeless. Yet, it is still true that both emphasize the practical.

In addition to the book of Proverbs, the book has been compared to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Just as the book of Proverbs focuses almost entirely on the life and lifestyle of the one who would follow Yahweh, the Sermon on the Mount focuses on the life and lifestyle (not so much the collective assignments of a church). Notice the parallels:

1. Rejoice in Trials (1:2; Matt 5:12)
2. Be Perfect or Complete (1:4; Matt 5:48)
3. Ask God the perfect Giver (1:5; Matt 7:7)
4. Testing and its Reward for Believers (1:12; Matt 24:13)
5. Don’t be Angry (1:20; Matt 5:22)
6. Faith Works (2:14; Matt 7:16-19)
7. Blessed are the Poor (2:5; Luke 6:20)
8. Warning to the Rich (2:6-7; Matt 19:23-24)
9. Don’t Slander (4:11; Matt 5:22)
10. Don’t Judge (4:12; Matt 7:1)

The book also uses Old Testament heroes and heroines of faith: Abraham, Rahab and Job. He also refers to Old Testament Scripture. He stated that it “says” (4:5), quotes it (4:6), and finds in it the fulfillment of Christian living (2:8, 11, 23).