

# The book of James

1:1

Welcome to the new study in the book of James.

I do have to warn you ahead of time that the book of James is in your face, this is how it is, pulling no punches, book of the bible.

Maybe that's why I like it so much, James doesn't mess around and tells it like it is, but at the same time he is humble. We see this in His opening sentence or verse.

✠ **James 1:1** *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.*

To understand this statement you first must understand who James is.

Some (very few) believe this is James, the brother of John. But James, the brother of John was put to death by Herod Agrippa I about A.D. 44.

✠ **Acts 12:1-2** *Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

But James the brother of Jesus was still alive and he became a leader of the church in Jerusalem

✠ **Gal 1:19** *But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

So it's clear, and many, if not most commentaries agree that the James that wrote the book of James is the half-brother of Jesus. (Same mother, Mary, different fathers, God and Joseph.)

Notice He doesn't claim to be the brother of the Lord Jesus, as one might expect. James and Jesus' other brothers didn't believe in Jesus until after Jesus rose from the dead.

✠ **John 7:5** *For even His brothers did not believe in Him.*

So Jesus' brothers didn't believe, but they did come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, even before the day of Pentecost as we read in the book of Acts.

✠ **Acts 1:14** *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

A couple of theories of what happened to James are;

*When he (James) bore strong testimony to Jesus as the Son of man, they flung him down from the gable of the temple, stoned him, and beat him to death with a club.*

*Josephus says that the Sadducees about A.D. 62 had James and some others brought before the Sanhedrin (Ananus presiding) and had them stoned as transgressors of the law. At any rate he won a martyr's crown like Stephen and James the brother of John.*

So if James was put to death about A.D. 62, it was clearly written before that date. There are two theories about it, one placing it about A.D. 48, and the other about A.D. 58, 4 to 14 years after James the brother of John died.

So now understanding who James was and when the letter was written, look at my claim of James being a humble servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and read his opening statement again.

✠ **James 1:1 *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.***

Do you notice anything that seems to be missing here? Think about it, you are the half-brother of Jesus and you are writing a letter to the 12 tribes of Israel. How would you start the letter?

Would it be ***James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ?***  
Or would you write, *James a bondservant of God and the brother of Jesus Christ?*

Notice James doesn't throw the fact that he is the half-brother of Jesus around; in fact he doesn't even mention that he is the half-brother of Jesus. This is important and something for us to think about.

James didn't want to be accounted creditable by who he was and his physical relationship to Jesus. No he wanted to be counted worthy because of Jesus and Jesus alone with his relationship with Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

One thing I am guilty of, as are so many other Christians, is bragging in a sense of where we go to church and who we know in the church.

We throw out big names like Chuck Smith or Billy Graham; we mention the name of Calvary Chapel or Vineyard, or First Baptist church like they are the only true way to God. But the reality is not who we know here on this earth, but whom we know in heaven, Jesus.

Now don't get me wrong, it's not a bad thing to mention your pastor or church or even those who you are friends with in the church, even if they are big in the church or church circle. But you must ask yourself, why am I mentioning this person's name and my relationship to them? Is it so others will accept me because I know someone big? I personally mention Calvary Chapel a lot because I go to a Calvary Chapel in my city, and I mention it because I agree and believe in their teaching and style of teaching, which

is a verse-by-verse study of the whole bible. I want to learn about the whole bible, not just a few things the pastor may pick, because God wrote the whole bible for us, not just part of it. And I do get excited when someone special comes to our church to sing or teach, but the bottom line is, without Jesus in my life and the life of the church, we are all nothing!

So next time you start name-dropping, stop and think about James. Not who he was, but what his claim to fame was. Simply that he was a servant of Jesus Christ and not his physical brother or half-brother.

So James calls himself a bondservant of God and Jesus Christ, so what is a bondservant? It really should say "*servant*" and not "*bondservant*", which is only found once in the bible in the original KJV.

† **Lev 25:39 (KJV) *And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:***

The Greek word used here for servant in the book of James is: *doulos (doo'-los)* which means: *One who gives himself up to another's will those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men. Devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests.*

So once again, James was humbling himself, disregarding who he was physically to Jesus and his own interest in the fact that he was Jesus' brothers.

If you think about it, he could have tried to take advantage of the church because he was the brother of Jesus, like throwing his weight around because of who he was.

So why am I pressing this so much and haven't even made it past verse one? The world puts much on who you are as a person and even who you know. If you have knowledge of something, but not the proper college degree you are looked down on as a failure or less than what you really are.

The world tells us to look our best, change your appearance and to look like the latest fashion or movie star. Appearance and stature, it seems without it you are counted as less or nothing in this world. But there was a man in the bible that did not agree with this mentality and even preached the opposite.

† **John 3:30 *He must increase, but I must decrease.***

This was John the Baptist who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus.

† **Matt 3:1-3 *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness:***

***'Prepare the way of the LORD;  
Make His paths straight.' "***

And even though he was given a great and awesome job to do, still he humbled himself and gave glory to the Lord. John the Baptist was not into the latest fashion or even into eating the latest foods in nice restaurants.

† **Matt 3:4** *And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.*

"OK Steve," you may be thinking right now, "I get it, don't seek to be somebody great and don't be a name dropper, let's move on."

You must understand it's not about us not trying to be somebody in the world's eyes, but who we make Jesus out to be in others eyes! You can walk around in Levis and a t-shirt, no jewelry or makeup, no big fancy car or home. But if you don't make Jesus shine like He should in your life, all you are doing (or not doing) means nothing.

You see James not only doesn't mention that he is the half-brother of Jesus, but he also calls Jesus Lord! He's not only humbling himself, but he is giving Jesus the Glory due Him.

As in John the Baptist statement ***He must increase, but I must decrease.*** John knows that it's more than just humbling yourself, but it's all about lifting up the name of Jesus.

We call Jesus Lord, but do we do the things He asks us to do?

† **Luke 6:46** *But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?*

Jesus spoke this after the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and in Luke. Have you been calling Jesus Lord but not doing what He has taught you lately?

This may not be the way you expected this study to start, but I think it's what we all need to hear. I don't teach this way to pound you into the ground with guilt and condemnation, but I try to teach out of love towards you and wanting the best for you and your walk with the Lord.

That's the same thing James wanted, the best for other believers, but sometimes the truth hurts. But it's a small pain compared to a lie or sugar coating the truth so you fall into temptation and sin.

Through the next studies in this book, we all need to take some medicine to help heal us spiritually. I will do my best to teach as the Holy Spirit leads with the Words He gives to me.

If the teaching seems wrong, then I challenge you to check it out in God's word for

yourself. But if it's right, then shouldn't we be obedient to God's word and what He will teach us in this book?

One more thing about the teaching in the book of James, this is what's called the meat of God's word.

† **1 Cor 3:1-3 (NLT)** *Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord.*

This was Paul speaking to the church in Corinth. So the question is, are you ready for some solid food? If the answer is yes, then come back next week as we continue on in this study in the book of James.

If your answer is not yet, then I would encourage you to go to the study on the series of the Holy Spirit, which will help you to mature in Jesus Christ, also go the study we just completed on using God's armor, which will also help you to grow as well.

If you haven't read the books of James, I would encourage you to, and if you have, I would encourage you to read it again.

May God richly bless you as you continue to mature in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!