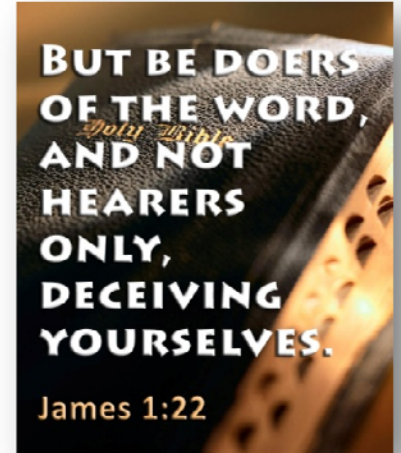


## 59 – James: Living a Life That Reveals Faith

- James is the **first book in the division we have labeled the “General Epistles”** (letters). These are those written by people other than Paul (James through Jude).
- Controversy has surrounded this little book, over the author, time written, who it was written to, its legitimate inclusion in our Bibles, and several other things. None of these, however, should matter when held next to the incredible messages given here. We do not need to know precisely when it was written, who wrote it, and to whom it was written. **We DO need to know, and to practice, what it contains.**
- The author mentions his name, James, but **there were several James**, so we are not sure who really wrote this letter. The author could be: 1) brother of John (son of Zebedee, Mark 1:19), 2) son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), 3) father of Judas (not Judas Iscariot, Luke 6:16), or 4) the half brother of Jesus (our Lord, Galatians 1:19). There is a great deal of speculation about these James’, but the most popular, and most reasonable, idea is that **James the brother of Jesus wrote this letter.** We know that Jesus’ half brothers did not believe he was the Messiah and ridiculed Him. Obviously they became believers after the resurrection. If this is the brother of Jesus, James is humble enough not to mention it.
- This book was probably written before most of the New Testament was penned. Best estimates put it most likely between 45 and 49 AD. As with all such dating, it is really not an important issue to our understanding of the serious content of this letter.
- James is addressed to **“the 12 tribes scattered among the nations” which should be literally interpreted as the Jewish believers.** They knew the Word well, but not all were practicing it.
- James is **one of the Bible’s most ethical, practical and challenging books in scripture.** It gets right in the face of the reader, and challenges him or her to really live a life that is the result of true faith, and one that reveals that faith to others.
- This letter **sounds more like a sermon than a letter.** It is authoritative: there are 54 imperatives in 108 verses – a lot of calls to action. James uses crispness in his wording, short laser-like sentences to convey great meaning. It is also a very poetic book, with lots of metaphors, similes, and imagery. He uses exhortations, questions and profound illustrations from everyday life to make his points. For such a short book, he also makes a surprising number of references to Old Testament books and characters including all 5 books of the Torah, Joshua, 1 Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and seven of the 12 minor prophets. He relates to Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah. In addition to the above, there are also an amazing number (15) of parallels to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). He doesn’t quote it, but reaffirms its messages. He uses 30 references to nature. This is an eloquent and masterfully constructed message worthy of great study.
- Some people say there is no unity to this book, but that shows ignorance of the content. **The obvious point and unity of the entire letter is to encourage believers to Christian maturity**, and to challenge them to live the kinds of lives that reflect Jesus. James touches on every area of believers’ lives: who they are, what they think, what they do, what they say, what they feel, what they have. James exhorts believers to get serious about their faith, and live it fully, not just give it lip service.

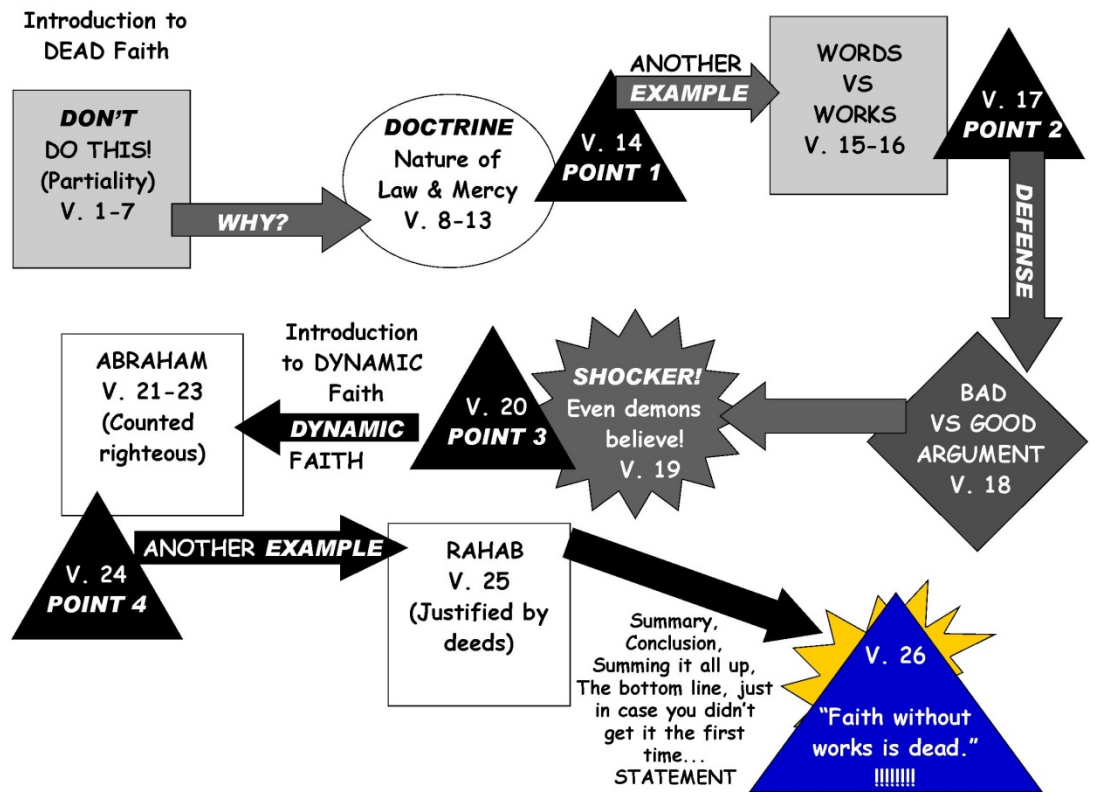


### Highlights

1	Greetings to the 12 tribes; letting trials grow us, the rich and poor, enduring trials and tribulations, be slow to speak, lay aside evil, be a doer and not just a hearer of the Word, the Law is like a mirror, useless vs useful “religion”
2	Warning about favoritism, faith without works (a life that shows faith) is dead
3	The terrible tongue needs to be tamed, heavenly wisdom vs earthly wisdom

4	Pride, friend of the world = enemy of God, submit to God and resist the devil, humility in the sight of God, don't speak evil of or judge others, do everything by the will of God, don't be arrogant.
5	Corruption of riches and power (awaiting judgment), wait patiently for the coming of the Lord, don't grumble, suffer in patience, pray for every need, pray for the sick, confess sins to one another, fervent prayer is effective, example of Elijah, turn sinners back to God.

- In chapter 1 James challenges the believer to not only patiently endure in trials, temptations and tribulations, **but to actually be thankful for them and rejoice**. Now that IS a challenge. He indicates that these grow our faith, and mature us, and God uses them purposely in our lives.
- The Law is spoken of as a "mirror" to show mankind who they are – sinful and in need of atonement. It identifies us. He likens a person who hears the Law (the Word of God), then does not "do" it, as someone who looks in a mirror and forgets what they look like.
- James chapter 2 is **about a belief that behaves**. One of the great points (and most misunderstood) James makes is that we are not saved or justified by our works, but by faith alone. **However, a life of faith will also show itself through "works."** **These are not the "good deeds" people think of, but all the collective deeds of the believer that reveal his or her faith.** We are saved by faith (alone, not by works, Ephesians 2:8-9), we must walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), we cannot please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6), whatever we do without faith is sin (Romans 14:23), faith is believing without seeing (Hebrews 11:1, John 20:28-29), and now James adds that faith without works is dead. **Useless.** Faith must be seen in our lives, not just spoken or thought. Faith must have fruit. A faith without this fruit (works, our behaviors) is dead. Faith must be seen in the lives of believers, in everything they do. James uses illustrations of both dead and dynamic, living faith. As he said in the first chapter, don't just hear it, do it!



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- In chapter 3 James gives one of the most direct and scathing attacks on **the untamed nature of the human tongue**. He likens it to a wildfire, "a defiler set on fire by hell." A little thing can cause huge damage and sin. The terrors of the tongue include such things as words spoken in anger, gossip, unkind talk of or to others, mindless talk (unproductive, just chatter) and false teaching. It is one of the most compelling pieces for believers to consciously be mindful and careful of what they say.
- The book of James is full of **very direct and powerful challenges to all believers to hear, know and live the word of God**, so that others can see our faith, and know our God. Faith that is not accompanied by these kinds of lives is a dead faith, and not real. God expects our lives to have the kind of fruit that identifies us as His children. This book is not about racking up points for "good works," it is about living good lives, lives that reveal our faith.