



INTRODUCTION

“Don’t study James!”

That’s what they told me when I was a new Christian. *“It’s too hard, it’s too confusing, there’s not enough theology.”* Well, I know they had good intentions; they wanted me to get “grounded” in the basics. But I plunged in like a fool anyway. And I found out that, although it’s got a few difficult spots, it’s not that hard to understand. Mostly it’s just too convicting!

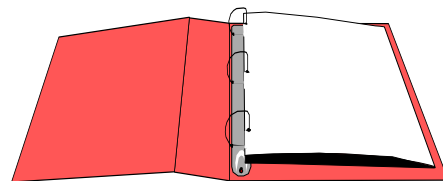
James is one of those books we should make a steady diet of; we should probably read it once in between all the others books we read, Bible or otherwise. James, Jesus’ younger brother, is the older brother we always wish we had, the mentor we all really want, the guy who’s been through it. He’s not afraid to smack us around and call us “dear brother” at the same time. *“James”*, says Doug Webster in Finding Spiritual Direction (IVP), *“is the kind of spiritual director we need.”*

I like the way Webster describes the changes that James wants to see in us: *“from self-pity to humility, from performance to worship, from favoritism to friendship, from opinion to truth, from conflict to peace.”*

James is a book for those who are serious about the Christian life. Those who just like to think about spiritual things, to have nice religious feelings, ought to steer clear. James writes like a man on borrowed time; he is impatient with anything short of total candor. But James is no pious finger-pointer. He has a pastor’s heart, and his words are strong like those of a friend who cares. He is acquainted with suffering and hardship. He knows that life is difficult.

I hope you’ll take some time out to meditate on the letter of James, to add some personal application to what you’re doing in your group. Maybe we’ll all see some changes.

Steve Hixon



Overview

Before you jump into the first lesson, take some time to read the entire book of James. In the space below, jot down your *first impressions* of the style of writing, the tone, the teaching, the imagery - anything that stands out to you.

After reading, fill in the chart below with your first impression of the general subject matter of each of the chapters.

1	2	3	4	5	

References to Nature in the Book of James

1:6	"wave of the sea"
1:6	"tossed by the wind"
1:10	"wild flower"
1:11	"sun . . . with scorching heat"
1:11	"the plant . . . blossom falls"
1:17	"the heavenly lights"
1:17	"shifting shadows"
1:18	"firstfruits"
3:3	"bits into the mouths of horses"
3:4	"ships . . . driven by strong winds"
3:5	"a great forest is set on fire by a small spark"
3:6	"a fire"
3:7	"animals, birds, reptiles, and creatures of the sea"
3:8	"deadly poison"
3:11	"fresh water and salt water"
3:12	"can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?"
3:18	"sow in peace [and] raise a harvest of righteousness"
4:14	"you are a mist"
5:2	"moths have eaten your clothes"
5:3	"gold and silver are corroded"
5:4	"workmen who mowed your fields"
5:4	"the cries of the harvesters"
5:5	"fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter"
5:7	"the farmer waits for the . . . crop"
5:7	"how patient he is for the fall and spring rains"
5:14	"anoint him with oil"
5:17	"prayed . . . that it would not rain"
5:17	"it did not rain on the land"
5:18	"the heavens gave rain"
5:18	"the earth produced its crops"

James' References to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

James	Sermon on the Mount
1:2	Matthew 5:10-12
1:4	5:48
1:5; 5:15	7:7-12
1:9	5:3
1:20	5:22
2:13	5:7; 6:14-15
2:14-16	7:21-23
3:17-18	5:9
4:4	6:24
4:10	5:3-5
4:11	7:1-2
5:2	6:19
5:10	5:12
5:12	5:33-37

charts from The Bible Knowledge Commentary