



# BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



## Summary

This practical letter about wise living brings faith and action together. James does not argue that one is more important than the other, but that faith can only be alive if it results in action. As a result, there are lots of things we can check to see the health of our faith in God as well as lots of practical, loving things we can do to grow in faith.

# Wednesday July 4: James

## Faith expressed through action

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Owen Lynch:

### What did I like about today's reading?

Scholars note that, strictly speaking, this letter should really be called "Jacob", because in the 14th century something got lost in translation when the first complete translation of the Bible in English was produced. We'll use 'James' though to avoid confusion!

James was the half-brother of Jesus of Nazareth, who became the leader of the Jews in Jerusalem who gave their allegiance to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. His letter is based on the teachings of Jesus (especially the famous Sermon on the Mount) and the Jewish book of Proverbs (especially chapters 1-9) which pretty much means that it is a collection of wisdom for living well!

The letter is intended for all Messianic Jews living outside of Jerusalem, rather than the letters that Paul wrote which are to specific groups of people about specific issues.

I love the practical wisdom contained in this letter - it's stuff that you can literally apply to your everyday life, like 1:19 - *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"* and 2:15-17 - *"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

James challenges the empty faith of the religious, saying that faith that is not expressed through action is dead! That's really what he said! Not everyone agrees with this, famously Martin Luther called James "an epistle (letter) of straw" and contended that James seemed to contradict the apostle Paul and the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We will return to this subject in our boxset on Paul.

### What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

It shows me that allegiance to Jesus will create tensions in my life when my values contradict Jesus' values. For example, it's clear to me that Jesus (God) is really generous with his time, money and energy - so since I have allied myself with Jesus, there has sometimes been a tension for me in how I spend my time, energy and money. Faithfulness to Jesus is more than just trying to convince myself that Jesus is real, it's living like he is real in my thoughts, yes, but also my words and actions.

### What am I going to do differently as a result?

I'm going to take James' challenge that my faithfulness to Jesus means nothing if it is not expressed through my action, my deeds. So I am going to be more intentional about expressing my faith in Jesus through my actions.

### Who am I going to share this with?

Well, I've shared this with all of you!! So you can hold me to account on that if you have the time! Be nice though!