

*Walking Out the Word:*  
**The Epistle of James**

**Important Background to the Epistle of James:**

- James is a common name that appears five times in the New Testament. Yet the only two men that could have written this epistle would be James the apostle, or James the brother of Jesus. The apostle James, the son of Zebedee was killed by Herod in AD 44, making it most likely that James the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3) who wrote this epistle. At first, James and the rest of the family were antagonistic towards the ministry of Jesus (John 7:5). They tried to stop Jesus in Mark 3:21, believing that he was crazy. After Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to James (1 Corinthians 5:7), he and his mother and brothers were listed among the early believers (Acts 1:14). It was to James that Peter reported his escape from Herod's prison (Acts 12:17), and it was James who presided over the question of whether to admit Gentiles to the church during the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). Paul consulted with James after his conversion (Gal. 1:19), and James recognized Paul's call as an Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:8-10). When Paul brought the collection for the poor, he brought it to James (Acts 21:17-25). James, the brother of Jesus, emerged as a leading apostolic voice in early Christianity. Josephus, the Jewish historian, specifies that James was stoned to death in AD 62. This letter was written between 48-62 AD.
- The epistle of James is a "general" letter addressed to a group of Christians in the Greco-Roman world, rather than one particular church. James gives useful guidance on practical conduct in a variety of areas, including: how to overcome temptation and trial; how to treat both the rich and the poor; how to walk in humility rather than pride; how to walk in wisdom and patience; how to control the tongue; how to put prayer and faith into action.
- James is more concerned about Christian demeanor than Christian doctrine. He does not mention the Holy Spirit, nor does he make reference to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In fact he only mentions Jesus Christ twice in 1:1 and 2:1. His examples are drawn from the Old Testament, rather than from the life of Christ. God the Father and His call to an ethical lifestyle is the focus of the Book of James.

**Things to talk about in Walking Out the Word:**

- *Opening:* Do you "count it all joy" when you face "various trials?" What trials have you faced this week?
- *James 1 & 2:* What does "testing" (1:2) imply? Describe biblical patience (1:2-8). Describe a double-minded man. How do trials differ from temptations (1:12-18)? Describe the process of deceiving ourselves (1:19-27). As you read this and meditate on it, ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of deception in your life. Why is personal favoritism dangerous in the church (2:1-12)? Why are deeds necessary to show one's faith (2:14-25)?
- *James 3 & 4:* Talk about the difference between demonic and divine wisdom (3:1-17). How does this revelation impact our ability to control our tongue? What is the source of fights and quarrels (4:1-12)? Write out the ten things that James instructs believers to do in 4:7-10. Why is submission to God essential for the believer to truly walk as an effective Christian? Do you have a tendency to presume about your future and ask God to bless whatever you *decide* to do (4:13-17), or do you submit all future plans to the Holy Spirit?
- *James 5 & Closing:* Do you feel more secure when you have more money? (Be honest). What should we do when we face trials? How about when we are happy or when we are sick? In closing, share with one another your personal needs. Join together in the prayer of faith, believing that God hears and answers prayer!