

James- Resilience

Red flag: What is one of the biggest challenges you've had to deal with since we last met as a group?

Green flag: What is one of the best things to have happened since we last met as a group?

1. Introduction and context

Four people are named James in the gospels. It is generally agreed that the author of this letter is James the brother of Jesus. He was not a follower of Jesus during Jesus' ministry and in fact he was probably one of the members of his family who believed that Jesus had gone too far and sought to bring him home when Jesus famously retorted that his followers were now his brothers.

It is not recorded but clearly he was converted after Jesus died and his name is amongst those that Jesus appeared to after his resurrection. He subsequently became a leader in the church in Jerusalem. When the council of church leaders were working out whether and how Jesus' new way of salvation through grace had replaced the restrictions of Jewish law it was James's arguments and support for the Apostle Paul that persuaded the Council and reaffirmed Paul's and Barnabas's ministry to the Gentiles. He was martyred in about AD 62.

This letter, written very early in the life of the church, was addressed to Jewish Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire after Stephen's martyrdom and the subsequent persecution by the Jews. It was possibly written less than 20 years after Jesus' death and so it may be one of the earliest letters written in the New Testament.

2. Scriptures

James, chapter 1. You may prefer to read this passage as you discuss the questions below. If you do not have time to consider all of section 3 **Explore** please do not miss considering section 4 **Apply**.

3. Explore

3.1. Read James 1:1-4. What steps does James propose lead to maturity?

- Testing of faith leads to:

- Perseverance leads to:

3.2. How do we know God's guidance in the steps to maturity from James 1:5-8?

- How do we get God's help during this maturing process from James 1:5?
 - How did Jesus keep in touch with the Father from Mark 1:35?

- Doubt is so natural for us all. In James 1:6-8 James warns against it doubt for a faithful person who is being tested.
- How did Peter deal with doubt in Matthew 14:30-31?

3.3. How do we know which Christians are mature from James 1:9-12?

- From James 1:9-11, if worldly success is not a measure of Christian maturity what is?
- From James 1:12 how is faithfulness recognised. Read Philippians 3:11-16.

3.4. Temptation challenges our perseverance. How does James say to deal with it?

- Is God the source of our temptations from James 1:13?
- Then what is the source of temptation from James 1:14-15?
- We have discussed the path to maturity. What 3 steps lead to failure? (Death here is separation from the blessings of God, not eternal damnation; so in the case of failure, we who have eternal life will not have earned many crowns)?

4. Apply

4.1. Many people of faith in the Bible show amazing resilience when their faith is tested Discuss how we could model two of these people:

- Job lost everything including family and financial wealth. Read and discuss his faithful reaction in such a devastating situation in Job 1:20-22.
- What did Paul do when stoned and left for dead in Lystra in Acts 14:19-21?

4.2. What are the habits of the faithful in James 1:16-27?

- How do we deal with anger in James 1:19?
- What is the source of truth in James 1:21-25 and what should we do about it?
- What member of our body must be kept under control in James 1:26?
- How do we avoid pollution from the world in James 1:27?

5. Pray

Thank you Father God for the wisdom taught by James about maturing as Christians. Please help us to be faithful members of your family in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Memory verse: Philippians 3:13–15 ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything ¹⁶ you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.' (ESV)