

Introduction: If you stroll by my house and look closely, you will notice that I have been doing a little work in our yard. Now, it's nothing that's going to blow you away, but I planted a couple of boxwoods, potted some flowers for Marsha on Mother's Day, and I have been working tirelessly, (maybe that's a stretch) I have been working hard to get some grass to grow in our front yard and back yard. If anyone wants to roll by and pray for our seed to take root and grow, feel free....

But every home project, at least every do it yourself home project begins with a trip to Home Depot. I've never been much of a handy man, but since I've become a grown man ☺, I have made more than one trip to Home Depot. If you've ever been there before you know that the store is massive! You can basically build a house from scratch with the materials they sell there. If you want lumber, you can get your lumber. Doors and frames? you can get your doors and frames. Lighting, windows, bathroom, tile and ceramic, plumbing, electrical, and of course on my recent trip, outdoor and gardening supplies.

I love Home Depot, but I don't like how for many Christians, many times, our faith often resembles the design of a Home Depot store. I'm talking about the compartmentalization of our faith. We choose certain parts of following Jesus that we like, but then we avoid the other departments of living for God. This is true with what we live out, and this is true with when we live out our faith.

There have probably been times in your life when your Christian life looked pretty nice on Sunday, but the other six days of the week your life was a little sketch.

This is why I love the Book of James. James lays out a faith that works itself out in the details of life, every single day of the week. Sunday . . . Monday... Tuesday and at any time of the day . . . 7:00 am 3:00 pm 8:00pm 1:00 am. James is talking about a faith that is to be lived out ALL DAY. EVERY DAY.

This so important, not only because it is the way we glorify God in all of life. It is also important because people want to know that Christianity is *relevant* and that Christians are *sincere*.

“The single greatest cause of atheism in the world today is Christians: who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. This is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.” – Brennan Manning

Hear me and hear me well. As we begin the Book of James, I want to make a bold assertion: if we as individuals and a church will master the wisdom principles of James, people will see the RELEVANCE of our Christian faith, they will see the SINCERITY of our faith._

That is why we have titled this series: “All Day. Every Day.”

“All Day. Every Day. An Introduction to the Book of James”
James 1:1-5:20

The Point: Display a life of wisdom by living out your faith all day, every day.

I am really excited about this book... Couple/Few reasons...

- 1) Natural follow-up to our Missions Series... Faith in Action in our context... “Forward Ever. Backward Never.” This summer, every day, we're on Mission with Jesus.
- 2) Though all of our sermons have a practical focus, our last two major series have been heavy on the gospel. Galatians... (Fall) True & Greater (Start of 2014)... This is foundational. We need these truths every day. Everything flows from our understanding of Christ and him crucified.

T: The first thing I want to invite you to do this morning is:

I. Understand James is writing to his church scattered by persecution (1:1).

Read 1 –

- I first want to cover some introductory material, much like you might find in a Study Bible. This material will help us understand James and how the individual parts fit together with his entire letter.
- There are several key questions you want answered.

*Who is James? (Author: **James, half-brother of Jesus**)*

- This is not James, the brother of John who was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus.
- He is the son of Mary, the son of Joseph (do those names ring a bell?) & the half-brother of a man named Jesus.
- In fact, James was no disciple at all, in the beginning. John 7:5 says that “not even his brothers believed in him.”
- But after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, James came to believe and he quickly became a leader in the Jerusalem church. He served as a pastor, and he calls himself a teacher in 3:1.
- Above everything, it is important to realize James is writing as a pastor to his people.

*To whom is he writing? (Audience: **His persecuted and scattered church**)*

- His people who were under persecution.
- Verse 1 is addressed to the “twelve tribes in the dispersion.” The recipients of the letter once lived in Jerusalem, but now they have been scattered and are experiencing trials and suffering. Which brings us to...

*Why did he write? (Purpose: **To encourage and instruct his people to persevere in good works in spite of suffering.**)*

- The Book of Acts tells us that after the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, many in the early church of Jerusalem fled out of the city to take refuge from looming persecution.
- So James tells them to live a pristine life even in the midst of suffering, because the brilliance of Christianity shines brighter when it is cast against the dark backdrop of suffering. After all, we follow a God who suffered to save us.
- We can read between the lines from these historical details to know that James was the kind of Pastor I want to emulate, because he possessed a great heart of love.
 - He stayed with the persecuted church.
 - He cared about the scattered church, even in their absence.

*When did he write? (Date: **40s A.D.**)*

- Early date vs. later date.
- 40s, between 40-50A.D. – pre-Jerusalem counsel.

T: These background details will help us understand the content and major themes of the book, which brings me to my second, very simple encouragement for you this morning.

II. Allow these truths to penetrate every area of your life every day of your life (1:2-5:20).

As we work through this book, I want you to take note of the following seven major themes.

1) The Work of God in Christ

- What do we learn about God in this letter?
 - God is the giver of every good gift [wisdom (1:5, 3:17), salvation (1:18), kingdom (2:5), mercy (2:13), grace (4:6), our life (4:15), healing (5:15)]
 - God is one. There is one God and God is unified in himself. (2:19)
 - God is relational. (For Abraham is referred to him as “friend.” (2:23)
 - God is jealous for us. He wants an intimate relationship with us more than any human relationship we’ve ever desired (Set it up with example/question?) (4:5)

- God is the Judge (5:9)
- God is Father (1:17, 3:9).
- Jesus is the Lord, the Lord of glory (2:1)).
- On first appearance the Book of James does not seem to have much focus on Christ, BUT when you familiarize yourself with the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, you are going to realize the Book of James drips with wisdom from Jesus.
- Peter Davids counts at least 36 strong parallels in content between James' letter and the words of Jesus, especially his Sermon on the Mount. Another commentator said "much of James reads more like a gospel of Jesus than a gospel about Jesus."
- The knowledge of God is the foundational truth undergirding all of the other themes.

2) Faith Works

- Throughout church history, James has been a polarizing Book. Martin Luther called it an "epistle of straw," because of its apparent contradiction with Paul's understanding of justification by faith.
- To find a contradiction between Paul & James is to misunderstand them both. Both James & Paul would agree: all who believe in Christ are justified by faith and all who believe in Christ will show their justification by the good works flowing from their faith.
- So James says, "**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**" (James 1:22)
- James wants to see consistent devotion to Christ, and as a pastor, I can totally understand his desire. One of the most vivid words he uses to describe a life inconsistent with the life of Christ is the word "double-minded." The Greek word is *dipsoucos*, which literally means "twin-souled."
- He wants them to be fully obedient to God's law, God's moral will for their lives, which he calls: "law of liberty" (1:25, 2:12), "the royal law" (2:8), and "the perfect law" (1:25).
- That is why out of the 108 verses (don't miss this), 54 of them are imperatives! That's pretty amazing.
- James would agree with **John Wesley**, the founder of the Methodist movement, who said: "**Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.**"
- Throughout this letter James is constantly exhorting his people by saying: *Work out your Faith!*

3) Steadfastness under Trial

- In light of the persecution of the church and the persecution that Christians were beginning to experience all over the Roman empire, James has much to say about suffering, our faith being tested, and the temptations we face daily. (1:13-15; 1:22-25)
- His letter begins and ends with a strong encouragement to: *Persevere through trials!*

4) Relationships in the Church

- You know it to be true . . . When people get stressed, sin surfaces all the more. Sadly, during these times we often sin against those we love the most.
- As we work through the Book of James, I want you to underline how many times James refers to the Christians as "Brothers." The Greek word refers to "siblings in a family," so it could also be translated "brothers and sisters."
- He, like Paul, Peter, John, and Jesus, viewed the church as the family of God.
- This family theme surfaces in how they care for one another, pray for one another and confess their sin to one another, as well as, watching what they say to one another and how they handle conflict.
- One of James primary exhortations to his brothers & sisters is: *Love one another at all times!*

5) Riches, Poverty, & Justice:

- Two major passages address this: 2:1-13 (addressing the injustice of partiality) & 5:1-6 (addressing the injustice of oppression against the poor)
- Our perspective, both of people and of God will determine how we approach poverty and riches.
- [One of the primary subthemes is: Eschatology – God is Judge... (2:12-13; 5:9)]
- James tells his people to: *Be rich toward God and generous toward others!*

6) Wisdom produces Maturity

- Would you consider yourself to be wise? Would other people view you as a wise person?
- James is a proverbial book. It touches on wisdom for every day life covering matters like the tongue, conflict, pride & humility, and even our travel plans.
- Wisdom has been defined as “knowledge applied to the glory of God,” and wisdom leads to maturity.
- Note the progression: Wisdom leads us to work out our faith, be steadfast under trial, relate to one another well, be rich toward God and sacrificial to the poor.

T: But . . . how do we acquire this wisdom?

7) Prayer

- Ultimately, prayer is the foundation, through dependence on God, by which we live out our faith and glorify God “all day. Every day.” (1:5, 4:2-3; 5:13-18)
- James could exhort his people to pray because he was a praying pastor. History tells us he carried the nickname of “old camel knees” because he prayed so much that his knees were calloused.
- It’s little wonder James tells his people to: *Depend on God for everything through prayer!*

In light of this introduction, I want you listen carefully to the entire book of James. Before we do so, we should realize that it is wise for us to hear the books of the Bible in one sitting for a few reasons:

- 1) *This is how the original audience would have heard it.*
 - a. When the Christians who were scattered received this letter, they would have heard it all at once.
 - b. The believers would have probably gathered in someone’s home, and for the next 15-25 minutes, they would have listened to the message sent from their leader.
- 2) *It provides context for all of the individual parts...*
 - a. For example, many of you know the famous passage on faith and works in James: where he says: “faith without works is dead.” How many of you are familiar with that verse? Hands real high.
 - b. Now, how many of you could tell me what led to James to that topic in the first place?
 - c. How many would have answered that James was talking about those making distinctions, I think we could say “discriminating” between the rich and the poor in the church, and how our faith should move us to care for the poor in practical ways? Hands real high. Hopefully that makes the point. ☺
- 3) *It keeps us from skipping over valuable parts.*
 - a. *All Scripture is given by God. We need to soak up every word of the Bible. And so know, receive with meekness and anticipation the living Word of God.*

RECITE THE ENTIRE BOOK – CHAPTERS 1-5**

Conclusion:

These words were written for our instruction. They were penned that as followers of Jesus, we might **Display a life of wisdom by living out our faith all day, every day.**

Let’s Pray.