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**Insights and Life Lessons
From Jacob:
Study on the Book of James**

Introduction

Scripture Memorization: Proverbs 9:10-11 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.”

1. About the author

- a. This letter is actually titled “Jacob”. There is no “James” in Greek; it is Jacob. By calling this book James instead of his actual name we lose a vital component of our Jewish beginnings.
- b. Jacob was the half-brother of Jesus.
 - i. Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:3, Luke 8:19 First time he is mentioned is when Jesus was preaching and he came with the family and sent a message that they were outside.
 1. Jesus teaches a powerful lesson about the true meaning of the spiritual family we are to embrace.
 2. Jacob understands from this example that simply being Jesus’ natural brother doesn’t get him any special privileges.

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- ii. Matthew 13:54-58 Jacob is mentioned in relation to Jesus. The people in the town of Nazareth were hindered from receiving all they could from Jesus, because they only saw him through natural eyes.

- iii. John 7:1-8 The feast of Tabernacle.
 - 1. Jacob and his brothers were only thinking of Jesus' celebrity status and showing off his power.

 - 2. They didn't understand that Jesus had embraced the value of the hidden life at this point in his ministry.

 - 3. They valued celebrity. He valued invisibility.

 - 4. Jesus knew that there would be a time that his glory would be shown to the world, and that it would be shown through his death and not his miracles.

 - 5. Jacob and his brothers were only understanding of "Chronos" time and not "Kairos" time.
 - a. Chronos: ordinary, ongoing, mundane time.

 - b. Kairos: extraordinary, unique time. A moment of great opportunity, that can either be seized or missed. "The opportunity of a lifetime needs to be seized in the lifetime of the opportunity."

 - c. Jesus is talking to his unbelieving brothers about "Kairos" time...they could go at any time, but for

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him, the timing must be ordained by His Father—the perfect time of opportunity.

6. Do we understand how to live fine tuned into “Kairos” times and do we welcome times and seasons of invisibility?
- c. Acts 1:14 Jacob becomes a follower.
- i. James is named among those who would go to Jerusalem and wait upon the promise that Jesus said they needed right before he ascended into heaven.
 1. What a remarkable difference in James’ relationship with the truth from the time Jesus was alive and walking in his ministry to the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 2. Can you imagine growing up with the Son of God and not even knowing it?
 3. After Jesus’ died and rose again, James came into the truth of Jesus being the true son of God who defeated death and brought salvation to the world.
 4. In the book of Acts, he committed his life to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to wherever the Lord decided to send him. James became a powerful voice in the early church as the presiding apostle of the church in Jerusalem.

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5. He was martyred in AD 62 or 69 by being stoned to death by the Pharisees on order of High Priest Ananus ben Ananus.

d. The book he wrote.

- i. The book of James and the book of Galatians are considered to be the first letters penned by the apostles most likely sometime between AD 45-57.
- ii. This letter is the earliest insights of the first generation of followers of Jesus who were mostly Jews.
- iii. It is the New Testament version of Proverbs, for much of his writings speak of God's heavenly wisdom that can transform us.
- iv. Its target was originally for Jewish Christians. His thoughts were meant to reach out to all the Christians who converted from Judaism and were scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

2. Major themes

a. Wisdom from above.

- i. The Greek word for wisdom is *Sophia* and is found in James' letter four times.
- ii. This wisdom sermon taps into the long tradition of Jewish wisdom and applies it to various practical topics for wise Christian living.

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- iii. Understanding God's purposes and His perspective will lead believers into spiritual maturity and gives insight in navigating difficult circumstances.
 - iv. When you are experiencing a difficult circumstance in your life, what is your way of dealing with it?
 1. Speak to close friends to get advice
 2. Pray and ask God for wisdom
 3. Find a scripture that can give me guidance
 4. Avoid it as much as possible
 5. Talk to my parents or mentors for insight
- b. Testing and trials**
- i. This letter is written to help guide those whose faith in God is being threatened by daily struggles and hardships.
 - ii. These hardships range from religious persecution to financial difficulties, from health problems to spiritual oppression.
 - iii. He teaches us that all these experiences are designed to bring us into spiritual maturity.
- c. The Law of Moses.**
- i. He explains that the Old Testament law of the 10 commandments has been summed up by Jesus' teachings of loving and valuing one's neighbor. This becomes the law by which we should strive to maintain; one based in love and not of rules and obligations.

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d. Faith and Good deeds.

- i.** Paul taught that works can never save us.
 - 1.** Can anyone quote a scripture that supports this?
- ii.** James continues this teaching by explaining the kind of faith that will save us.

e. Poverty and Wealth.

- i.** James addresses the huge gap between these two groups, even in the church. He speaks against favoritism based on the size of one's pocketbook or brand of clothes.
- ii.** To the poor, he encourages that they have been blessed with every privilege from God, though society may dismiss them.
- iii.** To the wealthy, he reminds them that no amount of wealth on Earth can buy what they have received from above.