

## FAITH + WORKS

### INTRODUCING JAMES



#### OPENING

- Begin the gathering with prayer and intercession. Take prayer requests, and encourage the group members to pray for one another.

#### SERMON REVIEW

- As we go through the book of James, we'll continue to emphasize the point that we don't work to be saved; rather, *because* we are saved, we work.
- The tone of the letter is at the same time proverbial, prophetic, and pastoral.
- It was the first New Testament letter to be circulated within the Church.
- The believers may have been scattered by persecution in Jerusalem, but that allowed the Church to thrive in and beyond the city. And it was to those people dispersed throughout the Mediterranean that James decided to write.
- James, the eldest of Jesus' younger brothers, introduces himself as a servant of God. He was related to Christ and in charge of the church in Jerusalem, yet gave himself a humble title. While others recognized his ranking before man, he was aware of his ranking before God.
- But James wasn't always the "pillar" of the church (Galatians 2:9) that he had become. When we first read about him in the New Testament (John 7:3-4, Mark 3:20-21), he leads his brothers in mocking and questioning the sanity of Jesus.
- Certainly he would have been aware of, perhaps even present at, the crucifixion. Once Jesus had resurrected, He appeared to James personally (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Evidently, this turned his skepticism into faith. After the encounter, we begin to read of James as an influential pastor in the early Church.
- One encounter with the risen Christ changes everything!

#### DISCUSSION

- How did God speak to you through this sermon?
- Having heard the author's story, what does James 1:1 now mean to you?
- Read Acts 8:4. Here we learn that the Church not only survived, but thrived under persecution! Why do you think that happened (and continues to happen today, in places like China and Iran)?
- What do the life and faith of James tell us about redemption in Jesus Christ?
- Have you had an encounter with the risen savior - and been moved from knowing about Jesus to living for him? If so, how did it happen?

### **CHALLENGE**

- Begin to read, write out, and even memorize the book of James.
- Try to share your own story of encountering Jesus with a friend - whether it be at work, over coffee, in the gym, or in any other setting.

### **PLAN AHEAD**

- We will look at James 1:2-18 this Sunday. Read and reflect on that passage beforehand, in order to prepare yourself for the teaching.