



# BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **12th Grade | Unit 6**

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# BIBLE 1206

## THE EPISTLES OF JAMES AND JOHN

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# The Epistles of James and John

## Introduction

In this LIFEPAK®, you will study the New Testament letters of James, 1, 2, and 3 John. In James's Epistle, you will become acquainted with that disciple, learning about his family, background, duties as leader of the Jerusalem church, writing style, and martyrdom. In James you will learn how to live the Christian life during trials and temptations by patience, controlling the tongue, and prayer.

In John's Epistles, you will study the importance of being forgiven of your sins and walking in the light. You will meet some pillars of the early church and one troublemaker.

After reading these four books, you should memorize the given verses. By participating in the various activities and discussions, we pray you will finish this LIFEPAK as a strong, more mature believer.

## Objectives

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAK. When you have finished this LIFEPAK, you should be able to:

1. Describe the life of the author of the book of James.
2. Explain the authenticity of the book of James.
3. Identify the message of the book as it relates to Christian living.
4. Compare Paul's doctrine of justification by faith to James's doctrine of faith.
5. Describe the difference between wisdom and knowledge.
6. Define prejudice and partiality.
7. Describe the power of the tongue.
8. Tell why some prayers are not answered.
9. Explain the cause of human conflicts.
10. Describe the life of John.
11. Tell about the false doctrine of Gnosticism.
12. Describe the ways of fellowship with God.
13. Tell about the Christians in the early church.
14. Describe some of the problems that faced the early church.



# 1. JAMES'S EPISTLE

Many Bible scholars believe that James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, was the author of the New Testament epistle of James. The investigation of this sacred text will follow four lines of research. First, you will study the man whom God

chose to write the letter. Second, you will observe the authenticity of the epistle. Third, you will note the occasion for it being written. Finally, you will study the text itself and the topics that James addressed.

## Section Objectives

**Review these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Describe the life of the author of the book of James.
2. Explain the authenticity of the book of James.
3. Identify the message of the book as it relates to Christian living.
4. Compare Paul's doctrine of justification by faith to James's doctrine of faith.
5. Describe the difference between wisdom and knowledge.
6. Define prejudice and partiality.
7. Describe the power of the tongue.
8. Tell why some prayers are not answered.
9. Explain the cause of human conflicts.

## Vocabulary

**Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.**

<b>concise</b>	<b>derogatory</b>	<b>impetus</b>	<b>repudiation</b>	<b>temporal</b>
<b>concur</b>	<b>effectual</b>	<b>prosaic</b>	<b>retaliate</b>	

**Note:** All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

## THE MAN

Of all the men named James in the New Testament, most scholars concur that the James listed as a brother of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19) and “pillar” of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17, 15:13–21, 21:18; Galatians 2:9,12) is the author of the Epistle bearing his name. To aid in appreciating James, you will study his life. You will learn about his family, home life, conversion, prominence in the Jerusalem church, and character as a man called by God.

**Family.** God moved two of the Gospel writers to list the names of Jesus’s half-brothers. James’s name appears first in both lists (Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3). By observing the custom of the day, this position in the list indicates that he was probably the oldest of Jesus’s brothers. The lack of Biblical mention of Joseph following Jesus’s youth suggests that his foster father died prior to our Lord’s public ministry. As the eldest son, Jesus assumed leadership of the family after Joseph’s death; when Christ left home, the family responsibilities rested on James’s shoulders.

Jesus taught that a prophet (communicator of God’s Word) had no honor in his own country, among his own people (Mark 6:4). This principle was demonstrated as Jesus’s own brothers and sisters failed to recognize him as Israel’s Messiah during his public ministry. Perhaps being so close to Jesus’s perfect obedience and sinless nature blinded them. Sibling rivalry often distorts the perception of true character and integrity among children in a family. A situation of jealous misunderstandings may account for James’s initial lack of belief in Jesus’s Messiahship.

As a positive **impetus** in his life, James was reared in a godly Jewish home where the Scriptures were honored as the standard for faith and practice.

A work ethic prevailed; and as was the custom, James and his brothers were taught carpentry by their father.

**Conversion.** Lacking understanding, James and his brothers rejected the ministry and claims of Jesus (John 7:5). Their rejection resulted in a verbal confrontation (John 7:2–9) which further separated James from Jesus. However, this **repudiation** ended when James beheld Jesus raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:7).

By the time of the events in Acts chapter 1, James was a believer, an eyewitness to Jesus’s Resurrection,

and numbered with the other disciples as they awaited Pentecost in Jerusalem. James’s closeness to his Holy Brother and his zeal as a Christian were probably major considerations leading him into his position of leadership in the early church.

**Prominence.** By tradition and inference of the Scriptures, James is seen as the leader of the Jerusalem church. The Scriptures indicate neither how such a position was created nor how James obtained the position. However, the results of his leadership are clearly seen in the Bible.

As the good news about Christ spread out from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8), many situations arose that required consultation with, or approval from, Christian leaders. During that time, James was the director of the leaders of the Jerusalem church. When Paul first visited Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19), he met with James. On Paul’s final visit to Jerusalem he was received by James (Acts 21:18). Upon divine release from prison, Peter sent word of the miracle to James (Acts 12:17). As he ministered in Antioch (Galatians 2:12), Peter was influenced by James’s messengers. James’s opinion given at the Jerusalem council became canon law for the early church (Acts 15:13–21).







## THE AUTHENTICITY

Centuries after the preparation and distribution of the original manuscripts of God’s Word, faithful men probed the authenticity of these writings to determine if they were in fact what God had spoken. Verification of the canonicity of the New Testament books occurred by investigating external and internal evidences. The Epistle of James was examined and accepted as part of the canon at the Third Council of Carthage in 397 A.D.

**External evidences.** External evidences used to determine the inspiration of a particular book include the Church’s historical attitude toward the book and the use to which it was put. Because the theme and style of James’s Epistle appealed to Jewish Christians, Gentile recognition of the letter came much later. As the epistle’s canonicity was being determined, much difficulty was encountered because it was not written by a recognized apostle, and was not addressed to a specific church.

Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp alluded to the Epistle of James in the first century. Origen (185–254) was the first to use the epistle and make reference to it as inspired by God. Additional reference in the Land of Israel and Syria indicated that

the letter was readily accepted by the Church of that area.

The Epistle of James was questioned by the Roman church until the fourth century. The Latin fathers Jerome and Augustine, defended James’s letter and fully accepted its authenticity. Their arguments, along with the work done by (the father of church history) Eusebius, paved the way for acceptance of the epistle at the Council of Carthage in 397.

**Internal evidences.** Internal evidences of authenticity are those found within the text of a book itself. Checking its pages for contradictions, heresies and false doctrines, and comparing it with other canonical books yields the final verdict.

The internal evidences for the inspiration of James’s Epistle are far stronger than the external evidences. Josephus wrote much about James, and his account harmonizes with what is known of James from this epistle and the book of Acts.

Although some have claimed that a contradiction exists between Paul and James, their works share similar statements of doctrinal importance. Consider the comparisons in the chart.

Romans 5:3–4	“... knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience ...”
James 1:3	“Knowing <b>this</b> , that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”
Romans 2:13	“For not the hearers of the law <b>are</b> just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”
James 1:22	“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

This letter shows how the Law, although fulfilled in Christ, has its expression in the New Covenant. This New Covenant is a higher law and principle that finds its substance in the law of the Spirit of life, the royal law (James 2:8) fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself.



**Complete these sentences.**

- 1.11** Two types of evidence used to verify canonicity of the New Testament books are  
a. \_\_\_\_\_ and b. \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.12** The Epistle of James was accepted as part of the canon at the  
a. \_\_\_\_\_ in the year b. \_\_\_\_\_ A.D.
- 1.13** The theme and style of James's Epistle appealed to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.14** Recognition of the Epistle of James came later from the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.15** Two of the early church fathers who alluded to the Epistle of James in their writings were  
a. \_\_\_\_\_ and b. \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.16** The Epistle of James was questioned by the Roman church until the \_\_\_\_\_ century.
- 1.17** Some people have tried to claim a contradiction between the writings of James and  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Read James 1****THE OCCASION**

The study of the occasion of writing one of our Lord's Epistles includes an explanation of the date, place, and reason for the book. The Epistle of James requires such explanation perhaps more than most books because of its unique characteristics.

**Date of writing.** James's letter was probably one of the first New Testament books to be written. According to Josephus, James was martyred in 62 A.D. Therefore, the letter must have been written before then. Some scholars believe this letter is the earliest writing in the New Testament, with a date between 45–49 A.D. The early date can be determined through a number of considerations. First, the persecution referred to in the text is a general one, unlike the specific situations that began in the third decade following the Crucifixion. Second, the use of the term *synagogue* (assembly) in James 2:2 predated the abandonment of this term in the second half of the first century when it would have been replaced by *ekklesia*. Third, no reference is made in the text to the Jerusalem Council of 49 A.D., which was a crucial event in the Church. Fourth,

the note in James 2:15–16 may be referring to the famine mentioned in Acts 11:27–28 that occurred in the spring of 44 A.D. Fifth, the simple nature of the letter's doctrinal and theological development argues for an early date. Sixth, there is no mention of Gentile Christians or their relationship to the Jewish converts as would be expected if written at a later date. Considering these factors, a date from 45–49 A.D. is reasonably assigned to James's letter.

It should be mentioned that some biblical scholars believe that the epistle was written by an unknown Christian author after James's death. This author used the authority of James's name to add importance to the letter, as was commonly done in the ancient Mediterranean world. Scholars holding this position for authorship point out the absence of any spelled-out personal knowledge of Jesus, the lack of reference to the letter by others until the end of the second century and the excellent Greek used by the author. Unfortunately, the primary opinion is unprovable, and the latter fact is explained if James himself used a secretary to compose the letter. It



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