

What Jim Said...A bit of background about the book of James

Remember the most famous line from the movie, *Jerry Maguire*? It's become a saying deeply embedded in pop culture: "Show me the money!!" Talk is cheap. In the end, it's our actions that are important and prove that what we say really is what we believe. This is the message in the New Testament book of James. James encourages readers to put their actions where their mouth is. In only 5 chapters, James delivers a whirlwind of practical topics that are relevant to followers of Christ all throughout the centuries.

The book of James is largely considered to be the earliest New Testament book to be written, likely written in the early to mid 40's, just a decade or so after the death of Jesus. James was a younger brother of Jesus Himself, and although he grew up with Jesus, he did not become a Christian until after the resurrection. He went from being a skeptical unbeliever that his brother was who He said He was to leading the church in Jerusalem and having tremendous influence on the early church. He was a powerful servant-leader who, although he was the brother of Christ, considered himself only "A servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (v.1).

Although James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem, he wrote this epistle (that's a fancy word that just means a letter) to followers of Christ who were spread out around the world. This book is filled with powerful statements from James, and challenges for Christians to put their faith into action. There are over 50 imperatives, essentially "do this" statements in this short book... averaging one for every two verses. James deals with many elements of the life of a Christian, from dealing with trials and temptations, how to treat one another, how to properly use the tongue to avoid hurting others, dealing with the rich and the poor, our relationship to God, wisdom, and others. It's a flurry of heavy-hitting yet immensely practical discussion in only 5 action-packed chapters!