

**ALTHOUGH JAMES' RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS
STARTED POORLY IT FINISHED WELL!
JAMES CH1:1**

INTRODUCTION

Name – dropping! A wonderfully elegant piece of research by Dr Carmen Leberz, from the University of Zurich, demonstrated the downside of name dropping. She took a large sample of undergraduate students and sent them each one of four slightly different email messages. The emails were written as if the sender was introducing themselves to the student as a future research collaborator. In each they gave their age, where they lived, the details of a part-time job that they had, and one of three ‘degrees’ of name-drop. In some, the writer claimed to be a friend of tennis player, Roger Federer. In others, they claimed to be one of his ‘practice partners’, and in a third group they just said that they were a ‘fan’ of his. The emails sent to the fourth, control group, didn’t mention Federer at all.

Having received the messages, the recipients were asked to rate their future research partners. Those who received messages claiming to be from a friend or partner of Federer were rated less likeable and less competent than the other two groups. Worse still, those claiming to be friends with him were deemed to be ‘manipulative’ too!

Views among professionals vary as to the psychology behind name-dropping. Some believe that it is fundamentally a technique to boost a low self-esteem. Others associate it with a lower ability to empathize – failing to recognize that their audience is unimpressed

(REFERENCE: Carmen Leberz, Klaus Jonas, Barbara Tomljenovic (2009). Are we known by the company we keep? Effects of name-dropping on first impressions. Social Influence, 4 (1), 62-79 DOI:10.1080/15534510802343997).

OVERVIEW

The central content of the letter (Ch1:12 – Ch5:6) carries the theme of the birth (Ch1:13-19a), growth (Ch1:19b-25) and development (Ch1:26-Ch5:6) of the Christian.

Not all growth is true growth; true Christian growth can be assessed by noting whether certain specific developments are taking place:

Recapitulation of the introduction (Ch1:12): through trials, by patience, to the crown

Birth (Ch1:13-19a): though the old nature remains active (13-16) the Father has brought us to new birth by his word (17-19a)

Growth (Ch1:19b-25): we grow by hearing (19b-20), receiving (21) and obeying (22-25) the Father's Word

Development (Ch1:26-Ch5:6); there are 3 notable developments which are the characteristics of true Christian growth:

**1:26
The controlled tongue**

**1:27a
Care for the needy**

**1:27b
Personal purity of
life**

**Detailed study of:
Care for the needy
(Ch2:26)**

**Control of the tongue
(Ch3:1-12)**

**Personal purity of (Ch2:1-
life (Ch3:13-Ch5:6)**

UNBELIEVING JAMES! V1

According to Greg Gilbert “The writer of the letter identifies himself simply as “James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ch1:1). The English name comes from the Latin “**JACOMUS**”, via old French “**GEMMES**”. The Greek name translates to “**JAKOBOS**”, and **occurs 42 times** in the New Testament and refers **to 4 men!**

Three of them are mentioned in 1 verse of the Bible – Acts Ch1:13. The four men called James, two of these men belonged to the 12, that is the 12 disciples of Jesus, one was the father of one of the twelve, the other is, the Lord's brother (half-brother).

1. **James the son of Zebedee** (Matt Ch4:21; Luke Ch6:14), martyred around A.D. 44 under Herod Agrippa (Acts Ch12:1-2).
2. **James the son of Alphaeus** (Luke Ch6:15) also called “James the younger” (Mark Ch15:40).
3. **James the father of the apostle Judas** (Luke Ch6:16; Acts Ch1:13), not Judas Iscariot, but also known as “Thaddaeus” (Matt Ch10:3; Mark Ch3:18).
4. **James the brother of Jesus** (Matt Ch13:55; Mark Ch6:33), converted after Jesus' death (John Ch7:5) and went on to lead the Jerusalem Church (Gal Ch1:19; Ch2:9; Acts Ch12:17; Ch15:13-21; Ch21:18).

The author and title of this Book derives from the name of its author, **James the Just and James Camel Knees (as he was called)**, the brother of Jesus (Matt Ch13:55) and the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts Ch15). James is writing so early that he has no knowledge of any of Paul's letters” (Cited in James by Greg Gilbert, pg 7).

James starts off as we all start off, not knowing Christ! He starts off as Jesus' younger kid brother (half-brother + probably the second oldest after Jesus – Mt Ch13:55; Mk Ch6:3). Along with being brought up in a big family (Mt Ch13:55; Mk Ch6:3), full of brothers and sisters, where your dad is a “step -parent” to the oldest kid, there is plenty of **controversy** as your older half-sibling Jesus, has a “Messiah identity” complex, as he believes that he is the Son of God (Mt Ch16:15-17; Mk Ch1:1), and you and your full birth brothers don't (Jn Ch7:5).

On top of the “mental health” issues that you believe that he has (Mk Ch3:31-35), you and the family try and take him from the public arena, but he refuses! In doing so, from your perspective he continues to “rattle” the religious leaders authority with his claim to a “new religion” where he is “God”, to the extent that he is arrested and given the death penalty by crucifixion! Being nailed to a cross, like a common criminal!

BELIEVING JAMES! V1

As you are dealing with grief, shame and how to cope with this tragedy, Jesus the one you didn't believe in, **is brought back to life from the dead** and appears to loads of people (Acts Ch1:3; 1st Corinthians Ch15:6) including yourself directly (1st Corinthians Ch15:7), along with you mum and siblings (Acts Ch1:14).

This impacts on your life so dramatically, you not only choose to believe in him, and put your faith in him, you dedicate the rest of your life to Church Leadership in Jerusalem, being persecuted by the very people you had once sided with and where you once welcomed their teaching (Acts Ch8:1-3; Ch15; Ch21:18)!

You lead so well, that you are known as “James the Just” and because of your constant faith in you older brother, as Lord and Saviour, you pray to Him so

regularly, that you are known as “Camel Knees”. You become an apostle (Gal Ch1:19) and a leader who is seen as a “pillar” of the local Church (Gal Ch2:9).

You family turns out to be not so bad, as they eventually believe and follow Jesus (Acts Ch1:14), **one of your brothers, Jude, becomes an author writing a Book in the Bible, you have famous relatives, Zechariah, Elizabeth and a cousin called “John The Baptist” who prepared the way for Jesus** and some believe that Salome (mentioned in Mk Ch15:40 + Ch16:1), who saw Jesus crucified and went to His tomb on the Sunday, could be both Mary's (Jesus' mother) sister and mother to James and John! “Mt Ch27:56 names two women called Mary, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee, who is probably identified with Salome. Jn Ch19:25 refers to two women called Mary, plus the mother of Jesus and his mother's sister, who stood near the cross. If his mother's sister is identified with Salome, then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, would be cousins of Jesus” (Cited in New Bible Dictionary, pg 1046).

BELIEVER JAMES! V1

What qualifies James to write a letter? Despite James being Jesus' half-brother, despite Jesus in His resurrected state showing Himself to James, despite who James' family were, despite who his extended family were, despite being an apostle, despite being a pillar of the Church! These are not the things that qualify James to write a letter! **What qualifies James to write a letter is not his physical relationship to Jesus, but his spiritual relationship with Jesus!**

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”, the only place in the New Testament where this complete phrase appears!

- **JESUS' SERVANT** - (Greek - diakonia) or “slave” (Greek – doulos)! James introduces himself as a “servant”, not a brother of Jesus, or an apostle, or even a pillar of the Church, but as a “servant”. **According to Douglas J. Moo** “For in the Old Testament this title is applied to the great leaders of the people of Israel, such as Moses (Deut Ch34:5; Dan Ch9:11) and David (Jer Ch33:21; Ezek Ch37:25). As do Paul (Rom Ch1:1; Gal Ch1:10; Phil Ch1:1; Titus Ch1:1) and Peter (2nd Peter Ch1:1), James therefore identifies himself in the letter opening with **a title that suggests his authority to address – and admonish – the readers**. If the title `servant of God` is common, the full description *servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ* is not. Only here in the New Testament does this language occur. James could intend both titles, `God` and `Lord`, to apply to Jesus - `Jesus Christ, both God and Lord` (Cited in Douglas. J. Moo, The Letter of James, pg 68).
- **JESUS' SAINTS** - Following the pattern of most New Testament letters, James addresses his readers in **terms of both their status (situation during a particular time) and their location (particular place or places)**, they are “the twelve tribes in the dispersion” - 12 tribes relating originally to the Jewish people who could trace their heritage back to the 12 patriarchs, Genesis Ch35:22-26. Who, because of God's judgement upon Israel through the Assyrians and Babylonians, were taken into exile and scattered or dispersed. **Dispersed taken from the Greek word for “scattering” referring to the numerous times of relocating of large groups of Israelites throughout the world. This includes the captivity by the Assyrians and Medians (722 B.C.), Babylonians (586 B.C.) and Alexandria in Egypt (300 B.C.), Phrygia (200 B.C.) and the Romans (A.D. 63)**. In the same way, because of the persecution (**Acts Ch8:1-3**) of the early Church, Christians dispersed (**literally thousands of families - Acts Ch2:41 – 3000; Ch4:4 – 8000+; Ch5:14 – multitudes more than ever;**

Ch6:7 – believers multiplied greatly) leaving Israel, and were scattered all over the earth. James is therefore writing to mainly **Jewish born again Christians** who had left Jerusalem and Israel because of persecution. In giving them this status, **James reveals that these people belong to Jesus!**

- **JESUS' SALUTATION** - The word "greetings" translates "**chairein**" meaning "**joy be with you**". James uses this particular greeting, connected with "joy", firstly because he loves his brothers and sisters in Christ. Secondly, as the Christians are suffering through being persecuted by their fellow nationals, he wants them to rejoice more not less in this trial. So often when we are suffering we lose our joy, we can pray less and love people less. However, for the person in Christ, the Christian, these times of trials and sufferings are a time to be joyful, to pray more and to love more!
- **Imagine being that person who is suffering because of persecution and you've left your home-land, left your family, left everything that was so familiar, and gone to a new nation, starting a new life, in a strange land, with a different culture, a different language, and a different way of doing life! Imagine! You then receive a letter from James, the Lord's brother, the apostle, the pillar of the Church, the one who stayed in Jerusalem when all others left (Acts Ch8:1)! He writes and says straight away "Joy be with you!"**

APPLICATION

James is a Christian, writing to Christians!

Both the writer and recipients of his letter acknowledge Jesus as Lord!

James is able to write with an authority to address and admonish his readers!

What do you understand from the 1st verse?