



BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **9th Grade | Unit 5**

BIBLE 905

The General Epistles

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Authors:

Ronald Jerry Evans, Th.M.

Muriel Irene Evans, Th.M.

Editor-in-Chief:

Richard W. Wheeler, M.A. Ed.

Editor:

Daniel W. Hill, Ph.D.

Consulting Editor:

John L. Booth, Th.D.

Revision Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

Westover Studios Design Team:

Phillip Pettet, Creative Lead

Teresa Davis, DTP Lead

Nick Castro

Andi Graham

Jerry Wingo



804 N. 2nd Ave. E.

Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

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The General Epistles

Introduction

The Epistles, or letters, written by James, Peter, John, and Jude, along with the Epistle to the Hebrews, are called the General Epistles. They are general in nature in that they were not written to a particular church. Except for 2 and 3 John, which were written to individuals, the General Epistles were addressed to large groups of people. Studying this LIFEPAK® will acquaint you with these Epistles of the New Testament. You will learn how God called men of different backgrounds and used them through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to reveal His Word.

The writers of the General Epistles probably never dreamed that their Epistles would still be read by people today and that they would be used by the Holy Spirit to lead these people to faith in Jesus Christ. The person who gives his life completely to the Lord never knows the great extent to which He may use him. As you study this LIFEPAK, you will become familiar with the unique way in which each writer wrote his Epistle. The Holy Spirit used the differences in each of these authors to give the world a Bible that would be delightful to read and to study. The more you become acquainted with each Epistle, the more you will be able to read and to understand what God wants to say to you through them.

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 origin and occupation of James, Peter, John, and Jude.
2. Describe aspects of character and personality of James, Peter, John, and Jude.
3. Tell how James, Peter, John, and Jude acted both before and after believing in Jesus.
4. Describe how James, Peter, John, and Jude influenced others.
5. State the theme of the Epistles written by James, Peter, John, and Jude.
6. Describe the style and to summarize the content of the letters.
7. Give details regarding the Epistle to the Hebrews.

1. JAMES

In this section you will study James, one of the writers of the General Epistles. You will begin with a look at the man, then you will see him as a disciple, and finally you will examine the unique way in which he wrote his Epistle.

Four different people are referred to in the New Testament by the name of James. These men include James, the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21); James, the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3); another James who was the father of the good disciple named Judas (Luke 6:16); and finally, James, the Lord's half brother (Matthew 13:55). Many scholars have come to believe that the last one mentioned is the writer of the Epistle called by his name; however, some students of the Word believe the author to be another James. All agree that the writer of James had to be a man whose origin and discipleship would not be questioned by

those who received his Epistle. If the author was the half brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, his letters would be not only readily accepted but also eagerly read because of his relationship to Jesus. In this LIFEPAK James, the brother of the Lord, is assumed to be the author of this Epistle.

The Epistle appears to have been written from Jerusalem about AD 45, making this Epistle the earliest of the New Testament writings. The letter was sent mainly to Jewish believers who had been scattered abroad because of persecution for their faith in Christ. James was one of the *pillars* of the early church (Galatians 2:9) and had great influence among the believers of his day. Tradition tells us that he lived to the age of ninety-four. He was stoned or beaten to death in AD 62 because of his refusal to deny Jesus as his Lord.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

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

1. Describe the origin and occupation of James.
2. Describe aspects of character and personality of James.
3. Tell how James acted both before and after believing in Jesus.
4. Describe how James influenced others.
5. State the theme of the Epistles written by James.
6. Describe the style and to summarize the content of the letter.

VOCABULARY

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

authoritative (u thô' u tã' tiv). Having official authority; giving orders.

contradict (kon'tru dikt'). To speak in denial; to oppose with words.

customary (kus' tu mer ē). According to habit or to common practice.

inanimate (in an' u mit). Not living or alive.

infer (in fêr'). To decide from something known or from reason.

spokesman (spōks' mun). One who speaks for, or in behalf of, others.

subjection (sub' jek' shun). Being brought under the control or authority of another.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /ʒh/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

THE MAN

To gain some appreciation for James, the writer of the Epistle, we shall first trace his origin, then look at his trade, and finally, study his temperament.

Origin. When the parents of Jesus returned from Egypt to the Land of Israel, they journeyed north and made their home in Nazareth in the province of Galilee (Matthew 2:13-23). After Jesus began His public ministry at the age of thirty, He returned to His hometown of Nazareth. Both Matthew and Mark (Matthew 13:55-57 and Mark 6:1-6) recorded that Christ's ministry was not readily received in His hometown. The people of Nazareth knew His whole family, and, as a result, did not want to accept Him as the Son of God. They recognized James, Joses, Simon, and Judas as brothers of Jesus (Matthew 13:55).

Read Matthew 13:55-58;
Mark 6:1-6; and Galatians
1:1 and 15-19.



James, along with his brothers and sisters, was still in Nazareth during Jesus' ministry. Paul recorded, in Galatians 1:19, that when he went to Jerusalem, prior to beginning his missionary journeys, he met only the Apostle Peter and the Lord's brother, James. James may have moved to Jerusalem after the Resurrection.

Trade. Matthew and Mark record the same event regarding Jesus' rejection in His own hometown. Slight differences exist that we should note. Matthew states that people called Jesus *the carpenter's son*, relating Him to Joseph, the town carpenter's son. Mark's account mentions that some of the townspeople spoke of Jesus as *the carpenter*, referring to His former trade. The **customary** training was for the sons to learn their father's trade that they might



| Epistle Being Read



| James' Home Area

have an occupation when they grew up. Tradition states that Joseph died early in Jesus' life, and that the family business fell on the shoulders of Jesus, the eldest son. Jesus left the home in Nazareth when He began His ministry at the age of thirty, leaving the carpentry business to his half brothers.

Biblical writers, by custom, place the names of families according to birth or to importance. Both Matthew and Mark listed James first in the record regarding the family of Jesus. This mention would indicate that James was probably the next oldest son in the family, who took over family matters when Jesus left. James may have continued in his father's trade and assumed responsibility for the welfare of the family.

Temperament. Not much is mentioned directly about James as a person, but we may **infer** several things from the information that



| James in the Carpenter's Shop

is given. We know that James was raised in a godly Jewish home, for God the Father would not have sent His Son, Jesus, to be cared for and trained by those who would not give Him a spiritual upbringing. We know from Mary's song, in Luke 1:46-55, that she was well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures. The responsibility of the father of the family was to teach the Word of God to his children (Deuteronomy 6:5-9). Joseph must have been faithful in doing this teaching because Acts 15:13-18 states that James was able to quote readily from the Old Testament. We also know from Luke 2:39-41, that both Mary and Joseph sought to "...perform all things according to the law of the Lord..." and that they "...went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover." James would have been well acquainted with God's ways and God's Word, as is evident from the content of his Epistle. James was probably a very practical person; the emphasis in his Epistle is practical.

This James also displayed leadership qualities. Both Peter and Paul looked to James as a leader (Acts 12:17 and Galatians 2:9, 12). His family also saw in James a leader after Jesus left to begin His public ministry and after Joseph died. We may conclude that James was a student of the Scriptures who showed leadership qualities in his early life as well as some very practical characteristics.



Write the letter and the correct answer on each line.

- 1.1** In the New Testament _____ different people named James can be found.
 a. three b. five c. four
 d. six e. seven
- 1.2** The assumption of this LIFEPAAC is that the writer of the Epistle of James was _____ .
 a. James, the son of Zebedee b. James, the father of Judas the Apostle
 c. James, the son of Alphaeus d. James, the Lord's brother
 e. James, the son of Levi
- 1.3** The Epistle of James was probably written from _____ .
 a. Nazareth b. Jerusalem c. Rome
 d. Capernaum e. Cana
- 1.4** James addressed his Epistle to _____ .
 a. Samaritans b. Jews in Jerusalem c. Gentiles
 d. Galatians e. Jews who were scattered abroad
- 1.5** Tradition tells us that James was age _____ when he was martyred.
 a. ninety-four b. sixty-eight c. fifty-seven
 d. eighty-nine e. seventy-five

Complete these statements.

- 1.6** Paul mentions that he first saw James at _____ .
- 1.7** James was born in the province of _____ .
- 1.8** Jewish young men who had grown up and left home could support themselves by the trade they learned from their _____ .

Match these items.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1.9 _____ Matthew | a. mentions Jesus <i>as the carpenter</i> |
| 1.10 _____ carpentry | b. second oldest son in Joseph's family |
| 1.11 _____ James | c. town carpenter and husband of Mary |
| 1.12 _____ Mark | d. mentions Jesus as the carpenter's son |
| 1.13 _____ Joseph | e. trade of Matthew |
| | f. youngest son of Joseph and Mary |
| | g. trade of Joseph and his sons |

**Write true or false.**

- 1.14 _____ James was raised in a godly Jewish home.
- 1.15 _____ James was never taught the Old Testament Scriptures.
- 1.16 _____ Joseph and Mary attended the Passover feast every year.
- 1.17 _____ James was not a very practical person.
- 1.18 _____ James showed leadership qualities in his life.
- 1.19 _____ Both Peter and Paul looked to James as a leader in the church.

THE DISCIPLE

James, the half brother of the Lord, did not believe that Jesus was the Christ until after the Resurrection. Only then did James become a disciple of Jesus and have great influence among the believers in the early church. We shall study James as an unbeliever, then see his transformation to a disciple, and finally look at his influence among believers.

Unbelief. James had grown up with Jesus. They had played together and worked together in Joseph's carpentry shop. James knew that Jesus was a special brother. The Scriptures state that Jesus learned obedience by the things that He suffered (Hebrews 5:8) and by **subjection** to Mary and Joseph. Jesus' actual goodness was produced in Him because of His relationship with His real Father in heaven.

When Jesus began to denounce the religious leaders of the day for their unbelief, even His family wanted to discourage Him (Mark 3:31-35). Jesus explained that those who obeyed God were more His brothers, sisters, and mother than His own earthly family. James, as well as the Lord's mother and brethren, could not yet fully understand that Jesus (Luke 2:49) was finally "...about His Father's business." In John 6:41-42 and 66, the writer recorded that many of Jesus' disciples turned and went away

**Read Matthew 12:14-50;
John 7:1-31; Acts 1:1-14;
and Galatians 2:1-10.**



because they could not understand His teachings. We read, in John 7:5, that His brothers did not believe in Him and wanted Jesus to display miracles in order to become popular. Christ endured His own family's unbelief, knowing that after His death and Resurrection they would finally believe in Him.

Transformation. Jesus' family must have wept sorrowfully as they saw their oldest brother falsely accused by the Jewish religious rulers and finally crucified by the Romans. Paul wrote that more than five hundred brethren at once saw Jesus alive after His Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6). He also stated specifically that the Lord appeared to James as living proof that He was the Son of God (1 Corinthians 15:7). James knew that his brother had been dead and that He was alive now, just as He said He would be. All doubt vanished and great joy filled the hearts of Jesus' own family and disciples.

Luke tells us that Jesus told the believers to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). The mother of Jesus and His family, including James, were in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 1:14). James then knew the power of the kingdom which Jesus had taught.

In his Epistle, James referred to himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (James 1:1). The word *servant* is a Greek term for a *willing slave*, or for someone who has become a slave by his own choice. James was now transformed as a believer and was willing to be a slave both to God and to Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior. The word *Christ* means the *Anointed One or Messiah*.

Influence. After Pentecost about three thousand new believers were added to the church at one time. With such an immediate increase in new disciples, new problems arose for the Apostles and leaders. To care for the new converts in practical matters, seven deacons were appointed (Acts 6:3-4). The Apostles gave themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. In the church at Jerusalem, James emerged as one of the most important leaders, probably an overseer. Although he was not one of the original twelve disciples, he eventually became the **spokesman** for the believers (Acts 15:13).

James' influence must have grown rapidly in the church, since he is called *the Lord's brother* and also a *pillar* of the early church by Paul (Galatians 2:9). Paul stated (Galatians 1:18-19) that he saw only Peter and James when he first went to Jerusalem about AD 37. James probably settled in Jerusalem after Christ's Ascension. About AD 44, when Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel, Peter told those in the house he visited to inform James of his freedom (Acts 12:17). When Paul came to Jerusalem later to settle a dispute about the Gentiles and the Law, he mentioned James first, before Peter and John. Paul seemed to imply, by recognition, that James was a prominent leader in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19). James appeared to have led the Jerusalem council and gave the closing remarks (Acts 15:13). On Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, he reported about his missionary journeys to James and to all the elders present (Acts 21:18).



Complete these statements.

- 1.20 James would know that Jesus was different because He was _____ .
- 1.21 Jesus learned a. _____ by the things that He
b. _____ .
- 1.22 The goodness that James saw in Jesus was due to His a. _____
with His heavenly b. _____ .
- 1.23 Jesus explained that those who a. _____ God were the same as his
b. _____ and c. _____ and
d. _____ .



Match these items.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1.24 _____ Jewish religious rulers | a. place where Holy Spirit descended |
| 1.25 _____ five hundred | b. half brother of Jesus |
| 1.26 _____ Paul | c. time when the Holy Spirit came |
| 1.27 _____ Jerusalem | d. Jesus appeared to them together |
| 1.28 _____ Pentecost | e. the meaning of servant in Greek |
| 1.29 _____ <i>Christ</i> | f. number in the upper room at Pentecost |
| 1.30 _____ <i>willing slave</i> | g. falsely accused Jesus |
| | h. same as <i>Anointed One</i> or <i>Messiah</i> |
| | i. states that Jesus appeared to James after His Resurrection |

Complete this activity.

- 1.31 Imagine that you are a half brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. On separate paper write a 200-word report of your attitude toward Jesus both before and after you became a believer.

TEACHER CHECK



_____ initials

_____ date

Complete these sentences.

- 1.32 At Pentecost, _____ believers were added to the church in one day.
- 1.33 James was probably an _____ of the church in Jerusalem.
- 1.34 James eventually became the _____ for the group of disciples.
- 1.35 Paul called James a _____ of the early church.
- 1.36 Peter and _____ were the only ones Paul met on his first visit to Jerusalem.
- 1.37 The Apostle _____ asked that James be notified when he was miraculously delivered from prison.
- 1.38 The Jerusalem council which discussed the question of Gentiles and the Law was led by _____.
- 1.39 Paul reported to _____ and to all the elders on his last visit to Jerusalem.

Complete these statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.012** James originally lived in a. _____ in the province of
b. _____, and later moved to c. _____.
- 1.013** Jesus was referred to by the townspeople of Nazareth as the a. _____
and the b. _____.
- 1.014** James called himself a a. _____ of b. _____.
- 1.015** The recipients of James' Epistle were persecuted by their own a. _____,
by the b. _____, and by c. _____ afflictions.
- 1.016** James is one of the a. _____ Epistles, addressed to the
b. _____ tribes of Israel who were c. _____
abroad because of d. _____.

Complete these activities (each answers, 3 points).

- 1.017** List five things from nature that James mentions in his Epistle.
- a. _____ b. _____
c. _____ d. _____
e. _____
- 1.018** List six of the nine areas of concern which make up the outline of the Epistle of James.
- a. _____ b. _____
c. _____ d. _____
e. _____ f. _____

78
97

SCORE _____

TEACHER _____

initials

date



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804 N. 2nd Ave. E.
Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

800-622-3070
www.aop.com