



## 09.12.10/James 1:1 and Introduction to James

### Materials Needed

baby bottle, jar of baby food, fruit or vegetable, cheeseburger (or just pictures of some/all of these things)

Tell the children that we will be starting a new sermon series over the next few weeks. We will be studying the book of James, and tonight we will get a picture of what this book was about, and how it might apply to us today.

### Read James 1:1

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.”

### Background

Who was James? James was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, as well as the leader of the early church in Jerusalem. (Galatians 1:19, Acts 15:13-21)

What is the Dispersion? The Dispersion (or Diaspora) refers to the twelve tribes of Israel that were scattered about the globe.

### Question 1

The early believers from the first church in Antioch were scattered and persecuted. This seems like a negative thing, because the believers were scattered about and couldn't be in community together in one place. But this was all part of God's plan. Can you think of some good things that came from the early believers being scattered out to different parts of the world? *When the believers went to different parts of the world, they brought the good news of Christ with them. Instead of keeping the gospel message to themselves in Antioch, they were able to “go and make disciples of all nations”, like Jesus told them to in his last words on Earth, as recorded in Matthew 28.*

### Discussion

The people that James was writing to were Christians, but they definitely had their struggles. In this letter, James addresses lots of the problems that the church was having – struggles in their individual personal lives as well as struggles in church fellowship. Here is a quick summary of some of the issues these believers were struggling with that James addresses: trials and temptations, showing favoritism, saying one thing and doing another (hypocrisy), gossip, disagreements that caused people to choose sides, and being too worldly and materialistic. That sounds like a lot of problems, doesn't it? Take a look at this list again. Do you see any similarities between these early Christians and your own life? How do you think God might use the book of James in the Bible to shape your life and bring you closer to Him? *Answers will vary. Have everyone be as specific as they feel comfortable being.*

### Question 2

In James 1:1, we notice that James identifies himself as “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We talked about the fact that James was not only leader of the church in Jerusalem, but also Jesus' own half-brother! He had many credentials that he could have used to make himself seem important so that others would want to listen to him. But to James the most important part about his identity was not the physical relationship he had with Jesus, but the spiritual relationship that he had with Jesus. Think about your life, and some of the things you are “known” for (being good at sports, getting good grades, loving spaghetti, etc.). What are some of the things people think of when they think of you? Would others describe you as “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ?” *Why or why not? Allow everyone to reflect and share.*

### Activity

Set out the different foods (or pictures of foods) for the children to see. Ask the children which one a newborn baby eats and why. (*milk from their mother or in a bottle – their digestive system cannot handle lots of different foods when they are first born*) Have children put the rest of the foods in order of when a person eats them (*milk, baby food, fruits/veggies, cheeseburger*).



Explain that this is similar to our lives as believers. *When we first come to know Christ, we are like infants – we have so much to learn and don't have very much spiritual knowledge or wisdom.*

#### Question 4

Most of the problems in the early Jerusalem church were caused because the believers there were spiritually immature. Just like moms and dads want their babies to grow up healthy and strong, God wants his children to grow in their faith. He wants mature followers that can carry out the work of his kingdom, not spiritual infants who need the leaders of the church to be their “baby-sitters.” What are some ways that you can get nourished spiritually? *Spending time in the Word and in prayer and being in community with other more mature Christians gives us spiritual nourishment, so that we can then grow in our faith. As our faith matures, we can handle more and more responsibility, and become more and more like Christ. Spiritual maturity is not something that happens overnight. Just like a baby goes through many stages before he/she is able to eat solid foods, our spiritual growth is also a process that we must go through one step at a time.*

#### Wrap Up

Jesus is the reason we have any hope of growing up spiritually. Without Him, we are actually dead spiritually. We are broken and sinful without Him and can't live like God wants us to, but Jesus came and lived a perfect life, died on the cross to destroy our sin, and then came back to life again. Now, if we trust Jesus instead of ourselves, we can come to life spiritually, grow up spiritually, and be with God forever! As you close in prayer, ask that God would show you the truth about Jesus, which is that He loves you and wants to save you and help you grow up spiritually. Pray that God would keep your heart open to the things He wants to teach you as we go through the book of James in the Bible. Pray that we would be just as excited about growing towards spiritual maturity as a child is about becoming a “grown-up.” Pray for an awareness of those around us that need to hear the gospel message, and for a boldness to share it with them.