

## Wisdom for the Asking .....

We are reading the book of James this month at the **Bible Book Club** – it is a short book and relatively easy to read but it does throw up many challenges.

This is a bit of background information, taken from the Bible Society website, which you may find helpful (or not).

*The letter claims to be written by 'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ'. Christian tradition associates this James with the brother of Jesus, who was the leader of the Jerusalem church. The Jewish historian Josephus in his history of the Jews (Antiquities of the Jews, 20.9) states that James was martyred in AD 62.*

*There are of course other Jameses in the New Testament but the weight of tradition suggests that this James was the leader of the Jerusalem church.*

*What do we know about him?*

*James appears a few times in the New Testament. Paul declared that the risen Jesus appeared to him (1 Corinthians 15.7) and in Galatians 2.9 referred to him, alongside Cephas (Peter) and John the Apostle as being a pillar of the church. Acts 12.17 implies that he might have been the leader of the Jerusalem community, and in Acts 15.6–19 he played an important part in the gathering in Jerusalem which is often called the Jerusalem Council. In Acts (in 21.18ff) James insisted that Paul cleansed himself ritually at the temple to counter the claim that he had rebelled against Torah.*

*If the letter was written by this James then it is quite early, written in the AD 50s, since James was killed in AD 62.*

*There are some, however, who do not believe that it was written by James himself but by people faithful to James' memory, arguing that the style suggests a much later date of the early second century AD.*

*What were people feeling?*

*Assuming an early date for the epistle, two decades after the death of Jesus, the people were trying to work out what it meant to follow Jesus when he was no longer with them. James provides many practical solutions to questions like this.*

*The letter is, slightly oddly, addressed to 'the twelve tribes of the dispersion'. The dispersion or diaspora is the word used by Jews to refer to the spreading of Jews to other countries following the exile. It probably therefore means Jews around the world, though the topics he then covers suggests he is talking to Jewish followers of Christ. If this is James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, then this would make sense as most members of the Jerusalem church were Jewish.*

We will be gathering together, with a cup of tea/coffee, to chat about what we found - on  
**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January at 2.00pm in the church hall.**

These are a few questions which you may like to think about ...

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or that inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or that troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- What did you think was the most powerful advice that James offered for Christian living? How might you put it into practice in your life?
- James has particularly strong words to say about the preferential treatment of the rich when Christians gather together. Think about your own church – who is given preferential treatment there? What do you think James might say to your own church?
- James' image of bridling the tongue is a particularly powerful one and his advice is as relevant today as it ever was. Discuss why this is such hard advice to follow and what you might need to do to put it into practice.
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?