



JAMES
MERCY TRIUMPHS
BETH MOORE

with articles by
MELISSA MOORE FITZPATRICK

SAMPLE CHAPTER

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Beth Moore has written best-selling Bible studies on the Patriarchs, Esther, Moses, Paul, Isaiah, Daniel, John, David, and Jesus. *Breaking Free*, *Praying God's Word*, and *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* have all focused on the battle Satan is waging against Christians. *Believing God*, *Loving Well*, and *Living Beyond Yourself* have focused on how Christians can live triumphantly in today's world. *Stepping Up* explores worship and invites us to reach a new level of relationship and intimacy with God.

Beth and her husband, Keith, are devoted to the local church and have the privilege of attending Bayou City Fellowship in Houston, Texas, where their son-in-law, Curtis Jones, pastors. Beth believes that her calling is Bible literacy: guiding believers to love and live God's Word. Beth has a passion for Christ, a passion for Bible study, and a passion to see Christians living the lives Christ intended.

Beth loves the Lord, loves to laugh, and loves to be with His people. Her life is full of activity, but one commitment remains constant: Counting all things but loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus, the Lord (see Phil. 3:8).

NEXTLEVEL ARTICLES BY

Melissa Moore Fitzpatrick has served as research assistant to Beth Moore since earning her M.A. in Biblical Exegesis from Wheaton College in 2007. She has since received her Th.M. in New Testament from Columbia Theological Seminary. She resides in Houston, Texas, with her husband, Colin. They are happy members of Bayou City Fellowship where her brother-in-law, Curtis Jones, pastors and her best friend and sister, Amanda, is her favorite pastor's wife.



INTRODUCTION

I am elated to have you along for this journey into the life and Book of James! This may be our first series together and, if so, I pray with all of my heart that this in-depth study and others like it will fan a lifelong flame in your heart for God's Word. Perhaps we've studied together before and, if so, I'm thrilled to tell you in advance that this one earned its own place in my heart. Each series from *A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling Place* to this one has been used of God to accomplish a distinctive and lasting work. The mention of each name stirs up the remembrance of that prevailing revelation.

I won't tell you in advance what God worked in my life through this journey because the fun of it for me is to process the material along the way with you. When I penned week 1, day 1, for instance, I had no clearer idea where we were headed than you do now. When you get to difficult material, you will see that I am struggling through it, too. When you're convicted, you can know that my stomach is turning upside down as well. I love the uncertainty of what's ahead as long as I'm in the security of God's hands. It's like taking a winding highway for the very first time in a convertible. I want to feel the wind in my face. If you do, too, we're going to make good traveling partners.

This time God placed the idea on my heart to offer you options.
Goodness knows we need a few of those
amid frantic schedules and demanding roles.
You get to **choose your own level of participation.**

Level 1: Participating in the video sessions only. Through the years I've watched women drop out of weekly Bible study because they couldn't keep up with the homework. Don't think for a moment that, if you can't do all of it, you're better off doing none of it. A shorter time in Scripture is far better than none at all. Watch the video sessions even if you can't get your homework assignments accomplished. You have LifeWay's blessing to copy the viewer guides for this purpose.

Level 2: Participating in the video sessions + doing the weekly homework assignments. Moving up to level 2 where you meet with God on the pages of Scripture numerous times each week exponentially increases your experience. When you turn the last page, you will truly know the Book of James and feel acquainted with the man who wrote it. If you've got the stamina to do the homework (and you do!), you've got it in you to view the sessions. Keep in mind that many of the larger themes are addressed in the sessions, so try your hardest to view the coinciding ones at the end of each week of homework.

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

1 Watch Videos

2 Complete Homework

3 Handwrite James

4 Read Articles

5 Memorize James

Level 3: Participating in the video sessions + doing the weekly homework assignments + *handwriting the Book of James*. I'm really excited about this level! For the first time in my nearly 20 years of writing Bible studies, we've arrived at a book of the Bible short enough to invite this exercise. The first and last weeks of this series focus on the life of James. In weeks 2 through 6, we'll study the actual Book of James. Each time we come to a new segment of James' epistle, I will ask you to read it then handwrite it in the back of your member book on pages designed for this exercise. If you don't choose level 3, you'll simply read the portion and, I pray, without a hint of self-condemnation. This option is simply available for those who want to take the next step to retain what they're learning.

Level 4: Participating in the video sessions + doing the weekly homework assignments + *handwriting the Book of James* + *reading "The Next Level with Melissa."* You might say I'm particularly partial to this level since I'm her mother. I say that with a grin but, while that's true, the real reason we incorporated this level is because you—or women like you—asked for it. Many women have written me after a series and asked how they could go even deeper in the material.

By that time, I've usually given them all I have to offer or, at the very least, all that the time and space allotment allowed. Woodrow Wilson once said, "I not only use all the brains I have but all I can borrow." Good advice, if you ask me; so this time around, I've borrowed my daughter Melissa's brain. And it's a big one. She has far surpassed her mother in formal theological training and the use of original languages, so I've asked her to bring a more academic approach to several of our concepts each week. Please keep in mind that her portions are options and that, stylistically, they are exactly what I asked of her.

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Melissa and I know up front that neither of our writings will suit everyone's tastes, but we partner this time with a deep and sincere desire to serve you more fully. I would gladly have added her name to the cover, but she asked that I refrain. My daughter Amanda is almost always involved in the Bible study process as my first reader and editor. This time around she had her hands full with my beloved grandchildren. You can know that she joins Melissa and me in serving you through this series as your number one intercessor. We wrote and she prayed.

Level 5: Participating in the video sessions + doing the weekly homework assignments + handwriting the Book of James + reading "The Next Level with Melissa" + memorizing the Book of James. Trying to picture some of your faces almost has me tickled. But don't blame me. Remember all those women who kept asking for more? Blame them. Beloved, if you commit to all five of these levels, the Book of James will live in the marrow of your bones—probably for the rest of your life. You'll find a short tutorial in the DVD bonus material that may help you if you're interested in this level. Needless to say, we're not recommending that anyone try to memorize the whole book in the seven short weeks of this series. In the tutorial, I suggest a chapter a month for a total of five months, but the best recommendation is whatever works! Because God led me to take this challenge, I've recited the five chapters aloud more times than I can count in the process of writing this study. The exercise continues to bless me beyond what I could have imagined. Think about it! Pray about it! Then, some of you, do it!

OK, Sister, which level seems the most doable for you right now?

1 2 3 4 5

I'm asking you up front because I'd like to challenge you to go one level above what seems reasonably attainable. If you're willing, stretch yourself one more level! If you're pretty sure you can reach level 1, try stretching yourself into level 2 and see what happens. All you overachievers, keep in mind that higher levels and harder work won't make God love you any more than He already does. Nor will memorizing the whole book make us superior to someone else who can barely manage a few sessions. We are secure in Christ and acceptable to God through Him.

We have nothing to lose here but much
Scripture to gain if we're game for a challenge.

Do only what **BLESSES** and not what burdens.

I'd like to say one last thing to you. I believe in experiences like this. I believe in Bible studies and God-centered books. I believe He can use them to alter a path. In the beginning stages of writing this series, a dimension of my life became so hard and had gone on for so long that I felt I could no longer bear it. I wanted to quit in the worst way. In the midst of it, I read a book. It doesn't matter which one it was because God can use anything He wants. I bawled at the end of it. Bawled till the tears were dripping off my nose and into my lap. Bawled until my lungs felt fluish and hot. The book talked about having the courage to live under strain and pain to be part of a better story. A larger story. It said not to wimp out. That only pain can bring about change. And, as a writer, not to be satisfied with writing a life I'm not willing to live. You're wondering what's new about that. But, then again, you know better than that. A subject doesn't have to be new. It just has to speak to the predicament you're in right now.

I'm humbled beyond expression to be your servant.

Jesus, Giver of Life and Lover of our souls, speak!

With deep affection,

Beth

Have the courage to live
under strain and pain to
be part of a better story.
A larger story. Don't wimp out.



Day One

ALL IN THE FAMILY

FLASH FORWARD

“When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:4-5

A new era had come, the time for which all time existed. Yet, for the most part, life lapped at the shores of the Sea of Galilee just as it had before the great terror. A handful of years earlier, a crazed King Herod ordered the slaughter of all the baby boys in Bethlehem. By the time the decree was issued, an angel of the Lord had already appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to make haste to Egypt with Mary and the child born to her of the Holy Spirit.

Don't suppose these kinds of dreams became a habit. Joseph had received a grand total of two. But by now he knew better than to doze back off and think about it in the morning.

Nothing was going as planned. Most Jewish men didn't live like this. They knew what to expect. The only thing they needed to know was what their fathers knew. Their trade was his trade. Their home was his home. The key decisions in life were dictated in advance by those very same fathers. Dad chose the bride in a business transaction with all the romance of a bank loan. Custom suffocated spontaneity from the very moment a Jewish boy gasped his first breath of air. That's not to say life wasn't good, but it was rarely unexpected.

The moment Joseph learned that the woman pledged to him was expecting, normalcy sprouted wings and flew like a raven to the wilderness. Suddenly the unexpected became all this carpenter could expect. If the angel of the Lord had not specified Egypt as their place of escape, the thought would have been appalling. He'd never imagine the cries of the world's oppressed rising to Heaven again from Egypt—this time through the wails of a toddler destined to be the Deliverer. No, nothing was going as planned.

Joseph may have become one of the rare men of history who thought going to sleep was his best option when he needed direction. Night after night brought no word; then, when he probably wondered if they'd been banished to the badlands, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream for a third time. “Get up! Take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel.” Why don't you complete the rest of the quote from Matthew 2:20 in the margin?

“... because those who ...

Continue the line of thought by reading Matthew 2:21-23.
Where did the young family settle and why?

Many would
ultimately live
because the One
humanity sought
would die.

Matthew 2:22 recorded yet another dream. If you didn't know better, you might think getting divine messages in your sleep had something to do with the name. Joseph designated dreamers in both Testaments.

Some of the dreams of the new era's Joseph were more like nightmares. Can you imagine the agony and irony a set of parents felt knowing that many died while the child Herod sought lived? They could not yet have comprehended that many would ultimately live because the One humanity sought would die. Then again, perhaps this was the meaning of the strange words of Simeon on the temple grounds when he beheld the infant Jesus.

Read Luke 2:34-35. Put yourself in Mary's sandals. What impact would Simeon's words have on you?

A sword will pierce our own soul, too. By the time Joseph and his family finally settled in Nazareth, he and Mary probably concluded that the sword piercing her soul had already sliced through her heart and done its damage. It had ripped them from their families and terrorized them with infanticide. It had bloodied their heels like a mad wolf chasing them all the way to Egypt, and it had turned home into hiding. *Finally*, perhaps they thought. They'd found their new normal. Thinking the worst is behind us is the better of two options, and for a while Mary and Joseph would have been right.

Scripture politely tells us that Joseph "had no union with her until she gave birth to a son" (Matt. 1:25, NIV). The young woman plucked from the pages of obscurity became the sign Isaiah 7:14 foretold, "The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel." Matthew 1:23 translates the name for us in a way that could take the perceptive among us to our faces or at least to our feet. "Immanuel"—which means, 'God with us'" (NIV).

Behold the gospel. Good news at its best.

Those of us with appetites whetted by tell-all TV may regret that the Bible has manners. It often holds its tongue. We don't know how long the couple waited to be together, and even to suggest that we imagine exceeds good taste. This is not the couple for our romantic notions, and even those who don't lean toward perpetual virginity don't want to talk about it. So, let's not. We can, however, talk about the outcome if we're willing.

Read Matthew 13:55-56 and record the minimum number of children under Mary and Joseph's roof: _____.

The Lord Himself will
give you a sign: The
virgin will conceive,
have a son, and name
him Immanuel.

ISAIAH 7:14

Since Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and did not share the same father, we can call them half siblings. Infant mortality rates were high in those days and only about half of the population lived past childhood, so there may have originally been more than seven children born to this household.¹ Matthew's Gospel tells us Jesus had "sisters," but we don't know how many, and we don't know their names.

The brothers, however, have the benefit of being both numbered and named. List them here in the order given.

Circle the first one.

So, there you have it: your introduction to the protagonist who will accompany and instruct us for the next seven weeks. Meet James, the half brother of Jesus Christ. You can't really know someone unless you know something about that person's beginnings. We know something about James' background from Jesus' beginnings. We can fairly safely assume that James was the second in the birth order of sons because he is listed first in the grouping as ancient literature was apt to convey.

Maybe I'm wrong, but I picture a person's life story differently according to the size of their family of origin. My co-worker, Evangeline, came from a family of 10 children. I can't think of her under the same lamp as another co-worker, Kimberly, who was an only child. One is not better. It's just bigger. Bigger families mean smaller houses, not by square feet necessarily but by sheer elbow room. In the days of Jesus and James, bigger families in smaller houses meant that meals, chores, and play mostly took place outdoors. When night fell, the sleeping quarters were skintight, and it's safe to say that, if Joseph snored, the whole family lay awake.

I also tend to think that people are shaped by the size of their towns of origin. Scott Korb, author of *Life in Year One*, suggests we picture Nazareth with a population of around 400 in the first century.² The roads were unpaved and public buildings were few. The houses were all one story, made of mud and stones, and topped with thatched roofs.

The windows of the small dwellings were usually high "allowing for light and ventilation but keeping passersby from peering in on you asleep on another straw mat." As Korb writes, "You would grind your flour, cook, and eat in the courtyard."³ Neighbors often ate together in those adjoining courtyards, a fact that sounds fun to a sanguine like me, as long as we're eating on paper plates. They didn't, however. "Everyone used limestone or chalk cups, mugs, bowls, and storage vessels—known to us as Herodian stoneware."⁴

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Low carb was not in the dietary vocabulary of the residents of Nazareth in the first century. Bread ate up about 70 percent of their daily calories so, by all means, go ahead and picture Jesus and James often breaking bread together and maybe several times a day.⁵ It was so much a part of their diet that the word *lehem*, Hebrew for *bread*, became a common colloquialism for food in general.⁶ It's not unlike the way we use the term *coke*. My girls and I often go "get a coke"; but when we order, they get Dr. Peppers and I get a cherry limeade. Everybody understands what we mean. That's how the Israelites were about bread when Jesus and James grew up.

Keep in mind as we draw this word picture of their young lives, we're only comparing their surroundings and circumstances and not their character or calling. One was the son of Joseph. The other was the Son of God.

Don't jump to the conclusion that these small-town boys never tasted city life.

What does Luke 2:41 tell you about the travel lives of Mary and Joseph's family?

This was only one of three feasts of the Lord that Jewish men were required to attend in Jerusalem. They didn't have to bring their entire families, but many did. Most families made all three trips annually. Go ahead and read the verses that follow in Luke 2:42-52.

Based on the information offered in verse 44, how on earth could these two parents have traveled an entire day without realizing their 12-year-old son was missing?

Welcome to life in the first century. They lived en masse, ate with the neighbors, and traveled in caravans. While no home is perfect, there was one in Nazareth that housed a boy who was. We can't really know James until we see him growing up beside the ray of sunlight beaming through that high window on the face of Jesus. What a strange way to live.

In closing our first lesson of the series, briefly describe your young life in the margin by including the size of your family, your town, and the foods you regularly ate. Share these biographical facts as a way of getting to know your small group when you meet for session 2. I'm so glad you came along. They will be too. May God make His Word a holy fascination to us and a flame leaping upward to its sacred source. Our God is an all-consuming fire.

Day Two

RESURRECTION POWER

FLASH FORWARD

“All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.” Acts 1:14

If you think you’ve had a multifarious tie with a relative, I offer you James with Jesus. Their relationship was complicated. Let’s give them that. None of us wants our closest sibling, half or otherwise, to grow up and leave us. The most complicated part is when they grow up and leave us before they’ve actually left home. That sense of having grown apart while we’re still together is harder than being forced apart by miles while we’re otherwise still close.

Jesus was exceptional. Yes, utterly perfect and morally flawless, but few of those around Him could wrap their minds around such a holy anomaly. Unshakably exceptional would have been characteristic enough, in the spirit of Luke 2:35, to reveal the thoughts of many hearts. Though we know Christ’s perfections through the unshakable lens of Scripture, let’s try to grasp them from the rickety top of a stepladder peeking through a window into their home.

Only two verses forthrightly describe the growth of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. The first one is in the context of His childhood, of all unfathomable things. The second one is in the context of His growth into manhood. Look up both of these and list their descriptions of Jesus.

Luke 2:40

Luke 2:52

Exactly how does a younger child follow that up? In a legalistic world where being wholly spiritual meant being largely unlikable, Jesus possessed the favor of God and man. You can have a relationship with the most loving, gracious, accepting person on earth and still be jealous of him. That Jesus was already beginning to shift His familial identity is obvious from Luke 2:48-50.

How did the various people in the scene respond to Jesus?

See? Complicated. Astonished, anxious, and upset in the aftermath, Mary was still touched in the secret chamber of her heart where she clutched life’s dearest treasures. Sometimes we can know something is right, wonderful, and as

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Younger siblings have accused their older brothers and sisters of playing God, but Jesus wasn't playing.

it should be yet still be pierced by it. We still feel the tearing away. Strong love includes a possessiveness, and one could not possess Jesus, no matter how close to His side. He was already wholly owned—heart, soul, and mind—by His Heavenly Father.

If Jesus jarred the mind of Mary and Joseph, who'd both been prepared by angels for His arrival and upbringing, imagine younger children thrown into the most complex family mix in human history. Younger siblings throughout time have accused their older brothers and sisters of playing God, but Jesus wasn't playing. And oddly, they weren't believing. Not the brothers anyway. John 7:5 says, "even his own brothers did not believe in him" (NIV).

We ask ourselves how Christ's brothers could possibly have disbelieved. Because timing was critical in the unfolding of the gospel, Jesus may not have made Himself fully known to those beyond the tightest inner circle. To Mary's eagerness to expose His miracle-working power at the wedding in Cana, Jesus responded: "Dear woman ... My time has not yet come" (John 2:4, NIV). By the time Jesus went public, His brothers might have been so defensive over His independence that their hearts were hardened.

Why hardened? Describe the event recorded in Mark 3:31-35.

Picture yourself as a sibling in a similar situation. You're trying to get to your brother, but a crowd stands between you. You play the family card, but the door turns to concrete. Please don't miss the part when the crowd tells Jesus His family is outside looking for Him. Picture how public this scene is.

Now, choose four words that might well describe your reaction if you were one of those siblings:

Two words keep nagging at me: poor Mary. Is anybody else thinking that? We moms find ourselves sandwiched between our family members like salami in grilled rye. We love all of them. We want them to get along. If not for their sakes, do it for ours. My mom used to threaten a nervous breakdown if we five kids didn't stop it. I always pictured that it would come on all the sudden like a heart attack and she'd just break on down from one joint to the next like a collapsing deck of cards.

Refereeing is exhausting and uglier in the home than on the court. Can't you hear the sound of a whistle in Luke 2:48 when Jesus was 12 and footloose in Jerusalem? "Son, why have You treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You." Not a single word from Joseph is recorded in that scene. Maybe Mary was talking for him. I try a similar tactic: me getting mad for him might temper him getting mad at him.

A lot of baggage gets stuffed into a family trunk until it finally pops open under the pressure. Often in families we don't get the luxury of one clearly-definable feeling. As much as we wish we could at times, we often can't just decide not to like someone and write him off. Usually we love him even when we don't like him.

I'm not forcing these feelings on the other children of Mary. I just want us to imagine the family dynamics later when Jesus was arrested, beaten almost beyond recognition, and publicly crucified. The horror and the rush of love, regret, fury, and blame must have been unbearable. Then He "was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ... he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time. ... Then he appeared to James" (1 Cor. 15:4-7, NIV).

That's where our journey begins. We don't know where they were standing or what they were doing. We know one thing from this inference: they were alone—just the two of them. Jesus and James.

In the remainder of our lesson, we're going to look in chronological order at the next two scenes that involve James either by name or as one of the brothers of Jesus. Look at each context with the complexities we've suggested and with the inferred impact of that private meeting. First, read Acts 1:4-15.

How do we know James was in the scene?

How recently must James have seen the resurrected Christ? Just make an educated guess within so many days or weeks for the sake of establishing how new he was on the believing scene. (Hint: read Acts 1:3)

The power of the resurrection trumps the power of the past if we're willing to let it. Gathering in that upstairs room with some of the very ones Jesus earlier called His real family, they could have posed for a poster with the caption "awkward." But this was no place for something so ridiculously narcissistic. When, like a laser, the call of Christ sears a hole through your self-protectiveness, you go wherever He leads whether or not you feel like you fit. How will we ever press onward through the hot winds from hell if we can't even get past awkward?

What do you think would have made James feel awkward about joining the apostolic group after his previous disbelief?

When the call of Christ sears a hole through your self-protectiveness, you go wherever He leads whether or not you feel like you fit.

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Describe a time when you faced feeling awkward, battling with doing what God was calling you to do.

Oh, that we'll find fresh courage in this journey to take our places in history alongside those who sought Jesus at the cost of fitting in.

One more scene and we close. Turn to Acts 12 and find the account of Peter's imprisonment when fiery trials were blistering the feet of those early Christ followers. To give you an idea of the time line, glance back to Acts 11:26.

What name had recently tagged those followers?

Now, read Acts 12:1-2. Who had been killed?

- Herod, the enemy of the church
- John, the brother of James
- James, the brother of John
- Stephen, the first of the martyrs

Read Acts 12:3-17. (You've got to love Rhoda here.) In verse 17 where our protagonist is mentioned, what instruction did Peter give concerning "James and the brothers"?

What range of elements might have been involved in their account to James and the brothers "about this" (NIV)? Think broadly and list possibilities here.

Now, imagine James getting the news from all angles. Maybe his thoughts went something like: *This thing we're doing is deadly. Terrifying. I feel sick. I feel exhilarated. He said not to fear those who can only kill the body. Think past the pain. What about our families? What does all this mean? I feel like hoards of demons have been unleashed on us. There are angels. Real, live angels—and some of them appear in beams of brilliant light. We may be captured, but we may be rescued. We may see horrors, but we may see wonders. We may lose our heads, but we cannot lose our souls. The stakes are up. The fire is lit. It's time to live like those who cannot die.*

Welcome to the life of those called Christians.


 LEVEL
4

 The NEXT LEVEL with Melissa
 THE EPISTLE OF JACOB

I will never forget the first time I read the Greek text of James 1:1. My eyes scurried back and forth searching for the name of our author in Greek and found no resolution. I saw the Greek name Ἰάκωβος (the English transliteration would be something like *Jakobus*) and thought, “Surely this cannot be the word behind our English name *James*?”

After some searching through a lexicon, I learned that *indeed* it is the Greek behind our English rendering, *James*. For the nerds out there who care about this kind of tedium, I found out that Ἰάκωβος is the Hellenized form of the Greek transliteration Ἰακωβ which is in turn from the Hebrew name יַעֲקֹב (*Ya’aqov*), or in English: *Jacob*.

I started to imagine all sorts of corrupt scenarios, like maybe James I, King of England, who was involved in the translation process of the Authorized Version of 1611 egoistically demanded that “Jacob” be translated as “James.”

After hours of some pretty boring research, I happened on a brief footnote that indicated the name *Ia’acov* became “James” in English as a result of the Norman conquest at the battle of Hastings in 1066.¹ The Norman conquest was a major player in shaping the English language. Who knew?

What makes this discussion extraordinarily confusing is that the English language has two variants that have been derived from the same name: Jacob and James.

We would typically think of Jacob and James as two completely different names, Jacob as the more distinctly Jewish name. As John Painter points out, however, “there

are clues that remind us of the connection between the two names in English. For example, the supporters of the Stuart Jameses are referred to as *Jacobites* and the period is named *Jacobean*.”²

In case I have lost you, the bottom line is that the man we know as “James” is named, like numerous other men in first-century Judaism, after the famous patriarch in the Old Testament, Jacob. This is actually the case for all the men named James in the New Testament.

The man we know as “James” is named after the famous patriarch in the Old Testament, Jacob.

Matthew 1:15-16 indicates that Jacob was also the name of Joseph’s father, which makes our author the namesake of both the patriarch Jacob and his grandfather Jacob.

The point of this discussion is to demonstrate that the more accurate translation of our protagonist’s name is “Jacob.” Throughout this study we will call our author “James” for the sake of simplicity and continuity with our English translations. But we would all do well to note at this point that the family of our writer (and by extension the family of Jesus Himself) was proud of its firmly Jewish heritage.³

Any time that we spend reminding ourselves of the blatantly Jewish roots of the early Christian movement is time well spent. So, in James 1:1 we see our protagonist, named after the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, addressing the twelve tribes in the Diaspora. Is that not absolutely gorgeous?