

## **VISIBLE TRUTH IS CONTAGIOUS**

*Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

Allow me to start by saying believers are called to walk their way to heaven and not to talk their way there.

What do I mean by this; religion that is only spoken is dead and cannot save anyone. True religion is one that can be seen in action, and this is saving religion.

Saint Francis of Assisi, a Catholic priest who gave up a life of wealth to live a life of poverty, once said "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words."

He meant that some of the most powerful sermons are not spoken but lived out – the world will not believe unless they see it or experience your religion. That is why miracles play a big part in leading many to believing in Jesus.

- Many unbelievers are victims of the way they see people of the light living. The way the believers live, gives them the assumption that they are ok because they don't see anything different in the way the Christians around them live.
- When your lifestyle is rightly aligned with what you profess, people will notice, and they will start asking questions.
- When your life is punctuated by a sweet aroma, a positive outlook to life, a likableness and an overflow of love, people will be attracted to you.
- This brings me to the title of our new teaching series; in the coming weeks if not months, I will be talking to you on the subject matter **VISIBLE TRUTH IS CONTAGIOUS**.
- Can people see your truth before you speak out your truth, can people see your light before you tell them about your light – something is wrong with a light bulb that must tell people that it is a light bulb.
- There is no better place to learn these truths than from the writings of the brother of Jesus by the name of James.
- The writings of James are probably one of the most practical and radical teachings you can find in the Bible.

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- Everytime you read the Bible, you are faced with two main challenges; the first one is a mental challenge in which you need to apply yourself in order to fully comprehend what you are reading. The second challenge is a moral challenge in which after understanding the scriptures, you then have a responsibility to live it out.
- When it comes to the book of James, the challenge is not a mental one because it is one of the easiest books to understand.
- Your challenge with James is a moral challenge because it is the hardest book to live by – once you read it, you can claim ignorance any longer.

*James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion, greeting.*

- James sets the scene by telling us who he is and the audience he is addressing.

Who is James?

- James was one of four half-brothers of Jesus who grew up with Jesus but didn't quite believe that Jesus was the Messiah.
- It must have been a tough situation to have grown up with someone as your brother to then have him one day claiming to be the Messiah. This caused untold tensions and confusion in the family.
- James was among the people who were taunting Jesus to appear before man to prove Himself as the Messiah.
- It is believed that James struggled with the Messiah concept until the resurrection of Jesus, who then personally appeared to James.
- From that time on, James was sold out for Jesus and was fully devoted to the resurrected Messiah – he then called himself a bondservant of Jesus.
- You will know that most of Jesus' disciples were related to Him and now after His resurrection, His own immediate family started believing in Him – this tells us a lot about the character of Jesus.
- Jesus' truth was visible to all and in that regard, it was contagious. James lived right next to this contagious truth and went all out to teach the church on how to live in the same manner.

Who is James addressing?

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*James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion, greeting.*

- When James wrote this letter, he was stationed in Jerusalem as one of the church elders there. But there were multitudes of Jews who had settled all over the known world of that time – the twelve tribes in the dispersion.
- These were Jews who would visit the city of God from time to time but predominantly they were foreigners in other lands.
- In a way, the Jews in the diaspora are symbol of the church of Jesus Christ that is temporarily located away from home.
- The Jews in the diaspora faced an integration problem; they were in foreign lands, but they were not of those lands.
- Doesn't this sound like the ecclesia - the called-out ones, the church is in the world, but it is not of the world.
- Being in the diaspora and away from the epicentre of Christianity (Jerusalem), they had to fend for themselves, they had to ensure that they remain true to the teachings of Jesus.
- Unfortunately, the Christians in the diaspora found themselves relaxing and started fashioning their behaviour like the locals.
- From time to time, the apostles in Jerusalem would get a report on how the church in the diaspora was doing and it is one those reports that prompted James "the headmaster" to write a letter to awaken them.

What is James addressing?

- James was a straight shooter; this is the man who had seen the Messiah up close and pledged to live for Him forever.
- James was a firm believer of a transforming gospel – he believed that every person that has encountered the true gospel will produce kingdom fruit. As Matthew said, you shall know them by their fruit.
- In his letter, James addressed the following matters
  - How to deal with challenges and difficulties
  - How to deal with temptations
  - How to deal with worldly possessions
  - How to deal with relational dynamics

## **VISIBLE TRUTH IS CONTAGIOUS**

- How to handle the word of God
  - How to make use of words
  - How to live out ones faith
  - How to engage in prayer
- The Bible has answers to every life situation and we will trust God that through these teachings, our truth will be visible to all.