

Connect360: Learning to endure

August 23, 2021

- *Lesson 1 in the Connect360 unit “The Making of Authentic Faith: Wisdom that Works” focuses on James 1:1-12.*

No one can accuse James of drawing out the introduction to his letter. While sometimes other books of the Bible have long and formal introductions, James began his letter quickly and clearly. He could have listed his credentials as a significant religious leader of the time but instead chose to identify as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. This example of biblical leadership stands in stark contrast to the modern notion of a “strong leader.” The wisdom of the world perceives a strong leader as generally unfeeling, cold and perhaps demeaning.

Just a brief consideration of the dog-eat-dog culture of corporate leadership highlights how different biblical leadership operates. Servant leadership prioritizes people over self-ego. James was following the ultimate example of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve others (Matthew 20:28).

Serve all the family of God

A servant leader, James’ heart was first and foremost to serve God and serve his brothers and sisters scattered all over. Some translations may use the term diaspora while others prefer scattered, but the point is the same—this is a message of encouragement and hope to fellow Jewish Christians of a vast geographical area. In other words, this is the beginning of a conversation between family. While James was in Jerusalem, his heart

was burdened to encourage his brothers and sisters spread out across the entire known world. They were separated, but James felt connected and united to them.

While this letter was written for the Jews of a particular time and place, as part of Holy Scripture, it also is for all Christians who are members of God's family. Ephesians 2:19 teaches that all who are reconciled in Jesus Christ are no longer strangers but a part of the family of God. Thus, all Christians should take heart and courage with James' message that learning to endure trials and difficulties will have eternal reward and be transformed to give purpose and meaning to their pain. This is a message of hope for all who are a part of God's family.

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