

# Who Are You?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please have a seat, and while you're doing so, please take out the book of James in your Bibles, please. Book of James, I hope you're having a good Thanksgiving.

Any visitors here that don't want to be too embarrassed, but welcome. I have the pleasure of being one of the pastors here, as you well know, as you celebrate Thanksgiving.

For us and our family, Thanksgiving's been kind of a good special time, as you all know. Friends, relatives tend to come and visit. Tomorrow, we're kind of having our big winding.

We had one last night with our small group, and they're great times. In case you don't know, Thanksgiving actually played a part with me actually being here.

Last year, my wife and I were spending a weekend up at Whistler, and we were driving through Squamish, and my wife absolutely loves Squamish, and simply asked, could we start praying that maybe you'll be able to pastor in Squamish?

[ 1 : 04 ] I thought she was out of her mind. I did not know of any church, or even if there was Christians in Squamish, I did not know. And literally within 48 hours, got a call from a friend telling me about a church in Squamish, and here we are, and we are immensely happy to be here.

Thank you so much for the love, support that you have shown us. We have appreciated it greatly, and now we thank you as our son has been able to move in, and most families are excited to see their kids get away.

We're actually excited to have our kid live with us for, if only a short time or a long time, it's okay. So please take out your Bibles, James 1, as we're going to be spending some of our time, but I've got a question for you.

Who are you? No, I really, really want to know. Who are you?

Are you real, or are you fake? I think it's a question that we are sometimes given to asking ourselves.

[ 2 : 27 ] Who am I? Sometimes it happens after we've been maybe in a time of deep thinking, which tends to be triggered by us doing something, or thinking something, or saying something that doesn't equate with who we think we are.

For some, I know some people have just finished a marathon, and asked themselves, who am I that I would do that? Or maybe you took up a trip up to Whistler, and you did the bungee jump, and asked yourself, who am I?

Or maybe you acted in a way that you're ashamed of. And you said, what in the world was I thinking? Maybe it was something you thought, or maybe it was a hurtful word that you said to your kids or your coworkers, and you simply asked yourself, did I just say that?

Who am I? If you were a fan of classic rock, you knew I began the sermon with a quick line from the Who's song, Who Are You?

The song was written by Pete Townsend. And he stated that the reason why I wrote this song is he was in New York, signing up with record companies, getting more money, and after he had signed this contract, guaranteeing them more royalties, he said he went out that night on a bender drinking with some of his friends who were in punk rock groups.

[ 4 : 15 ] And he knew that the people who sang in these punk rock groups, if they knew what he had just signed, would disavow him as one of their heroes, for the Who was one of the earlier punk rock groups.

And he wondered to himself, I wonder if they will think that I sold out to the establishment. After waking up, a police officer found him, passed out in the doorway, and asked him, Who are you? And he says he's been asking that question ever since. Am I a sellout? Often, we think those same thoughts, don't we?

Whether it's a thought in our head, a word that we said, or an action that we did, which causes us to ask us, Who are we? Some of us, we hide it.

I've got a friend, and if she told you the story, she would laugh, but probably be a little bit angry with me. But she drives a very nice BMW, and she's dressed in the most slickest of clothes, and she's got top-notch watches on her wrists.

[ 5 : 33 ] But what you don't know, she still lives in the same bedroom that she's had since she's four years old. Because the only way she can afford that expensive lifestyle is to live with her mom and dad.

For some of you, it's less obvious. You don't like people coming over to your home because they might see that it's messy.

Your kids might be behaving in a way that might embarrass you, and you're afraid that somehow this image that you have portrayed to others will look bad upon you.

Everything seems to fall apart with a test, doesn't it? The reality is, let's take a look at James 1, 1-4. James is telling us something here.

Let me read it for you. It says, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, the twelve tribes of the dispersion. Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

[ 6 : 51 ] For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

What he's simply stating there is, you will have trials, you will have tests, so you can know who you are. You can know what you believe. Now, who here loves tests?

Come on. I know there's a couple of you freaks in here that love tests, right? We got one, Dave.

Thank you. There's always that person that loves a test because they're a little bit on that competitive side. They want to see how good they're doing.

I'm sure if you ask some of our Quest students, sometimes when you take that test, it reveals how little you know, how much you know, or whether you've just been wasting your time for the last semester, right?

Sometimes when we don't do well, we feel foolish. There was this friend that I ran into that a test revealed something very serious about him.

[ 8 : 02 ] I'm in my third year at university, went to the University of Western Ontario in London, and I run into an old high school buddy. And the high school buddy says, yeah, here I'm at Western.

I got accepted into the business program. If you know anything about Western, they make a really big deal about their business program. Highly competitive to get in. Usually you have to go for your first two years, get a high enough grade, then you can get accepted into the honors business.

Highly competitive. So when this guy says, hey, yeah, I'm here. I got into the business program.

First thing I'm thinking is, man, I knew you in high school and you weren't too bright, right? Man, you must have cleaned up your act in some way that made you that good to get into the program.

Well, it would turn out that my friend got caught in a scandal. The scandal was his first test in business. What happened to him, that I got this story later from his brother, is after graduating high school with me, he decided to do the Europe thing, went over to England, started working at a bar, found some guy's ID.

Turns out he was a smart guy and he stole his identity. So it was funny because when I first met him, he didn't have the same name. He went by these initials, right?

[ 9 : 20 ] When I knew him, it was Tom. Now he was TJ. So little did I know that he had stole this guy's and sure enough, what, sniffed him out to the school. He took his first business exam and it was so atrocious.

Not only did they say, you don't belong here, you can't be the guy who applied, right? You know, Scripture actually does the same things to us.

The Bible calls us to test ourselves, to reveal our faith. Psalm 17.3 says, says, you have tried my heart.

You have visited me by night. You have tested me and you will find nothing. I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

Amen? Psalm 26.1 says, vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Later on, the psalmist will write in Psalm 139, search me, O God, and know my heart.

[10:29] Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the everlasting.

Lamentations 3.40, let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever been unsure of who you are, what you're thinking, what you're saying, and you honestly ask God, Lord, I need you to test me.

That's big, right? Paul will tell us in 2 Corinthians 13.5, examine yourselves.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?

[11:36] Unless indeed you fail to meet the test, I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test, but we pray to God that you may not do wrong.

Not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right through, though we may seem to have failed.

See, Paul understands to fail the test God's has dire circumstances, does it not? To either know God or not know God.

The Bible is quite clear in explaining that what we are created for, we will soon be jumping into next week, Ephesians, but Ephesians 2.10 says, for you and I are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

There's a purpose for us. There's something that I have been created for, I've been made for, just as you have been created for something.

[12:58] You see, the reasons for tests are not to make us feel badly. That is not what I'm here for today. I'm not trying to encourage you to try harder.

My goal for you today is that you would know who you are.

If you feel challenged or uncertain, I'm here to tell you that's okay. If you feel that your spiritual life is unhealthy, that's okay.

It's better to know these things are not okay now than when you get to a place when it really matters and find that it does not work.

Have any of you ever bought anything that's counterfeit? You bought something thinking it's going to do something, but as soon as you get into it, it doesn't work.

[14:07] I remember quite vividly my first counterfeit item. The year was 1980 and it was a Rubik's Cube.

Do you guys remember the Rubik's Cube? this is when it started to take over the world, right? It was one of the most popular things. My parents, being the cheap parents that they are, did not want to spend the extra three dollars for the authentic Rubik's Cube, but got me a counterfeit Rubik's Cube.

And you guys probably don't know, but you should know this about me. I was in competition to get the fastest time in the world. I had defeated everyone in my junior high school.

Up to grade eight, I was the fastest. 48 seconds. So I was going for the city championships and at the city championships, I was getting so fast that my Rubik's Cube kept exploding in my hand.

It couldn't withstand the high speed pressure that was going on. So I learned a very valuable lesson that day.

[15:16] Along with no name cereal, never buy counterfeit no name brands ever since. In case you want to know, it was kind of funny, the record at the time was 20 seconds and in my little mind at grade eight I thought I could beat it.

Now the world record stands at 4.77 seconds in case you're wondering. And it's interesting, one of my friends' son is actually one of the world's best at this. And when they turn, all his fingers are turning all at once.

It's kind of amazing. YouTube it. It's incredible what they can do now. But anyhow, I had put all my hope of being the city champion on a counterfeit cube and it didn't work.

My question to you is, are you willing to put everything on your faith before God, hoping that it saves you? I don't know.

Who are you? Sometimes, one of the best ways to understand who we are is, how do we identify ourselves to others?

[16:27] Let's take a look at James. Let's take a look at James, verse 1, 1. James simply states this letter, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

James actually begins this letter as many other official correspondence letters of the day. We read who sent it, we read who it sent to, and we find a short salutation.

Now, I want you to pay attention this Sunday to how James chooses to identify himself. Obviously, this letter is written by someone who was known to them, that James had no need to give any other indicator of who he was.

So, we, as looking into this letter, who was he? There essentially is three, James is in the New Testament, that we are familiar that scholars believe could have written this letter.

The first one was an apostle. His name was John James, the son of Alphaeus. However, history doesn't tell us much more about him.

[17:47] Scholars understand that he is not the author. The second is James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John. However, he is discounted because of his early martyrdom at the hands of Herod.

However, there is a third option that is open to us in understanding who James is. And this is James, the half brother of Jesus.

If you're Roman Catholic, that is your background, you might be thinking, ha, Jesus didn't have any other brothers.

brothers. Well, I'm here to tell you that he did. Roman Catholic dogma holds that Mary remained a perpetual virgin. However, Scripture is quite clear that Mary and Joseph had other children, and James was one of them.

Galatians 1.9 expressly calls James the Lord's brother. John 7.5 tells us that James initially rejected Jesus Christ.

[18:57] 1 Corinthians 15.3 says that after Jesus rose from the dead, he came to believe in his brother, Jesus Christ, as being the Savior, as Jesus appeared to him.

History through the book of Acts tells us that James presided and became the head of the Jerusalem church. He presided what we call the Jerusalem council in Acts 15.

And we see many patterns of speech similar to his quotations in Acts 15, which lead us to believe that the writer of this letter is indeed James, the half brother of Jesus.

So think about it for a second. This guy is writing you a letter. Notice it says, to those in diaspora. those were Jewish brothers and sisters who were no longer in Jerusalem, had spread across the land, and you're getting a letter from him. If I wanted to write a authoritative letter, what am I going to say, right?

[20:06] Probably might begin with Pastor B.K. Smith. If you're a doctor writing one of your patients, you start off, I'm doctor so-and-so.

Why? Because I want you to take this correspondence seriously, because the message that I have for you is serious. For some of you, what do you call yourselves?

Christian, often, right? If you're a Christian, you call yourself Christian. But then the question comes up, what does it mean to be a Christian? For some of us, primarily in a cultural and traditional form of identification that we see in Canada and the U.S.

It means that I grew up in a Christian home. I have a Christian Judeo-Christian background. For some, it means I don't swear, I don't dance, I don't drink, and I don't hang with those who do, right? For some, it's a political statement. It's a quest to defend certain values. For others to say I'm a Christian denotes past religious experience, a general belief in Jesus, and a desire to be a good person.

[21:27] Now, you and I know if someone calls themselves Christians, we sometimes ask the question, well, really, are they? So, I decided to do a scientific study.

What do most people identify themselves as? So, I opened up my Facebook account, and I looked at all the people whose last name started with A, and I looked at how they described their faith as. I read disciple of Christ, Christ follower, I'm a red-letter Christian, biblical, the right one said Baptist, right?

Evangelical, others put saved by Christ, lover of Jesus. Some people put soul, totally devoted, faith in Jesus, forgiven, adopted, unworthy, born again.

But what was interesting is that no one called themselves the same thing that James called himself. James calls himself something different. He says, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 22 : 44 ] He could have identified himself as leader of the Jerusalem church, could have identified himself as brother of the Son of God. However, in his letter, he shows us this form of humility and that he cares not about his physical relationship to Jesus, but his spiritual relationship to Jesus.

God has a servant, and this, my friends, is where it gets good. How many of you in your Bibles has a different word than servant in James chapter 1?

Check it out. Put up your hand if it's got a different word there. What do we have? Slave. Bond servant.

servant. There's three general words that are used in this position. Servant, bond servant, and slave. If we go to the Greek word, the word is doulos, which means slave.

The rendering reads, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave, is how James identifies himself.

[ 24 : 03 ] The only word that James cares to use to describe himself is a slave to God and Jesus Christ. This word slave, this word picture, is used more frequently to describe a follower of Jesus Christ than any other word in the Bible.

In fact, Paul, Peter, Jude, John, and James all use this term to describe themselves as slaves of Christ.

Their understanding to be a Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ is to consider yourself a slave of Christ.

During the first four centuries of Christian writing, authors regularly saw themselves as fellow slaves of Christ. The theological dictionary of the New Testament defines this word doulos as to describe the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave.

The emphasis here in the New Testament is always serving as a slave. Hence, we have a service which is not a matter of choice, but the one who renders it, which he has to perform, whether he likes it or not, he is subject as a slave, which is to do the will of the owner.

[ 25 : 42 ] So some of you might ask, well, why does it say servant or bond servant? There's two reasons why translators choose these words.

One, because of the sensitivity of the stigma attached to slavery in Western society. Translators made the decision to avoid that term. And two, doulos in Latin is actually service, S-E-R-V-U-S, and later translators made the mistake of confusing that term and thought that it meant servant.

So the question that we need to ask ourselves is, why is being a slave of Christ so different from being a servant of Christ?

One, a servant is hired, a slave is purchased. 1 Corinthians 6, 2, or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

You are not your own. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.

[ 27 : 03 ] You see, a servant can choose to leave the job, choose not to do the chore. The servant's job ends at 5 o'clock or when the dinner bell strikes.

Servants have an element of freedom in choosing what work they will do and what work they will not do. There is a level of autonomy, of personal rights.

With that of a slave, there is no freedom, there is no autonomy, and there are no rights. One commentator on the subject writes, to be a slave is an expression of utter devotion and total subservient to the master.

It means they are bound to the master and obligated to do his will. The term did not always mean degradation.

Our understanding of the term is largely defined by our Western understanding of the term.

However, in Rome, it is believed that there was one fifth to one half of the population were actual slaves.

[ 28 : 20 ] Some, because of criminal activities, or they were conquered in war, but they would always have an ability to buy themselves out of slavery.

slavery. Some willingly sold themselves into slavery to pay off debts to be cared for. Others were simply born into it by virtue of their parents being slaves.

What is interesting is this term doulos refers to being born into slavery. James became a slave by virtue of his new birth in Jesus Christ.

And because of this, he considered himself totally devoted to his master. James was totally dependent upon God for his care and sustenance.

much like a slave was to his master, a slave's food, clothing, home, and safety were taken care of. Charles Spurgeon writes the following, the early saints delighted to count themselves Christ's

absolute property, bought by him, owned by him, and holy at his disposal.

[ 29 : 43 ] Paul went even as far as to rejoice that he had the marks of the master's brand on him, and he cries, let no man trouble me, for I bear in the body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

There was the end of all debates. He was the Lord's and the marks of the scourges, the rods and the stones, were the broad arrow of the king, which marked Paul's body as the property of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, he writes, if the saints of the old time were glorified in obeying Jesus, I pray that you and I may feel that our first object in life is to obey our Lord.

My friends, this is my simple question that I have for you today. Who are you?

Are you beholden by God? Are you beholden by the things of God? God? Are you beholden by the glory of God?

[ 30 : 51 ] Do you willingly submit to his authority over you? Is Jesus the focus of your life as a way of life or is he some charm that you would wear on your bracelet?

You see, when we call ourselves Christians, we proclaim to the world that everything about us, including our very self identity, is found in Jesus Christ because we have denied ourselves in order to follow him and obey him.

Amen? Amen? Why this message? My hope is that we would be introspective during this time.

Next week, we are going to be jumping into the book of Ephesians and we are going to get into the great grandeur and glory of God.

It's deep and it's big and I want you to know who you are before you dive in there with me.

[ 32 : 02 ] It is a glorious letter and I want you to read that letter and be in glory in awe of God.

Before I end this morning, I want to read you a story that is told by Eusebius.

Eusebius is one of the church early fathers. He writes, I am a Christian. The young man said nothing else as he stood before the Roman governor.

His life hanging in the balance, his accusers pressed him again, hoping to trip him up or to force him to recant. But once more he answered with the same short phrase, I am a Christian.

It was the middle of the second century during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Christianity was illegal and believers throughout the Roman Empire faced the threat of imprisonment, torture, or death.

persecution was especially intense in southern Europe where Sanctus, a deacon from Vienna, had been arrested and brought to trial. This young man was repeatedly told to renounce the faith he professed, but his resolve was undeterred.

[ 33 : 23 ] I am a Christian. No matter what question he was asked, he always gave the same unchanging answer. Sanctus girded himself against his accusers with such firmness that we would not even tell his name or the nation or the city to which he belonged or whether he was bound or free, but he answered the same way every time.

I am a Christian. When at last it became obvious that he would say nothing else, he was condemned to severe torture and a public death in the amphitheater.

On the day of his execution, he was focused to run the gauntlet, subjected to wild beasts and fastened to a chair of burning iron. Throughout all of it, his accusers kept trying to break him, convinced that his resistance would crack under the pain of torment.

As Eusebius recounted, even thus they did not hear a word from Sanctus except the confession which he uttered from the beginning.

His dying words told of an undying commitment. His rallying cry remained throughout his entire trial. I am a Christian.

[ 34 : 43 ] My friends, the New Testament cries out that we are to submit to Christ fully as unto slaves, not as hired servants. But I ask you, are you a slave of Jesus Christ?

are you willing and are placing everything under him? Or do you consider yourself a servant, a part-time hireling, or one who seeks to serve when it profits you best?

I conclude with the words of John Calvin, for until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his every fatherly care, that he is the author of their every good work, that they should seek nothing beyond him, that they will never yield to him for service.

So let me ask you this question. Who are you? dear Lord heavenly father.