

# The Story of James

## On your marks:

Here is another [Footsteps to the Feast](#) collection of stories, games, simple drama, craft ideas, music and a worship outline linked to the life of the apostle James. This could be used to create a two-hour special event during a holiday period or at the weekend, for children and families, or else just drawn upon as material for a session with children on Sunday or during the week.

## Get set:

The following material is set out with the same subheadings as in the book *Footsteps the Feast* and you can click on to whichever part of this resource will be most useful to you for your programme or event.

## Go!

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## Introduction

### Seaside Surprise

*A special event to celebrate the story of the apostle James*

James grew up by the 'seaside'. That sea was Lake Galilee. We know quite a lot about

James:

His was a popular name. It was also the name of Jesus' brother and Jesus' cousin. Jesus' cousin James must have been shorter or maybe younger and so to distinguish him from the James in our story was called James the less; in addition the disciple called Jude had a dad also called James.

James had a brother called John. It seems that they may have been known for having rows with each other. Their rows were like thunderclaps! Jesus had a nickname for them: 'the Sons of Thunder'. Maybe it was because of the difference in their ages? John was probably still a teenager whereas James may have been around 30. (A bit like Dell-boy and Rodney in *Only Fools and Horses!*)

James had a dad called Zebedee and a mother called Salome. They were well to do. Their fishing business was so successful that they could employ people to work for them. Salome was keen that James and John got on. The Bible records the story of how she was once very pushy, wanting James and John to be Jesus' right-hand men in the new kingdom. But she (and they!) had really missed the point of what sort of kingdom Jesus was bringing.

It also seems that James and John's family were fishermen by appointment to the temple! There were known to the high priest's family. John used his contacts there to get close to the trial of Jesus.

And James was a fisherman with his brother. Coming from Capernaum, they were probably part of a Fisherman's Guild and so were good friends with Andrew and Peter, who were also fisherman. James will have been about the same age as Peter. Maybe Andrew like John was younger and it was these two who went off to hear John the Baptist and brought news back about Jesus, later introducing their brothers to Jesus, leading to James's personal 'seaside surprise'.

James became one of the three disciples who were very close to Jesus, along with Peter and John. He was a privileged witness to some special moments in Jesus' ministry, including the raising of Jairus's daughter and the transfiguration. Clearly Jesus was preparing James to become a leader in the early church. It's no surprise then that Herod singles out James to be executed as a way of earning favour among the Jewish authorities (see Acts 12) and, he hoped, of putting an end to the growing movement known as 'the followers of the Way'. So it was that James became the first of the disciples to die for his faith.

There is also a tradition that says that before this happened James became the first travelling apostle. It is said that he went across the Mediterranean to Spain. Whether that is true or not, tradition does suggest that his relics were taken back to Spain, and today the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in the north of that country is a hugely popular pilgrim destination for many Christians. A number even walk the 500 miles to the shrine, which is signposted by the Apostle's symbol - a scallop shell, which is the badge of pilgrims everywhere. This is another 'surprise' from the seaside that has ended up, like the story of James, being known right across the world.

St James special day is the 25th July.

## **Bible Footsteps**

The call of James - Mark 1:19-20

James witnesses the raising of Jairus's daughter - Mark 5:35-43

James is present on the Mount of Transfiguration - Mark 9:2-13

James asks to sit at Jesus' right hand - Mark 10:35-45

James is killed - Acts 12:1-2

## **First Steps**

If you have a large group, they could be divided into teams as they arrive, with names that pick up seaside activities (for example, surfers; splashers; swimmers; skiers, and so on). Each team could decorate their base with a collage of a seaside scene, including something from the story to come, such as James's fishing boat, his fishing nets, his catch of fish and his special shell symbol.

Start the session off with some active warm-ups related to the team names or any seaside activities, such as boating in a pedalo, putting up a windbreak, eating an ice cream, changing under a wrap, building sandcastles, walking on the stones, and so on.

James ended up travelling all around Galilee, down to Judea in the south and back, and very probably even across the seas as far as Spain!

As a further warm-up, get travelling like James and mime energetically...

going by foot, by bicycle, by car, by motorbike, by rowing boat, by jet ski,

by aircraft, by ship, by helicopter, by air balloon,

running, walking fast, walking slowly, walking on heels, walking on toes, walking on the sides of your feet, hopping, skipping, climbing, walking on the spot.

Punctuate these activities with an occasional 'surprise' shout, at which everyone has to leap up and look very shocked! Welcome to 'Seaside Surprise'!

## **Footsteps Chant**

Teach the following chant to a simple clapping rhythm to celebrate the story of the apostle James. Use this chant at various points to link the sections:

We're going on a journey  
A journey with St James  
Who followed Jesus to the end  
Through all life's joys and pains

Rehearse this at various volumes and in different tones of voice.

## First Footing

I wonder what surprises we might find at the seaside?

Start off your seaside special story with a treasure hunt in some sand. Hide the following items in a large bowl or box of sand:

- Interesting shells
- Pieces of netting
- A little boat
- Some plastic fish
- Some rocks
- A starfish
- Treasure chest (containing a scallop shell)

And depending on how much sand and space you have, include as many fun seaside items as possible.

(N.B. You can obtain packs of different shells, including starfish, from craft outlets like [Hobbycraft](#).)

What we have found in the sand helps us to step into the story of today's important seaside surprise.

*Shells:* James's story began down by the shore,...

*Some netting:* ... where fisherman were mending their nets once when Jesus came along.

*A boat:* James's family owned their own boat.

*Some fish:* James and John were probably sorting out their catch on the boat with their hired helpers. Perhaps James's mum, Salome, was sorting out the best fish to put on a special meal or to send to the high priest, with whom they had a contract.

*Some rocks:* Andrew had already introduced his brother Peter to Jesus. Jesus had given Peter a nickname. 'You're going to be "a rock",' he said.

*A starfish:* Jesus was the 'star' in this story. He had such wonderful ideas and did such amazing things that people followed him. They didn't really know who he was yet but they knew he was special. He was compelling. There was something different about Jesus.

*The treasure chest :* James had found something really valuable that day, though he may not have realized it at the time. He gave up everything to have the treasure of following Jesus and... (open up the box) he became more famous than he could ever have imagined. Today James's travelling symbol is a scallop shell!

Today's story starts with four fit fisherman. Try this tongue twister with the group:

Four fit fishermen  
Follow forceful fellow  
Finding firm friendships

Future and faith

How fast can they say it?!

## **Footbridge**

Here are some games you could play to help explore the theme of the day:

### **James Games 1**

In a circle play a fruit salad type game, in which you name off the children and adults with the key words:

Fish, Friends, Followers

When the leader calls out one of those words, all those with that 'name' must cross the circle to the other side.

When the 'altogether word' Faith is called, everyone moves at the same time!

### **James Games 2**

On four large pieces of A3 paper, draw outlines of a large fish, one for each team, or, with small groups, on A4 pieces for each person involved in this fish race. Gently concertina the paper a little but without creasing it, such that it does not lie completely flat when placed down on the ground. Now, by creating a gentle draft with a piece of cardboard, each team or individual should flap the fish from one side of the hall to the other. Whose fish will be the winner?

### **James Games 3**

You will need a large roll of plastic and thin and lightweight netting, which you can buy in the major hardware stores. Spread the netting out and across the hall, anchoring it on opposite edges. Individually or in teams, the children must now crawl under the netting from one side to the other to collect James's catch of fish from baskets at the opposite end. The fish can be made out of silver paper or card. Can all the fish that James caught be brought home?

### **James Games 4**

You will need several buckets of water, into which you have dropped a number of 'penny' fish. Provide each team or individual with a bamboo fishing rod and a small fridge magnet on a piece of string. How many fish can be caught in a given time?

### **James Games 5**

James's special symbol is a scallop shell. Play 'James Says' (a version of Simon says), in which, prompted by a particular shell word, the children must adopt a given shape each time but not, of course, if 'James' does not say it. Suggested shells and shapes being:

Scallop: sit cross-legged with arms stretched out in front and hands together in a large

cup shape.

Limpets: lie face down on the ground 'stuck to the floor'.

Razor: stand up tall and thin.

Starfish: stand up with hands and feet spread out wide.

Welk: twist hands, feet and face around so that all are at different angles and facing different directions.

## **Best foot forward**

Involve the groups to help you tell the story of the day that James had his big 'seaside surprise'!

Ask everyone to mime mending the nets, sorting fish, clearing the boats and folding away the sails.

It was an ordinary morning down by the Sea of Galilee. The people were busy about their jobs, particularly the fishermen after a night out on the lake. Can they imagine the noises, the smells and the sounds of that ordinary morning?

Then the ordinary was shattered by the extraordinary. Jesus came along with a clear and challenging message to the people:

'The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.'

See the paraphrased versions of each part of this message in [The Call of Jesus from Mark 1](#).

Print this off and distribute the words among four good readers.

Invite them to call out the alternative ways of saying Jesus' message using the suggested wording. Encourage them to shout it out, loud and clear.

And then Jesus says to James and the other fishermen: 'Follow me. I've got a new job for you - not trawling the lake for fish but catching people for the kingdom.'

So, should James go or should James stay? What would you do?

Use the exercise [Choice Circus](#).

Divide the whole group up into two halves. Each is now to become the opposing sides of James' conscience. One half should think of reasons why James should go; and the other half should think of reasons why he shouldn't go with Jesus. Dress someone as James.

Listen to the arguments from both sides.

James does decide to go. His symbol is a shell, such as might have existed on that Galilean beach. He becomes a traveller with Jesus. His journey starts that day with that

seaside surprise.

Going with Jesus becomes a life-changing decision: a decision to believe; a decision to change; a decision for adventure; a decision to travel; a decision full of surprises to come; a decision which will involve sadness and risk; a decision which leads to the experience of his life.

James decides to choose life.

It's the same for us. All our decisions have consequences. Some decisions have bigger consequences than others. The decision to follow Jesus is the greatest decision of all.

Jesus calls us, too. He thinks we are important. He wants us on his team - which is amazing! God needs us - which sounds unbelievable, but it's true.

(N.B. Fishermen were very unlikely choices as followers of Jesus. Their job made them religiously unclean. Interestingly this applied to carpenters, too, because they handled coffins and dead bodies! But Jesus calls unlikely people. He comes close to those who no one else comes close to.)

End with the Footsteps Chant again:

We're going on a journey  
A journey with St James  
Who followed Jesus to the end  
Through all life's joys and pains

I wonder where the journey took James next? We'll find out after a break.

## **Footrest**

Allow time for a refreshment break.

## **Footlights**

Here are some simple drama ways to explore further the story of James.

James's journeys with Jesus were full of highs and lows. As a warm-up with your groups get into some of the emotions of the stories to come by playing an [In/Out game](#). To do this, stand in a circle with everyone facing outwards. Introduce a feeling from the stories and ask everyone to think of how they might become a statue of that particular emotion or attitude. Then on the count of three, everyone should turn in and become their chosen statue.

Suggested emotions are:

Sadness, curiosity, annoyance, shock, tiredness, excitement, hurt, anger, fear, hopefulness

James had all sorts of experiences.

Get into groups of four or five

With [instruction cards](#) for each group, set up their group scene to create a [freeze-frame](#) or photo still of some of the key things James was part of:

1. The healing of Jairus's daughter
2. The Transfiguration on the mountain
3. When his mum spoke to Jesus
4. In the Garden of Gethsemane
5. On the boat up in Galilee, after the resurrection

Each group should decide on what James says in each scene. Can the others guess the story? Maybe some groups could be adventurous enough to create more dialogue and action for their freeze-frame and bring the story to life.

## Footnotes

Here are some music suggestions for the story of James in 'Seaside Surprise':

'I have decided to follow Jesus' (*Junior Praise*)

'I'm gonna walk by faith' (*Kidsource*)

'Jesus, Jesus, here I am' (*Kidsource*)

'Get on board (Kingdom Train)' (*Kidsource*)

'It's an adventure' (*Kidsource*)

'Come on, let's get up and go' (*Junior Praise*)

'Peter and John and James in a sailboat' (*Junior Praise*)

## Fancy Footwork

Here are some craft ideas for 'Seaside Surprise'.

Create a collage of one of the stories of James using painted pasta shells.

2. In [A-Cross the World](#) there is information about an Asian Cross with a craft idea using a large scallop shell and some imitation pearls.

Using a pack of different sorts of shells (from a store like [Hobbycraft](#)), decorate and fill out the five letters of James's name and add to it the following mnemonic to help you remember the surprise treasure that James discovered that day by the seaside in Galilee, namely:

## Jesus And Me Eternally Safe

This is a promise for all who, like James, decide to follow Jesus.

Here is an outline drawing of an icon of the [Apostle James](#) (this opens as a PDF). Enlarge this and print it off so that colours or shiny paper can be added to create an image of James.

Which colours will you chose and why?

## Foothold

Draw together all your activities around the story of the apostle James with a time of refecton and worship.

James was among the disciples on the first Easter Day when they saw for themselves that Jesus was really alive again. He was also there when Jesus returned to heaven at the Ascension and also ten days later at Pentecost when he, along with the others, was filled with the life of Jesus on the inside when the Spirit came upon them all. He was part of the first exciting years of the church as it grew but then he was the first apostle to be called home to heaven. James was the first disciple to be killed for his faith.

Jesus said this would happen; he said, 'You certainly will drink from the cup from which I must drink. And you will be baptized just as I must!' Mark 10:39 (CEV).

Cut out some large pieces of white felt in the shape of scallop shells, one for each group, and slowly place on this a selection of items that link to the story of James and the seaside surprise that changed his life. Here are the items:

- A small boat and piece of netting
- A small map of Israel/Palestine with arrows up and down it and around Galilee that indicate approximately James's journeys with Jesus
- A tiny child figure that recalls Jairus's daughter
- A stone for the mountain experience of the Transfiguration
- Two small chairs to remember Salome's wish that her sons have top seats in the Kingdom one day
- A cross
- A flame
- A scallop shell
- A sword

Let the group help you to make the story association from James's life for each object.

I wonder what you like best about James?

I wonder what is the most important part about his life?

I wonder which part of his life is especially for you at the moment?

All this came about because of James's choice... at the beginning... to follow Jesus on that 'surprise seaside' day when Jesus called him.

Prayer:

Help us, Lord, to say 'yes' to you like James did, when you call us and help us to be ready to follow you wherever you lead.

## **Footsteps to the Feast**

Bring the stories and activities around the story of James to a grand finale with a group activity together in a circle.

Join hands and then create a movement up and down like the waves lapping on the Galilean shoreline, where James began his journeys with Jesus.

Then on the count of three, lift the linked hands high with an accompanying gasp of shock as James meets Jesus and says 'yes' to him. The gentle wave has become a shock wave!

Next swing the linked hands back and forward to represent the walking and talking with Jesus that James now experienced. The shock wave has become a new wave of being a friend of God. Use the Festival Chant as you do this:

We've been on a journey  
A journey with St James  
Who followed Jesus to the end  
Through all life's joys and pains

Finally, lift the linked hands and then sway them towards you and then away from you like the tongues of flame that were above James's head on the day of Pentecost. The new wave has become the permanent wave of the Holy Spirit in his life, keeping him safe forever.

James's story can be our story, too!

## **Stepping out**

End your session with food together to celebrate all you have learnt.

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