

With Perseverance
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James 1:2-15

- **What are examples of difficult experiences that increase our maturity and perseverance?**
- Today we begin our study in the book of James, a short letter written by James the half-brother of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem.
- It was written to Christians who had been scattered due to persecution.
- It gives us very practical truth for living the Christian life.
- Galatians taught us we are saved by faith and not by works.
- James teaches us our good works should be evidence our faith.
- He begins by addressing his persecuted readers right where they were living: how followers of Christ should respond when we face trials.

The Big Idea: Trials touch every life. God uses trials in the life of a believer to test and grow our faith. How we respond to trials determines how we mature as a follower of Christ.

James 1:2–15 (ESV)

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its

flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

- "Count it all joy", WHEN (not IF) you face trials. Trials touch every life.
- What does James mean by the word "trial?"
- **When faced with a trial, what is the first question we ask God?**
- Our natural tendency is to try to understand the situation we are in.
- Truth: If I believe God loves me like scripture says he loves me, then I don't need to understand the trial (tragedy, loss, pain) I just need to trust my Heavenly Father. When it comes to loving and caring for His children, God's track record speaks for itself!
- Asking "why" is natural, but for the believer it isn't productive. What is?
- James gives the follower of Christ more than advice, he gives a command (count it all joy) that seems absurd. How can we have joy in a trial?
- The word "count" "...*may also be translated "consider" or "evaluate."* *The natural human response to trials is not to rejoice; therefore, the believer must make a conscious commitment to face them with joy.*"ⁱ
- Why on earth would I choose to "evaluate" a trial (loss, pain) as joy?
- James didn't say be happy because of our trial, he said be joyful that our Heavenly Father is at work in the midst of that trial. (God's sovereignty)
- Verses three and four: Trials are a testing (proving) of our faith that produces steadfastness (endurance), which leads to a mature believer who is complete and lacking nothing.

- David Platt writes: *“This is really the ultimate purpose for trials in this passage and in the book of James as a whole. God’s goal in our lives is maturity in Him, growth in His likeness.”ⁱⁱ*
- Peter wrote about this: 1 Peter 1:6–7 (ESV) ⁶ *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
- Whether it’s a chair, a house, a bridge, or our physical bodies, how do we prove the strength of anything? That applies to our faith as well.
- We may not like it but experience proves that strength is proven by stress.
- One commentator put it this way, *“True faith, like pure gold, endures, no matter how hot the fire. True faith therefore **develops**, or more literally “works” (katergazetai), **perseverance** or staying power.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- Truth: Choosing to count it all joy doesn't mean we celebrate our pain. It means we intentionally claim God's promise that He will use our pain for our good (Rom. 8:28.) The joy comes from believing that truth about Him.
- Trials touch every life. God uses trials in the life of a believer to test and grow our faith. How we respond to trials determines how we mature as a follower of Christ.
- One big thing we need in the midst of a trial is wisdom. In verse five James gave us the solution: ask God who gives wisdom generously.
- This is one of the great promises of God to His children!
- It’s my standard prayer request because it covers every part of my life.
- But James said asking for wisdom is not enough, we have to ask “in faith” and not doubt that God will provide it.
- He describes a doubter as being like a wave of the sea, double-minded, and unstable. We’ve all seen that. We’ve all BEEN that at some point.
- Truth about NOT being a doubter: Trusting God isn’t holding a daisy and saying “He loves me; He loves me not” as we pluck the petals. The very definition of trusting God is looking up in

- the midst of pain and professing loudly: *“He LOVES ME and I can trust Him no matter what!”*
- Truth: If I believe God is all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful, why would I hesitate to ask Him for wisdom — and why would I ever doubt He will provide that wisdom?
 - In verses nine and ten, James reminds us that trials are no respecter of persons or class of people. Rich and poor alike we all face trials, and if we’re a follower of Christ we have the same access to God’s care whether rich or poor.
 - We’ll come back to verse twelve, but in verses thirteen through fifteen James talks about the danger of temptation especially during a trial.
 - Temptation is always hovering at our heart’s door, but when we are in a weakened state because of a trial we can be even more susceptible to it.
 - Verse fifteen describes a “process” of desire leading to sin and to death.
 - Quoting David Platt again: *“Every trial brings temptation with it. When we face financial difficulty, we are tempted to distrust God’s provision. When someone dear to us dies, we are tempted to question God’s love. When we experience unjust suffering, we are tempted to impugn God’s justice. But know this: God may test us, but according to verse 13, He does not and cannot and will not tempt us. We are responsible in temptations.”*^{iv}
 - Satan tries to use trials to cause us to sin. God uses trials to grow our faith. The key to resisting temptation is claiming God’s promises.
 - Verse twelve is a summary of what we’ve learned: ¹² *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*
 - Enduring under trials does not save us, but God has promised there will be rewards in heaven when we do.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge wrote:
“Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular

satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my experience, has been through affliction and not through happiness.”^v

- Trials touch every life. God uses trials in the life of a believer to test and grow our faith. How we respond to trials determines how we mature as a follower of Christ.
- In this passage we saw several truths about trials:
 - Choosing to count it all joy in trials doesn't mean we celebrate our pain. It means we intentionally claim God's promise that He will use our pain for our good (Rom. 8:28.) The joy comes from believing that truth about Him.
 - Asking God “why” in a trial is natural. However, if I believe God loves me like scripture says He does, I don't need to understand the trial I just need to trust my Heavenly Father. His track record speaks for itself!
 - One of our greatest needs (especially in a trial) is wisdom. If I believe God is all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful, why would I hesitate to ask Him for wisdom and why would I ever doubt He will provide that wisdom?
 - Enduring and trusting God's love and care through trials results in a mature faith in this life and rewards in Heaven.
- Whenever we're facing a trial in life, we know we can turn to James chapter one and be reminded that God uses trials in the life of a believer to test and grow our faith. How we respond to trials determines how we mature as a follower of Christ.

ⁱ MacArthur, John. The MacArthur Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 61499-

ⁱⁱ Platt, David. Exalting Jesus In James (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (Kindle Locations 143-145). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Blue, J. R. (1985). James. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, p. 821). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Platt, David. Exalting Jesus In James (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (Kindle Locations 206-209). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

^v Malcolm Muggeridge, in *Homemade*, July, 1990
<https://bible.org/illustration/learning-through-afflictions>