

# JAMES

## Faith on Display in Hard Times // James 1:1-12

**THE POINT:** God uses trials to mature your faith.

### THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

It's hard to think of joy in difficult circumstances. Yet James wrote that believers should have joy, even in our trials. He was not teaching that the trials themselves are something to be happy about. What he was saying is that, even in the toughest of circumstances, joy is available because of our relationship with Jesus.

► **When have you been surprised to find out a “coincidence” was actually planned all along?**

### JAMES 1:1-4

After a brief introduction, James got straight to the point. He called his readers—and us—to face our various trials with great joy. God's ultimate goal in testing is that our faith becomes mature and complete. Through the trials we experience, He is developing endurance in us. We sometimes call it perseverance, faithfulness, or steadfastness, but it is God's work of developing our spiritual muscles and the resolve to stand firm in our faith. Joy in trials is not natural. In fact, it might seem downright ridiculous to most. And, from an earthly perspective, it might be. However, God has called us to live in ways that don't make sense to the world. When we choose to trust in Jesus, joy is available—even in the hardest times.

► **What are some common trials and difficulties we might experience in today's world?**

► **What benefits do we gain through experiencing trials? How have trials helped you to grow in your faith?**

### JAMES 1:5-8

God has promised to generously give wisdom—specifically to understand and navigate our trials—to those who trust Him and who ask for it. Believers don't need to be timid, because God has invited us to approach Him boldly. But we must understand that God calls us to ask with unwavering faith. When people focus too much on the ways of the world—which are constantly changing—it's easy to be tossed back and forth like a tiny boat lost in a stormy sea. Trusting in God and asking in faith requires that we focus on God's unchanging character and not the unstable world. When we ask for wisdom with this kind of faith, we can be assured that He will provide it. God is a generous giver of wisdom. He is faithful. And when we faithfully follow Him, He will give us the wisdom needed to live well through trials.

► **How can we know if we lack godly wisdom?**

► **What keeps us from seeking God's wisdom when we face trials?**

### JAMES 1:9-12

Poverty is a trial for obvious reasons. People have basic needs—clean water, nutritious food, adequate shelter, and warm clothing—that must be met to live in a healthy way. Wealth can also be a trial. Wealth has many practical advantages, such as never needing to worry about life's basic necessities. However, earthly resources are temporary, and we will take no earthly possessions to our graves. The rich are never to boast about what they have because, just like the grass and flowers, their wealth will wither and pass away. All people have deep needs which money can't meet, and the rich person must choose humility as an expression of faith in God. The ultimate reason to celebrate for both the poor and the wealthy is not found in this life, but in the life to come. The trials we face in this life are temporary, and just as wealth fades, so do our problems. But faith endures. In this world, trials strengthen our faith, and through faith we have access to God's gift of eternal life.

► **What can believers do today to prepare for trials that might come tomorrow?**

► **How does focusing on eternity change the way you respond to trials?**



# LIVE IT OUT

Unit 1 // Session 1

## ➤ CHRIST

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Jesus faced trials like no one else ever has or will, yet He remained faithful through it all. We are called to follow Jesus, not only in the ways He lived, but also in His attitudes and perspectives.

Read Hebrews 12:2.

➤ Why did Jesus endure the cross?

➤ What was the joy that was set before Him?

Read Luke 9:23.

➤ What are practical ways God is calling you to take up your cross?

➤ Why is this a necessary part of following Jesus?

## ➤ COMMUNITY

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There are reasons for the struggles we face. For one, God uses them to grow us in maturity and lead us to trust Him. Further, as God comforts us, we learn how to comfort others.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:4.

➤ How has God comforted you in tough times (i.e., through His Word or the comfort of a friend)?

➤ This week, how might God use you to comfort someone else facing struggles?

## ➤ CULTURE

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We live in a broken world, and we can see signs of this brokenness all around us. People everywhere are facing challenges, and many don't understand why.

➤ This week, identify a non-Christian friend facing a difficult struggle. Express genuine concern and offer comfort. Look for opportunities to share that Jesus is the answer to our hardships. Make sure you're sensitive to your friend's perspectives and don't over-spiritualize or minimize their real-life experiences.