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WHAT'S AN IMPORTANT LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED?

Faith on Display in Hard Times

The POINT ➤

God uses trials to mature your faith.

➤ JAMES 1:1-12

¹James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ: To the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. Greetings.

²Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

⁴And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

⁵Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him. ⁶But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being double-minded and unstable in all his ways.

⁹Let the brother of humble circumstances boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰but let the rich boast in his humiliation because he will pass away like a flower of the field.

¹¹For the sun rises and, together with the scorching wind, dries up the grass; its flower falls off, and its beautiful appearance perishes. In the same way, the rich person will wither away while pursuing his activities.

¹²Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

All of our bones are pretty strong, but the weakest ones are our toes.² Be careful not to stub your toe on the dresser in the middle of the night. It might just break!



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

Because of Jesus, people can live with joy regardless of circumstances, as joy is rooted in an eternal perspective and not in earthly circumstances.

The road has not always been easy for Dave Dravecky. While a pitcher for the San Francisco Giants, doctors found that he had cancer in his pitching arm.¹ To fight the cancer, Dave had a difficult surgery, but he was determined to keep pitching and wouldn't let anything stop him. Just ten months after surgery to remove the tumor, Dave Dravecky won the first game of his comeback. Five days later, however, while throwing a pitch, Dave snapped a bone in his arm and fell to the ground in pain. He'd never pitch again.

Because of the cancer and treatments, Dave's arm wasn't able to hold up to the stress of major league pitching. Eventually, doctors amputated Dave's left arm to save his life when radiation and other surgeries failed to stop the cancer.

Dave was living his dreams—until he lost it all. It's difficult to think of joy in these kinds of 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.

JAMES 1:1-4

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

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



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.
#BSFLFaithLivedOut

JAMES 1:5-8

3 How can we know if we lack godly wisdom? How can we grow in wisdom?

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

5 What do these verses teach us about God?

JAMES 1:9-12

6 What can we do today to prepare for trials that might come tomorrow?

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

8 If an unbeliever asked you why you still believe in God after a season of hardship, what would be your answer?



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

Because of Jesus, people can live with joy regardless of circumstances, as joy is rooted in an eternal perspective and not in earthly circumstances.

Because we live in a world that is under the weight of sin's curse, we will face all kinds of difficult things. Still, God has called us to live with joy. This is possible when we focus on God's blessings in our lives and on eternal life in heaven.

>CHRIST

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.

9 Why did Jesus endure the cross?

10 What was the joy that was set before Him?

Read Luke 9:23.

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

12 Why is this a necessary part of following Jesus?

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

> COMMUNITY

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.

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

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



> CULTURE

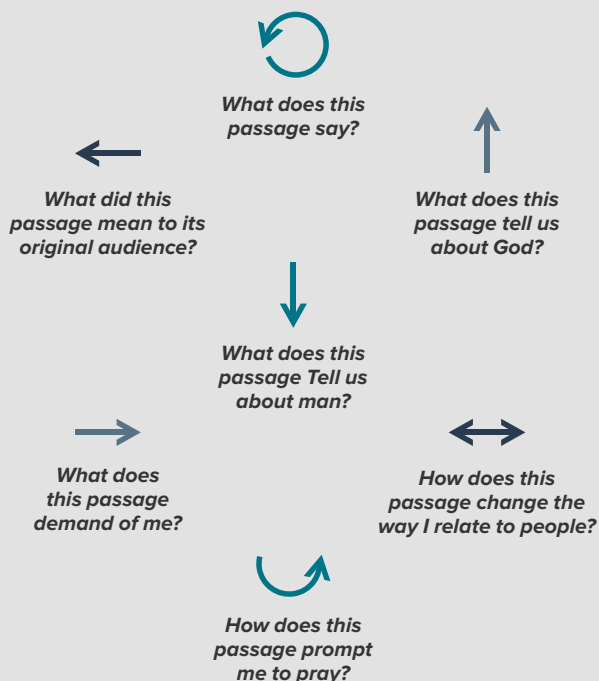
We live in a broken world, and we can see signs of this brokenness all around us. People everywhere are facing challenges, and many don't understand why.

15 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.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One ROMANS 5:1

God is loving and kind, gracious and merciful—and many people are tempted to focus on these qualities of God’s character, but ignore that He is holy and just. This means not only that He loves all people, but that He, according to His nature, must punish sin. And here’s the bad news. We’ve all sinned against God, and we deserve punishment for our sins. Thankfully, there’s good news too. If we are willing to trust in Jesus and follow after Him—that’s faith—then we are justified, or made right with God. We live in a world which is characterized by conflict, trouble, and disappointment, and people often experience a lack of peace and wholeness. Because of our faith, we can experience not only peace in this life, but more importantly, peace in our relationship with God. And this affects every area of our lives, no matter what troubles we face.

➤ Why is genuine faith so important?

➤ How are we able to experience peace in this life?

Day Two

ROMANS 5:2



In the Old Testament, the Jewish people saw God as holy, high and lifted up, and unapproachable. And really, all these things were true—God is certainly holy, and because of sin, no one could approach God except the high priest. But even he could only come into God’s presence once a year. However, Jesus made it possible for all believers to come into God’s presence. Though we are sinful, when we trust Jesus, His righteousness is applied to us, and we are able to come into the presence of God. The next time you pray or worship, pause and thank Jesus for making it possible for you to come to God.

➤ **What separates people from God? Why?**

➤ **How does Jesus make it possible for us to come to God?**

Day Three

ROMANS 5:3

In this verse, Paul pointed out that he and other followers of Jesus were facing incredibly difficult times. Specifically, they were being persecuted for their faith. In the original language, “affliction” refers to facing heavy pressure, or even being crushed, similar to an orange being squeezed or crushed to make juice. Here’s the point. When we squeeze an orange, orange juice comes out. Similarly, when a Christian is squeezed by the pressures of life, specifically persecution, what naturally comes out is faithful living. If anything else comes out—anger or cursing, hatred or conflict—we need to ask about the true nature of the one facing pressure. Though the hardships were no fun, Paul knew they were valuable because they not only proved the character of faithful believers, but the trials also helped them to grow in endurance.

➤ **What comes out of your life when you’re squeezed by life’s pressures?**

➤ **Why are hard times beneficial for Christians?**

Day Four

ROMANS 5:4

For anyone who's ever played sports or learned an instrument, we know that practicing is not always fun. There's not much worse than running sprints after a long practice. Running scales on a piano or guitar can be boring and monotonous. But there's value in all these things. At times, our lives will be difficult, and it might seem like the hardships will never end. When we endure, our character is demonstrated and our faith is proven real. This is incredibly valuable because trusting in Jesus, even when it's not easy, builds confidence in our relationship with Him.

➤ **When has it been necessary for you to show endurance?**

➤ **Why is endurance so valuable?**

Day Five

ROMANS 5:5



You've heard this before, but it's worth hearing again. (Often, repetition is an important tool for learning the things we need to know). Hope is having confidence that God will fulfill His promises and accomplish His purposes. When we truly love God—the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives helping us to love God with all our heart—then we can have real hope that we will be with God in eternity. This life is hard, but there are better things awaiting those who are devoted to Jesus. Let's commit to loving God with all we are, and He will not disappoint us.

➤ **In your own words, what is hope?**

➤ **How do trials and endurance relate to hope?**