

FOUR-WEEK BIBLE STUDY



TESTS OF FAITH



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Tests of Faith

Four Lesson Study on James 1:2-5

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” (James 1:2-5, NIV).

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Lesson 1: Joy During Trials

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2).

Do we celebrate or cringe at life’s trials? When we hear the word “trials” do we automatically associate it with joy? It’s pretty safe to say that most of us would not. There are no two ways about it – life’s trials can be hard. They stir up emotions we may not want to face.

Typically, there are different levels of trials. Some are easier than others. Some break our heart. When we least expect it one can slam into us right between the eyes with little or no warning. Trials that debilitate us into ineffectiveness. You know the ones I’m referring to. The unexpected death of a loved one. An adulterous spouse. A wayward child. The loss of employment. A call from the doctor. Those kinds of trials are extremely tough to understand and navigate through. Sharks circle waiting to move in for the kill at the first sign of weakness.

Simply getting out of bed each morning during such a trial can be a test in itself. Sometimes situations beyond our control unwittingly pull us into trials. For instance, helping a friend with a serious addiction takes commitment, time, emotional support, and energy. A company going through financial difficulties may mean serious trials for its employees. Other times, our own choices cause our trials.

No matter the degree of difficulty, whether caused by our own actions or the actions of others, trials happen to all of us. The key to dealing with (and growing through) them is Who we lean on for strength, guidance, and wisdom. Where our focus lies makes all the difference. Joy or pity party?

Take a moment to write out James 1:2-5.

Now read these verses aloud. They represent our memory verses for this study. I encourage you to write them on index cards and place them in various locations where you spend the most time.

The book of James (authored by Jesus’ brother, James) is sometimes called “the Proverbs of the New Testament.” It practically and faithfully reminds Christians how to live in faith. From perseverance to true faith, this book provides invaluable instruction about living authentically and wisely for Christ. In this first lesson, we dive headfirst into James 1:2: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds.”*

To give us a starting point, let’s look at the King James Version of this lesson’s passage. *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”* Notice that the KJV uses the word *temptations* instead of *trials*. Note that God never tempts us, but He does allow trials. In the original Greek, temptations in the KJV refers to trials with a beneficial purpose and effect; divinely permitted or sent.

In other words, everything is Father-filtered. A pastor that I greatly admire introduced me to that phrase several years ago. I’ve never forgotten it because it reminds me that God allows trials to mature and grow our faith not to harm or defeat us. To me, Father-filtered means love. God takes an active, personal interest in



our spiritual growth. There are numerous accounts throughout Scripture where God tests believers and sends trials their way to strengthen their faith in order to prepare them for specific service.

Take a moment to write 1 Peter 1:6-7:

These verses clearly answer the reason why God tests our faith – so that genuine faith may result in praise to Him. Not a pretend faith; not our family's faith; your *genuine* faith given by God.

We can be certain that if we fail a test, we can expect to be tested in that same area again. Sometimes we may get tired of the same test over and over. In frustration, we ask God, "Why don't you test me in an area where I can pass?" God already knows what we *can* do. He wants to refine and develop us in the areas that need to mature and strengthen.

According to the following Scripture passages, how are we to deal with trials and temptations?

Mark 14:38

Matthew 26:41

Matthew 6:13

In prayer, we invite God's power into the situation. When we do, we are no longer fight with our own two hands. We battle with the hands that parted the Red Sea, guided the multitude of Israelites through the desert for forty years, and wrought destruction on Sodom. We have the power of the Most High living inside us! If we truly understood that truth, we would invite trials instead of complaining our way through them.

God reminds us throughout Scripture that He is trustworthy in times of trouble:

Psalms 32:10

Psalms 34:22



Psalm 125:1

Proverbs 29:25

Isaiah 26:3

James shows a remarkable familiarity with the words spoken by Jesus in the Gospels. He references Gospel passages numerous times. For example, the theme of this lesson's verse is a Christian's joy in the midst persecution.

What do the following Gospel verses tell us?

Matthew 5:11-12

Luke 6:22-23

In these verses, James specifically refers to afflictions and persecutions endured *for the sake of the Gospel*. Why? Because they represent trials of the *faith* of God's people. By these trials, God tests His people, just as He did Abraham when He called Abraham to sacrifice his only son. James does not refer to inner temptations from our sinful nature, but outward tests allowed by God specifically for the testing of a believer's *faith*.

"Facing trials" refers to being unexpectedly encompassed—not in the limited sense of allurements of sin, but trials or distresses of any kind which test and purify a Christian's character. Encompassed is a powerful word. It means to encircle or envelope.

When we experience trials, doesn't it feel as if we're drowning at times? We feel encircled and enveloped by the pain, confusion, and even oppression of that circumstance. But with our eyes locked on our Savior, persecution for His sake enhances our joy. That sounds odd, but allow your mind to settle on the apostle Paul's life. He lived joyfully through many difficult trials.



What does Acts 5:41 tell us?

In the following passages, who endured specific trials?

Acts 20:19, 24

Philippians 4:11-13

1 Peter 4:12-13

Much like the process of refining gold, our faith requires applied heat to obtain the purest form possible. Left to our own devices, we normally choose to live easy, comfortable lives. But living that kind of life does not offer hope to a hurting world. It produces inappropriate attitudes of superiority and being “chosen” rather than diligently serving as Christ’s hands and feet. We endure trials so that our faith can be proved genuine, but also to offer the hope of salvation and God’s love to those hurting around us. And when that occurs, our genuine faith turns around and offers all the glory right back to God.

James reminds us to have *joy* during trials. That’s extremely important because joy is not our usual response when faced with difficult times. Instead of chiming in when others grumble and complain, we have the privilege to shine His light of hope into that situation.

Enduring trials such as cancer, divorce, or job loss are extremely hard. However, if believers never experience those heartaches, we cannot empathize with others who experience them in order to point them to the hope of Christ. Enduring those heartaches provides us a vastly different perspective than simply knowing someone who has. From personal experience, we are able to offer God’s wisdom and hope in ways that powerfully impact lives. Experiential knowledge opens the ears of those who are deaf to Christ.

Sinking into a sad and disconsolate frame of mind makes us faint under trials and negates our effective witness. But maintaining a teachable, joyful spirit enables us to better take in a true sense of the situation. We view our circumstance from a clearer perspective. We humble ourselves under Christ’s leadership and follow Him rather than emotionally reacting in harmful ways. Even through pain, God enables us to keep our eyes open to His instruction. Keeping our eyes on Him is vital.

The world and its philosophy may instruct us to act calm under our troubles. Christianity teaches us to be joyful. Sounds hard, doesn’t it? You bet it is, but Christ in us provides the strength we need. God’s testing of our faith comes from His love – not His anger. Father-filtered means love.



Let's review our Bible memory verses for this study. Write out James 1:2-5 once more:

On any given day, believers endure trials which threaten to overwhelm us. God allows these tests to refine our faith and burn off the garbage to leave only that which is pure. We are strengthened by the enduring fortitude of overcoming trials. We discover that His strength is perfect when our strength is gone. That knowledge enables us to face future trials because we know that God is faithful to not let us drown. The refining tests allowed by God are intended for our purification, much like a silversmith who refines silver with fire. When asked how the silversmith knew the silver was pure, he responded, "When you can see your reflection in it." In context with our study, we are pure when God sees His reflection in us. That results in others seeing Christ in us, as well.

In trials, we are much more sensitive to the presence of God. Our communion with Him increases as we search the Scriptures to find answers and ask loved ones to pray. Those actions draw us closer to the Lord—the very source of our joy. Having been through serious trials in my life, I can tell you first hand that my walk with the Lord would be vastly different and not nearly as intimate had it not been for those painful trials that brought about spiritual growth and full reliance on Him to get me through.

Joyfully enduring trials is a focused discipline. To face each trial with a joyous attitude takes a conscious commitment to defer to and trust in Christ's leadership. In joy, we trust Him wholeheartedly as He equips us for future ministry through the lessons learned in the valleys of pain and suffering. Being joyful during trials exhibits genuine faith and trust in God's will for our lives. God is intentional about you. He loves you enough to test you individually. Let the praises ring!

What did God provide as your main takeaway for this lesson?

Prayer:

Father, thank You for being intentional about me. In my comfort zone, I may not always welcome the tests of faith that You allow to come my way. But I know that they are for my good and the strengthening of my faith and character, so I welcome them joyously. Mold me and shape me for Your glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Lesson 2: Faith Tested

“Because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance” (James 1:3).

I was naïve as a new Christian. I wanted to learn and study the Bible to find out God’s guidelines for my “new” life. I wanted to clean up my act, get out of debt, and start living with a new focus and attitude. At first, becoming a Christian represented a nice, neat to-do list. I had planned it out to fit in my comfort zone all wrapped up nicely in a box with space set aside just for God to move in.

Those naïve thoughts were woefully short of reality. God had His own box and I was the one who would be moving. Even though I knew that some things in my life would change, I believed that my circle of friends would simply expand to include my new Christian friends. However, my old friends were no more prepared than I was when Jesus increasingly became the central focus of my life. They didn’t want to accompany me through the doors that God was opening. They were comfortable where they were. My circle of friends did not comfortably expand around my old ones. One by one God removed all of them except two. My comfort zone no longer existed.

A remarkable transformation happened from the inside out and continues to this day. My zeal to simply have a good time and coast through life has been replaced by a deeply embedded desire to study and teach His Word and worship Him through this broken vessel.

The tests that God orchestrated in my life were hard — and they hurt. You see, they’re supposed to. Pain gets our attention. God has to break the world’s mold in which we are encompassed. He cleans out all of the junk, puts His light in us, and begins molding us into the likeness of His Son. God cannot accomplish through us all that He desires if we stubbornly hold on to the world’s junk that suffocates our hearts. Only through faithful perseverance to give God 100% access to our heart will we ever truly experience all that He has planned for our lives.

Take a moment to write out this study’s memory verses from James 1:2-5:

In this second lesson, we move forward to study James 1:3: *“Because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance.”* The Greek word here translated as “testing” (*dokimion*) refers to proof. Tests uncover the truth. The proof lies in the results. So, God allows tests in our lives to reveal the truth. Even though He already knows the truth, oftentimes we do not. We operate under false illusions about certain aspects of our character or moral fiber. When God tests us in those areas, the results prove to be eye-opening indeed. Allowing Him to instruct and guide us through those valleys in our spiritual walk is vital to our spiritual growth.

The Greek verb for *develops* means “to achieve” or “to accomplish.” The tests and trials that God allows in our lives are not for His entertainment. They are meant to achieve and accomplish certain things. God designed trials to produce patience, endurance, and perseverance in believers.



Take a moment to write out the following verses:

Romans 5:3-4

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

The word *patience* in the above verses is the exact same Greek word as *perseverance* found in James 1:3. I love the King James rendering of James 1:3: *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”* Patience is huge. As you may know from personal experience, we tend to get impatient during difficult times. Difficulties mess up our schedules. They get in the way. They don’t follow our preconceived plans. Life is hard enough, right? However, enduring and learning from God’s trials and tests of faith over time develops the perseverance and patience that He desires for our lives.

Biblical testing greatly differs from standardized testing that we experienced in school. School standardized tests primarily reveal a student’s current knowledge. Biblical testing, as James uses it here, develops something not yet present in full measure. The object of God’s testing is specifically a believer’s faith. The faith that James refers to is belief in the power, word, and promises of God. It clearly implies that there must be a sound belief in God’s promises during times of trial.

Let’s take a moment to write out a few of God’s wonderful promises:

Ephesians 3:16-19

Romans 4:13, 16

God allows increasingly greater trials in our lives to increase our endurance for greater ministry and joy. The more difficult the battle, the sweeter the victory. The louder our praise to God! Those named and unnamed heroes of faith recorded in Scripture trusted God in the midst of unbelievable circumstances because their eyes focused on their future reward.

Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us: *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*



In 1 Peter 1:7, the word *testing* is used in the context of a refiner who tests and tries gold with fire. That is the same parallel that James uses in this verse.

Write out 1 Peter 1:7:

The fires of trials are enacted to prove that our faith is genuine. You and I can appreciate tests to prove genuineness. Take medications for instance. When we take medicine for a variety of ailments, we want proof that the manufacturer has tested it, put it through accredited clinical trials, and guarantees the medicine's safety and effectiveness.

Everything important is tested—trivial things are not. Take nursery rhymes for instance. No one tests those to ensure that they make sense or even use words that Webster's defines. But a Christian's faith in God is worthy of testing. Imagine going through life assuming that we believed the "real thing" only to arrive at the end to discover differently. When God tests our faith, it drives us to His Word. To the truth.

Since tests of faith are so important, they are administered by God Himself. Over time, testing prepares us for bigger battles. If you've been a Christian any length of time, do you recall the kinds of tests that you endured early in your spiritual walk? Looking back, they may seem trivial and even silly. But they were stepping stones along the path of spiritual growth. Suffering is the training ground.

Let's look at one prominent Biblical example: King David.

1 Samuel 17:34-35

1 Samuel 17:45, 50

Let's review our Bible memory verses for this study. Write out James 1:2-5 once more:

We like to be prepared for tests that we know will come our way. We would prefer some study time, or perhaps a clue as to what the tests contain so we could brace ourselves. But individual tests of faith do not have a pre-set study guide because God tests each person individually according to the plan He has for your life. It takes faith. It takes spending time in God's Word to embed His truth into the marrow of our bones. Faith in God's truths is critical.



So, what does a strong faith look like? Let's close by looking at Martin Luther's definition of faith:

Faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain of God's favor that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith. Because of it, you freely, willingly and joyfully do good to everyone, serve everyone, suffer all kinds of things, love and praise the God who has shown you such grace.

What are two specific things that you have learned through this lesson that have made a difference in your faith walk?

1)

2)

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the love and grace You pour into my life. Trials and tests of faith hurt. Help me to trust in Your holy reasoning and be joyful in the process. I yearn to be molded into the likeness of Your Son, so I entrust the carving tools to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Lesson 3: Perseverance

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything” (James 1:4).

Do you finish everything you start? I mean *everything*? Several years ago around Thanksgiving, I plunged head first into a new project to embroider a “P” on all of my cloth dinner napkins in time for Christmas. I set out to find the embroidery book and floss.

Upon arriving home that evening with all of the proper items, I arranged myself on the sofa and opened the instruction book. I was supposed to iron the image from the book onto each napkin so that I would know where to sew. I heated up the steam iron. Then I read the fine print that instructed, “iron should not use steam.” Hmm. I unplugged the iron and convinced myself that I could do it *without* a pattern ironed *on* the napkin, I settled down with all of the paraphernalia littered around me and began to sew. Needless to say, several hours and needle pricks later, I put the whole frustrating mess aside and moved on to other things. The project was never completed.

Many people are prone to start projects on the “full steam ahead” gauge only to lose steam and barely finish or not even finish at all. Whether it involves a task at home, a school assignment, a project at work, an exercise routine, revised eating habits, or a tedious ministry duty, we all fall into the unfinished category at one time or another. But this lesson’s passage makes it very clear that perseverance *must* finish its work when it comes to the testing of our faith. It’s not something that can be put aside indefinitely – it *must* be finished.

Take a moment to write our study’s memory verses—James 1:2-5.

In this third lesson, we turn our attention to James 1:4: “*Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*” Even though it’s not pleasant, perseverance in this context refers to suffering. Not being inconvenienced for a short period of time, but pressed on or wrung like a sponge over a long period of time. Most of us would not willingly choose such a course. However, when we look to God and lean on His strength and guidance, such perseverance produces strong, godly character.

There is a woman from my home congregation who comes to mind immediately. Over three decades ago, her husband, a prominent local businessman and elder in our church, went in for routine back surgery. Something went terribly wrong during the surgery and for the next *ten* years he was a quadriplegic and unable to communicate in any intelligible manner.

During those ten years, that faith-filled woman devoted every waking moment to care for her husband in every possible manner. Not one time did I ever hear her complain about what had happened or attempt to lay blame. Not once did I hear her call the situation unfair. Not once did I ever see her angry. Not once did I ever see any evidence in her mannerisms or level of joy that indicated her life was anything other than



completely normal. Not once. After ten years of living in those unbelievably difficult circumstances, God called her husband home. The celebration of life and worship of God at his funeral service was astounding to say the least.

I cannot begin to measure the respect that I had for this incredible, godly lady. She has since gone home to be with the Lord, but I was deeply honored to be able to call her a friend and sister in Christ. As a result of her perseverance, her faith is unwavering, solid, and strong. That, my friends, is the perseverance that James refers to in this passage. Not simply endurance, but being pressed on without pause for a duration of time. Have you ever endured a season like that?

Let's look up and write out at a few Biblical examples of perseverance:

Genesis 18:11

Genesis 21:5

Matthew 9:20-22

Luke 13:11-13

Our faith, purified and strengthened by trials, produces a staying power which enables us to live under pressure. It is not a passive resignation to a situation, but a confident stand when surrounded by overwhelming pressures. It's tenacity of spirit that holds up under the pressure while waiting for God's reward or dismissal. The danger is when we start looking for a way *out* of a trial rather than learning what God is accomplishing *in* the trial.

Tragically, trials often become the occasion for complaining and discouragement. We become obsessed with getting out from under the pressure rather than persevering and standing firm. Only through perseverance during trials are we free to become everything that God intends us to be.

What do the following Scripture passages tell us?

Romans 5:1-4



Ephesians 4:13

Philippians 3:14-15

Colossians 4:12

Perseverance is a product of faith that changes us from spiritual infants into warriors for God. In order to overcome trials, you and I desperately need to be equipped with the armor of God. Ephesians 6:14-17 reveals the equipment needed for our spiritual battles. **Let's fill in the blanks as we go through our battle gear checklist:**

“Stand firm then, with the _____ of _____ buckled around your waist, with the _____ of _____ in place, and with your _____ fitted with the readiness that comes from the _____ of _____. In addition to all this, take up the _____ of _____, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the _____ of _____ and the _____ of the _____, which is the _____ of God.” [Ephesians 6:14-17]

Once armed, we can stand tall and confident in Him to face our trials! In what area of your life right now do you specifically need to suit up in the armor of God? Take a moment to read Ephesians 6:14-17 out loud slowly. As you reach each piece of armor, mentally picture yourself physically suited up with each piece.

How did those inspired words increase your confidence level? Be specific.

When believers overcome obstacles through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have persevered. And one more thing: REJOICE when you persevere! Don't take trials as the world does. Be joyful at the chance to prove that God is Almighty, All-Knowing, and Faithful. We simply represent the frame through which others see the wondrous paintings and workings of our Creator. The key to allowing God's light to shine through you is not only how you *endure* the storm, but how you live joyfully *during* the storm. Let Him shine!



Let's review our Bible memory verses for this study. **Write out James 1:2-5 once more:**

Ralph Waldo Emerson penned these immortal words: *“By persisting in your path, though you forfeit the little, you gain the great.”* God is in the process of molding us into His best works. He intends for us to be mature, functioning Christians in every part of our being exactly as He intended from the beginning of time. We can do it His way or His way, amen? No Plan B needed.

In order to accomplish this, trials are necessary. They build in us endurance; a steadfastness under pressure which will develop us as mature, strong Christ-followers fully equipped to do the kingdom work that He has prepared in advance to us to do. So, put on the armor of God and keep fighting until the finish line. Each morning during times of trial, slowly recite Ephesians 6:14-17. Allow those words to give you a strong mental picture of God's protection and provision over you and your situation.

Perseverance is not something that we can put aside to focus on “some day.” Today is the day!

Prayer:

Father, I am so thankful that You provide me with everything I need to face and endure trials. When I'm feeling weak strengthen me as only You can. Give me the eyes to see Your face always before me. I'm ready to suit up. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Lesson 4: Wisdom Sought

“With His stripes we are healed.”

Over three lessons now, we have studied about the testing of our faith and perseverance. There is a vital ingredient in that equation that we need not overlook. **Prayer.** To be wise in times of trial is a special gift of God – and true wisdom comes only from Him. We seek that wisdom through prayer. We pray not for the removal of a trial or test, but for His wisdom to learn and use it well. God gives wisdom generously to all who ask for it – without finding fault.

We see numerous examples throughout Scripture of those who sought God for wisdom and were joyfully granted it. Remember Solomon? So why would we ask for wisdom? Because a believer in suffering does not simply need more knowledge; rather, we need spiritual insight in applying His wisdom and truth to our situation.

Take a moment to write our memory verses for this study—James 1:2-5.

We are wrapping up our study with James 1:5: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”* The original word for *wisdom* is frequently rooted in a right attitude toward God. (See Psalm 111:10 and Job 28:28). Seeking wisdom is an ongoing process – not a one-time request.

In Matthew 7:7, Jesus instructs us to “keep asking...keep seeking...keep knocking.” In a similar fashion, we continually pray for wisdom for spiritual insight. That insight enables us to maintain perspective and a sense of order when everything surrounding us is in chaos. How many of us wait until we reach a breaking point to cry out to God in prayer?

Spending time with the Lord in prayer affords us His wisdom, patience and peace for each day. James reminds us that God gives wisdom without reservation and without reproach to all who seek Him. God longs to give wisdom to anyone who earnestly seeks Him for it. He doesn’t get a kick out of watching us struggle emotionally or spiritually. He offers His wisdom to us so that we rely on Him and His strength to learn that which He has ordained.

Read and write out the following Scripture passages:

Matthew 7:7-8

John 14:13-14



Luke 11:13

Christians undergoing trials need special wisdom from God to face them. Can you imagine relying on our own limited wisdom when our circumstances reach far beyond our understanding? When the doctor calls with a serious diagnosis, do we rely on our own devices to get through it?

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. It involves applying God's truths and the truth that we know to the situations that confront us. James refers to our ability to take God's truth and apply it to the trials that we face. God's wisdom provides supernatural ability to see Him at work bringing us to perfection in Christ. This perception and understanding do not just happen by osmosis. All wisdom centers in God. Without knowledge of Him, we are unable to understand the issues and circumstances of life.

What does Proverbs 9:10 tell us?

Recognizing our need coupled with a willingness to continually seek wisdom from God remain crucial to receiving the needed wisdom. Self-sufficiency and spiritual pride land us into a long journey of confusion and unnecessary pain.

Why do we have difficulty asking for wisdom? In a word, pride. We really don't like to admit that we don't know all the answers. Our culture today arrogantly assumes that our 24/7 technology creates instant wisdom.

Knowledge and wisdom are two entirely different matters. Wisdom is that elusive quality we respect in others and find so difficult to develop in ourselves. James 1:5 encourages us to ask God for wisdom because He expressly promises it to those who do – and not to just a few people or wisdom in small amounts, but to *all* people liberally.

God also alleviates our fear to ask for wisdom by reassuring us that it *will* be given to those who ask. Friends, when God says that He will – He *will*.

Take a moment to read Proverbs 2:1-12. What specifically stands out to you in those verses?

Wisdom is ours only if we seek it above *all* other possessions and value it above *all* other diversions. God longs to grant us spiritual wisdom that not only helps us make wise choices and strengthen perseverance, but also gives us the ability to act and react with grace and wisdom.



Why is perseverance so valuable? So that we may be “mature and complete, not lacking anything.” Perseverance is not the goal, but rather the lifestyle through which believers attain spiritual maturity. Take Joseph for example. Joseph experienced severe trials when he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. He endured an incredibly long, hard trial as a servant and then prisoner until Pharaoh granted his freedom. Through that hardship, God gave Joseph the wisdom and position to successfully navigate Egypt through a severe drought.

During those times of trial Joseph’s faith proved genuine when he declined to sleep with Potiphar’s wife. He displayed godly forgiveness and wisdom when he made peace with the very brothers that had originally sold him into slavery. In short, Joseph trusted in God’s wisdom. Martin Luther penned a wonderful insight for us regarding Joseph’s life:

We were given these examples so that we would learn to have patience in suffering. Then, we will never complain about God no matter how horrible the grief, fear, or pain may be. Surely Joseph experienced such deep pain. ... We must patiently bear the bad things that happen to us. They are not signs that God has abandoned us or is angry with us. Rather they prove we have His favor. They show us that He’s testing our faith.

Are you currently experiencing a difficult trial where you need God’s wisdom and perseverance? Pause here. Take a moment to go before God in prayer and ask Him for His wisdom in that particular situation.

Over the next two weeks, commit to daily prayer over your situation. Then keep your eyes opened to behold the way God works in and through you in those difficult circumstances. Remember to give Him the glory and praise!

We have reached the end of our diligent study regarding God’s tests of faith. These passages in James say, in effect, if our Christianity is genuine it has to show up in times of trouble. Frankly, if it’s no good in trouble, then it’s no good at all. If it’s only good for when we don’t need it, we don’t need it. If our faith in God is only good when we’re doing well, then what good is our faith? It has to sustain us when everything goes wrong. A legitimate test of the genuineness of faith is seeing how it stands during life’s trials and tribulations.

One final time, write our memory verses for this study—James 1:2-5. Can you do it from memory? Here are the first few words:

Consider it

As we close, it is important to note that these passages in James do not distinguish between internal and external trials. I believe we can agree that every external trial soon becomes an internal one. In my experience, no trial that has stayed on the outside has been much of a trial at all. It’s only when it gets in and festers in our mind and heart that it becomes a true trial. Our lives are made up of trials in the form of



unfulfilled dreams, frustrations, unmet expectations, loss, betrayal, loneliness, disappointments, fear, conflict, criticism, and persecution.

The trials may start on the outside, but sooner or later end up on the inside. That's what makes them a trial. That's life. But when we seek God and ask Him for wisdom on a daily basis, our trials will be triumphs of faith. Not for our glory, but His alone.

Victoriously going through tough trials means having a joyous attitude, an understanding mind (perceiving both the reality and purpose of the trial), being suited up in the armor of God, and a heart that believes God knows what He's up to. Because He does, friends – He does indeed.

Through what God has taught you through this study, what have you found to be most helpful in your spiritual journey of faith?

Prayer:

Father, I am so thankful that I do not have to rely on my limited wisdom. You graciously offer me Your infinite wisdom in great measure without hesitation. May I never be fearful to ask You for it and use it often when I receive it. Continue to test me, Father, because I long to have a strong, genuine, and vibrant faith that will make a difference for Your Name and give You glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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