



STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, May 18, 2025

Teaching Title: The Truth About Trials

Key Scripture: James 1:1–12

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: James 1

Tuesday: James 2

Wednesday: James 3

Thursday: James 4

Friday: James 5

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY TOPIC:

Trials

MEMORY VERSE:

James 1:12 NLT

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

Trials and difficult times are a part of life. They are unavoidable and inevitable. But how are we supposed to handle these trials? Where is God in all of this? James 1:1–12 confronts this issue head-on. James shows us that trials are opportunities for spiritual growth, wisdom, and blessing. If we allow them, trials can build endurance, deepen our faith, and shape our character. God is present with us during our difficult times, and He desires to give us wisdom to navigate our specific situations, if we ask Him. When we endure through trials and allow God to shape us, He rewards us with the crown of life. So when troubles come, hold on to the God who holds the crown.

Questions:

Ice Breaker: Coffee or tea? What's your favorite go-to coffee or tea order?

1. Read James 1:1–12 together as a group. Share a time when life surprised you with an unexpected challenge. What was your initial reaction?
2. What is the significance of how James describes his own identity in verse 1? (See Digging Deeper below)
3. According to James 1:3–4, how do trials produce endurance in us? (see Digging Deeper for more)
4. According to James 1:5–8, why is wisdom essential during trials? Have you ever asked God for wisdom during a difficult season? How did He respond?
5. What are some reasons people may hesitate to ask God for wisdom in hard times?
6. Think about a difficult season in your life. Looking back, how did God use that situation to help you grow?
7. What is the "crown of life" James mentions in verse 12? How does that promise encourage you?
8. What is a current challenge you're facing? How is God speaking to you through this passage?

Digging Deeper

Question #2:

There are several men named "James" in the New Testament. How do we know who this one is? Many scholars have identified him as Jesus' half brother. What do we know about him?

New Testament Scholar I. Howard Marshall points out these key facts:

- His name is actually Jacob. It became James as it traveled through Italian and other European languages. But in the Greek of the New Testament he bears the name of Jacob the Patriarch.
- He was one of Jesus' brothers (Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19).
- During Jesus' ministry James shared the family's skepticism about Jesus' significance (Mark 3:21; John 7:5). But was changed by an encounter with Jesus after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7).
- Acts 1:14 therefore records his presence with the eleven apostles in Jerusalem between the resurrection and Pentecost.
- He is first named as a significant leader in the Jerusalem church in Acts 12:17.
- The Jewish historian Josephus records that the high priest, Ananus, had James stoned to death during the interregnum between the departure from Judea of the Roman governor Festus and the arrival of his successor in AD 62 (Josephus Ant. 20:9.1).

-I. Howard Marshall. *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Letters and Revelation*. IVP: Downers Grove, 2002.

James identifies himself as a "slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." William Barclay points out three implications of this statement:

1. It implies absolute obedience. The slave knows no law but his master's word; he has no rights of his own; he is the absolute possession of his master; and he is bound to give his master unquestioning obedience.
2. It implies absolute humility. It is the word of a man who thinks not of his privileges but of his duties, not of his rights but of his obligations. It is the word of the man who has lost his self in the service of God.
3. It implies absolute loyalty. It is the word of the man who has in no interests of his own, because what he does, he does for God. His own profit and his own loyalty is to him.

-William Barclay. *The Letters of James and Peter*. Westminster Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1976.

Question #3:

"In 1:2-4, James explains that trials are reason for rejoicing because of the wholesome effects they produce. The word "trials" (peirasmois) describes things that put a person to the test. They may be difficulties that come from without, such as persecution, or they may be inner moral tests, such as temptations to sin. James uses the word in the former sense in 1:2-4 and in the latter sense in 1:13-18. The outward trial, rather than being a reason for unhappiness, can be a ground for 'pure joy.' Peirasmois is trial or testing directed towards an end, and the end is that he who is tested should emerge stronger and purer from the testing."

-William Barclay. *The Letters of James and Peter*. Westminster Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1976.