

*James 1:16-18 NLT - 16 So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. 18 He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.*

You are the Father's chosen, prized possession. This perspective helps us to run the marathon of life with endurance in the face of hardship.

Hebrews 12 also gives us advice on how to run with endurance.

*Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT - 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*

*God has set the course of your race in place. Where must we focus to run with endurance? What helps you keep your focus on Jesus?*

## WRAP-UP

Life is a marathon, not a sprint. All of us will face trials in this life, but when we know that our good Father has overcome this world and is using every struggle in our lives to grow and mature us, we can run our race with endurance knowing we will go through it, grow through it and mature.

## Memory Verse

*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.*  
-James 1:12 NLT

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Like the father of the demon-possessed boy, during times of trial doubts can haunt us. Don't be afraid to face your doubts and seek God for the strength to overcome them.*

## "Endurance"

David Hutsko- Aug 31, 2019

## INTRODUCTION

Let's face it – sometimes life can be just plain hard. That was certainly the case of the scattered and persecuted church to whom James wrote his epistle. In the midst of trials and challenges and obstacles it's easy to be overwhelmed. It's easy to lose sight of what God might be doing when you are hurting. So, James reminds us that God is good, and He will bring good from even the most difficult circumstances, if only we will endure and not give up.

## Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

What is the longest distance you have walked or run?

## STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

### 1. Your Struggle is your Path to Growth

*James 1:2-4 NLT - 2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

Given the choice, most of us would rather live a life without struggles or pain. But our maturity, and our faith, develop under such challenges. In some form or another, all of us will suffer.

What did Jesus say about the trials of this life?

*John 16:33 NLT - 33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*

The hardships we face are not punishment because God is angry, it is an expectation of life in this world. Because of Jesus' assurance that

He has overcome all this world throws at us, we can face the trials knowing we can grow through them. But growth is not automatic. Some who are challenged will decide to abandon their faith. Others who endure and cling to God will grow.

The word for endurance in James 1:3 is *hypomonē*. It is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering; the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong.

*Have you known believers whose faith was deepened by enduring hardship? Share a little about their story.*

## 2. Pressure Propels Us to God's Presence

How then do we grow through our trials? It takes wisdom.

*And where do we find wisdom? (James 1:5)*

*James 1:5-8 NLT - 5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. 7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.*

When you find yourself in difficult times it should compel you to seek God. James says we should have faith in God alone and not waver. But doubt creeps in uninvited during those times of testing. That was true of the father of the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9. By faith the father asked Jesus and his disciples to heal the boy. But he still struggled with doubts.

*Mark 9:22-24 NLT - 22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can." 23 "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." 24 The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"*

This father didn't deny his doubt, but asked God for help to overcome it. His was not an antagonistic doubt that challenged God's ability, but a doubt that sprang from fear.

*How do you feel about acknowledging your doubts to yourself and to God? Are you worried that doubting means you have failed or that your faith is lacking? Don't let fear hold you back from seeking help.*

Jesus demonstrated that He is able to do miracles and that He can help us overcome our doubts.

## 3. God is Good

*James 1:9-12 NLT - 9 Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. 10 And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. 11 The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements. 12 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.*

James takes an opportunity to point out that God's heavenly blessings come to us when we endure testing and temptation. His focus is not in fleeting material rewards such as wealth, which can become a trap to us. They are greater and more precious and include the crown of life.

*James 1:13-15 NLT - 13 And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. 14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

Our trials can tempt us to sin and abandon God. But James message is clear; God doesn't tempt us, He is good, and He has good gifts for us.

*According to James 1:14 our own desires are the source of temptation. What kind of desires might arise in us during times of testing and trials that would drag us away from God?*

The closer we draw to God and the more we know and understand His character, the better we can endure the hard times.

*What truths does James share in James 1:16-18 that can help us to weather the storms of life?*