

blame God for our temptation to do evil.

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

We will face trials in our lives. James has shown us the way God can use those trials to grow our faith. In contrast to our faith being grown through endurance which leads us to life, James describes a process which leads to death. What is the process by which our temptation ends in death? What is the source of our temptation to sin? It is our choice whether to provide the environment where our desires grow into sin or not. What are some scenarios where you might be tempted by these sins and what is a good strategy to avoid being trapped- gossip; coveting; lust; lying; or pride?

Temptation itself is not a sin, sin is when we give in to temptation and act on it. We can be wise by avoiding the situations that feed those desires, or we will be faced with wrestling to free ourselves from the traps they set.

WRAP-UP

James concludes this part of his letter with a statement of hope. He tells us every good and perfect gift comes from God, our Father, who never changes. It is our good and loving God who uses life's trouble to shape us and mature us in our faith. He is kind and generous in giving us the wisdom we need every day, to avoid being tempted by evil desires which can lead us to death.

MEMORY VERSE

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. - James 1:2-3 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

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

Challenge- Be on your guard this week for situations that would tempt you to sin, and be proactive in avoiding the traps they set.

"Matured not Trapped" **Pastor Gina Nicola**

INTRODUCTION

This week we are looking at the book of James, and specifically, what James has to teach us about how we grow in our faith. And while James is acknowledging the very real problems that all of us will face, he is not telling us why bad things happen to us, nor is he focused on how to relieve to pain we might suffer. James is explaining how God uses those troubles in our lives to grow and mature us in our faith.

Ice Breaker

Would you say you have a green thumb, or do you have trouble getting things to grow?

Key Passage

James 1:12 NLT - 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.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Trials Produce Maturity

James 1:2 NLT - 2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

This letter was written by James to all of the Jewish believers scattered among the nations due to persecution. So, when he begins the letter with "when trouble comes your way" it was a foregone conclusion that they would face trouble. In the original text James refers to the troubles as *poikilos peirasmos*, or *various trials*. Something that would test and prove their faith.

The “various trials” we face can be any unexpected circumstance that tests us, whether physically, emotionally, financially, spiritually, or any other way. What are some of the various trials you have already passed through in your life? How did that trial effect your faith?

When we face trouble in our lives, we aren’t likely to immediately see it as an opportunity for joy. But that is what James is encouraging his readers to do. To do this, we need to shift our focus from the trial itself to the effect it will have on our faith- the maturity it can bring.

James 1:3-4 NLT - 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 perfect¹ and complete, needing nothing.

¹ teleios -full grown, mature

Romans 5:3-4 NLT - 3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.

Both James and Paul view the endurance associated with our trials as a critical component of our spiritual growth. Endurance means remaining or bearing bravely and calmly while we are experiencing the trial. What other responses might we have to trouble beside endurance? If we endure, what benefits do James and Paul foresee? Where do we find the strength to endure a trial?

God is not making your life miserable to grow your faith. Life is filled with trouble; it is one of the results of living in a fallen world. But God uses the trials in your life to develop maturity in your faith. And that is something we can rejoice in.

2. Spiritual Wisdom Grows New Life

James 1:5 NLT - 5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

James knows that facing a trial will take more than endurance, it will also take wisdom. And while worldly wisdom isn’t always bad, it can be inadequate or misleading. All of us, especially new believers, may struggle to understand why we must endure trouble, and how we should respond when it comes.

James assures us that we should not be afraid to seek God’s wisdom. How does James describe God and His response to our asking? Why do you think someone might hesitate to ask for God’s wisdom in a trial?

Matthew 7:7-8 NLT - 7 "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Jesus taught us principals of effective prayer in His sermon on the mount. Finding God’s wisdom is more than a one-time thing. It is part of our daily rhythm of prayer. It is continuous. It is also part of the chronical of our faith. Wisdom is more than knowledge, it is the application of our beliefs, it is living out our faith.

Seeking wisdom can begin by reflecting on what God has shown us in the past. There may be a lesson we failed to learn previously that God is showing us again, or we may have had a victory in an area that we should apply in our present situation. But the effectiveness of seeking God’s wisdom is not in knowing what to do, it is in acting on it. Can you share with your group the wisdom God showed you in a particular situation and how you responded to it?

James 1:6-8 NLT - 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.

There will always be competing voices telling us what to do as we struggle through our trouble. But God is more than just another option to consider. We can’t divide our faith between the ways of the world and the wisdom of God. It is like a skier who fails to commit to the turn, “Anything you approach tentatively, and any move you half make, puts you at a disadvantage before you even start.” Or as James puts it, you are as unsettled as a wave on the sea tossed and blown by the wind. Turn your whole mind to God, “commit to the turn”, because you can’t be facing in two directions and fully engaged in both.

3. Trials Mature, Temptations Trap

What would you say is our most common reaction when things go wrong? It might be that we look for someone to blame. James warns us not to