

SERMON NOTES: JAMES 1:1-18

QUESTION: HOW ARE WE TO RESPOND TO LIFE'S TRIALS?

James 1:2-4: ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1. EMBRACE THE **PROCESS**

- God is building a stronger **faith**
- God desires my **good**

James 1:5-8: 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. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

2. **LEAN** INTO THE TRIAL

- Confidently **ask** for wisdom
- God will **answer**

James 1:9-12: ⁹ The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰ But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

¹² Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

3. MAINTAIN AN **ETERNAL** PERSPECTIVE

- Man looks at the **outer** appearance
- God is concerned about our **faithfulness**

Cf. Matthew 13:22, The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

James 1:13-15: ¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

4. ACKNOWLEDGE THE **ROOT** OF OUR STRUGGLE

- Our evil desires are to **blame**; not God
- Our evil desires are the **root** cause of our undoing

James 1:16-18: ¹⁶ Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

5. TRUST GOD'S CHARACTER AND PROVISION

- God is not **fickle**

- God's **word** is producing new life in us

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE: JAMES 1:1-18

OPENING

- Discuss the emotions that are usually associated with trials?
- Would you ever place "pure joy" on that list?

GOING DEEPER

- Pastor Bruce gave five directives from the Book of James to help us respond to the trials we face in this life. Which of those steps is a challenge for you to implement? Why?

Leaders Notes: We have numbered these for you in the preceding pages. Be prepared to share your own experiences if you need a conversation starter.

- **Read James 1:5-8**

Why do you think it is so difficult to ask God for wisdom when experiencing a trial?

"He must believe and not doubt" - What are we being asked to "believe" in these verses?
(Hint: reread verse 5)

Leaders Notes: Many of us often find it difficult to discern God's wisdom in the midst of the storm. Though we ask for direction, we often do not see the path clearly marked out for us. We wonder, "What is God trying to tell us?", "Why do we have to go through this ordeal?", or "How does God expect us to get through this crisis?" The following verses offer additional perspectives on how to approach these questions: Proverbs 2:1-15; 3:5-6; Psalm 25:1-12; 37:23-24; 119:105

- **Compare James 1:5-8 to Jesus' words in Matthew 7:7-11**

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Leaders Notes: Both passages focus on God's desire to provide for His people and both exhort us to pursue earnestly and persistently God's direction and wisdom. The journey from our need to God's provision is always a faith-stretching experience. If God does not answer our prayers exactly the way that we expect Him to, then we have some reflection to do. It is never the case that God has left us, ignored us, or desires to harm us. And we may not ever know exactly why God allows us to go through this or that trial. But this does not mean that God has stopped loving us. Our faith will get stronger as we learn to trust our loving Father, even when we cannot fully understand His sovereign purposes.

CHALLENGE:

- Memorize the five steps.
- Share these steps with a family member or friend.