

James 1:1-8

Trials, Joy, and Wisdom

Developing maturity in the Christian life is the **theme** of this book. By examining the book of James we can expect to become more mature.

The book of James was **written** no later than 50 AD, over 15 years after the death of Christ.

What do we know about James? Leader of church (Acts 15:13) Half brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55)

Was he an apostle? No, that was James the son of Zebedee (Mark 3:17)

Which other New Testament author was a half brother of Jesus? Jude (Jude 1:1 and Matthew 13:55)

James begins his letter by describing himself as a servant. To whom? God and Jesus.

Greek – *doulos* – servant or slave: a relationship of subjection to another's will. A slave was not his own person. He was required to do his master's will, not his own. That was James' attitude.

What does that say about James? No pride. He was fully content to be known simply as Jesus' servant. He had an accurate grasp of who he really was.

Having Jesus as his half brother was not nearly as important as having him as his Savior. To James, the blood on the cross that saved him was far more important than the family blood in his veins. James was proudly asserting that he belonged to God and to Jesus Christ heart, mind, body, and soul.

Who is the letter written to? Jewish Christians (James 2:1)

Why were they scattered? persecution (Acts 8:1; 11:19)

As James was talking about trials, what is the key word in verse 2? Whenever

What does that tell you about trials? Inevitable. Bound to come. Get ready. You won't be an exception.

What is the source of trials as laid out by James? Because of what they are designed to do—develop perseverance, bring us to maturity, not lacking anything, how could they come from anyone else but God when they're designed to produce good? (verses 3-4, 12)

Trials are not designed to produce more faith. Faith is *tested* through trials, not *produced* by trials.

If trials do not produce faith, what does? Romans 10:17 tells us faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Faith is built in us as we hear and understand and trust in God's Word. It has such a central role in our lives as Christians! We must not neglect it. (Hebrews 4:12)

Application: What trials you can expect to face? How do you normally feel and respond when you face a trial?

God gives us examples of trials in the lives of various people in the Bible to learn from. Who comes to mind? Paul and Silas chained in prison (Acts 16:23-33) Joseph imprisoned (Genesis 39-41) Paul's list of trials (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) David and King Saul (1 Samuel 16-31) Job's trials (Job 1-42)

How does James tell us to respond to trials? With a joyful attitude and heart. Remember that trials are not a sign of God's displeasure. They are God's instruments for growing us into maturity. The Lord Jesus said: "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33).

Define/describe joy. Not necessarily happiness. Closely linked with peace. Supernatural.

How can we be joyful in the midst of a trial? Need a plan/recipe/4 step approach/practical solution.

1. Recognize it as a trial—often we just think we are having a bad day.
2. Remember that trials have a purpose—realize there is a plan to shape us into the image of Christ.
3. Get your focus off the trial, off yourself. See beyond the trial and circumstances.
4. Pray and ask God for wisdom, strength, and encouragement.

I'm going through a trial. I'm looking for joy. Where can I find it? Fruit of Spirit (Galatians 5:22) The Holy Spirit has this joy waiting for us. If we are linked to Him, it will be manifest in our lives.

What could hinder/derail that relationship? Unconfessed sin. Ask to be filled afresh/anew. Put yourself in a position to be ministered to. Meditate on Scriptures. Spend time with God. Pray for joy to be restored and be manifest in your life. The secret to living a victorious life is the Word of God in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. God is not obligated to act according to our plan. This is a good thing. We can't limit God.

How would you paraphrase "Consider it pure joy....?" What exactly does that mean?

ESV—Count it all joy

HCSB—consider it a great joy

NASB—Consider it all joy

KJV—count it all joy

Amplified—consider it wholly joyful

GNT—consider yourselves fortunate

NLT—when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy

Message—Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides.

Not partial joy. Not some joy. Not a mixture. He did not say that they must *feel* it all joy, or that trials *are* all joy.

He didn't say to be joyful *for* the trial.

Why might God want us to have joy in the midst of trials? Our joy in the midst of trials will be a powerful witness to the world when they see it. Having joy means recognizing that He is the author of the trial and there is a higher purpose for it.

In the midst of discussing trials, James talks about wisdom. What is the secret to getting wisdom? Pray and ask God for wisdom. Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 1:7 tell us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." To get wisdom, I have to be right with the Lord. Note that fear of the Lord is just the starting point (beginning) for getting wisdom.

What's the link between trials/perseverance and wisdom? If we're going to have joy in the midst of trials, we will need wisdom to understand what we're going through...wisdom to see the big picture...to see the trial from an eternal perspective.

This is not a promise that God will give everyone who asks Him for wisdom a higher IQ, but rather the ability to see the importance of enduring trials and persevering in them faithfully. Without wisdom, we are clueless about what's going on.

How will I know when I get wisdom? How will that manifest itself? The decisions you make will be good ones. Just believe. Don't doubt. Pray for wisdom every day.

Application: How might wisdom be manifest in your life?

What's the difference between a smart person and a wise person? Knowledge without application.

Who are some examples of men of wisdom? Joseph was a prisoner in Egypt, yet because he feared God, he was possessed of a wisdom far greater than that of the wise men and astrologers of Egypt (Genesis 41:39). Daniel was a captive in Babylon, yet he could advise the king and Babylon's wisest men, because he feared God (Daniel 2). Paul was a prisoner in chains, yet he could advise the navigators on the sea better than they knew themselves, because he feared God (Acts 27). They all got their wisdom from God.

How does James tell us our request for wisdom must be made? (James 1:6) In faith, without doubting God's ability or desire to give us His wisdom.

What's the mark of the double-minded man? What does he look like? Doubter, unstable, in the middle ground between faith and unbelief, lacking confidence in God's faithfulness or power. One who trusts and obeys God part of the time but not consistently. He or she really is at the mercy of their circumstances.

Visualize the double-minded, unstable man. In the midst of a trial, he asks God for help, then he turns to his worldly friends to get their opinion, then he turns on Oprah/Dr. Phil, then he buys a "how to" book. He looks for answers everywhere, trying to cover all the bases. He is not loyal to God alone. He has several opposite opinions in his mind. He cannot choose which is the right way to go. At one moment, he believes and the next moment, he does not. God says that He and He alone will provide.

MEMORIZE: James 1:2-3