

Week 1—James 1:1-12

DAILY DOSE OF JAMES



MONDAY—How is Joy Possible when facing trouble? (1:2-3)

James tells us to “consider it joy” when we face trials of many kinds. At first, that concept sounds a little strange, especially if we don’t read the rest of the verse which says, “because the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” James isn’t saying here that we should automatically be happy when difficulties come our way. But, the thought that God can make us stronger through the trial is grounds for much comfort and joy.

Take a moment to think about the trials you have experienced in your past.

- What difficult experiences have helped you grow in perseverance?
- How have you grown from them.
- What are some important things for you to remember the next time a trial comes your way?

If we take time to reflect on the growth we have experience in the past, we should be more equipped to face the trials of today or tomorrow knowing that as a child of God, those experiences will not go to waste.

TUESDAY—What does it mean to be a mature Christian? (1:4)

In verse 4, James says that perseverance leads us to maturity. Maturity is one of those things that seems a bit slippery. Those times that you thought you had it and can now look back – you realize you really didn’t. Didn’t we all think we were mature when we were sophomores in High School!

Christian maturity is something that is a progressive journey. It

involves becoming more and more like Jesus in our thinking, our actions, our character, and our will. Though Christians may never be perfect while living in a sinful world, God's desire still is that we become like Christ. Through prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship, serving others and other spiritual disciplines a person can grow in maturity. James indicates, though, that perseverance is key to our growth and maturity as a Christian. This perseverance is the same perseverance that comes from those difficult times and trials.

- What is a time period in your life that you felt like you really grew in maturity?
- What are some things you think you could improve in your life to help you grow in your maturity as a Christian?

WEDNESDAY—What should we pray for when we are going through trials? (1:5)

Have you ever found it difficult to know what to pray for when tough times come your way? Often we will ask God for strength to get through it or for God to take the trial away. But James helps us understand what to do in the midst of a trial. According to verse 5, we should ask God for wisdom.

Why would we need wisdom when we are going through trials? Shouldn't we ask for strength, grace, or deliverance? Here's why we ask for wisdom: We need wisdom so we will not waste the opportunities God is giving us to mature. Wisdom helps us understand how to use these circumstances for our good and God's glory. Remember, God's desire for us is maturity.

Finally, in case anyone is struggling in their faith and prayer life, James includes in verse 5 a short description of the God he is telling us to ask. Our God is the great Giver. But not only does He give, He gives generously. God desires to help us grow in our ability to count on Him as we walk through the difficulties that are inevitable in this life. When asked, He will provide us with a generous supply of wisdom to help us grow more into the likeness of Jesus.

- When you go through trials, who do you usually go to for help?
- How do you think your view of a trial would be affected if the first thing you did was to ask God for wisdom?
- How do you think your understanding of God affects how you

- pray?
- What are some things you can do to grow in your prayer life?
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THURSDAY—Does God reject my prayers if I experience doubt?

James 1:6-8 are verses that have tormented many Christians for years. They say this:

“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. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

Have you ever started praying and realized your mind wandered? Or perhaps you prayed for something and really didn't think God would answer you. Do these verses indicate that God will automatically reject your requests because of a lack of faith?

When Paul says that we should “not doubt,” he is literally saying that we should not have a divided mind. When he refers to someone who is “double-minded,” he is talking about someone who is essentially “double-souled.” A person who has a divided mind and a double soul is someone who knows what is right and true, yet chooses to deliberately harbor, repress, conceal, and ignore sin. This person, who is internally conflicted with truth and willful sin, seems to be the person Paul is challenging here, not the person who experiences occasional doubt. James supports this explanation of double-mindedness in James 4:8: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts you double-minded.”

- Do you have any pockets of sin that you have not dealt with?
- How do you think some of that concealed sin affects the way to pray to God?
- What are some things you should do (or should stop doing) to keep you from being “double-minded.”

FRIDAY – What is of true worth in this life? (James 1:9-12)

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 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. 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. (James 1:9-12)

In James 1:2-11, James has helped us understand how to view testings and trials as opportunities for growth and has given us a game plan when we are in the midst of difficulties – ask for wisdom. He has also reminded us in verses 9-11 that our real worth is not tied to our material circumstances, but to our position in Christ.

Now, in verse 12, James essentially sums up what he has said so far. He wants to help suffering Christians find the strength to make tough moral choices. He calls us to face the issue of worth. Persevering is worth doing, because the crown of life is worth more than avoiding the trial. James calls for courageous applications of this principle. Giving up on a difficult ministry, retaliating against people who are mistreating you, withdrawing from active participation in worship and fellowship, compromising moral standards, interrupting your life of obedience, turning away from a walk of fellowship with the Lord--all these responses to adversity assume that escaping the trial is of more value than gaining the crown of life.

As Christians we are called to place greater value on the goal of becoming mature and complete in Christ. James calls us to believe this: the crown of eternal life is worth more than a life of comfort and more than any advantage to be gained by money in this life. Truly blessed is the one whose heart is set on this goal.

- Are you too preoccupied with the gaining of material wealth in this life? Do you worry too much about money?
- How different would your life be if you spent more time and energy doing and focusing on things that have eternal significance?
- How might the thought of a future crown of life help you through the trials and difficulties of today?