

Authentically Dealing With Trials and Temptations

Message 1 of 6 in the series: "Authentic: Life Lessons from the Book of James"

A. James, an early leader in the Jerusalem church, wrote an open letter to Christians who had been scattered far and wide, instructing them on how to authentically live out their faith no matter where they ended up.

"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings." James 1:1 (NKJV)

1. The recipients of James' letter were scattered because they had fled religious persecution that exploded in Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen. "A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and **all the believers except the apostles were scattered** through the regions of Judea and Samaria." Acts 8:1 (NLT)
2. Although James was a half-brother of Jesus, apparently, he didn't believe Jesus was the Son of God until after Jesus rose from the dead. From that time on, however, James became an authentic follower of Jesus.
 - "Where did he (Jesus) get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?' Then they scoffed, 'He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and **the brother of James**, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.'" Mark 6:2b-3a (NLT)
 - "When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. '**He's out of his mind,**' they said." Mark 3:21 (NLT)
 - "**For even his brothers didn't believe in him.**" John 7:5 (NLT)
 - "He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. **Then he was seen by James** and later by all the apostles." 1 Corinthians 15:4-7 (NLT)
 - "...I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. The only other apostle I met at that time was **James, the Lord's brother ... James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church.** Galatians 1:18-19,2:9 (NLT)

Life Application: An encounter with the living Christ is life-changing. "...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

B. James said that if we view our trials from God's perspective, we can authentically have joy in the midst of them.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let **perseverance** finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4 (NIV)

Perseverance = "hupomone" (ancient Greek) = endurance = patience = NOT giving up.

Four reminders that can help us see our trials from God's perspective:

1. "For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.' As you endure this divine discipline, remember that **God is treating you as his own children.**" Hebrews 12:6-7 (NLT) (Proverbs 3:12)
2. "...God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 (NLT)
3. God is more interested in our holiness than our happiness. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Romans 8:29 (NIV)
4. Trials build character and reveal spiritual maturity. "Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to **prove your character**, and to **find out whether or not you would obey his commands.**" Deuteronomy 8:2 (NLT)

Life Application: We can get a pretty accurate assessment of our spiritual maturity by noticing what comes out of our mouths when we go through difficult/painful trials. "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Luke 6:45 (NIV)

C. James said that if we genuinely seek wisdom, God will be glad to give it to us.

“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 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. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.” James 1:5-8 (NLT)

1. Seeking God’s wisdom requires humility. “Now, O Lord my God, you have made me king instead of my father, David, but **I am like a little child who doesn’t know his way around...** Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?” 1 Kings 3:7-9 (NLT)
2. Seeking God’s wisdom requires faith in God alone. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; **do not depend on your own understanding.** Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)
3. Seeking God’s wisdom requires obedience. “But don’t just listen to God’s word. **You must do what it says.** Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.” James 1:22-25 (NLT)

D. During trials, we will often face temptations to blame God, lose faith, give up, find a shortcut, etc. But James reminds us that God blesses those who authentically endure.

“**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. 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. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.” James 1:12-15 (NLT)

Three reminders that can help us not give in to temptation:

1. “The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.” 1 Corinthians 10:13-14 (NLT)
2. God hears our prayers to resist temptation. “And don’t let us yield to temptation but rescue us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:13 (NLT)
3. We can help each other resist temptation. “A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read Mark 3:20-21, 6:2-3, John 7:5, 1 Corinthians 15:4-7 & Galatians 1:18-19, 2:9-10. Why do you think James cared so much about spiritual maturity and authenticity?
2. Read James 1:2-4. Then discuss how the following verses can help us gain God’s perspective on trials. (Hebrews 12:6-11, Proverbs 3:12, Romans 8:28-29, Deuteronomy 8:2)
3. Describe a trial you’ve been through that helped you mature spiritually. How did it change you?
4. Read James 1:5-8. Then discuss the following requirements for seeking God’s wisdom. Which of these requirements is the most difficult for you to practice.
 - Seeking God’s wisdom requires humility. (1 Kings 3:5-15)
 - Seeking God’s wisdom requires faith in God alone. (Proverbs 3:5-6)
 - Seeking God’s wisdom requires obedience. (James 1:22-25)
5. Read James 1:12-15. Why is it tempting to blame God, give up, lose faith, seek shortcuts, etc. during difficult times? Do the following reminders help you endure and not give in to temptation?
 - God will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. (1 Corinthians 10:13-14)

- God hears our prayers to resist temptation. (Matthew 6:13)
- We can help each other resist temptation. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

6. Discuss the following quotations:

“The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it... But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world...” C.S. Lewis

“It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.”
Mark Twain