

HOW TO UNDERSTAND TRIALS: A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

James 1:2–4

In our passage, James provides us with important answers to some of life's toughest questions.

Q1. Who Experiences Trials?

James 1:2

Answer: _____

Q2. What Value Is There in Trials?

James 1:3

Answer: Trials make us _____

Q3. What Is the End Result of Trials?

James 1:4

Answer: Trials can change us _____

Life is hard, but personal pain can foster wisdom and spiritual growth—if we let God work in both the good and the bad times.

For the Family

Read James 1:2–4: *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Explain that the people to whom James is writing were experiencing trouble because of their faith in Jesus. James tells them to think of these troubles with joy, because they will help them to become stronger.

One way to understand this idea is to talk about the importance of practicing to become good at something, like sports or music. We endure practice to become better athletes or musicians.

If your child plays a sport, you've probably already talked about how important it is to practice. Sometimes you don't want to go to practice. It can be hard or boring. But you only get better at something if you practice. That's why parents make their children go to practice, even if they don't want to go.

This is a matter of having the right perspective—the right way of thinking. When you're in the middle of a hard practice, instead of thinking how hard or boring the practice is, you can think of the results of the practice. You are getting stronger and better. You will be able play well in the next game.

If your child plays an instrument, the same is true. Practice isn't always fun, but it can make you a better player, and get you ready for the recital. Don't just think of the difficulty of practice. Think ahead to the recital, or just being able to play for friends.

James is telling his readers that the trials of life can actually be good for them, if they have the right perspective about them. Instead of looking at the trial, James tells them to trust what God can accomplish through the trial. Just like practice makes you better, enduring the trials of life can make you better.

Pray together that you will be able to trust God when you go through trials in life. Thank him for helping you have the right attitude whenever you face trouble in life.