

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.

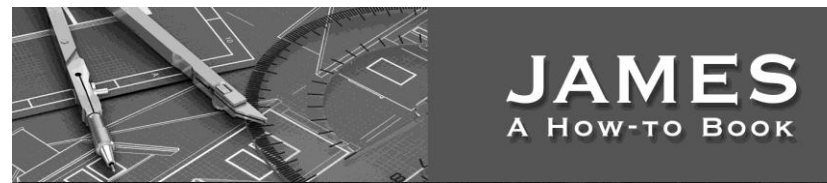
This is a matter of having the right perspective—the right way of thinking. When you're in the middle of a hard practice, instead of thinking how hard or boring the practice is, you can think of the results of the practice. You are getting stronger and better. You will be able to play well in the next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

4



James: A “How To” Manual for Life

This Week: How to Understand Trials 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.

Last Week:

James was a brother of Jesus, but he didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God until he saw the risen Lord. He then became an important leader in the church.

The book he wrote is a book of wisdom, like Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. Wisdom is knowledge applied to life. It is practical, and often challenging. James exhorts and encourages his readers toward working out their faith in righteous living.

This Week: James calls for disciples to pursue an attitude of joy when trials come into their lives. That attitude allows disciples to develop steadfastness in their lives, which when allowed to work brings maturity and completeness.

Open

1. How do you typically react to trials in life?

- Ignore them
- Get discouraged by them
- Take them on reluctantly
- Take them on with enthusiasm
- Ask for help
- See them as an opportunity for growth
- Other

1

Read James 1:2-4.

Notice the two imperatives (commands) in these verses:

Count it all joy ...

Let steadfastness have its full effect ...

Let's look at these:

Count It All Joy

1. What do you think "*count it all joy*" means as used here?

Read the following verses. Notice how the word "count" or "considered" is used.

Philippians 2:3

Philippians 2:6

Hebrews 11:11

2. What does it take for a believer to have an attitude of joy in the midst of trials?

3. How would you explain this to an unbeliever?

4. What is the result of counting it all joy?

5. How would you define "steadfastness" as it is used here?

Read Luke 8:4-15

How is the "good soil" defined in vs. 15?

Read Romans 15:4-6

What are the two things which will give us hope, according to verse 4?

6. From these verses, what is the relationship between steadfastness/endurance and God's word?

Let Steadfastness Have its Full Effect

1. What does it take for a believer to remain steadfast in the midst of trials?

2. What is the result of allowing steadfastness to work?

3. What does being "*perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*" look like in the life of a believer?

Faith

Read Hebrews 11:1

1. What is the relationship of faith to what James is asking his readers to do when they encounter trials in their lives?

2. How much faith does it take to "*count it all joy ...*"?

Reflect

1. Trials are one way that God uses to produce steadfastness and maturity in our lives.

Why are trials so effective at this?

What can trials produce that may not be developed in any other way?

2. Share a time when you prayed to be released from a trial, only to discover later that those trying circumstances actually grew you toward maturity.

3. What types of experiences have caused the most spiritual growth in your life?

4. How can you increase your faith so that you can obey these two commands?

Take-aways

Share with the group your take-away from your time together.

Next Steps:

- Rather than blaming God for my trials, I will trust God through my trials.
- I will allow God to skim off the dross (impurities) in my life and refine me for his purpose.
- I will remember to joyfully trust God in both good times and bad.
- I will use my suffering as an opportunity to witness to others.

Memory Verse – James 1:2-3

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.