

JAMES

A Faith That Works

Study 1

Introduction

The Christian in Trials and Suffering

James 1:1-4

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James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:
Greetings.

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.

1) a) Discussion Question. In verse 1, James introduced himself to the believers as *doulos* (slave or servant) of Christ in the letter instead of 'brother of Christ' or the 'leader of the Jewish church'. What kind of leader is James trying to portray to the readers of this letter based on this introduction?

b) Objective Question. Choose all that apply. What are the minimal facts required for faith in regard to resurrection per Gary Habermas and accepted by 75% of the scholars in the field?

- A. The tomb was empty
- B. Crucifixion of Jesus
- C. Apostle Paul who was a staunch Jew converted
- D. James the brother of Jesus converted
- E. James, son of Zebedee's conversion
- F. Mary Magdalene's conversion
- G. The disciples' witness and belief (and willingness to die for it)

c) Objective Question. Select the most appropriate answer. Who are the "twelve tribes scattered among the nations"? (who are the original recipients of this letter)

- A. The Jewish Christians who are dispersed all over Asia Minor
- B. All the Jewish tribe, regardless if they are Christians or not
- C. All Christians, regardless if they are Jewish or Gentiles

James 1:2-4

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.

2) a) Discussion Question.

i) What are the emotions you usually grapple with when you are undergoing a trial?

ii) Do you find it weird that joy should be the leading emotion amongst these array of emotions?

iii) How do you enable joy to be the leading emotion? Please share.

2b) Discussion Question. What does James mean by us being perfect? Isn't that putting even more pressure and guilt in us in the midst of an already difficult time?

2c) Discussion Question.

i) How does the prospect of being perfect or mature alleviate our suffering or bring joy?

ii) What are the usual things that we look towards for comfort during a trial instead?

iii) Is James being totally unrealistic in expecting us to be joyful over being matured? What are the challenges to this?

iv) Do we really aspire to maturity? Can't we just remain immature till our death?

Quick Verse Reference

Galatians 4:19

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,

Ephesians 4:12-13

to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

d) Reflection Question. Based on Eph 4:12-13 and Gal 4:19 it seems that James 1:4 is pointing to progress of maturity so that we become more and more mature like Christ. On a scale of 0-100%, in your current state, how many percent would you rate yourself? Go one round and just openly share how you see yourself at this moment.

e) Reflection Question. Are you willing to pray to God every night to make you more mature like Him and like Christ or do you feel resistant to change? Go one round and share.

Takeaway

The Jewish Christian were facing persecution and James (presumably “the Lord’s brother” (Gal 1:19), who was the leader of the early Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; 21:18; Gal 2:9) writes a letter to encourage them and to point to the goal of maturity in Christ.

Case Study

Case 1 – Trials and Maturity

Sah Kit is a Christian for 5 years and attends Fourth Baptist Church. She is a divorced woman in her forties, mother of 3 kids and struggling financially to support the kids on top of house chores and sending the kids to school.

She had recently developed rheumatoid arthritis and has severe pain in her joints everyday. Her life group is going through the book of James and James 1:2-4 says, *“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.”* Sah Kit shares that she finds it impossible to find joy in her life let alone through the extra trials of the joint pains.

Bee Seng, a life group member in the same group, said that it is because Sah Kit does not do enough to understand the long-term benefits of the trials. He tells her to read more of the Bible, pray more, attend more classes and join more groups so that she can find joy in her trials.

1) a) Discussion question. If you are the life group leader leading the study in James, what would you say after Bee Seng’s response?

b) Reflection question. If you were another member in Sah Kit’s life group, how would you support her? What kind of help would you offer her?