**1. Motivate**

What’s an important lesson you’ve learned after coming through a tough experience?

* wind knocked down a tree in your yard, cut up for firewood to sell
* wrecked car – insurance enabled them to get a newer, better car
* flunked a test, was a wakeup call to really study
* team lost a game, got them fired up for the next several games
* did a poor job on a presentation, learned from mistakes … learned what *not* to do
* went to ER for injury, while there found a problem that docs took care of before it got bad

**2. Transition**

Today we look at what James has to say about problems

* How to respond
* How God uses trials to mature your faith.

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_g5sxk8pa> . If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/2bwten4m>

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Trials Strengthen Your Faith

Listen for a source of joy.

James 1:2 – 4 (NIV) James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

How are we to understand “temptations” or “trials”? How did James encourage his readers to respond to difficult times?

* count it pure joy
* face the problem and maintain an attitude of joy

James says to “consider it pure joy” when you face trials. What keeps us from reacting with joy when pressures of life are overwhelming?

* focus on the problem too much
* it’s all you can think about … hard to read Scripture, hard to pray
* keeps you awake at night
* if it’s physical pain, it’s hard to be joyful
* some people cannot stop crying – they are simply overwhelmed

What are some common trials people experience in our world today?

* finances
* by products of the pandemic … loss of jobs, bumbling of different government agencies
* health issues
* injuries from accidents
* children and grandchildren that go astray
* our own spiritual struggles – anger, fear, doubt, addictions (physical, emotional, etc.)
* the news all seems to be bad – no matter which network you view

James says the *testing* of your faith develops perseverance. Why do schoolteachers give tests?

* so they can give grades
* to see if the students have learned the material
* to see if students have mastered required skills
* so the *teacher* can check on the performance of the *students*

God also allows us to go through times of testing. According to this passage, how are our “tests” from God different from a schoolteacher’s tests?

* it’s not for God to check on our performance
* God is omniscient, He already knows how we will respond
* the test is a learning experience for us
* it teaches us how to better depend on God
* it develops perseverance
* you learn of God’s sufficient power, God’s love, God’s sovereignty

What good can you experience when you go through a difficult situation in your life?

* learn to trust God
* you learn God is able to solve the problem, provide the need, give strength and encouragement
* loss of a job leads to a better job
* a health problem once over, gives you a better understanding of what others are going through
* you become more tolerant of others who faced similar situations
* you gain compassion

3.2 Trials Require God’s Wisdom

Listen for God’s promise.

James 1:5 – 8 (NIV) If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

James says we can pray for wisdom. Just what is wisdom?

* it is more than knowledge, more than having all the facts
* it is the ability/skill to understand the facts in context
* ability to use the knowledge in the best way possible

What is God’s response when we ask for wisdom?

* gives the wisdom generously
* doesn’t fault you for not having that wisdom on your own
* each time you ask God for wisdom, and He provides, it more and more convinces you that God is sufficient
* God strengthens your faith in Him

Why might you need God’s wisdom when you are in a difficult situation, a time of trial?

* you might have important choices to make
* when you are going through trials, your emotions are volatile and decision making is difficult
* when you are sick and don’t feel well, your thinking can be confused
* you can be tempted to respond to your feelings of discouragement and despair and might not make a wise decision

What might keep us from approaching God for help during a trial?

* think this is too small a problem to ask God about … He’s busy running the universe
* think this is too big of a problem to ask God about …
* *nobody* can solve this problem, not even God
* we just plain forget to take it to God
* we might be angry at God for letting this happen, we get into an attitude of “distrust” rather than trust

How can doubting affect a person’s prayer life?

* you begin to think the problem is too big for God
* when you are confused about why this is happening
* when you are very discouraged and don’t even think to pray
* when you focus so much on the problem you forget about God’s love for you, His desire to accomplish good things in your life

What can a believer do to overcome doubts and discouragements as we seek God’s wisdom?

* read God’s promises early and often
* be reading and thinking about, meditating on God’s Word daily
* be familiar with how God met the needs of His people as they trusted Him
* reading Christian biographies is also a good way to be reminded of God’s workings in people’s lives

3.3 Trials Help Us Keep the Right Perspective.

Listen for eternal rewards.

James 1:9 – 12 (NIV) Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 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 will fade away even while they go about their business. 12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Why do you think James says humble circumstances are a “high position”?

* you learn to trust God, not yourself
* you experience God’s provision and supply
* rejoice that God is sufficient

Why is dependence on wealth living a life of uncertainty?

* the stock market can be up and down, based mainly on the emotions of investors
* politics that drive government action can either help or hurt your business (whether you own the company or just work there)
* accidents or sudden physical problems don’t pay any attention to your financial bottom line

What is the blessing promised to those who love the Lord?

* we stand and survive trials of life, God’s promises are a sure thing
* we will receive the crown of life – eternal life – eternal union with God

How does a view of eternity change the way you respond to trials?

* our trials are for a set period of time
* days, weeks, months, years
* eternity is totally unrelated to time, we can think of it as a dimension beyond that of time
* the comparison is impossible
* as we are with Jesus in eternity, those trials will be a distant and minute memory … maybe those memories will be wiped away?
* we might struggle now during those situations, but can look forward to being in God’s presence forever

If an unbeliever asked you why you still believe in God after a season of hardship, what would be your answer?

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

* the hardships we experience are just part of life
* they come and go
* God is in control and will not let things happen that would destroy us (spiritually, emotionally)
* God is at work in those situations, He carries us through them
* He enables us to learn and grow spiritually (and emotionally) as we work our way through the trials

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Pray for strength.

* In whatever trial you are facing, cry out to God for help.
* “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call to him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6).
* Our Lord has experienced trials just as we have, and He is sympathetic about our human weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

Ask for help.

* It is easier for most believers to offer help to others than it is to ask for help.
* If you are experiencing a difficult trial, reach out to a close friend, your Bible study leader, or pastor, and ask for their help.
* They will be willing to help carry your burden (Gal. 6:2) just as you are willing to help others carry theirs.

Look for the ministry opportunity in your pain.

* After his career-ending amputation, Dave Dravecky and his wife began a ministry, endurance.org, to minister to people who are facing their own trials.
* Find a way to use your pain to benefit others.

Chart

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Crossword Puzzle  
***Clues and Words taken from James 1:1 – 12 (NIV)***

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