

Introduction: 3 Observations about life in a fallen world

1. Trials are inevitable.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

1 Peter 4:12

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

¹² Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted; ¹³ and evil persons and impostors will keep on going from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves.

2 Timothy 3:12-13

2. Trials tend to “make us” or “break us.”

3. Victims fail to move beyond asking “why” and remain stuck in their pain.

A word from God to those whose world is “falling apart.”

¹ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. ² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:1-4

1. What can I control when my world falls apart?

Answer: **MY ATTITUDE**

James 1:2

“Consider” – evaluate, calculate, choose

“All joy” – an attitude = literally “unmixed, or pure joy”

“Trials” – surrounded by

Luke 10:30

2. What must I do to make it through today?

Answer: **ENDURE / PERSEVERE**

James 1:3

“Knowing” – by experience = perspective

“Testing” – to approve, to purify, to demonstrate as genuine

“Endurance” – hupo-meno = staying power

3. What hope do I have for tomorrow?

Answer: God will take the **WORST** and use it for my **BEST**.

James 1:4

“Let perseverance” – allow, cooperate with God’s work so that you will become...

“Perfect” – mature, ripe, full-grown

“Complete” – full, all parts being well-rounded and developed, lacking nothing

How God uses adversity to mature us

1. We are forced to **DEPEND** on God at a new level. Left to ourselves, we tend to be self-sufficient, proud, and insensitive to God.
2. We are **WEANED** from the temporal, the urgent, and the worldly affairs of life. We are forced to **REEXAMINE** our values, priorities, commitments, and future.
3. Trials allow us to **WITNESS** first-hand the reality and power of God. Our need becomes the vehicle of God’s grace; our problems the object of His power.
4. They serve as an awesome **TESTIMONY** to the unbelieving world. How we endure hardship shows the world how real God is.
5. We become sensitive, caring, and compassionate **CHRIST-LIKE** people. Those who have been hurt deeply tend to love deeply.

Discussion Questions:

1. Share a negative experience in your past that (although difficult) has had positive results in your life.
2. Although very normal, why is it important to get beyond asking “why?”
3. What is an area in your life right now that qualifies as a trial, or “world-breaker”?
4. Take a moment and walk through the three “what” questions that God gives us in James 1:2-4.
5. Discuss how you can put this truth into practice in your current situations. Close with a time of upholding each other in prayer.

Introduction: A brief review

¹ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. ² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:1-4

The principle = “Don’t ask why, ask what.”

Three “what” questions survivors ask:

1. What can I control when my world falls apart?
2. What must I do to make it through today?
3. What hope do I have for tomorrow?

The answer = God’s sovereignty + goodness = He will take my worst circumstances and use them for my best if I will trust Him and not bail out of His spiritual maturity process.

I. **The problem** – sometimes we get “stuck” in our pain.

II. **The solution** – God promises help for those who are “stuck.”

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8

- God’s offer = supernatural **WISDOM**
- Our responsibility = to **ASK**
- God’s attitude when we come = **OPEN & GENEROUS**

III. **The one condition** – We receive God’s wisdom only when we “ask in faith, without any doubting.”

To “ask in faith” means...

“Without any doubting” means...

Conclusion – Four things you must do to get unstuck

1. **Admit** you’re stuck.
2. **Admit** you can’t do it on your own.
3. **Ask God** for supernatural wisdom.
4. **Be willing** to do whatever God’s wisdom demands of you.

Discussion Questions:

1. According to Scripture, what is “wisdom?” How does this differ from our conventional thinking and use of the term?
2. What attitude permeates this passage with regard to God’s sympathy and understanding of our “getting stuck” in adversity?
3. Discuss the one condition necessary to receive this supernatural gift of wisdom to grow through the pain in our trials. (cross reference – John 7:17, Romans 12:1)
4. What step will you need to take to receive the wisdom God promises to give you in your present situation?

Introduction: A mythical story and a brief review

A definition

Dis-cour-age-ment (-ment) *n.* - to deprive of courage, hope, or confidence; to lose heart.

The question

Where are you most prone to struggle with discouragement?

Discouragement is the #1 destroyer of God's plans for our lives; just before we receive God's highest and best, many of us throw in the towel.

God's plan for slaying the dragon of discouragement

A - Attitude

God's will in adversity – **JOYFUL ENDURANCE**

*² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, **lacking in nothing**.*

James 1:2-4

R - Resource

God's promise in the process – **SUPERNATURAL WISDOM**

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8

T - Theology

God's prescription for perseverance – **DIVINE PERSPECTIVE**

⁹ But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰ and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. ¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:9-12

Hanging tough in tough times demand we:

1. Get God's perspective on our circumstances. James 1:9-11
 - How? By looking at our circumstances, through the eyes of **FAITH**.

2. Get God's perspective on our future. James 1:12a
 - How? By looking at our future, through the lens of **HOPE**.

3. Get God's perspective on our motivation. James 1:12a
 - How? By looking at our motivation, through the lens of **LOVE**.

Summary/review – You can slay the dragon of discouragement!

1. Re-evaluate your circumstances.
 - **The test:** is my faith in things that are perishable or things that are **PERMANENT**?

2. Re-evaluate your focus.
 - **The test:** is my hope determined by the size of my problems or the certainty of God's **PROMISES**?

3. Re-evaluate your motivation.
 - **The test:** is the primary motivation of my heart to **LOVE CHRIST** or simply get relief and please myself?

Discussion Questions:

1. Write out simply and clearly in one sentence what currently (or potentially) discourages you the most right now.
2. Share with someone your answer to question number one if you are comfortable and it's appropriate to do so.
3. Discuss the power of perspective as it relates to your situation. Walk through the three points made in James 1:9-12 and talk about how they shed light on the specific challenges you are facing.
4. Pray for someone you know who is having a “broken world” experience.