

YOUNG ADULTS

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

FALL 2013 | PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE
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PRESSURE POINTS
WHEN RELATIONSHIPS COLLIDE

threads
by LifeWay

SESSION 1

THE PRESSURE OF TRIALS



What pressures squeeze the joy out of life?

THE POINT

Joyful trust in God will see you through all trials.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

No one lives a problem-free life.

My mom used to say when life gives you a lemon, just make lemonade. But that's a whole lot easier said than done. I got a call from a friend whose mom was told she has cancer. Their lives were rocked by the news. A neighbor has been job hunting for a career in his field for more than a year and still has no offers. No economic good news is in sight. Another young woman lost her fiancé in a car accident just one week after they were engaged. Where's the lemonade amidst those lemons?

The Bible is full of people who were dealt hard hands in life, but through faith and perseverance to God, they made sweet lemonade. Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Hannah, and David are a few. The list is long. But each found triumph through God amidst the messes. In James 1, we have a game plan for overcoming trials and finding joy, even during those terribly unfair times.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

James 1:1-4 (HCSB)

1 James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ:
To the 12 tribes in the Dispersion. Greetings.

2 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you
experience various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith
produces endurance.

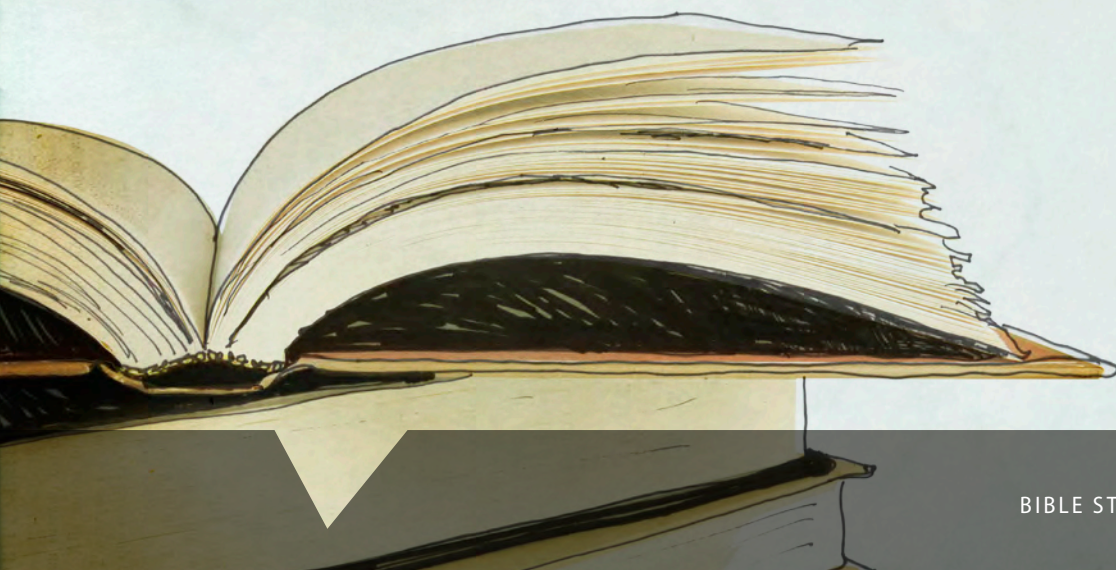
4 But endurance must do its complete work, so that
you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Key Words

Slave (v. 1) – This humble title signifies ownership by, absolute obligation to, and readiness to obey a master.

Trials (v. 2) – Trials are difficulties and afflictions that can strengthen our faith and prove its genuineness.

Mature and complete (v. 4) – Mature or perfect may refer to relative maturity as compared with immaturity (Ephesians 4:13) or to final perfection in the coming age (1 Corinthians 13:10). Complete refers to entire or whole, with no unsoundness whatsoever.



James 1:1-2

Two problems with encountering trials are that you don't expect them, and they surround you. You may fall into a situation that was unforeseen. You may lose your health and/or wealth (Luke 10:30; Acts 27:41). James tells us trials are inevitable: it's not *if* you encounter them, but *when* you encounter them.

Trials are varied. They come in all shapes and sizes:

- » **Temptation** – An enticement to sin, whether it's a click on a computer screen, a mean word, or a harbored hatred. (We will dig into this more next week.)
- » **Sickness** – Sometimes it's not your sickness but the sickness of another person.
- » **Persecution** – Suffering for Christ is to be expected for a believer.
- » **Trouble** – It could be any adversity, affliction, or circumstances sent by God—or allowed by Him—to test or prove your faith, holiness, or character. Such troubles can be financial hardship, bad news, difficult people, hard circumstances, troubled relationships, broken cars, or layoffs.

No matter what shape or form they take, you can triumph over your trials. You don't have to struggle under the pressure or fall apart in anger or distress. God says you can overcome. How do you do that? The reference to joy is actually the first phrase in verse 2. This is the desired outcome where God wants you to arrive. Joy may not be your first attitude. When you run aground or fall into a pit unexpectedly, your instinct is to react emotionally. You feel hurt, startled, mad, and in pain. Joy may not be your initial reaction, but it is to be your ultimate attitude.

JOY joy
JOY joy

**What's your first reaction when a trial comes your way—
fear, frustration, anger, doubt, faith, or hope?**

QUESTION 2

How does joy become your ultimate attitude? Count it so. "Consider it a great joy" is an imperative, which means it is a command (v. 2). Joy is a careful and deliberate decision. Don't rely on your inner feelings or emotions; instead give due consideration to the external grounds. Weigh the facts, not the feelings. The word "count" or "consider" comes from a root that means to lead, to bring, or to carry. It is the concept of deliberately choosing where to place our focus.

What can we do to place our focus on God instead of on our troubles?

QUESTION 3

HERE COMES THE TRIAL

You've just gotten a rejection letter from the dream job you've been praying for and working toward.



1. Choosing to place trust in God could benefit me by:

2. Choosing to place trust in God could benefit my circle of friends and family by:

3. Choosing to place trust in God could benefit others by:

James 1:3

How do I consider it joy in the middle of a trial? By knowing what God will do as a result of the trial. Trials aren't a test of your personal strength or wisdom; they test your faith in God to see you through. God Himself is with you. He is developing "staying power" in you.

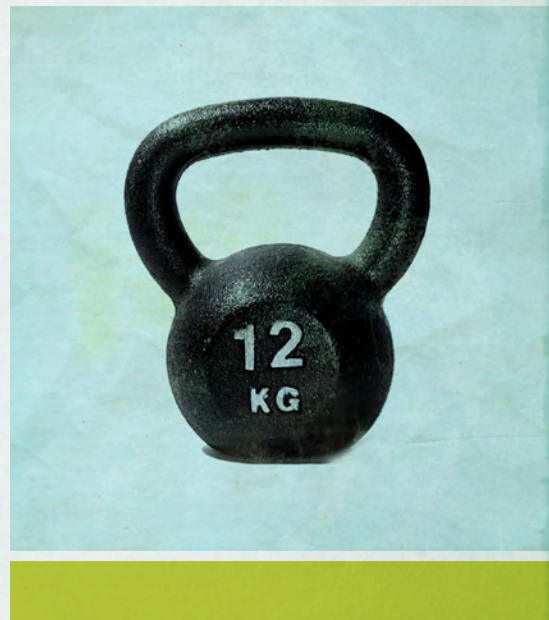
Trials are also the natural result of sin. Because we live in a fallen world, pain and difficulty are created when we—and others—sin. Someone else's sinful actions may carry consequences that affect you from time to time. Whether your trial is a natural consequence of sin or a time of testing from God, He can use that experience to deepen your faith.

The testing results in something. God never arbitrarily punks you with a test for no reason. The testing of your faith always prepares and works effectively to accomplish something very specific—endurance. The word "endure" means "to remain under." We sometimes call it perseverance, faithfulness, or steadfastness, but it is God's work of developing your spiritual muscle and resolve to stand firm. He desires for us to possess an unswerving faith.

Remember the story Jesus told about the soils in Luke 8:4-15? A lot of people heard the word, but in the end the only seed that was fruitful was the seed that endured in the soil. In the Christian life, perseverance and staying power are not optional.

When you are being tested, keep in mind:

- » In our fallen world, pain and difficulty are realities of life.
- » You have a faith worth developing and refining in God's eyes.
- » God has a plan to strengthen and prepare you.
- » You have the assurance of the presence of God. When He refines us, He never abandons us.



During your most recent trial, how did you see God walking with you?

QUESTION 4

"Many men owe the grandeur
of their lives to their
tremendous difficulties!"

—CHARLES SPURGEON

*How have you been encouraged by the
endurance of others during trials?*

QUESTION 5

James 1:4

Endurance takes time. It requires day-after-day action. When I submit to the process of endurance and allow the shaping and strengthening of my faith, the goal is ultimately reached: completeness, perfection, lacking nothing. I have to consent to let endurance shape and mold my faith until its work is complete.

I can resist the work of endurance in my life and fight against it. I can run from it and try to escape it in favor of a trial-free life. I can avoid the pain of studying, but in so doing I also avoid passing the class. I can avoid the pain of working, but also miss out on having a paycheck. I can avoid the pain of lifting weights in athletic training, but miss out on being a winning athlete. Or, I can embrace the work of endurance in my life and become open, pliable, humble, and teachable.

Which is less painful? Both paths can be painful, but one brings about pointless pain and wasted grief. God is working *around* your life so that He can work something *in* and *through* your life. His desire is that you be 100 percent complete in Him.

- » **Perfect** – having reached its end; complete, mature.
- » **Complete** – fully developed; running at full capacity with nothing unused.
- » **Lacking Nothing** – nothing left out or left behind; fully equipped and prepared.



LIVE IT OUT

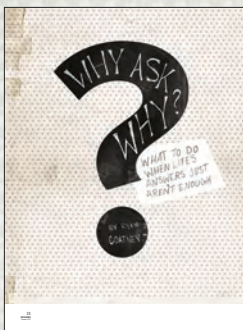
So what does God want you to do when trials come your way?

- » **Choose** a joyful attitude. Determine where you will place your focus in the midst of trials—on God or on the trial you face.
- » **Be obedient** in the small (and big) things God has called you to do. During trials, don't abandon commitments and practices that honor God. Determine to follow His leadership even when the future is unclear.
- » **Encourage** someone else who is in the midst of a trial. God can use your experience to strengthen another person's faith.



Today, choose joy. God is working in every circumstance, both good and bad to bring about the development of His character and power in you so that you may be perfect, complete, and useful for His glory. Despite life's circumstances, God gives us the capability to turn sour into sweet. **Now go make lemonade.**

Why ASK Why? What To Do When Life's Answers Just Aren't Enough



The question is everywhere. We stand in line at the DMV, and we ask, "Why did every person on the planet need a new license today?" Someone close to us faces illness, and we ask God, "Why would such a kind person suffer so much?" Life forces us to consider reality as it exists, and we ask "Why?"

To continue reading "Why Ask Why?" from Collegiate magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

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My thoughts