

## Living Faith in the World: The Book of James

### Lesson 3 Trials and Temptations: God Uses All Things for Our Good Scriptures 1

**Acts 2:42-45** "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread (*Lord's Supper*) and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."

The early church turned its world upside down for Christ. *They taught the doctrine of Christ, their fellowship was centered on Christ, communicated with Him in prayer, and exalted Him in worship. They shared their possessions because they cared, not because they had to!*

**Fellowship** means to hold things in common, to share things together. The fellowship of the early church was expressed by open hearts, open hands and open homes.

**Lord's Supper** causes believers to 1) look back to the cross, 2) forward to the coming of Christ, and 3) inward to the condition of their hearts regarding everything in their lives.

**1Corinthians 11:17-22** "In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. V18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. V19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. V20 So then, when you come together, it is not the *Lord's Supper* you eat, V21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk, V22 don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you *despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing?* What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!" Unfortunately, during the Lord's Supper-and event meant to be at the very heart of worship-was one of the places where the divisions within the Corinthian church were obvious.

**Read aloud James 2:1-7** Churches were giving places of honor to the rich and lowly places to the poor. Most people the Lord chooses to use are not affluent (rich) or powerful. James vigorously states that mistreating the poor, or anyone else, shows a lack of respect, but also violates God's law, which Jesus stressed throughout his earthly ministry. Love your neighbor as yourself. (**Matthew 22:36-40**)

**Galatians 3:28** "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." All who come to Christ by faith become members.

**Matthew 6:19-21** "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. v20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. V21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be."

The world wants to rank us, categorize us and divide us. In God's kingdom every person has equal value in God's eyes and we value one another equally and live together in harmony.

### Lesson 3 Trials and Temptations: God Uses All Things for Our Good

**James 1:9-11** "Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 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."

**Matthew: 20:16** " So the last will be first, and the first will be last." **v26** Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **v27** and the one who wants to be first must be your slave—**v28** Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**1)In the kingdom of God, the lowly will be exalted.**

**Q: What does it tell us about God that He exalts the lowly and humbles the rich?**

This is another example of how the wisdom of God is upside-down from the world's. In the world, a rich man boasts in his \_\_\_\_\_, but in God's kingdom, he boasts in his \_\_\_\_\_. This doesn't mean *the poor are elevated above the rich* in the kingdom, but that when the rich are \_\_\_\_\_ and the poor are elevated from what the world thinks of them, their value meets in the middle *to become equal, as they are in God's eyes*.

In the culture of this time each person was born into their social status. The wealthy were the highest social status. The poor were low in status while the slaves were considered possessions. You were either born rich or poor, elite or humble. The religious culture and the secular culture looked much alike in this manner.

The church in Acts was unlike the world had ever seen. In this first church in Jerusalem everyone shared \_\_\_\_\_ together, \_\_\_\_\_ together, and worshiped together. They shared all they owned in \_\_\_\_\_. (**Acts 2:42-45**) The way they lived fits \_\_\_\_\_ teachings. This church practiced sharing of resources and equality in honor, but many churches struggled with letting go of this worldly thinking. The wealthy would share everything they had with the poor, also giving up their social status and standing as well.

**1Corinthians 11:17-22** The Corinthians were segregating meals by rich and \_\_\_\_\_.

**James 2:1-7** Churches were giving places of honor to the rich and lowly places to the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Galatians 3:28** Galatians had to be taught that in God's kingdom, differences of high/low honor in the world was to be taken away. Because we \_\_\_\_\_.

**Matthew 6:19-21** Only the \_\_\_\_\_ we store up in heaven will last. God will reward you. The world wants to rank us, categorize us and \_\_\_\_\_ us. In God's kingdom every person has value in God's eyes and we value one another equally and live together in harmony.

**Q: Jesus measured honor differently than the Biblical culture of His day. In what way? How does this relate to our culture today? Name divisions of honor or status today you have seen.**

## Living Faith in the World: The Book of James

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**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 (steadfastness) finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

**Trials:** Trials that God allows strengthen the believer and are different from the consequences of sin in a believer's life. (**1Peter 1:6**) Having hope in Christ does not mean that believers will *not suffer grief and experience trials*, but they process these challenges *differently* than unbelievers. For Christians sorrow is not lasting and joy is central to their faith. For unbelievers, gladness is superficial (dependent on circumstances) and sorrow is central to them.

**Philippians 3:14** "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

**1Corinthians 9:24** "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." Too often today, Christians are content merely being in the race rather than diligently paying the price to win. *Christian should strive to win.*

**Hebrews 12:1-2** "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Don't be distracted or discouraged but stay fixed on Him.

**Witnesses:** Not a crowd of spectators who are watching believers on earth; but experts whose experiences testify of God's faithfulness. We're encouraged by them to run the race of faith.

**2Timothy 4:7** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

**James 1:3** "because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

**Persevere:** Have a tough resolve or brave endurance in challenging circumstances.

**Ephesians 6:10-17** "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. V13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. V16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

**Proverbs 21:31** "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory rests with the Lord."

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**James 1:12** "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."

**2 Timothy 4:6-8** "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. **V7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **V8** Now there is for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

#### 2) Remain steadfast through the trials of this life.

**Q: What does it mean to remain steadfast and faithful to God when we go through hard times**

**Steadfast:** *to be firmly fixed in place; to be loyal-resisting temptation, to be constant-steady, unchanging commitment, to be resolute- to have a determined spirit in the face of challenges, to persevere-be persistent, follow through.*

**Faithful:** *to be true-honest and adhere to truth, aligning with this reflection of God's character. Devoted-to focus on love and dedication, with a deep and sincere commitment, To be trustworthy-reliable and dependable.*

James tells us trials produce \_\_\_\_\_ which grows us in spiritual maturity. This process is often likened to building muscle through exercise. The exercise can be tiring, stressful and even painful at times, but the reward is becoming stronger and healthier by building muscles. Just as physical muscles grow through the "trials" of exercising, we grow spiritually through life \_\_\_\_\_ we go through by trusting and following God's direction. A lot of growth happens through trials. With the full effect of growing our \_\_\_\_\_ is that we would be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." **(1:2-4)**. This happens when we arrive in heaven! James repeats this idea when he speaks of the "crown of \_\_\_\_". Where as Paul talks of: **Philippians 3:14** "pressing on toward the \_\_\_\_\_".

**1 Corinthians 9:24** and run the race in such a way as to get the \_\_\_\_\_ (crown of life)

**Hebrews 12:1-2** we're told to throw off every \_\_\_\_\_ and fix our eyes on \_\_\_\_\_ as we run!

**2 Timothy 4:7** It's not how fast or slow you run or how good you look doing it, it's about remaining steadfast. Staying \_\_\_\_\_. Finishing the \_\_\_\_\_.

**James 1:3** Trials and tribulations test our \_\_\_\_\_. Will we quite when it hurts or \_\_\_\_\_ and grow stronger? Will we continue to follow Jesus when things get hard?

**Ephesians 6:10-18** Spiritual warfare and the spiritual attacks of evil will come against us. We are to put on the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and take a stand, stand our ground.

**Proverbs 21:31** God is the one who will fight the \_\_\_\_\_ for us.

We will make mistakes, have failures, sometimes go off the path, but always come back to \_\_\_\_\_ fix your eyes on Him, and keep running after Him.

## Living Faith in the World: Book of James

### Lesson 3 Trials and Temptations: God Uses All Things for Our Good Scripture 3

**James 1:13-18** "When tempted, no one should say, 'God tempted me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. V15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. V18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

**Temptation:** Is inevitable; no one escapes it, not even Christ. Recognize this reality. *Temptation itself is not a sin. Yielding to temptation is sin.* We alone are responsible for our actions. Not God  
**Genesis 1:31** "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."

**1 John 1:5** "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." We may claim one thing by words, but are condemned by our lives.

**Romans 8:28** "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

**Genesis 3:6** "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

**Galatians 5:16-26** "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. V18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. V22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

**2 Corinthians 10:5** "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

**1 Corinthians 10:12-13** "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." **Ephesians 3:20** "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

### Lesson 3 Trials and Temptations: God Uses All Things for Our Good

**Q: Describe a time in your life when trials made your faith stronger.**

**Q: How can we help each other remain steadfast (persevere) under trial? How could running the race together help us stay faithful?**

**James 1:13-18** Read at top of Scripture page.

**3) God does not tempt us with evil. Only good things come from God.**

**Q: What causes temptation in our lives? How does temptation lead to sin?**

We've talked about staying steadfast (persevering) through trials, now James guides us in understanding evil and the temptation to do evil. When God created the universe, everything He created was \_\_\_\_\_. (**Genesis 1:31**). God did not create evil. Evil only came later, when *human beings did not trust what God said was true and took matters into their own hands*. That would be Adam and Eve. God is not the author of evil. God is \_\_\_\_\_, and in Him there is no \_\_\_\_\_ at all. (**1John 1:5**) God takes things the Enemy or other people mean for evil in our lives and uses them for \_\_\_\_\_. (**Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28**)

The root of all sin is human beings choosing what *their lustful desires want over what God says is good*. Just as Eve saw the fruit, it was "a delight to the eyes" and desirable (**Genesis 3:6**) James says temptation comes from our own \_\_\_\_\_, not from God (**1:14**). Paul calls these lustful desires the "*desires of the flesh*." These desires are not godly but pure desires, contrary to the \_\_\_\_\_; sexual immoral, idolatry, selfish ambition, hatred, drunkenness, discord, \_\_\_\_\_ (**Galatians 5:16-26**) James says our desires can lure us and entice us to sin. *Like a fish to a fishing lure. We don't realize we are hooked right away; we sink deeper and deeper into sin and stick*. Like King David and his adultery/murder with Bathsheba, there were many places he could \_\_\_\_\_. Contrast this with Potiphar's wife asking Joseph to lie with her. *He ran so fast*, he left his \_\_\_\_\_!! Scripture tells us to take every thought \_\_\_\_\_ in obedience to Christ-because the battle starts in the mind. (**2Corinthians 10:5**). **Wisdom is telling the difference between what \_\_\_\_\_ good and something that \_\_\_\_\_ good.**

**1Corinthians 10:12-13** God always provides a way out. Don't be overconfident in our own \_\_\_\_\_. We can pray, repeat Scripture to ourselves, practice spiritual disciplines, cry out to Him. God wants us to flee \_\_\_\_\_ (**Psalms 37:27**) God is able to bless us far more abundantly than we can \_\_\_\_\_ or imagine (**Ephesians 3:20**) Even in pain and suffering. We just need to cling to Him, fix our eyes on Jesus, run the race with \_\_\_\_\_, and let God fight our battle for us.

**James 14-15** Unchecked desires give birth to sin which lead to death. When people have temptation in their hearts and fantasize about it in their minds, sin is conceived; and once sin is born, it brings forth death by enslavement. These are serious, life-altering consequences of sin.