

■ SCRIPTURE

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, **3** for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. **6** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For that person

must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; **8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, **10** and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. **11** For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. *ESV*

■ DISCUSS

1. According to verse 1, who was the author of this letter?
2. Who was James? How does he describe himself?
3. Why do you think James didn't introduce himself as the brother of Jesus? Wouldn't it help to say, "I know what I'm talking about, because I knew Jesus like a brother—in fact, I am His brother"?
4. According to verse 1, who are the recipients of this letter?
5. What does that mean? Why does James say it that way?
6. According to James 1:2 and the following verses, how should we react when times get tough?
7. Why? What is the end result of this "testing"?

8. Do you remember what Francis Chan said about the word “testing” in the video? What word pictures did he paint for us?
9. Do you think people expect God to make them happy? Is that a wrong idea?
10. If you made this the “goal of your life,” to grow in holiness even if it meant suffering, how would that change your life? What decisions would you make differently? How would you have to adjust your priorities?
11. Is that a realistic idea?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let’s consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Conversation: Some of us complain a lot. What if we followed James and started considering our troubles “pure joy”? Who could you contact this week—by email, phone, text, or in person—and instead of complaining, tell them about the way God is helping you grow?

Journaling: Write about your struggles. Don’t hold back. Complain all you want. But then go back to your journal the next day and jot some notes in the margins about how God might be making you “mature and complete.”

Memorization: Learn James 1:2-3, and maybe verse 4. This will be a powerful support to you in your toughest times.

Prayer: Consider others you know who are going through difficulties. Ask God to help them grow.

Influence: Have you seen spiritual growth in someone else who has gone through trials? Tell them so.