

III. Trials are an opportunity be involved with the \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>9</sup>Let the **lowly brother** boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup>and the **rich** in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>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. ~ James 1:9-12.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ~ 2 Cor. 1:3-4

Sample Small Group Questions  
James 1:1-12

- How would you respond to someone who tells you that good can come from the trials which you are experiencing?
- What doubts about God and prayer does the average person usually experience?
- What attitude did James tell people to exhibit when they are facing trials?
- What is produced when our faith is tested?
- What reward awaits the person who perseveres under trial?
- What good has ever come out of a difficult situation in your life?
- How does a person's relationship with God change as he or she goes through trials and problems?
- With what doubts have you struggled concerning God and prayer?
- What do you believe God is trying to teach you this week through the trials and situations you are experiencing?
- In what specific areas do you need to ask God for His wisdom this week?

Next Sunday, July 18, 2010:

What would *James* say about our... "Temptations"



James 1:1-12

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

<sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

*James* - There are two references regarding James in the Gospels (Mt. 13:55; Mk 6:3). It is believed that James was the oldest of Jesus brothers and the lead pastor at the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal 2:9). The church itself must have been remarkable given the attendance of the Apostles, former pharisees, and many witnesses from the Gospel accounts. The other notable fact about James is that he sat over the first church council in Jerusalem.

*twelve tribes in the Dispersion* - The audience for the book is essentially all the Israelites spread throughout the Roman Empire.

*Count it all joy* - Joy is seen as a collecting pot, not a momentary event, subtle feeling, or pervasive thought. It is a collection of moments, good and bad, contributing to a deeper relationship with Christ. Joy is more than an emotion, it grows as our trust and reliance in Christ grows through the various ups and downs of life (Phil. 2:2)

*my brothers* - James's used the allusion (1:9; 2:15; 4:11) of family to constantly remind the readers that these messages were directly intended for believers in the risen Christ.

<sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

<sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup>he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways.

<sup>9</sup>Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup>and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

**testing of your faith** - The word testing in the Greek (dokimiov) has both the flavor of testing and genuineness. Faith is not a static mental state, but a lifelong journey of understanding our relationship with almighty God. Trials produce opportunities to determine the strength and resolution of that relationship.

**complete, lacking in nothing** - This is a complicated section, first suggesting that mere steadfastness is not enough, it is not God's desire that we only become enduring people, he expects that endurance to produce something inside of us. The point is that we are in a battle to live our life as Christ led His, we will not achieve this perfection, but we are called to strive after it. Suffering is going to be one of the vehicles used to drive us to that place.

**double-minded man**- James coins a new term, not seen in any other book of Scripture, but not a new concept. In the Greek it literally means "double-souled". This is the person who truly relies on nothing and his faith is filled with many beliefs, superstitions, and in the end no reliance is placed on God at all. This is not speaking to the momentary doubts that we have that spurn us towards deeper understanding (Ps. 22:2; Ps. 31:22; Ps. 49:5; Jer. 8:18; Lam. 5:20).

**Rich/Poor**- The book of James contains a very strong theme about the relationship between the Rich and the Poor. (1:27, 2:5, 5:1-6 ). James places high expectations on the rich to look out for the poor as God does. The book presents a strong tension between God and those who use money inappropriately. God abhors those who would hoard money, use it for senseless pampering, use it for slavery of others, etc..

<sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>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.

**crown of life** - This crown is the crown of one who has finished the race (1 Cor. 9:25), and someone who has strived to live the life worthy of his calling (Eph. 4:1). This is probably not referring to our heavenly reward as much as it is relating back to James 1:4 and the perfection/completion we will achieve by letting our trials work there way through our heart.

It can be difficult to see our faith as having promises/ blessings when they are not static blessings and not always immediately understood. Sometimes what God is doing in our life might not seem like a blessing at all. Those under trial must be open to seeing how Christ is actively working for our good (Rom. 8:28) and believe firmly that he will fulfill what he has promised (1:12) throughout Scripture.

## I. Trials are an opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. The Gospel is an unfolding story, not a completed action.
- b. The Gospel is a guide for building a relationship with Christ in this lifetime...
  1. through His incarnation
  2. through His sinless life
  3. through His substitutionary death
  4. through His resurrection
  5. through His ascension and reign
  6. through His promised return.

## II. Trials are an opportunity to grow in \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup>he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways.