



**JAMES: Week 1**

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## **JAMES**

### **WEEK 1: Persevering through Trials and Temptations**

**Bottom Line:** God will give you the strength to persevere even when you face trials and temptations.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

James is a book of the New Testament whose author is assumed to be James, Jesus' half-brother.

James' story is quite impressive, and it offers a compelling case for the historical accuracy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me explain.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, denied Christ's deity, which means that James did NOT believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

James' doubts were likely due to having seen Jesus grow from a small child into a man who now claimed to be the Messiah.

So, understandably, James would have struggled with the idea that his brother happened to be God's Chosen One.

**Mark 3:21** recounts Jesus' family's reaction to his claims of a deity: "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'"

However, something drastic, shocking, life-altering had to have happened for James to end up being not only the author of this book in the New Testament but also the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

That event was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:7** tells us that James was singled out for a Resurrection appearance.

James' conversion to Christianity, therefore, can be traced back to the moment he saw his brother, Jesus, whom he knew was crucified, ALIVE before his very eyes.

Nothing else could cause a man who once denied and was humiliated by his brother's claims to risk his life for the Gospel willingly.

In 62 AD, James was martyred for the sake of the Gospel.

No one dies willingly for a lie.

The Book of James offers practical advice for many of the common issues that will arise in the lives of believers.

As we read what James wrote to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations,” we can find hope and encouragement that, despite the trials and temptations of this life, we can still find joy in Christ.

## **LESSON**

Chapter 1 of The Book of James discusses the theme of perseverance during trials and temptations.

Trials, hard times, and challenges are inevitable and unavoidable.

James understood that Christians of his day would not be able to escape them.

And yet, even today, we somehow equate God’s blessing and favor with a life free from trials.

This simply isn’t the case.

Unfortunately, once we give our lives to Christ, we are not guaranteed health, wealth, and prosperity.

We need to only look at virtually every New Testament follower of Christ to see that struggles are a part of the life of every believer.

Jesus himself guaranteed that we would have trouble, but that we could “take heart” since he has already “overcome the world.”

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some of your most common struggles?

How do you deal with them?

2. What temptations do you think most teenagers struggle with today?
3. What do you think it means to “persevere” in your faith?

In the scripture below, we see James’ advice about how we should approach trials as they come our way:

### **Read James 1:16.**

*1 This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the “twelve tribes”—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!*

*2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

*5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. 7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.*

*9 Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. 10 And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. 11 The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all their achievements.*

*12 God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

*13 And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. 14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

*16 So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters.*

Look back at verse 2.

How does James advise that we deal with trials?

To respond with JOY.

Sometimes scripture will reveal the areas where we need an overhaul in our thinking, and this is one of them.

How many of us genuinely respond with joy when we are in the midst of a struggle, a conflict, or a temptation?

It's not a stretch to assume that most, if not all, respond much differently.

Anger, resentment, frustration, fear, distrust, these are just a few of the ways that we instinctively react when things are hard.

But James does have reasoning for his bold claim.

In verse 3, he tells us, "when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow."

And endurance is necessary for the life we're trying to live as believers.

Let's think about this from a different perspective.

Runners train for years to win races because they understand that races are won by building up endurance.

Is it possible to sit on the couch day after day for years on end, and win a marathon?

Well, yes.  
It IS possible.

But it's certainly not probable.

So, will you be able to get through this life without learning from trials?

According to James, trials are necessary for our growth as believers.

And there is a prize to be won.

He says that once we've "patiently endured testing and temptation," we will "receive the crown of life that God has promised."

And yet we struggle to get excited about this promise.

Even though it's difficult, we must take our focus OFF our trials and begin to look to God to see how He'll grow and transform us.

That's where we can find joy.

There is hope, and we can rest in that even though the darkest of times.

**Discussion questions:**

1. What is your "go-to" response when you face a trial or temptation?
2. Think of a trial you've gone through in the past.

What good has come of it?

How has it changed you?

3. Why do you think it's so hard to get excited about the prize at the end of our race?

**Read James 1:19-26.**

**19** Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. **20** Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. **21** So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

**22** But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. **23** For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. **24** You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. **25** But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

**26** If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.

We should all be spending significant time growing in God's Word, but what good is it if we don't apply it?

James warns against our tendency toward hypocrisy when we read and preach God's Word, but we neglect following it in our own daily lives.

And we have all kinds of excuses.

We cherry-pick scripture and claim that it wasn't written for "our time," so we don't follow it.

We don't want to be judged or excluded by those we cherish, so we don't do what is right.

But we know, deep down, that our excuses — whatever they may be — are just a pointless attempt to run away from the truth.

With every passing Sunday that we hear God's Word in church and don't apply it to our lives, we teach others what we value.

It's a scary thought, but it's true.

Do we value God's Word?

If we value it, there should be evidence of that.

If we value it, we will trust it to speak authoritatively in every area of our lives.

And we would allow the Holy Spirit to use the Word to convict, change, and transform us.

James was wise to point out this hypocrisy among believers in his day, and we would be wise to apply it in ours.

We shouldn't fear being changed by God.

Change is a beautiful gift that God gives to His followers.

How He must love us that He wants not only to live in us but also pull us out of our sin, then transform us into the likeness of His Son.

**Discussion questions:**

1. Think about an excerpt or verse of scripture that convicted you.

How did you respond to that conviction?

2. How can our hypocrisy in neglecting God's Word affect others in the faith?

3. How is there freedom in allowing God to change us?