

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S TRIALS

KEY PASSAGE: James 1:1-12

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. ²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers' temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. ⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. ⁹Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: ¹⁰But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. ¹¹For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also, shall the rich man fade away in his ways. ¹²Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Understanding the Sources of Trials

Often, we want to point fingers and immediately place blame when trials come our way. However, it is always wise to ask, "What is the true source of this trial?" The answer will most likely be different for each one we face. Many difficulties are simply those you and I bring on ourselves because of poor decisions, but some troubles can be caused by other people.

For example, a young believer may face certain difficulties repeatedly because he has only begun to walk with Christ and requires further refinement. Or he may see his troubles increase because of rejection or persecution by others. Peter in 1 Peter 4:12 warned believers not to be surprised or disheartened by such trials and explained that God will always work them out for good. **Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.** 1 Peter 4:12

Still other pains happen simply because the world we live in is fallen. Ever since creation was corrupted by sin, sorrow has been one of the many consequences. And, of course, the Devil himself instigates a great deal of our suffering to make us question our faith.

Does God ever send trials Himself? Yes, He does. He also allows them, especially if they result from choices, we've made that were not in His will. The Lord will even send trials when we are living obediently because our Father loves us too much to leave us where we are spiritually. His greatest desire is for each of us to grow closer to Him and to walk in the center of His will.

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Regardless of the source, the Father promises to use each one of our trials for good. Knowing this should change our attitude toward them. Therefore, we should consider every challenge we encounter as a reason to rejoice rather than give in to feelings of helplessness and defeat.

As children of a sovereign God, we are never victims of our circumstances; our heavenly Father is in absolute control of everything that concerns us. With this in mind, trials should no longer be a source of anxiety or frustration for us because we understand they are His way of accomplishing His will in our lives.

Understanding God's Purposes

In any trial, God has an opportunity to:

- **Test our faith.** In 1 Peter 1:6-7, the testing of our faith is compared to the refining of gold. Both are purified by fire and are of great worth—faith even more so because of its eternal value. If it is this precious, isn't God's testing of it worthwhile? After all, untested faith is weak and unreliable, so exposure to trials is what best strengthens it. **Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.** 1 Peter 1:6-7
- **Test our devotion to Christ.** Trials can help us discover just how obedient we truly are. Sometimes, we must go through difficult things. However, these moments give us the choice to obey, and doing so helps us grow.
- **Purify us.** During trials, certain negative attitudes such as prejudice or scorn hidden deep inside of us will rise to the surface. God uses these moments to show us what is in our hearts—not to condemn us, but to cleanse us of those things that keep us from receiving His best blessings. **The Refiner's fire.**
- **Demonstrate His love.** If life was always easy and all our desires were met, God would be taken for granted. People never pray more than when they are in the midst of a trial, and it allows the Father to display His love and grace most abundantly.

For instance, someone who is in desperate need of a job may receive one in such a way that reveals God's kindness, or someone who is struggling with illness may find his or her only relief through His healing.

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- **Produce a Christlike spirit in us.** God knows us individually—where we are, where He wants us to be, and how to get us there. He is at work in our lives to make us more like Jesus.
- **Equip us.** In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Paul teaches that trials prepare us to comfort those who are experiencing similar struggles. That means the pain we endure will grant us the opportunity to bless others and to be stronger witnesses for the gospel. **Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Believe and Rejoice

In order to have the appropriate response to trials in our lives, we must always remember:

- **God controls their length and intensity.**
- **The Father has specific purposes for everything we experience.**
- **The Lord designed each challenge to meet a specific need in our lives.**
- **God will cause our trials to produce good, positive results in us if we respond in obedience.**
- **Through trials, God strengthens our faith.**
- **Difficulties are opportunities for us to demonstrate perseverance under pressure.**
- **Through challenges, God develops Christlike character within us.**
- **The hardships we face help us measure our spiritual walk with God.**
- **The Father will be with us through every situation to accomplish His good.**
- **God will always help us overcome our circumstances if we trust Him.**

RESPONSE

Hurt and pain are inevitable while we are here on this earth, but we can always choose how we respond to them. We can blame others, turn to drugs and alcohol for relief, and throw our hands up in frustration. Or we can respond in the right way and view our trials from God's perspective. This helps us realize our difficulties are opportunities for spiritual growth. We know that life will not always be easy, but because we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, He will see us through.

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SUMMARY

When facing trials, have you ever asked, "God, why did You allow this?"

While it is natural to question the difficult and painful circumstances that you endure, you will only find a truly fulfilling and comforting answer when you seek wisdom from the Father. When you ask for God's viewpoint on your situation and respond to it using the scriptural principles He teaches, you will be able to endure your circumstances and grow through them.

In fact, James 1:1-12 tells us that God uses trials to accomplish His purpose in our lives. Through them, He strengthens our faith, makes us more Christlike in character, and demonstrates His great love and power in personal and impactful ways.

Understanding this can change our viewpoint on hardship. And instead of feeling like victims, we can face difficulties with joy, peace, and expectancy—confident in God's promise to reward our faithfulness and to bring something worthwhile from our pain.