

**ECCLESIA  
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST  
Pastor Luther H. Holmes, Jr.  
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Bible Enrichment Series**

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**NINE TESTS EVERY BELIEVER MUST FACE  
LESSON 1**

**KEY CHAPTER: James 1:1-12 (Message Bible)**

**1** I, James, am a slave of God and the Master Jesus, writing to the twelve tribes scattered to Kingdom Come: Hello!

**Faith Under Pressure**

**2-4 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work, so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.**

**5-8** If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who "worry their prayers" are like wind-whipped waves. Don't think you're going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open.

**9-11** When down-and-outers get a break, cheer! And when the arrogant rich are brought down to size, cheer! Prosperity is as short-lived as a wildflower, so don't ever count on it. You know that as soon as the sun rises, pouring down its scorching heat, the flower withers. Its petals wilt and, before you know it, that beautiful face is a barren stem. Well, that's a picture of the "prosperous life." At the very moment everyone is looking on in admiration, it fades away to nothing.

**<sup>12</sup> Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.**

## **Introduction**

We are living in a time that most of us never would have expected or predicted. Now more than ever we recognize that we do not know what tomorrow holds.

In times like these the question must be asked, how should we, as followers of Jesus, respond during these unusual and uncertain times?

Tonight, we turn to the book of James where we have this reminder: that while trials are certain and come in all shapes and sizes, joy is possible as we recognize God's purpose and provision in the midst of our trials.

## **Context**

James was the half-brother of Jesus, and he was a pastor in the church in Jerusalem in the years following Jesus's return to Heaven. ***James is writing to real people, in a real situation.*** These are people who are facing real trials. As individuals and as a church we must strive to have a view toward joy in the midst of unexpected situations. We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we can trust that God will use our trials to accomplish His purposes. As we navigate uncertain times we must trust His plan, submit to His work in us and go to Him in faith asking for wisdom.

The first phrase of verse 2 provides a call that frames the entire section that follows. James is calling on believers who are facing trials to consider their trials with joy. On its own this may seem like a call to unsubstantiated happiness, but the verses that follow reveal the reason saints can truly, *count it all joy*.

We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that our trials have a purpose (1:2-4) As we face trials, we can have this hope: That God is using our trials to make us perfect and complete. The call for joy or rejoicing in the knowledge that God uses trials to bring us to maturity is a theme throughout the New Testament (≡; Romans 5:1-5)

How can we endure with joy?) Jesus endured the cross with joy as his motivation (Hebrews 12:2) While Jesus endured the cross with joy, He still experienced pain, grief and sorrow (Matthew 26:37-39). Enduring with joy does not mean we don't experience pain, but it does mean that we have hope and purpose in the process. We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that God provides wisdom for the journey. In times of difficulty, we become acutely aware of our need for wisdom. It is easy to feel lost or unprepared. God does not leave us alone to find our way through our trials, He generously and graciously gives wisdom to those who ask in faith.

God is ready and willing to give wisdom, but there is a qualifier, we must ask believing that He will give it. We must trust that He will hear and answer our request. The person who doubts is described as double-minded and will not receive wisdom from God.

In this series, we will examine "Nine Tests Every Believer Must Face" knowing that they're all working together for our good. The nine tests for our learning are:

- (1) The Wilderness Test. (alone in storms)
- (2) The Test of Time (just waiting and waiting)
- (3) The Motivation Test (Doing the right things for the wrong reasons?)
- (4) The Failure Test (We all fail if we try to do something)
- (5) The Self Will Test (Are you stubborn in your ways?)
- (6) The Discouragement Test
- (7) The Misunderstanding Test
- (8) The Frustration Test
- (9) The Servant Test

Let's begin our study tonight with:

### **#1 The Wilderness Test**

***Deut. 8:2 (NLT)** Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands.*

***Deut. 8:3 (NLT)** Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people need more than bread for their life; real life comes by feeding on every word of the Lord.*

***Deut. 8:16 (NLT)** He fed you with manna in the wilderness, a food unknown to your ancestors. He did this to humble you and test you for your own good.*

***Deut. 8:17 (NLT)** He did it so you would never think that it was your own strength and energy that made you wealthy.*

The word “**wilderness**” is defined as a desert place; a place uncultivated or lived in; a state of disorder. Wildernesses are places of:

- Difficulties
- Pressures
- Insufficient resources
- Oppositions

One of the questions most asked in Church is “Why.” In one of our beloved hymns, there are these lines:

*“And we wonder WHY the test, when we try to do our best...”*

**We ask why...why is this happening to me.**

- It is asked when bad things happen to good people.
- It is asked when great effort produces only poor results.
- It is asked when the expected success is delayed.
- It is asked when the wicked prosper while the righteous struggle.

People tend to deal with difficulties better if they understand that what they endure serves a purpose. Knowing that the trials of their faith are not pointless makes the enduring bearable.

***Romans 8:28 (NLT)***

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

**The purpose of every test is:**

- To reveal what we understand
- To reveal what we don't understand
- To reveal to us the applicability of the lesson

**Why the Wilderness Test:**

- To humble you
- To prove your Character
- To teach you that you need more than bread

To discipline us for maturity or self-control  
To reveal to us that it was not our own strength that made us prosper

### **The test occurs**

So that we would not forget God.  
So that we would learn to trust God.  
So that our faith in God would grow stronger  
So that we would have a platform from which we could minister to those who are around us.

### **How God tests us:**

He allows us to LACK  
He supplies our need in a manner in which we are not FAMILIAR.  
He allows us to be DEPENDENT  
He allows us to be STRESSED  
He allows us to suffer PAIN

### **God is more interested in our CHARACTER than He is our COMFORT.**

Man cannot see his weaknesses until circumstances reveal it.

Impatience is revealed when something hinders our progress.

Pride is revealed when we are forced to do something menial.

Stubbornness is revealed when we are forced to do something that we do not desire.

- Our lack of faith is revealed when we are required to do more than what we are able.
- Idolatry is revealed when we are required to sacrifice those things that matter to us.
- Immaturity is revealed when we can't have our way
- Self-Will is revealed when we are required to do something against personal ambitions.
- Self-Centeredness is revealed when we are forced to serve others

***Matthew 12:35(KJVA) A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.***

## Testing is

Inevitable  
Continual  
Necessary  
Productive  
Influential  
Crafted by God

## Dangers of the Testing

People become DISILLUSIONED  
People become DISTRAUGHT  
People become DISTRACTED  
People become ANGRY  
People become BITTER  
People become HARDENED

Only two men were promoted to becoming a king without the struggle of **THE WILDERNESS**.

- King Saul—consumed by jealousy
- King Solomon—consumed by his own passions

While the **TESTING** is universal, how we respond is left up to our personal inclinations.

## Blessings of the Wilderness Test

We see the SUPERNATURAL work of God.  
We receive ASSURANCE of the care of God  
We receive assurance of the POWER of God.  
We receive assurance of the FAITHFULNESS of God.  
We are transformed by a RENEWING of our minds.

- We will become mature Christians.
- We will develop the ability to endure.
- We will lack in nothing.

***Jam 1:2** Consider [it] all joy, my brothers [and sisters], whenever you\* encounter various trials,*

***Jam 1:3** knowing that the testing of your\* faith produces patient endurance.*

***Jam 1:4** But be letting that patient endurance have a perfect work [or, full effect], so that you\* shall be perfect [or, mature] and complete lacking in nothing.*

- Our effectiveness and successes depend upon our responses to the various trials or testing.

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