

ECCLESIA
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
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Bible Enrichment Series

NINE TESTS EVERY BELIEVER MUST FACE
LESSON 6 – THE DISCOURAGEMENT TEST

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. **12 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

Tonight, we begin with Lesson Six

THE DISCOURAGEMENT TEST

1 Kings 19:1-2 (KJV)

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. [2] Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

1 Kings 19:3-4 (KJV)

And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

[4] But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

1 Kings 19:5-6 (KJV)

And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. [6] And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

1 Kings 19:7-8 (KJV)

And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. [8] And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

1 Kings 19:9-10 (KJV)

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? [10] And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

WHAT IS DISCOURAGEMENT?

- **Discouragement is defined as the act of disheartening or depriving of courage**
- **that which abates or destroys courage**
- **to take away/remove/lose confidence or enthusiasm**

At some point in life, everyone will face discouragement. In moments of despondency Thomas Edison after having been told by his teachers that he was “too stupid to learn anything,” didn’t think he would be the owner of GE one of the largest publicly-traded firms in the world,

It wasn't until the age of 62, with a \$105 social security check in hand when Colonel Sanders pitched his chicken recipe to restaurants. According to reports, some 1,009 people rejected him.

Discouragement causes one to dwell on DOOM, DISPAIR, and AGONY—and add to DEFEAT and DEPRESSION.

In the NT, discouragement was translated as:

To faint or to grow weary

***2 Cor. 4:1** Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;*

***2 Cor. 4:16** For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

***Luke 18:1** And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*

FIVE CAUSES FOR DISCOURAGEMENT

1.) Fear—the expectation and apprehension of impending danger; dread or anxiety.

- ***Psa 53:5** There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them.*
- ***Psa 53:5** There they dreaded with dread, where no dread was; for God has scattered the bones of the one who besieges you; you have put them to shame because God rejects them.*

Fear produces weakness. (in the Greek—feebleness or limp hands)

- ***Zep 3:16** Jerusalem, the time is coming, when it will be said to you: "Don't be discouraged or grow weak from fear!"*

(GNB) The time is coming when they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not be afraid, city of Zion! Do not let your hands hang limp!

- ***Hab 3:16*** *When I heard this message, I felt weak from fear, and my lips quivered. My bones seemed to melt, and I stumbled around. But I will patiently wait. Someday those vicious enemies will be struck by disaster.*

Fear paralyzes one into INACTIVITY.

- ***Job 32:6*** *and began to speak. I am young, and you are old, so I was afraid to tell you what I think.*

2.) Fatigue—

- ***Neh 4:10*** *And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.*
- ***Neh 4:10*** *Meanwhile, the people of Judah were singing a sorrowful song: "So much rubble for us to haul! Worn out and weary, will we ever finish this wall?"*
 - There are times that we all feel like we are tired and worn out. We take some time to rest or sleep and that helps to refresh us and restore our strength.
- We become fatigued when our task is greater than our resources.
- Fatigue affects us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.
- Fatigue is commonly called BURN-OUT.
- It occurs when we have depleted our strengths and have no reservoirs from which to draw more strength.

3.) Frustration—to break or to bring to nothing.

- ***Ezra 4:4*** *Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,*
- ***Ezra 4:5*** *And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

Frustration leads to the loss of morale.

- **Isaiah 19:3** (GNB) *I am going to frustrate the plans of the Egyptians and destroy their morale.*

- **Frustration leads to burn-out**
 - **Hebrews 12:3** (GW)
Think about Jesus, who endured opposition from sinners, so that you don't become tired and give up.

- **Frustration leads to RASH ACTIONS.**
 - **Act 19:36** *Then these things being undeniable, it is necessary for you, being calmed, to be so, and to do nothing rash.*

4.) Forsaken—deserted, abandoned.

- **Mat 27:46** *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (CEV) Then about that time Jesus shouted, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"*

- Feeling deserted
 - Joseph**
 - David**
 - Paul**

5.) Failure—

- **Exodus 18:18** *Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.*
- **Neh. 4:10** *And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.*

WHY THE DISCOURAGEMENT TEST?

- 1.) To cause one to find joy in God, not just circumstances
- 2.) To reveal that we are not self-sufficient—we need God and people
- 3.) To reveal our motivation—whether for self-glory or the glory of God.
- 4.) To allow opportunity for OTHERS to minister
- 5.) To teach us to “wait” upon the Lord to renew our strength
 - The Hebrew word for wait is qâvâh which means to **BIND** together by twisting; to expect: - gather (together), look, patiently, tarry.

EMPOWERING APPLICATION FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

Remember that ALL of us will face discouragement and it is how we deal with discouragement that determines our successes and failures.

So, how should we deal with Discouragement?

- 1.) Encourage yourself in the Lord—taking personal responsibility
 - ***1Sa 30:6** And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*
- 2.) Read the Bible promises of God
 - ***1Pe 5:12** Silvanus helped me write this short letter, and I consider him a faithful follower of the Lord. I wanted to encourage you and tell you how kind God really is, so that you will keep on having faith in him.*
 - 8,000 promises are available
- 3.) Listen for the Voice of God
 - ***1Ki 19:12** And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*
 - ***1Ki 19:13** And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

4) Make Church attendance a priority.

- **Heb 10:25** *Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer.*

5) Never forget the power of PRAYER.

- **Neh 4:3-4** *Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:*
- **Neh 6:8-9** *I sent a message back to Sanballat, saying, "None of this is true! You are making it all up." Our enemies were trying to frighten us and to keep us from our work. But I asked God to give me strength.*
- **1Kings 19:10** *He (Elijah) answered, "LORD God All-Powerful, I've always done my best to obey you..."*
- **1Ki 19:14-17** *Elijah answered, "LORD God All-Powerful, I've always done my best to obey you. But your people have broken their solemn promise to you. They have torn down your altars and killed all your prophets, except me. And now they are even trying to kill me!" The LORD said: Elijah, you can go back to the desert near Damascus. And when you get there, appoint Hazael to be king of Syria. Then appoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat to take your place as my prophet. Hazael will start killing the people who worship Baal. Jehu will kill those who escape from Hazael, and Elisha will kill those who escape from Jehu.*

TALKING TO GOD IN PRAYER

- 1.) Assures you that God is STILL IN CHARGE
- 2.) Assures you that God knows more about the situation that you do
- 3.) Assures you that God will bring about the end He has purposed.
- 4.) Assures you that the kingdom is bigger than you are
- 5.) Assures you that the kingdom will go on even after you are gone from the scene.
- 6.) Assure you that even in your discouragement, God has not forgotten you
- 7.) Assure you that even in your discouragement, you have a ministry to fulfill.