

ECCLESIA  
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST  
Pastor Luther H. Holmes, Jr.  
August – September 2022  
Bible Enrichment Series

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**NINE TESTS EVERY BELIEVER MUST FACE**  
**LESSON 7 – THE MISUNDERSTANDING 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 Seven

### THE MISUNDERSTANDING TEST

***Luke 19:10** For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

***John 10:10** The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

***Hebrews 12:3** Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

- Parents and their children of today consistently struggle to understand each other.
- We also struggle to understand those with whom we work or live around.
- Often misunderstandings arise that hinder progress, relationships, and our peace of mind.

Usually, misunderstandings occur because of the Gaps that we have to deal with

- Generation Gap
- Social Gap
- Educational Gap
- Religious Gap
- Cultural Gap

Differences between individuals often lead to **MISUNDERSTANDINGS**.  
**A misunderstanding is defined as:**

1. A failure to understand
  2. To interpret incorrectly
  3. To Quarrel
  4. A Disagreement
- Misunderstandings are common and can start a destructive cycle of disagreements, arguments and quarrels that may last for a short period or it could last a lifetime.

- Misunderstanding can lead to the separation of close friends.

***Act 15:37** And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.*

***Act 15:38** But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.*

***Act 15:39** And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so, Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;*

### **Misunderstandings hinders the work of the Gospel**

- ***Philippians. 4:2** (Living)  
And now I want to plead with those two dear women, Euodias and Syntyche. Please, please, with the Lord's help, quarrel no more--be friends again.*
- ***Philippians. 4:3** (Living)  
And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked side by side with me in telling the Good News to others; and they worked with Clement, too, and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are written in the Book of Life.*

### **Misunderstandings can result in mistreatment**

- ***Gen 37:26** And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother (Joseph), and conceal his blood?*
- ***Gen 37:27** Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.*

### **Misunderstanding can result in loss**

- ***John 6:53** Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*
- ***John 6:66** From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.*

### **Misunderstanding can lead to persecution.**

- Act 14:19 Some Jewish leaders from Antioch and Iconium came and turned the crowds against Paul. They hit him with stones and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead.

### **Misunderstandings can lead to false doctrines**

- 2Pe 3:16 Paul talks about these same things in all his letters, but part of what he says is hard to understand. Some ignorant and unsteady people even destroy themselves by twisting what he said. They do the same thing with other Scriptures too.

### **Misunderstandings occur when people misinterpret or mistake the true significance of actions, words, attitudes, or motives.**

- Gen 37:8 **And his brethren said to him (Joseph), Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.**
- Gen 37:10 **And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, what is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?**

### **David's motives were misunderstood by his brothers:**

- 1Sa 17:28 **And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.**

### **Why the Misunderstanding Test**

- To humble us as it reveals our own weakness
- We do not always communicate effectively
- We do not always see the big picture as God sees it

### **Showing us our weaknesses teaches us to rely on God and His Word and not just on our own abilities**

- **Deu 8:3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**

## **Being misunderstood brings humility in our lives**

- (It is hard to be proud when everyone misunderstands your motives, your words, or your actions)

## **The three greatest virtues of Christianity (St. Augustine)**

Humility

Humility

Humility

Humility is an exclusive Christian Virtue. No other religion expects humility from its followers.

## **People are consumed by Self-Interests**

- It is a Me First generation
- If you don't Toot your own horn—you won't be noticed
- It's everyone for himself...
- It is a dog-eat-dog world we live and work in

***John 13:4** So during the meal Jesus got up, removed his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist.*

***John 13:5** He put some water into a large bowl. Then he began washing his disciples' feet and drying them with the towel he was wearing.*

## **Misunderstanding reveals PRIDE**

### **When we are prideful, we are prone to:**

- Self-Importance
- Self-Indulgence
- Self-Sufficiency
- Self-Righteousness

## **Misunderstanding reveals the necessity of PATIENCE**

**Being misunderstood means that we often have to lay plans aside until the misunderstanding is resolved.**

- Not everyone will agree with us
- Not everyone is as fast to understand as us.

## **Misunderstanding reveals the necessity of forbearance and forgiveness**

- Because of the differences we have as a people (education, social status, generational views, cultural differences, and different weaknesses) ...we

must be patient with the weak, and not be envious of those who are stronger

***Col 3:12** God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient.*

***Col 3:13** Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you.*

Misunderstanding helps us to measure our maturity.

***Jam 3:2** For we all go wrong in a number of things. If a man never makes a slip in his talk, then he is a complete man (mature) and able to keep all his body in control.*

### **THE DANGER IN DEALING BADLY WITH MISUNDERSTANDINGS**

Anger  
Resentment  
Unwise responses  
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Baggage  
Despair  
Bitterness

**Conflict and bitterness in the church may be the single most damaging matter to the work of God.**

- In the secular world, how one gets along with fellow workers is more important than experience, intelligence, gifts, and abilities.
- Misunderstandings forces us to
  - Learn to speak more clearly
  - Be more tolerate with others
  - Be patient with the slower pace of others
  - Be humble in face of opposition
  - Control our responses to prevent worsening the circumstance

**As misunderstandings occur often and do such damage...it is important for the believer to learn how to deal with misunderstandings effectively.**

## HOW TO RESPOND TO MISUNDERSTANDING?

Let's wrap-up this lesson with a few points of application:

1. **Know that sometimes we will be misunderstood by our close friends.**
2. **Know that the best defense is an honest, clear, non-defensive explanation.**
3. **Know that we can't control how people respond to us.**
4. **Pray for those who misunderstand you.**
5. **We must not return evil for evil.**

## MISUNDERSTANDING ALSO LEAD TO CONFLICT BETWEEN EACH OTHER. SO, HOW DO WE RESOLVE CONFLICT THE BIBLICAL WAY?

Learning how to resolve conflict the biblical way allows us to keep our cool and humbly communicate in a peaceful, loving manner—Christ's way.

### **1. Take the initiative to resolve the conflict.**

The moment you sense a problem in your relationship, take the first step toward righting it—even if you think the other person was wrong and you've done nothing to provoke him or her. Approach the person face-to-face. Conflict seldom is completely resolvable via e-mail, letters, texting, or phone calls because we can't read each other's face, eyes, or body language.

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

– [Matthew 18:15](#)

### **2. Focus on goals bigger than your personal differences.**

Before starting a discussion, establish that the relationship is more important than any disagreement. If you focus on what's keeping you apart, it will be much harder to reach the goal of working on priorities out together.

*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

– [Ephesians 4:3](#)

### **3. Listen attentively as the other person tells how he or she sees the situation.**

Let the other person speak first while you listen with your heart, eyes, and ears — without becoming defensive or angry. Try to hear the hurt in the person's voice and empathize. Don't interrupt. Let the person complete his or her story. **Understandably, this will be the most difficult of the seven steps.**

*To answer before listening—that is folly and shame. – [Proverbs 18:13](#)*

*Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them. – [Proverbs 29:20](#)*

### **4. Validate the person's feelings without minimizing his or her concerns.**

Acknowledge the other person's points, without arguing or challenging. Then ask if they will listen to you.

Unresolved conflict causes unrest, disunity, anger, revenge, gossip, and unkindness—Satan's way. When we resist Satan by adopting Christ-like behavior, the enemy retreats—at least for the moment. He'll be back with a new strategy, but don't allow him to get a foothold. You know how to make him retreat again.

Everyone will be misunderstood at some point in his or her life. How one deals with misunderstandings reveals one's

- Character
- Maturity
- Ability to Lead

As followers of Jesus will sometimes be misunderstood not only by the world but by other believers. May God give us the spirit of Jesus that we might walk in his steps.

Failing the misunderstanding test often leaves us defeated and embittered. Passing it brings us closer to the character of Christ.

Some passages adapted from Crosswalkdevotionals