

The Epistle of James: Bible Study for Sunday, April 26, 2020

Read James 1:1: The author of this letter is Jesus' oldest brother, James, who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah **until** Jesus appeared to him **after** He had risen from the dead. He wrote this letter only 10-15 years after that; therefore, it **may** be the oldest book in the New Testament. James refers to himself as a bond-servant of Jesus Christ-- a term of humility.

The twelve tribes who are dispersed refers to the Jewish Christians (Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah). As a result, they were persecuted under the Roman Emperor Claudius and by their Jewish neighbors, friends, and family members. Their businesses were boycotted. Their children were mocked and thrown out of school. They were driven out of Jerusalem and forced to move to other places....all because they became Christ-followers. Times were harsh, and life was grim. Many of them were so weary; they were tempted to defect from their faith in Christ.

What questions do you think these Jewish Christians were asking themselves and asking God?

Chuck Swindoll writes, "For millennia, the best philosophers and theologians have tried to resolve the discord between the belief in an all-good and all-powerful God and the pervasiveness of wickedness, evil, and suffering in the world He created." We have many of these same questions today. James' first message is: **Real faith produces genuine stability.**

James 1:2: "Consider it all joy, my brethren **when** you encounter various trials."

Why does James use **when** and not **if**?

What does Jesus tell us about tribulation (trials) in John 16:33?

So, we recognize that various trials and tribulations are inevitable. The Greek word "various" means diverse or multicolored. Trials explode into our lives, last too long, and produce frustration and change. **Therefore, when James advises us to "Consider it all joy" when we encounter trials, what is your initial reaction? (Be honest)**

What keeps us from reacting with joy when trials and pressures of life seem overwhelming?

How does joy become our ultimate attitude? "Consider" means *to lead, to bring, or to carry*. It is the concept of evaluating, and then based on the evaluation, **leading your mind, attitude,**

and actions in God's direction. "Consider it **all joy**" is a command, and joy is a careful and deliberate **decision**. That's right: **Joy is a choice. WE DECIDE!**

The question is: **What kind of joy is there in the midst of trials?** First of all, James is not commanding us to be happy or joyful about the trial itself. Currently, we are in the midst of a pandemic. There is no joy in the results of the disease such as loss of life, loss of livelihood, economic instability, social isolation, anxiety, and so much more.

Then, what does an attitude of joy look like during these difficult times? This joy is a deliberate attitude of confidence in God.

Psalm 28:7: "The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving."

In the verse above, circle the two words that describe the Lord. Next, underline what happens when He helps me.

Read John 15:10 What does Jesus tell us to do? _____

Read John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you that **My joy** may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." **Who is the source of our joy?** _____

Read John 17:13 "But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." In this passage, Jesus is praying aloud shortly before His death so that his disciples can hear His prayer for them. What do you think it means to have Jesus' joy fulfilled in ourselves? _____

True joy is not based on circumstances such as happy times or trying times. True joy stems from the unwavering strength of the Lord. It reminds us that our joy stems from our hope and assurance of salvation in Christ, and it is rooted in what He has already done for us.

Rick Warren gave us this definition of joy: "Joy is the **settled assurance** that God is in control of all the details of my life, the **quiet confidence** that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the **determined choice** to praise God in every situation."

Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This verse reminds us that because the Holy Spirit lives within us, we have His joy within us. Furthermore, we can exhibit His joy in our lives for others to witness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the joy I have in knowing that You are in control of my life. Help me to choose joy in every situation because "You are my strength and shield. I trust you with all my heart, and my heart is filled with joy. Let me burst out in songs of thanksgiving."

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Here is an exercise that helps us develop the practice of “considering” it **all** joy.

HERE COMES THE TRIAL:

A loved one has been diagnosed with a serious illness.

Joy and trust in God could benefit me by: _____

Joy and trust in God could benefit this loved one by: _____

Joy and trust in God could benefit others by: _____

For Further Reflection

What emotions did you feel during your most recent trial? How did you see God walking with you in that trial? _____
