

THE JOY OF TRIALS

James 1:1-18

Ice-breaker (choose one)

1. Share about a time when you experienced a tough situation at home, work or at school and how you responded. Now that you've had a chance to distance yourself from the experience over time, how has your perspective towards the events changed over time?
2. Have you ever made a New Year's resolution? "Getting in shape is simple. Just eat right and exercise regularly." Why do we find this easier said than done? Think about when you have been in great shape physically. How does this compare and contrast to being in good shape spiritually?

Read James 1:1-8

1. The author of this letter is believed to be the half-brother of Jesus (1:1; Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19). During Jesus' earthly ministry he didn't believe Jesus to be the Messiah (John 7:5). When James refers to Jesus in his letter he uses the name "Jesus" twice, "Christ" twice, and "Lord" eleven times. Look at each of these references to consider how James' view of Jesus changed from simply being his older brother Jesus - to Lord (1:1; 2:1; 3:9; 4:10; 5:4,10-11,14-15).
2. Like James, before we come to faith in Christ, we don't believe His claims either. But once we accept Christ into our lives, our view of Christ changes. Taking a cue from James, how does one's view of Christ change after salvation?
3. How does James tell his readers to respond to trials and why (1:2-8)? Why is it important to ask God for wisdom and not just perseverance? When we ask God for wisdom, it is important that we believe something about God. What must we believe? How do we normally respond to trials and why?
4. Suffering is apparently the way in which God produces perseverance and maturity in us. Why do you think trials are so effective at this and nothing else is so effective (see also 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 12:7-10)? Can you give one current or past example of this from your own life?
5. God is single minded in His goal for your life (1:2-4). Are you equally single-minded about reaching this goal? Or do you have some traits of a double-minded person (1:6-8)? How can you cooperate with God in accomplishing the purposes for which He allows trials in your life (1:3-4)?

Read James 1:9-18

6. James uses a play on words when he talks about "talking pride" on one's position (1:9-11). What is the "high position" the poor brother is to take pride in and is the

“low position” a rich brother is to take pride in? How is each person’s position potentially a trial that can bring perseverance and maturity?

7. What blessings does God promise us that promote joy in our lives (1:12)?
8. What is the difference between God allowing trials in our lives (1:4) and temptations we experience to do evil (1:13-15)? Why could God never be the source of evil?
9. What “good and perfect gifts” (1:16-18) does God give us that enable us to experience victory over temptation (1:5; see also Romans 8:5-8; Psalm 119:11)?
10. What do you think “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth” means (1:18)? What difference should it make to your life that you are a “kind of first fruits of all he created?”