

James 1:2-4 is one of the most counter-intuitive passages in the New Testament

Oxymoron - Figure of speech that pairs two contradictory or opposing words together

Jumbo Shrimp – Deafening Silence – Pretty Ugly - Act Naturally | Joyful Trials

How can anyone genuinely find joy in suffering? Man am I happy that I'm going through this

No one wakes up hoping for hardship. I'm praying for? Sickness, financial, disappointment

Our instinct is to avoid pain and seek comfort. We often measure God's goodness easy life

Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage – 1914 Sir Earnest Shackleton & 27 men – Antarctic

- 6 weeks in...ice locked – 10 months hoping for thaw – October 1915 – Abandon Ship
- Merger Supplies – Sled Dogs – 3 small life boats...moved onto ice – Watched boat sink
- Stranded – 1000's miles – No radio – No Heat – No rescue coming | Front – Job – Psalm
- Our original mission is dead...We are all going to make it home alive | **CRAZY STORY**
- Knew greatest threat was despair | Social time – Football – Tents sang songs – Prayed
- Diaries – Wrote strange sense of cheerfulness, camaraderie, and unshakable morale

How can something painful actually become one of God's greatest blessings in your life?

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Not all of our hardships going to be as brazen sunk on a ship...COMPARATIVE SUFFERING
Psychological pattern where you rank your pain or struggles against the hardships of others

Junior High Relationship – When you suffer...however you suffer...the pain is real

Big Idea: God uses trials to produce mature believers who reflect Christ

Three things you can practically do when hardships come

1. **Rejoice in the Test (2)** ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, Let's discuss what it is to be tested by the Lord...many people think it is a punishment...no
Testing from the Lord = Process of allowing or ordaining difficult circumstances to refine, purify, and reveal the true nature of a believer's faith | Three purposes of a test from God
- a. **For Refinement not Ruin** – Divine test is spiritual growth and maturity, not failure
 - **Temptation** - (does not come from God) is designed to make a person fall into sin
 - **Test** – (Does come God) designed to draw a person closer to God | Not result sin - Job
- b. **Reveals your Heart** – Trials not break you...act as a mirror shows you who you truly are
 - God already knows what's in your heart...he gives us trials to show us what's in there
- c. **Prepares you for Great Responsibility** – Biblical History | Leadership | Massive Test
 - **Abraham** – Test of Obedience = Gen. 22...waited decades for son...offer Isaac burnt
 - **Joseph** – Test Righteousness – Slavery | Potiphar's Wife | Imprisoned...stayed righteous
 - **Peter** – Test of Loyalty – Denied Jesus 3 times before the rooster | Failed & Restored

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

Believers can choose joy in every trial because they trust the God who is at work through every trial

- a. **Choose Joy Deliberately** – 'Count it all joy' | Count = accounting term...intentional calc.
 - Our automatic response is to be sad, angry, disappointed...and a big one is fear
 - Loss of control (Crash w/o Permission) – Unknown (Predictability) – Vulnerability (Exposed)
 - Shift from happiness to Joy – Happiness (Circumstances) – Joy (Fruit of the Spirit)
 - You can be unhappy and joyful | Loss of a loved one who was suffering for a long time
- Choosing joy deliberately is a sacred act of trust; a daily decision to rest in God's grace and actively look for His light, even when the world feels dark

b. **Choose Joy Completely** – 'Count it ALL joy' | Force smile – Ignore Pain - Pretend Great

James is not calling for joy in partiality - respond complete joy regardless of the kind of trial

- The word **all** emphasizes that every trial is an opportunity for joyful trust
- Some Trials: Physical – Financial – Relational – Emotional – Spiritual...each opportunity
Joy does not minimize pain – Joy magnifies the faithfulness of God
- Acts 16 – Paul & Silas – In jail after exercising a demon from a slave girl...sang hymns
- Instead of asking, 'Why is this happening to me?' | 'What is this producing in me?'

c. **Choose Joy Continually** – when you meet trials of various kinds

- "When" - Means trials are certain, not optional – Every believer...hardship...fallen world
- "You" – It's not 'when they' – Not some distant, random people..."When you"
- "Meet" - Greek word conveys idea of suddenly encountering something along path
- "Trials" - A test of faith that takes the form of hardship or adversity
- "Various Kinds" – "Multicolored" = Just like a rainbow...trials many colors...see coming

Joy in trials is not absence of tears—it is the presence of trust...choose trust continually

| Isaiah 40:21 Soar

Takeaway - Respond by faith instead of reacting in fear

2. **Recognize the Purpose (3)**

³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

- Most of us ask, "Why is this happening to me?" when trials come | James surprising
He does not tell us to focus on the pain of the trial but on the purpose of the trial
- Trials are never meaningless...purpose behind every test He allows = Steadfastness
Steadfastness = being resolutely firm, unwavering, and loyal

God uses testing of our faith to produce steadfast believers who faithfully endure for His glory

Static Load Testing - Dozens fully loaded trucks w pre-measured, calibrated weights driven

- Engineers | Pressure reveals weaknesses and strengthens confidence in the structure
- God is strategically adding weight so show us our strengths and weaknesses...Praise God
- Trials are not random accidents or evidence that God has abandoned His children
God's goal is steadfastness...a faith that remains under pressure without giving up
- Steadfastness is spiritual endurance...It is remaining faithful when life is difficult
- Continuing trust Christ answers do not come quickly | **How many want answers...Now**
Why my health? Why this loss? Why this job? Why this spiritual battle? WHY THIS KID?
LOOK AT WHAT GOD IS BUILDING IN YOU...A FAITH THAT IS STEADFAST
- Strongest Christians rarely who have avoided suffering...walked deep...trusting God
Steadfast believers become powerful testimonies of God's sustaining grace

To make my point...I am going to give you five blessings that come with trials | TRIALS:

- a. **Deepen Our Faith** – Trials reveal whether our trust is in God or in our circumstances
- Shifts us from theory to experience – Intellectual beliefs / Theological concepts
Trial forces us to move from knowing about God to actively relying on God

All your theology gets moved into practice when trials fall on us...make or break faith

- b. **Produces Christlike Character** – God uses suffering shape us into the image of His Son
 - Earthly comfort often breeds a quiet complacency - construct lives around temporary
 - Trials act as a jarring wake-up call, reminding us this world is not our ultimate home
 - When this world is shaken...forced to anchor our joy to something unshakeable
- This produces the eternal mindset that Jesus modeled...eye prize of the Father's kingdom
Forged in Fire – He has to heat it and hit it to make the shape
God's ultimate goal for you is Christlikeness...gonna take heat & some hits get you there

- c. **Teach Dependence** - We learn to rely on God's strength instead of our own
 - Most anxiety comes from trying to control things we never could in the first place
 - A sudden trial (job / sickness) forces face a hard truth: **We are incredibly limited**
 - When we reach the absolute end of our own strength | **Choice: sink or surrender**
Surrender is where dependence begins...stop micromanaging universe & let God be God
- d. **Refine Priorities** - Loosen grip temporary things and increase longing eternal realities
 - Put to death 'Functional Saviors' | Secretly rely on to give us security, worth, peace
 - Our bank accounts, our health, our career status, or our relationships = Temporary
We all need 'Savior Refinement' in our lives – The things we depend on more than God
Trials force us to ask: If I lose this, do I still have hope?
- e. **Equip us to encourage others** - Suffering enables us to comfort who face similar trials
 - You have gone through things I haven't...I have been through things you haven't
 - We...COLLECTIVELY...been through everything...who is this church ill-equipped minister
Steadfast believers become powerful testimonies of God's sustaining grace
Takeaway - Trust the process, even when you don't understand the pain

3. **Remain Under the Process (4)**

- ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
- God completes His work in us when we patiently remain under the process w/ perseverance
- Everyone loves a finished product, but few enjoy the process | **DIY Projects**
How many of us would like to just be God's finished product? You'll never get there
- James tells us to remain under the process, trusting God knows exactly what He is doing**

- a. **Permit God's Work** - "*And let steadfastness have its full effect...*"
 - *Acknowledge the Pain* - Doesn't mean wearing fake smile...Have you ever read Psalms?
 - God's people cried out in anger, grief, and confusion. Honest prayer is the first step
 - *Don't rush the process* - "God, get me out of this!" VS. "God Get me Through This!"
 - You will never be the same person you entered the trial as...more / less like Christ
- b. **Pursue God's Maturity** – "*that you may be perfect and complete,*"
 - **Perfect = Not sinless, but mature** | **Complete = whole and well-rounded**
Think of spiritual maturity as the difference between a microwave vs the crock pot
My microwave has a button for everything: Pizza – Popcorn – Potato...things that start w 'p'
Don't you wish there was a mature Christian button? Crock Pot...it's a long, slow, cook
Head = Renewing the Mind | Heart = Cultivating Devotion | Hands = Engage Community
Fruit tree doesn't bear fruit the day it is planted – Wind...rain...heat...pruning...bears fruit

- c. **Possess God's Sufficiency** – "*lacking in nothing*"
 - James is not teaching that Christians will lack nothing materially or never have struggles
 - God uses trials shape every area of life...faith not immature or one-dimensional

This does not mean Christians will possess everything they want

It means they will become everything God desires them to be

Takeaway - Stay Faithful When the Pressure Increases

The deepest things God does in our lives often come through the darkest seasons we endure

- **Depend on God's Provision** - Not own strength...God will provide everything necessary
- **Delight in God's Presence** - True sufficiency is not in what God gives, but in God Himself
- **Demonstrate God's Power** - Display Christ's strength in weakness

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Rejoice in the Test – Recognize the Purpose – Remain Under the Process

Big Idea: God uses trials to produce mature believers who reflect Christ