

## Staying When It Hurts

James 1:1-4

1-18-26 - Jason Ogden

**Big Idea:** Faith is often formed **not when life improves**, but when we stay present with God and others while nothing changes. Perseverance is not pretending to be okay. It is remaining present, without numbing, hiding, or disappearing long enough for God to do His work.

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### The Situation James Is Writing Into

- Believers are scattered and disrupted
- Life feels unstable and unresolved
- Faith is being lived under pressure, not theory

James speaks to faith downstream, where prayers linger, suffering lasts, and obedience is costly.

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### “Consider It Joy” (James 1:2)

James does not command emotions.

He invites reflection.

- Joy is not denial
- Joy is not rushing past pain
- Joy is not pretending things are fine

James asks us to *consider* whether pain is the *whole* story or whether God may still be at work inside it.

### Personal Reflection:

What makes this verse hard to hear right now?

## What Trials Do (James 1:3)

Testing means exposure, not pass/fail.

Pressure reveals:

- What we reach for when relief doesn't come
- What we begin to believe about God
- How we cope when life stays the same

Over time, exposure produces perseverance.

### Reflection:

What tends to surface in you when a situation doesn't resolve?

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### Let Perseverance Finish (James 1:4)

Perseverance takes time and it can be interrupted.

It is not interrupted by:

- Weakness
- Needing help
- Rest, treatment, or care

It *is* interrupted by disconnection.

Perseverance finishes its work when:

- Pain is named instead of buried
- Sorrow is shared instead of silenced
- Faith remains relational instead of private

God is not forming a tougher version of you, but a truer one.

### Reflection:

Where are you tempted to carry things alone?

### **Tears Are Part of the Process**

Scripture treats tears as part of the work, not a failure of faith. Joy does not come around sorrow. It comes through it.

#### **Reflection:**

What feelings are hardest for you to stay present with?

#### **Staying Together**

Perseverance becomes dangerous when it becomes lonely. We often drift not from faith, but from people, especially when pain lingers without improvement. Staying doesn't mean fixing. It means remaining present.

#### **Reflection:**

Where do you need presence more than answers right now?

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### **The God Who Stayed**

Jesus did not bypass suffering. He endured it. When you stay, you are living inside the very shape of Christ's love.

#### **Closing Reflection:**

What does staying look like for you this week?

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

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#### **1. Getting Oriented**

James writes to people whose lives feel unsettled and unresolved.

Where does that description touch your life right now?

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#### **2. Hearing "Consider It Joy"**

What reaction do you have when you hear that phrase—resistance, confusion, guilt, numbness? What might that reaction be protecting?

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#### **3. Staying vs. Surviving**

Think of a current hardship.

What does survival look like there?

What might staying present look like instead?

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#### **4. Disconnection Patterns**

When pain lasts longer than expected, what do you tend to do—withdraw, distract, spiritualize, self-manage? Where do you think you learned that pattern?

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#### **5. Perseverance and Community**

Why do you think perseverance is harder to sustain alone? What makes sharing ongoing pain feel risky?

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#### **6. Tears and Faith**

How were emotions like sadness, anger, or fear handled in your family or church growing up? How does that shape the way you relate to God now?

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#### **7. Staying With Others**

When someone else's suffering doesn't improve, what feels hardest—fixing, waiting, not knowing what to say? What would it look like to stay instead?

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### **A Concrete Invitation**

This week, where might Jesus be inviting you to stay—in a conversation, a prayer, a relationship, or a feeling you've been avoiding?