

# BELIEVE

WISDOM FROM JAMES FOR THE WAR CALLED LIFE

## GROUP NOTES, WEEK 1

### OPENING QUESTION

*What is one big pressure you're facing right now?*

### SCRIPTURE

Read James 1:1-18

(Note, you may want to watch The Bible Project's Video on James. Just google "James Bible Project.")

### BIG IDEAS

The book of James opens with a brief note from James, the half-brother of Jesus, writing the letter to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion." James is writing near the end of his life from the city of Jerusalem. He's been pastoring in that city for decades, and shepherded his people through famine, persecution, and dramatic church growth. He was steeped in the Jewish Scriptures and in the teachings of Jesus. His wisdom, combined with his decades of fruitful Christians ministry, have been brought together to give us this important book from this important Apostle and church leader.

The big idea of our first teaching in this book is simply this: **God has a purpose for each Christian. Pain and pressure are part of the process.** We draw this conclusion from the final verse of this passage, v. 18, which says, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." It was God who caused us to be born again as we trusted the gospel, and all this was so that we could be a kind of first-fruits – a fore-telling – of the coming Kingdom.

>> Read v. 18. *What does this verse mean? What surprises you about this passage? What does it tell you about the reason Christ saved you?*

Being "firstfruits" is a noble purpose. But when it comes to pain, pressure, and persecution (or what James calls "trials.") In vv. 2-4, we're told to be steadfast in trials, because if we do then we'll be complete – we'll live for our purpose.

>> Read vv. 2-4. *What is a trial you're facing? How are you currently responding?*

Christians have a mighty and majestic purpose, but Pastor James wants to warn us of three things that threaten to steal our purpose. We find the first mentioned in vv. 2-8. It's the opposite of perseverance. It's the temptation to flake out and act foolishly when the pressure comes. James wants to remind us that we've been born again to be firstfruits, so we can hold fast.

>> *Talk about a time you were tempted to give up when it became hard to follow Christ. How is James encouraging you in this verse?*

The second threat to our walking in this noble purpose is mentioned in vv. 9-11. This is the temptation toward division. The devil will send persecution and pressure with an aim to divide us. If we're going to be a people who look like heaven, we must walk together.

>> Read vv. 9-11. *What kind of division is James warning against? What are the ways that our unity is threatened as a church? How does v. 18 help us?*

The final threat to our walking in our purpose is simple temptation to sin. When things are hard, we're often tempted to sin and pursue a lesser good because it's simply easier.

>> Read vv. 12-17. *What are the excuses to sin that James warns against in this passage? What does he say about God's character? Why is that good news for you?*

### PRAY

Christian, you have a great purpose. Pray for each other that you'll resist the ways we're tempted to miss our purpose, and that we'd persevere towards the goal for which Jesus saved us.