



BETTER FOR IT

It's human nature to avoid things we don't like, but James— the brother of Jesus— insists that faith is perfected through perseverance. And he would know; James presided over an early Christian church that was incredibly poor, and persecuted by the privileged at the constant threat of death. Yet, James insisted that the times when we cannot pray or obey away our trials produce the most growth, and provide the truest reflection of the amount of confidence we have in God. In this way, James tells us that God will use whatever circumstances he chooses not to remove from our lives.

Start Talking

1. If you could have any single super-power, what would you choose? Why?
2. Who is the most resilient person you've ever known? What made you choose them?

Looking Back

1. What did you do when you were faced with what Andy called the "brutal facts" of suffering and death this past week? How do you feel about your response?
2. How did your "hope in the end of the story" inspire you to give and love more freely?
3. Last week, we discussed the fact that God uses pleasure and pain to draw our attention. What did you do to intentionally "listen" over the past few days? How did you make room to hear His voice in your life?
4. How and when did you strategically remind yourself of the hope we have in the "end of the story" this past week?



What About You?

1. Has your faith or confidence in God ever been tested? Did you pass? Did you emerge with your faith intact? If so, why? If not, why?
2. People don't generally lose faith because of their own suffering. People are more inclined to lose faith because of the suffering of others. Why do you suppose that's the case?
3. Have you ever known anybody who views faith as some sort of super-power they can use to try and manipulate reality?
4. How do different people use the term, "faith?" Why do you think there is such a disparity in definitions?
5. Do you think faith can get us out of the consequences of living life in a fallen world?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: James 1:2–12.

1. Read James 1:2. In addition to your faith being exercised and strengthened, what other positive outcome might result from your current trial(s)?
2. Why do you think James chooses the word, "Whenever" to begin his advice about trials? What's he implying?
3. How do you think James is defining, "faith," here? Does he view it as a super-power a person can use to get out of hard stuff?
4. Why do you think James jumps so quickly from the idea of embracing trials, to the idea of asking for wisdom? What's the relationship between these two things?
5. If faith doesn't get us out of the consequences of living life in a fallen world, what *can* it do in your experience?
6. Why is "confidence" in God important when it comes to the practical task of daily living?

Putting It All Together

1. How do you think James' advice applies to the reality you're going to live over the next few days?
2. What can you do if you can't possibly see how God can use your current trials?
3. How can you implement James attitude this week? What would it look like? What actions will it lead to?
4. What will you do to ensure that you, "consider it joy," to face trials this week?
5. How will you remind yourself to ask for wisdom this week when circumstances feel insurmountable?

