

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday June 2, 2019. "James: A Practical Guide for Life. Life"

I. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II. Theme.

We began a new series Sunday that we'll be in for the entire month of June. It's a study of the book of James. But it's going to be much more than just a word study or information about this book. James was written to churches all over the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and gives practical, useful advice and wisdom to handle the tough things of life. James has been called the Proverbs of the N.T., (an O.T. book loaded with wisdom). James is brutally honest, and direct in what our life following Jesus should look like, and can almost be seen as a template or blue prints in how to live life well. Even though the tone of James feels harsh, all of the wisdom is for the readers benefit to handle the things of life. There are five chapters in the book of James, and five Sundays in June, so we'll highlight the major theme of each chapter each Sunday. We won't hit the historical and background information about James here. If you want that detail, just check out the message from Sunday. It gives that information. We'll start right into the first chapter and unpack the major theme of it.

III Scripture.

The entire first chapter of James was read Sunday morning, and even though we're only highlighting a couple of specific passages; **1:2-8, 22-25**, go ahead and read all of James chapter 1 just for some context.

James begins his letter warning the followers of Jesus were facing persecution and he wanted to give them some guidance, plans to understand and face that suffering, and to handle it well.

We know going thru difficult times, struggles, even intense suffering, can be life shattering.

Think about a time or two you went thru some really difficult hardships. What were they?

What was that experience like? What did you deal with?

Looking back, what helped you navigate those difficult times?

In addition to the passage in James, **Romans 5:3-5** was read, and a process of growth thru suffering was given. This cycle of growth was; suffering brings about endurance or perseverance, perseverance brings about this growth in personal character, and the development of this character brings about a deep and abiding hope. Let's talk about each of these.

Perseverance.

Thru suffering there is this thing building within us. James, and Paul in Romans, call it "*endurance*". The ability to hang in there, to last, be resilient, without giving in or up. We learn how to self-soothe, or manage our suffering by how we learn and grow to respond to it. We grow an ability to persevere, make it thru that thing, the next time suffering comes. James and Paul are saying God is forming this

maturity in you, this inner strength, this completeness, and it's in accepting that suffering will come, life will get really hard, you will grow this ability to endure, persevere, be resilient that ONLY comes from hard times.

Character.

Thru suffering perseverance, resilience, endurance, is built. This inner ability to withstand, and carry really hard things with a certain sense of lightness. Going thru a really hard times, suffering, and building the ability to endure or persevere, grows our personal character.

And it seems people who don't go thru suffering at all become Peter Pan. They have this weird naivete, childishness not childlikeness, sense of entitlement, about life. They are unrealistic in their perspective, and expectations about life. And little things just incapacitate them.

Suffering, navigated well, produces endurance, which creates a strength of character, this moral fortitude that grows their maturity.

Hope.

And then from those things there's hope, the best thing ever. Thru this cycle, process, of facing suffering, developing this ability to persevere, growing this internal strengthened character, there grows **this spiritual superpower of Hope.**

Both James and Romans are saying there is this process of processing of suffering that is transformative. And thru all of those things grows this ability to see a better place on the other side of that struggle...even if you don't know what or where that better place is. THAT'S HOPE!!

Talk about each of these. What have you experienced yourself, or seen in others, about the power of perseverance, character, and hope?

How have you seen these done well, and possibly done poorly?

I don't want to downplay suffering. It's awful. But studies have shown people who have gone thru suffering, and have worked thru it well, **come out the other side; stronger, more compassionate, wiser, their relationships are deeper, and their emotional intelligence, (ability to read people and navigate relationships), is stronger.**

It's not trauma, suffering, that makes you stronger. It's **what you do THRU and AFTER that thing that actually grows you.** Suffering is horrible. Immensely painful. Shakes our world to the core. But there is a process, a work being done, when we can navigate suffering well and wisely.

James' final warning is; don't just read these words, put them into practice, build a life that navigates and makes the most out of suffering and difficult times. This isn't another; just do for the sake of doing. But rather loving compassionate words of advice to help us for when we go thru difficult times. Bad things aren't optional...they'll come our way. But suffering is optional. We get to choose how we handle those difficult times in our life. Build, craft a life of doing this well.