

Week of January 11th

James 1:2-8 (NIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Challenging times and trials are common to all of us. A natural human response is often to seek escape from the pain and difficulty, rather than to endure it. Yet James tells us we can see trials as something of joy, and an opportunity for growth and greater steps of maturity.

RESPOND

1. Why is it that so many people seek after happiness, which is outcome and emotion based? Where have you seen this "Pursuit of Happiness" play out in life/work? How does marketing, TV and pop culture feed this "need" to be happy?
2. Read Galatians 6:7-9. Pastor Ken mentioned that when we face trials, sometimes those trials are the result of a cause and effect relationship. What do these verses teach about trials we inflict on ourselves?
3. The other possible reason for trials can be a mystery. There may be no logical explanation (see Job, for instance). When faced with these types of trials how should we respond? What does James 1:2-8 teach on this matter? What would you identify as signs of spiritual maturity in someone's life?
4. One significant key Pastor Ken mentioned to help us "endure" when all we can see is the pain of the trial is to have spiritual eyes to see the potential and promise on the other side of the pain.
 - the potential of who we could become by enduring and growing
 - the potential of what could become reality in life and circumstances by remaining faithful

Can you share a time in your life where in hindsight you can now see how God used a painful trial to help build, shape and mold you?

Share some practical ways we can encourage one another when we are in the midst of trials to help us endure and stay faithful.

Can you think of a time when you wanted to "rescue" a loved one from their trial, and you were conflicted, not wanting to see them suffer, but also knowing the Lord was at work?

5. There were three steps mentioned this weekend for responding to trials, to help us to get to the other side of pain. What were those steps and how would they be applied in everyday life?
 - rethink challenge ... Read Romans 12:1-2. What are different ways to feed our thinking and to stay on track?
 - Go to God... ask for wisdom
 - Do it... do what God's word directs

One thing Pastor Ken mentioned was that acknowledging the Lord was more than "tipping your hat"

- it was trusting the character of God
- it was also trusting the will and desire of God

Which is easier, to trust his nature or to obey and follow his ways? Why is this?

Read Proverbs 3:5-6

What does this mean? When is this easier and when is this difficult?

6. Pastor Ken told the story of a baby bird and his son who had a splinter removed and they thought they were going to die. The same concept of "trials and testing" is the word James refers to, but we must place our hand in his and trust the process of God's refining work.

When the going gets tough, the tough ... rely on God. God is there for you every minute of every day and night. He will never quit on you. Don't quit on Him. He will take you to a state of peace and joy beyond the ability of man to explain.

As you pray for one another, if there would be an area of trial and you're willing... allow the group to pray for you and to encourage you as you walk with God in these days, believing his best is still yet to come.