



Group Time

ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See page 48 for directions)

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LOOK BACK:

Point: Life's pain points us to God's power.

- What thorn(s) did you determine can be a testimony?

Question: What's the difference between going through a "trial" as opposed to having something "bad" happened?

LOOK UP: Watch this week's video on the 4G web page.

Recap: As the rain may fall on the just and unjust alike, "stuff" sometimes happens in life no matter who we are. God allows His people to "experience various trials" that test their faith. James tells us to consider this a "great joy." Why? Because it produces endurance which leads to spiritual maturity and completeness.

But how can we know the difference between a trial and just bad stuff common to all people? And how can we know we are facing a trial in a way that is leading to spiritual maturity? What does spiritual maturity look like?

LOOK IN: Discussion

- Look up the definition of the word "trial." There are a variety of meanings. How do you think James is using this word and what does it mean?
- James is writing to 1st Century Jewish converts. What kind of trials do you think/know they were facing?
- What kind of trials do 21st Century Christians in Bastrop County face? (To compare worldwide go to *persecution.org*.)
- How does facing a trial lead to spiritual maturity? Share an example from your own life or someone you know.

LOOK FORWARD: Application

Point: Spiritual maturity happens through trials.

Our Response To A Trial Determines The Outcomes

- Do not create your own trials.

Read Matthew 5:10-42. If your trials are the result of your sin, deal with your sin. Don't blame God for the consequences of ignoring Him.

What sins, in thought or deed, do you need to deal with?

- Watch your direction.

What are you giving yourself to? Where are you spending your time, talent, and treasure? What needs to change?

- Keep it simple.

If we are focused on being and doing for God's Kingdom, trials will come. When they do, keeping your response simple with what you know to be true will guide you to maturity. Prayer, God's word, like-minded community, and acts of service keep us grounded in truth.

Read Matthew 7:24-27. What do you need to start doing to ensure you have a firm foundation to face the trials effectively?
