

DEVOTIONALS FOR JAMES 1

IT'S JOY

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

JAMES 1:2-3

This is contrary to how we usually think when we encounter trials of various kinds. Joy is not the word I would use to describe them. But a Jesus-follower's manner of thinking differs from others in this life. We look at situations differently. We see them as God would see them—opportunities for testing. These trials have the potential to increase our faith and force us to look at situations from a spiritual perspective, not a natural one. Therefore we should have more endurance and faith, which produces an increase in steadfastness.

Our faith is not a crutch for the weak-minded, but rather it's for those who are willing to become stronger, be tested further, and find joy in moments we meet trials. So be strong today—strong in the faith and count your joy.

ASK THIS: What's the trial you are facing right now?

DO THIS: Find one aspect of joy to count in this trial.

PRAY THIS: God, I pray that you show something beneficial about the present trial that I may not see, so that I can praise you in this storm.

THE STEADFAST EFFECT

And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

JAMES 1:4

There is an effect that comes from faith under trial—it's steadfastness. But notice steadfastness has its own effect, a "full effect." Many of us will endure a partial effect but not a full effect. The pain and discomfort of this life scream, "Turn back!" But not James. James tells us to push through the obstacles of faith and look beyond the present pain. It's a call to be steadfast so that we will experience something wonderful that we miss if we give up: perfection, and completeness. If you want to lack nothing in faith, then push through with faith and discover the wonder of the steadfast effect.

ASK THIS: What trial are you presently facing that you want to give up on?

DO THIS: Be steadfast in the faith with me.

PRAY THIS: God, this season beckons me to give in and give up. In my weakness make me stronger. In my unbelief, increase my belief. Please give me strength today to be steadfast and therefore complete lacking nothing.

JUST ASK; IT'S YOURS

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God,
who gives generously to all without reproach,
and it will be given him.*

JAMES 1:6

I know I lack some things at present. But upon reflection I have realized that I am keeping these needs to myself. They are locked in the confines of my mind, stirring around and creating only concern. Why do I do this? Do I keep them to myself out of shame? Is it embarrassment? Am I scared to ask because I might look stupid or foolish?

Regardless, James says if we lack, we should ask. And not ask just anyone—ask God. The God who owns all things and is the source of everything good and righteous. And here's the best part, God is waiting for us to ask because he wants to give generously. It's important! God does this without reproach, which is the operative phrase here. This means God gives generously to one who asks without an expression of disapproval or disappointment. Wow!

So get to asking, and stop keeping your needs to yourself.

ASK THIS: What do you need to ask God right now?

DO THIS: Ask him, out loud, and right now.

PRAY THIS: God, I need _____.

THE FAITH-ASK

*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,
for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea
that is driven and tossed by the wind.*

JAMES 1:6

There is a way we should ask: in faith. Faith is confidence in the unseen God. Not only what God does but who he is. If we have faith only in what God does or what we expect him to do, is that really faith? But rather, we should place our faith in God regardless of what happens in the high times and low times, so when the waves of life beat upon us, leading to shipwreck or safety, we're anchored into the only thing that really matters—a God who never changes. So let's ask in confident faith untouched by the events and distractions of life.

ASK THIS: Consider one bold request you want to ask God.

DO THIS: Ask in faith.

PRAY THIS: God, I have asked before, but I am going to ask again. This time with confident faith in you, the unchanging God.

STOP DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

JAMES 1:7-8

I think what we want is some stability, not *suppose-ability*. But there is a lot of *suppose-ability* among Christians. We suppose God will respond to us; therefore, we are unstable in what we believe he will do. But remember, Christian faith is anchored in the person of God, not merely what we expect he will do nor what he does. Therefore our stability is based in the Lord and him alone. So when we ask him, we should not suppose he exists but know that he exists and hears, listens, and responds to us. Therefore we should ask confidently in the Lord and be not double-minded about God, regardless of how he might answer or not answer, because our faith is not in what God will do or not do for us, but in the Lord himself. That's not *suppose-ability*; that's stability.

ASK THIS: What is your confidence in God based on?

DO THIS: Be stable—have faith in the Lord.

PRAY THIS: God, turn my confidences from what you might do to who you are. Make me stable and single-minded. Cancel my duplicity of thinking.

DANGEROUSLY RICH

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

JAMES 1:9-11

There's not a person alive who doesn't imagine the boast of being rich. But James says the rich person isn't rich forever, but only a season. Humiliation awaits the rich because, like the flower's beauty, it is passing and perishing. The rich will fall and fade. But not the lowly. He thoughtfully considers his boast because his boasting is in the Lord, not some temporal pursuit.

ASK THIS: Are you boasting?

DO THIS: Boast in the Lord.

PRAY THIS: God, may I never take the riches of your provision for granted. Your provision is better and lasts longer than anything I can provide for myself.

THE DEATH OF GROWING DESIRE

Then, desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

JAMES 1:15

Desire is not a static thing in the life of a follower. It grows, much like a human life grows inside the womb of a woman. It starts with a longing that develops until it matures into a decision, action, and routine behavior. But at some point, it is transformed because desire is conceived. But an evil desire does not give birth to life; on the contrary, it brings death. But here's the question: Why do so many go through all that labor to produce something that produces nothing? Sounds like a waste of time and energy to me.

ASK THIS: What evil desires are bringing you death?

DO THIS: Desire what's good and holy.

PRAY THIS: God, kill my evil desires, and simultaneously replace them with holy desires.