

Lesson 1: Count it All Joy¹

The Book of James

Scripture Passage: James 1:1-18

Growing Connected (10 min.)

Take turns sharing your name and an area of your life you'd like God to grow you in. As a group, ask God to transform you into the likeness of Jesus in those areas throughout this series.²

Introduction (2 min.)³

In the eyes of many, negative circumstances are often seen as a form of payback for something bad someone did. On February 24th, 2007, Justin Timberlake's song, "What Goes Around...Comes Around," charted at the number one spot on the Billboard Hot 100 list in the United States. Perhaps the reason for the great success of this song is because many of us actually believe that retribution awaits every negative action, even the ones that we do.

The Bible, on the other hand, overwhelmingly affirms something altogether different about God. The biblical storyline demonstrates that trials are often a tool for the development of God's children for spiritual adulthood. Stories like that of Joseph (Genesis 37 & 39) or the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 11:16-33) remind us of this. We can even see God's work through suffering in ordinary life circumstances. For instance, someone who was once "po-", who couldn't even afford the 'or', may now make wise financial decisions because they learned what it meant to be frugal. In essence, trials are a platform God uses to grow us up in Him!

Yet, becoming part of God's development plan requires understanding how to respond to trials. The epistle of James gives readers a vision of how to handle various trials that plague the global church-- trials that come from the outside and that arise from within. Throughout these 8 weeks we are going to see how God shapes us through our obedience to His Word! In the first lesson, we are going to learn:

Big Idea: We can have joy in our trials if we understand that God is producing a mature and fortified faith through them.

PLAY VIDEO- PT. 1- Video Notes

Group Training

This lesson reminded us of God's activity even in the worst of circumstances. Therefore, one does well to learn how to slow down and think on God's perspective.

Individual Activity (5 min.)

- 1.) Write down a problem that is affecting you.
- 2.) Write down how you're tempted to respond.
- 3.) Write down the ways God can grow you in light of what was taught so far in the video.
- 4.) Write down how obedience to God in this situation can provide an opportunity to share the Gospel with others. Use this sentence stem- "If I obey God in my response to ___ I can share the Gospel when _____"

Example-

- 1- I lost my job out of nowhere and now I don't have anything to pay for my basic necessities.
- 2- I am tempted to worry and blame God for doing this to my family.
- 3- I can learn how to ask God for wisdom regarding my finances and to trust in His provision.
- 4- If I obey God in my response to job loss, I can share the Gospel if I'm asked why I seem to have a different perspective instead of worry.

Group Discussion (10 min)

Processing our thoughts with others is an important skill. Ask if 2 people would be willing to volunteer to share what they wrote down.

PLAY VIDEO- PT. 2- Video Notes

Think Tank

Partner up with someone (15 min.)

The teacher taught that God wants to mature us and desires for us to be vigilant. While God doesn't tempt us to do evil, he does allow us to go through trials to mature us in our faith. Yet, sin and Satan war against our faithfulness. Also, we have the tendency to deceive ourselves to believe God is not good when we go through trials. For this reason, we must know the dangerous path of sin seen in the Bible and avoid it at all costs!

- 1.) Partner with someone next to you or in a breakout room.
- 2.) With your partner, compare the following (3) biblical texts:
 - a.) **Read James 1:14-15 out loud:** *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (ESV).*
 - **How does James describe the steps that lead someone to sin? Write out the steps together.⁴**
 - b.) **Read Genesis 2:15-17 out loud:** *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (ESV)."*
 - c.) **Read Genesis 3:4-6 out loud:** *But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*
 - **In what ways did Adam and Eve's sin carry out the process that James 1:14-15 describes?**

Come back as a large group and discuss (10 min.)

1. What similarities between Adam and Eve's temptations and the temptations we face in difficult circumstances?
2. What are the main differences between responding to trials by sinning and responding to trials by obeying God?
3. In what ways can God grow us when we obey Him as we face trials?

Training Session Wrap-Up (2 min.)

Summary: We can have joy in our trials if we understand that God is producing a mature and fortified faith through them.

*Closing Prayer:*⁵ Ask someone in the group to pray that God would grant wisdom, perspective, and faith in the Gospel that is vigilant when rubbed up against trials.