

New Series: "Live Like It"

Part 1 - "How to Handle Trials"

***ALEXANDER THE GREAT STORY**

We wear the name of Christ-follower. Would someone need to have this conversation with us because of our lifestyle? What area comes to mind? MY PRAYER THROUGH THIS SERIES IS THAT ALL OF US WILL BE TRANSFORMED IN ONE AREA OR ANOTHER!

TODAY WE BEGIN THE GREAT AND POWERFUL BOOK OF JAMES. SHORT, BUT MIGHTY. THEME THROUGHOUT – IF YOU ARE GOING TO CALL YOURSELF A CHRIST FOLLOWER, THEN YOU NEED TO LIVE LIKE IT.

James = God's antidote to hypocrisy

HOW DO WE DEVELOP CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER?

WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT "TESTING" IN THIS FIRST CHAPTER. HOW TRIALS AND

TEMPTATIONS TEST US, LIKE A BIRD OR A BUTTERFLY “TESTING” ITS WINGS – BECOMING STRONGER SO THAT IT CAN FULFILL THE PURPOSE IT WAS MEANT FOR.

BIG IDEA: ONCE WE HAVE WITHSTOOD THE TESTING OF TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS, WE DEVELOP “PERSEVERANCE” (UNSWERVING CONSISTENCY) IN OUR LIFESTYLE THAT MAKES US A STRONGER, BETTER PERSON.

THE BOOK OF JAMES IS INFINITELY PRACTICAL

IT IS A BOOK OF TOPICS – HANDLING TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS, BEING LESS ANGRY AND A BETTER LISTENER, TAMING THE TONGUE, THE POWER OF PRAYER, HOW FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD, DEFINITION OF TRUE RELIGION AND TRUE WISDOM TO NAME A FEW.

- A. WRITTEN BY ONE OF 2 JAMES MENTIONED IN BIBLE AND BY FIRST CENT. HISTORIANS – APOSTLE JAMES (BRO. OF JOHN, SONS OF ZEBEDEE – “SONS OF THUNDER”) – BUT MARTYRED UNDER HEROD AGRIPPA**

**IN A.D. 44 - - EARLIER THAN MOST
HISTORIANS PUT WRITING OF THIS BOOK**

***MORE LIKELY WRITTEN BY JAMES THE HALF
BRO. OF JESUS (Joseph and Mary had other kids
– **Mark 6:3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this
Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph,[a]
Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with
us?" And they took offense at him.****

**– Fam. Didn't believe in Him at first - **John 7:5 For
even his own brothers did not believe in him.****

***Maybe your experience – def. mine – HELPED
GROW MY CHARACTER BECAUSE I WANTED TO
BE A WITNESS TO THEM. IT WAS A TRIAL, BUT
THE END RESULT = DEFINITELY WORTH IT! A
LOT OF JOY SEEING THEM FOLLOW CHRIST
LATER!**

***JAMES LATER BELIEVED AFTER
RESURRECTION (**1 CORINTHIANS 15:7. Then he
appeared to James, then to all the apostles,**)
JAMES LEADER OF JERUSALEM CHURCH/
COUNCIL – ACTS 15:13.**

**WRITTEN ABOUT AD 50 OR LATER –
CONTROVERSIAL – DOESN'T MENTION NAME OF
CHRIST MUCH (TWICE) FOCUSES MORE ON**

GOD THE FATHER, BUT GOLDMINE ON HOW TO LIVE FOR CHRIST! (I HAVE PEOPLE START W. THIS BOOK ALONG W. GOSPEL OF MARK). PERHAPS THE EARLIEST N.T. BOOK!

I. OPENING GREETING

A. JAMES 1:1. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. – JAMES REFERS TO SELF – “SERVANT” (I WOULD FIND SOME WAY TO FIT IN THAT JESUS WAS MY HALF BRO.). BONDSERVANT = WILLINGLY OBEDIENT. SOMEONE GIVING UP HIS WILL UP FOR THE WILL OF HIS MASTER.

B. WRITTEN TO “12 TRIBES SCATTERED” – NEW JEWISH CONVERTS (completed) BEING PERSECUTED. (OR SIMPLY TO CHRISTIANS AS “THE ISRAEL OF GOD” (GAL. 6:16). FOCUSES ON STAYING FAITHFUL/NOT GIVING UP OR GOING BACK BECAUSE LIFE IS HARD. YOU SAY – A LOT WRITTEN ABOUT THIS. GOD KNOWS OUR NATURE AND TENDENCY TO SLIP

BACK INTO OLD WAYS OF THINKING AND LIVING. (MISSING HIS BEST)

- II. DEALING W. TRIALS – JAMES 1:2-4**
Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

C. COUNT IT “PURE JOY” WHEN FACING DIFFICULTIES/SUFFERING.

IN CONTEXT HERE. . .

JOY = not so much emotion, but an active acceptance of adversity that can transform our character.

JESUS – HEBREWS 12:1-3. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and

perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. – DESPISED SHAME, BUT FOR JOY SET BEFORE HIM (OPENING WAY OF SALVATION FOR US) ENDURED THE CROSS.

1. *JESUS SHOWED PERSEVERANCE/ ENDURANCE. PERSEVERANCE IS A QUALITY YOU ARE GOING TO NEED IN THIS LIFE! (Shout out and write down). (BRAINSTORM W. WHITE BOARD ON WHAT LIFE SIT. WE NEED PERSEVERANCE. . .)

a. These early Christians would definitely need it if they were to endure and help change the world – Hebrews 11:36. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning;[a] they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in

deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

ILLUS. TENNESSEE AQUARIUM BUTTERFLY SECTION. DON'T START OFF BEAUTIFUL AND ABLE TO FLY. START OUT AS VERY FRAGILE LITTLE WORMS THAT CAN BE OVERCOME BY HEAT IN A BOX THAT GETS STUFFED IN OUR MAILBOX! MY WIFE ORDERS THEM FOR "BUTTERFLY WEEK" EVERY YEAR FOR HER PRESCHOOLERS. THEIR CACOONS MUST STAY ATTACHED TO A FOUNDATION. THEY MUST BE HANGING IN. IF YOU BREAK OPEN THEIR CHRYSALIS TOO EARLY WHAT HAPPENS? ADVERSITY STRENGTHENS.

THE KIND OF TESTING/TEMPTATION THAT JAMES IS TALKING ABOUT IS BOTH STRENGTHENING AND PURIFYING.

1. **There will be the testing of disappointment and sorrows that threaten to STEAL our faith away.**
2. **There will be the test of seductions that threaten to LURE us away from our faith. (NEXT WEEK)**

QUOTE – WILLIAM BARCLAY – “There will be the threat of dangers, the sacrifices, the unpopularity which the Christian way must so often involve. But they are not meant to make us fall; they are meant to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not meant to make us weaker; they are meant to make us stronger. . .therefore we can rejoice in them! The Christian is like the athlete who knows that the heavier he trains, the more he is being fit for victory.”

MY OLD YOUTH PASTOR USED TO SAY, “The Christian life is not a 100 yard dash, but a 26 mile marathon that is worth winning.”

2. **PERSEVERANCE IS A QUALITY GOD WANTS TO PRODUCE IN HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE PREPARED FOR EV. GOOD WORK**

(EPH. 2:10 - For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.)

3. **“COMPLETE – LACKING IN NOTHING = MORE AND MORE FIT FOR THE TASK GOD HAS PREPARED FOR US. AS WE GO THROUGH LIFE LETTING GOD SHAPE US THROUGH OUR EXPERIENCES INSTEAD OF FIGHTING HIM, WE BECOME CLOSER TO THE STANDARD OF BECOMING LIKE CHRIST. VERY DIFF. THAN GOAL OF PERSONAL HAPPINESS IN OUR CULTURE.**

***BUT. . .”DOESN'T GOD WANT ME TO BE HAPPY?” BIBLE DOESN'T SAY THAT. HE WANTS YOU TO LOVE HIM AND BE MORE LIKE HIS SON. THE GOAL OF *BEING MORE LIKE CHRIST* IN CHARACTER WILL BRING A LASTING JOY THAT IS DEEPER.**

People focused on feeling good won't do the character work it takes so that true lasting happiness can be the result.

****ISN'T IT TRUE THAT SOME OF THE MOST MERCIFUL, GIVING PEOPLE WHO TRULY MAKE A**

DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS HAVE BEEN THROUGH SOME STUFF THEMSELVES?

- III. **WISDOM – JAMES 1:5. 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. –**

WISDOM FOR YOUR SITUATION CAN COME FROM ASKING GOD –

”How can I use this situation to better fulfill your purpose for my life?” OR A SIMPLE PRAYER –

“Show me how you can use this for good.”

WAS TOLD BY A MENTOR – I WOULD BE BETTER PASTOR FOR GOING THROUGH SOME THINGS. (LIKE WHEN MY PARENTS PASSED AWAY – TWO MONTHS APART IN 2005) OR LOW POINTS IN MINISTRY. GOD CAN USE OUR SUCCESSES *AND* FAILURES TO MENTOR OTHERS.

GREEKS SOUGHT KNOWLEDGE. BUT THE HEBREW DEFINITION OF . . . **WISDOM = The**

ability to apply knowledge and experience to all of life.

LAST WEEK - ROMANS 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose.

- GOD DOESN'T MAKE ALL OF IT HAPPEN, BUT WILL USE WHAT DOES TO MAKE US MORE LIKE CHRIST AND HELP OTHERS.

IV. METHOD OF ASKING FOR WISDOM:

D. JAMES 1:6-8. 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. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. – WE ASK CONVINCED OF GOD'S NATURE OF GENEROSITY, AND THAT HE LOVES TO GIVE WHAT IT IS GOOD AND RIGHT FOR US TO HAVE.

E. "DOUBLE MINDED"? = WHEN THINGS GO WELL, BLESS GOD. WHEN THEY

DON'T – CURSE, REBELLION AND UNBELIEF.

AS A RESULT OF TRYING TO BELIEVE AND DOUBT AT THE SAME TIME WE ARE DRIVEN AND TOSSED BY THE PREVAILING CURRENT.

***ILLUS. SHARON GETTING SICK KAYAKING IN SAN DIEGO. MOTION OF HOLDING STILL BEING DRIVEN AND TOSSED. NO DIRECTION. HAD TO FOLLOW JOEL INTO SHORE. COULDN'T SEE WHERE THE RIGHT LANDING WAS. WASN'T SURE SHE TRUSTED HIS SENSE OF DIRECTION (EVEN THOUGH HE LIVED IN HAWAII FOR 2 YEARS). BUT HE COULD SEE WHAT WE COULDN'T!**

-SOMETIMES WHEN BEING DRIVEN AND TOSSED BY THE CURRENT OF DOUBT WE CAN'T SEE HOPE ON THE HORIZON.

****ONCE WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I GOT LOST AT THE BEACH BECAUSE I DIDN'T REALIZE THE CURRENT WAS TAKING ME DOWN SHORE. COULDN'T FIND OUR TOWELS. EXTREMELY NEAR SIGHTED – KEPT GOING – LOOKING FOR**

**MY FATHER - "I KNOW HE'S HERE
SOMEWHERE!"**

**UNTIL MY FATHER FOUND ME AND GAVE ME HIS
HAND – "C'MON LITTLE RICKY" DO YOU THINK
HE WAS ANXIOUS TO FIND ME TOO? GOD IS -
WHEN WE ARE TOO NEARSIGHTED TO FIND HIM
IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.**

**WILL SAVE V. 9-11 FOR NEXT WEEK WHEN WE
TALK ABOUT, "THE TEST OF
TEMPTATION" . . .HOW GOD CAN EVEN USE OUR
TEMPTATIONS TO PRODUCE CHARACTER WHEN
WE TRUST IN HIM.**

**CONCLUSION: AS WE PREPARE FOR A TIME OF
COMMUNION TOGETHER, I WANT TO PREPARE A
LITTLE DIFFERENTLY THIS MORNING. . .**

**JAMES 1:12. Blessed is the one who perseveres
under trial because, having stood the test, that
person will receive the crown of life that the Lord
has promised to those who love him. – GOD
PROMISES OUR TRIALS WILL NOT LAST
FOREVER. PERSEVERANCE WILL BE
REWARDED! BECAUSE OF THE AUTHOR AND
PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH WHO ENDURED THE
CROSS FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM OF**

**PROVIDING NEW LIFE FOR ALL WHO WOULD
COME TO HIM IN FAITH.**

****FOLD BULLETIN IN HALF. IN LEFT COLUMN A
COUPLE OF RECENT TRIALS. IN RIGHT COLUMN
– “DIVE FOR PEARLS”; FOR WISDOM FOR HOW
GOD MIGHT USE THESE SITUATIONS IN A GOOD
WAY IN YOUR LIFE AND SOMEONE ELSE.
COULD YOU EVEN GET TO A POINT WHERE YOU
COULD BE THANKFUL?**

**TO PREPARE FOR COMMUNION I WANT YOU TO
WRITE THESE “PEARLS” DOWN IN THE RIGHT
COLUMN AND SEE IF YOU CAN THANK GOD
BECAUSE YOU KNOW HE HAS YOUR GOOD AT
HEART. HE PROVED THAT BY DYING ON THE
CROSS SO THERE COULD BE THE HOPE OF A
RESURRECTION FOR US. IT WAS DIFFICULT
FOR THE DISCIPLES AND JAMES TO PICK UP ON
THAT, BUT WHEN NEW LIFE CAME FROM DEATH,
THEN THEY TRUSTED. CAN BE THAT WAY FOR
YOU TOO (IN ADVANCE). THEN GO AND
PARTAKE AND THANK GOD THAT HE IS WITH
YOU. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DOUBT HIS LOVE
BECAUSE OF HOW WILLING HE WAS TO GO TO
THE CROSS FOR YOU TO MAKE YOU
COMPLETE, AND PERFECT, AND LACKING IN
NOTHING IN HIS EYES. WHEN YOU ARE**

**FINISHED W. WRITING YOUR “PEARLS” DOWN,
MOVE TO THE SIDES AND PARTAKE.**