



May 4, 2025
Real Wisdom for a Messy World
JOY AMIDST TRIALS
James 1:1-4



1. Opening Discussion: (You will probably want to use only one of these openers)

- a. Letter writing is a dying art. Before the internet seemed to make letters obsolete what was the most important personal letter you remember receiving? What made the letter so memorable? Do you still have it or similarly meaningful letters? Do you ever reread them?
- b. When did you hear the expression “no pain, no gain” used? What was your reaction? Did it encourage you to participate in a sport or physical activity, or did it have the opposite effect and drive you away? Do you think it is true? Do you have to experience pain to gain?

2. Prayer:

- a. Adoration – Pray Psalm 95 or another passage of Scripture that enables you to focus on praising God for who He is in all His majesty and glory, the only One worthy of praise.
- b. Confession – Spend time in silence, allowing the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any sins you need to confess. Keep a paper and pencil handy in case He reminds you of one that requires you to ask forgiveness of someone. Close by reading 1 John 1:9
- c. Thanksgiving – In the spirit of Ephesians 5:20, thank God for answered prayers, His blessings and gifts, and the opportunities He provides to serve. Make a point to thank Him for at least one thing that you’ve never given thanks for before.
- d. Supplications
 - i. Pray for the activities of His Church, both locally and around the world; for those who serve Him, including missionaries, pastors, and volunteers; for the persecuted Church in countries which are actively hostile to the Gospel: and for the more than **3,000,000,000** souls who currently have **NO** access to the Gospel – especially that God will raise up workers who will go and serve in their lands.
 - ii. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of friends and family, your personal needs, and at least some of the items on LRBC’s weekly *Praises & Prayer Requests*. Close by reading John 14:13-14, 15:16, and 16:23-27.

3. Sermon Key Points for John 20:1-18

- a. A Christian View of Suffering Is Very Different from the World's View
 - i. Trials and suffering are an inevitable part of life in a fallen world
 - ii. The world's wisdom teaches many unwise ways to cope with suffering
 - iii. Real wisdom is to count it ALL joy!
- b. In Christ, Trials Produce Strength You Can Count On
 - i. Because trials are inevitable, we need resiliency, endurance, and strength of character

- ii. Walking through trials with Jesus tests and strengthens our faith and character
- c. Steadfastness in Christ Transforms Your Character to Be Like His
 - i. Steadfastness takes us deeper in Christ and the Spirit makes us more like Christ
 - ii. So, how do you look at your own past and present trials?

4. Bible Study:

- a. ***Sunday Afternoon*** – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:
 - i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
 - ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
 - iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
 - iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
 - v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
- b. ***Monday:***
 - i. This week we are starting a new series in the Epistle of James that will continue into August. James is a letter. When a house church received it, it would have been read just as we would read a letter – from beginning to end at one sitting (or standing).
 - ii. For today, do that – read James. It can be read in about 10 minutes (15 minutes if read aloud), but you will probably want to go a little slower so you can grasp some of the significant teaching. As you read, note verses that seem particularly important to you or that you want to understand better.
 - iii. After completing your reading, write down a sentence or more describing what you hope this study will accomplish and keep it as a reminder over the coming months.
- c. ***Tuesday:***
 - i. Read James 1:1-4. Read it from more than one version if you have them. Also, if you have a Bible that provides an Introduction to each book, read what it says about James, particularly noting information about the author, the recipients, and the date it may have been written.
 - ii. Now focus on verse 1.
 - 1. Who was the author? Read: Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17, 15:13, & 21:18; and Galatians 1:19, 2:9. Assuming that the James in these passages is the same individual named as the author (not all scholars believe this to be true but it has been the accepted view throughout church history), what facts do we know about him?

2. Read Mark 3:21 & 31-32 and John 7:5. What seems to have been James' view of Jesus during His public ministry? What does Paul suggest in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that led to James' change of heart?
3. How does James identify himself in verse 1?
 - a. This is the only place in the Bible such a title is used. Why do you think James would have called himself a servant of both God and Jesus rather than focusing just on his belief in Jesus as Paul typically does (see Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, etc.)?
 - b. What does James' use of the title “servant” say to you?
 - c. We hear “Jesus Christ” so often that we sometimes think of it as just His full name. What does James' use of the longer title Lord Jesus Christ tell us about his belief in Jesus?
4. To whom did James address his letter? What do Acts 8:1 & 4 and 11:19-21 tell us about who would have been the likely readers? How do Galatians 6:16 and Luke 3:8 show that the contents of James also apply to non-Jewish believers?

d. Wednesday:

- i. Read James 1:1-4 again, but today meditate especially on verse 2.
- ii. What is your initial reaction to the statement made in verse 2? Does it seem realistic or even possible? How does verse two relate to what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:11-12)?
- iii. Verse two is translated a little differently in each modern version. Consider these three. Which speaks most meaningfully to you?
 1. NIV: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,*
 2. ESV: *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,*
 3. CSB: *Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials,*
- iv. The first word of verse 2 is “count” or “consider”. When thinking about the subject of the verse, trials, what does that opening word mean to you?
 1. Do you think James expects us to relish painful experiences?
 2. What are some of the ways Hebrews 12:7-11 should help us “count/consider” trials with the joy James commands?
- v. Verse 2 talks about “trials”; subsequent verses will introduce “testing” and next week “temptations”. What do you understand each term to mean? How do they differ?

e. Thursday:

- i. Read James 1:1-4 again, meditating on verse 3.
- ii. Left to stand on its own, the command of verse 2 would be difficult for most of us to accept. How/why does verse 3 make it more acceptable and even desirable?

- iii. When James equates “trials” with “testing of your faith,” how does/should that prepare us to accept them with joy?
 - 1. What are the two possible outcomes from a “test”?
 - 2. What does Hebrews 6:4-6 teach us about the absolute necessity of avoiding the negative outcome?
 - 3. How does Romans 8:28-39 reassure us that the positive outcome is ours if we truly depend on Him?
- iv. The last word of verse 3 is translated differently in modern versions: “steadfastness” (ESV), “perseverance” (NIV), or “endurance” (CSB). How would you explain the concept (idea) being communicated by these terms (see Luke 8:15, Romans 5:3, 2 Thessalonians 1:4, Hebrews 10:36 & 12:1, Revelation 2:2 & 13:10)?

f. **Friday:**

- i. Read James 1:1-4 and meditate on verse 4.
- ii. James is often called “the Proverbs of the New Testament” because it provides advice for living the Christian life, not just reaching the end goal of eternity with Christ. How does that notion come through in verse 4?
 - 1. If steadfastness/perseverance/endurance is not the end/final goal of testing, what is (see Matthew 4:48, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, & 1 Peter 1:14-17)?
 - 2. What does it mean to you to be a “perfect and complete” (ESV, “mature and complete” in the NIV and CSB) Christian? What do these verses suggest about the answer: Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 3:7-15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, & Hebrews 5:11-6:1?
 - 3. How does Romans 5:3-5 show us that even during trials we really can be “lacking in nothing”?

g. **Saturday:**

- i. Read Jesus’ Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:4-9 and 18-23.
 - 1. What parallels do you find with what we have studied this week?
 - 2. What does verse 23 tell us about the outcome and evidence of being a mature Christian?
- ii. Now that you have studied these introductory verses of James, you may find it meaningful to reread the entire book, this time looking for ways James reinforces or expands on the themes of verses 1-4.

5. **Application:** The first four verses of James provide an answer to tough, real-world questions, at least for Christians, such as “Why does God allow suffering?”. God loves and forgives us, but He is not satisfied that we remain unchanged. He expects us to grow to become more like Christ continually, and He will help us do so by using trials when He knows in His wisdom that is what we need. We must ask ourselves whether we are doing our part to grow like Christ. Are we spending enough time reading and studying His Word, in prayer and meditation, and with other believers to grow, or to even just offset the negative influences of the world?