**Introduction:**

Greetings. You could not have picked a better time to study this incredible letter of James. James is a very practical letter for us because James and the believers in those days were dealing with many of the same issues that we are dealing with today. Issues such as temptation, money, trials, misuse of the tongue, conflict, genuine faith, and social injustice, just to name a few.

It takes about 20 minutes to read the book of, and every one of the 108 verses are packed with truth on how to reflect and live out our Christian life before God and others. The letter of James tells us how to act and react to the situations we encounter in life.

**Background:**

I had a professor in college that said, “if you don’t take time to understand the background of a book or letter from the Bible then you will lack the wisdom to move forward with confidence.” Background provides a clear window into the author’s life and culture.

***Helpful Notes:*** There are several Jameses in the New Testament, but most scholars agree that the James mentioned in this letter is the half-brother of Jesus. James is the natural son of Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus. James did not believe in his brother, Jesus, during His earthly ministry (John 7:5). But after Jesus had risen from the dead, He made a special appearance to James, who was then convinced that Jesus was the Son of God. He became a believer and eventually the leader of the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem until he was martyred around AD 62. After the death of Stephen in Acts 7:54-60, persecution broke out causing many believers in Jerusalem to flee for their lives. James writes this letter to those who have been scattered among the nations.

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.* James 1:1

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**Talking it over - Group Study:**

1. What are some key elements you hope to find when receiving a letter from someone?
2. Who writes this letter? What do we know about James? (See Matthew 13:55; Acts 1:14; 15:13; Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:7)
3. Who does James write to, and why does he write this letter? (See Acts 8:1) How does James describe himself?

Try this experiment in your group: Write out your full name in the space indicated below, and then write on the line the title or description that most naturally comes to mind.

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Your full name Description or title that best represents you

1. If you had to flee because persecution was breaking out toward believers in Christ, what would you want to hear in a letter that would encourage you and challenge you to persevere?

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**When trials come rolling in - James 1:1-12**

Like the waves of the ocean, there are times when they’re calm and welcoming. At other times when a fierce storm moves in, the waves roll and toss violently. In the same way, there are days when things seem calm in our lives, and other days, when the trials of life roll in and seek to overtake us. What insight does James give on how we are to react and respond when these trials, like a giant wave, come crashing into our life?

1. Read the passage to yourself.

2. If you’re in a group, have someone read it out loud or have everyone read it out loud together.

**Bible Study Methods**

**Observation** – **Make a list**. What do you see that stands out in the passage? Look for key words, or phrases. Comparisons or contrasts. Spiritual qualities of a follower of Jesus?

**Myth about Trials:** When a person surrenders their life to Jesus, life suddenly becomes easier and problem free.

**Truth about trials**: Trials and hardship will occur for everyone whether they are a believer or not. It’s our response to these trials that either makes us stronger or bitter toward life. Trials are the tools that shape our character in being more like Jesus.

5 ways trials and hardship tend to roll into our lives:

* Mental (example: anxiety, depression etc.)
* Physical
* Spiritual
* Relational
* Financial

Or any combination of these.

**Question:** Why would God use trials to strengthen and mature us as believers?

1. Troubles should **refine** or purify our faith vs. 2-4 (How?)

**Question:** Why should we consider our trials or troubles pure joy?

1. Troubles should cause us to **rely** on God vs. 5-8 (How?)

****Helpful Notes:** The reason our problems sometimes overwhelm us is our pride causes us to try to handle them by ourselves instead of depending and trusting in Jesus – our ultimate problem solver.

1. Troubles should cause us to **redirect** our priorities vs. 9-11 (How?)
2. Enduring under trials brings a present and future **reward** vs. 12 (What?)

*“We won’t really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure.”*

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**Interpretation – Ask a Question:** What is the author’s main intent or purpose of the passage?

* What truth about trials is James trying to convey to the church then and now?

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**Application – Put into practice**

* How should your church view trials and hardship when they come rolling in?
* Share a trial or hardship you have been through. How have you grown through this time? What have you learned about yourself, God, and others?



**Praying it through –** Take time in your group to share and pray for those who are currently experiencing a difficult trial in their life. May God’s character strengthen you in your troubles. May the Lord grant you wisdom as you seek His face, and may the Lord increase your faith and drown your doubts.

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