

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – April 3, 2022

Theme: James: Faith in Action

Topic: Turning Trials to Triumph

Main Text: James 1:1-4

Key verse: James 1:2 - *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.”* (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: In the immediate past quarter, we studied 'The Beatitudes' from Matthew 5:1-12. One of the key lessons from the series was that being poor in spirit, meek, hungry and thirsting for righteousness, pure in heart, etc. are attitudes expected of followers of Jesus Christ. The objective of the series was to help us to become more like Jesus in attitude and kingdom-mindedness. This quarter, we would be building on last quarter's lessons as we explore the theme "Faith in Action" from the Book of James. Bible scholars are unanimous that James, Jesus' half-brother (and not James the brother of John) is the author of this epistle. James' letter was primarily directed at Jewish believers who had been scattered all over the nations because of the persecution that arose at that time. These scattered believers were having to endure diverse trials in the alien cultures they found themselves. The epistle opens with call on them to *“count it all joy when you fall into various trials.”* According to the Expositors Bible Commentary, the word "trials" describes things that put a person to the test. They may be difficulties that come from without, such as persecution (see James 1: 2-4), or they may be inner moral tests, such as temptations to sin (see James 1:13-18).

1. James 1:2 says to *“... count it all joy when you fall into various trials.”* (a) What are examples of trials believers face and what does the clause *‘when you face various trials’* communicate to you? (b) How would you reconcile James 1:2 with the popular notion, even among Christians, which rejects trials and difficulties? (c) What are the obvious conclusions then from (a) and (b) above concerning trials?

One ongoing debate among Christians is the question whether a true believer should experience trials and difficulties. Many charismatics strongly believe that a true believer ought not experience trials and difficulties, that God's love shields the believer from trials and difficulties. That is why, often, believers who are experiencing difficulties, would make comments like "what did I do wrong? I have done everything right," "as far as I know, I've walked faithfully with God," etc. Or ask questions like, 'why me?' Even non-Christians have struggled with question like, 'why do terrible things happen to good people?' All these questions and comments persist even when Scripture is clear that believers are to expect trials and difficulties, *‘... Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows...’* (John 16:33). A point we must note is that the trial is not meant to test the believer's worthiness for salvation; neither is it a test of his character nor whether he is sinful. Rather, as James says, *“because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance”* (James 1:3). Someone said, "a gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials."

2. Read Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:2-3. (a) Why are trials necessary in a believer's life? (b) What practical tips do these passages offer for how a believer can be joyful when facing trials? (c) Let participants share their experiences about a time when they faced trials and difficulties and how it blessed them?

God says in 1 Peter 4:12 (NLT) *“Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you”* This makes it clear that trials are a part of God's redemption plan for us and so are to be expected. That is why James says, *“Consider it a great joy, my brothers, and sisters, whenever you experience various trials”* (James 1:4 CSB). He did not say "if" but "when." **We should note also that trials are not the consequence of our disobedience.** Rather, they just happen because of whose we are and for living in a world opposed to God. So, Jesus says *“I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.”* (John 17:14-15 NLT). And rather than preventing them, God uses them to strengthen our faith.

3. Read James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7 (a) Why can trials be considered grounds for genuine rejoicing? (b) How does a believer turn trials into triumph and what is the nature of the triumph? (c) How should these affect how we view trials from now on?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the trials You allow my way. Give me the right attitude and response to these trials so that I may be refined and strengthened by them, ready for Your kingdom. Amen.