



REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

James 1:2-4

Trials and Tribulations

4/26/2020 - 5/2/2020

MAIN POINT

Struggles are worth the trouble because suffering is used for God's purposes, for He is sovereign over all suffering.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What was the last major tragedy you saw covered by the news? Describe the coverage of the event.

How did you process this event? What thoughts did you have?

How should what we believe about God shape the way we respond to suffering and trials?

Suffering is never pleasant to experience or to talk about, but it is an inevitable fact of life. The New Testament was written by and delivered to a suffering people. James, the church in Jerusalem, and all of us are not immune to suffering. So what causes suffering and how should we respond when we experience it? What hope does the gospel give to those who are suffering? We will consider those questions today.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read James 1:2.

**What does the fall of man have to do with the presence of suffering in the world?
(Look to Genesis 3:1-19 for guidance in this section.)**

What is the difference between suffering because of sin and suffering because there is sin in the world? What would be an example of each? Which kind of suffering is James addressing?

Suffering exists because sin exists. Before the fall of man, there was no suffering. So then, trials are a natural consequence of rejecting God's best for our lives. While it is true that suffering can happen because we messed up or did something wrong, that is not what James is talking about. James is referring to those trials that crop up because we live in a fallen world. Those are the trials that affect all people regardless of how they live.

**Read Genesis 3:17. What kind of suffering was introduced immediately after the fall?
How do you experience this suffering?**

**Read Romans 5:12. What is the ultimate fruit of sin and suffering? Have you ever
made this connection? How does this reality highlight our need for Jesus?**

Do you ever come home exhausted at the end of the day? Experience problems in your home and in the workplace? Ever have a conversation with a friend that you wish you didn't have to have? These are just a few of the ways that brokenness has introduced itself into your relationships. Not only has sin broken our relationships with other people and with the created order, it has broken our relationship with God. One of the greatest trials we face in this life is death, which is the ultimate fruit of sin. This is why we need Jesus to give us hope in the middle of our trials.

What do you remember about James's audience? Why might it seem odd for him to tell them (or us) to "consider [suffering] pure joy" (v. 2)? Does this mean that we can't be hurt or disappointed at suffering? Explain.

After the initial shock and rush of emotion that comes with suffering, what two truths did our pastors say we needed to remember? How does focusing on this help us to embrace our suffering in a way that honors God?

What is radical about James's approach to suffering? How does it compare to the approach of your non-believing friends and family?

James's audience was scattered because of persecution. Yet, James seems to be telling them that trials were good for them or at the very least were redeemable. After all, it is hard to be joyful

about something that isn't good for you.

James 1:2 brings a few key truths about trials together. First, trials will always be part of your life; that's why James said trials of "many kinds." Knowing that trials are coming helps keep us from being rocked when they come. Shock and hurt is understandable; but after that initial reaction, there is greater peace to be found because of the second truth—namely, that suffering is used for God's purpose. While the Bible never identifies God as the author of suffering, He is sovereign over suffering. He takes all of our pain and all of our grief and uses it to further His purpose in our lives and in the world.

| Have a volunteer read James 1:3-4.

Is someone without faith in Jesus capable of seeing the greater purpose in suffering? Why or why not?

How might the perseverance that is developed in the furnace of suffering prove to be useful in other areas of life?

According to verse 4, what purpose does God have in our suffering? What choice do we have to cooperate with this purpose?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17. What are we denying God and ourselves if we fail to embrace our suffering and see it in light of eternity?

These verses open with the words "because we know." Faith in Jesus Christ was assumed by James in the letter. So when we read about suffering, this radical way of thinking about it is only possible for those who have faith in Jesus. They are the only ones able to see suffering in light of eternity and the hope of the gospel. Furthermore, as we heard from our pastors this weekend, verse 4 could actually be phrased "let perseverance." In other words, we must let perseverance take effect. We participate in the work God is doing through our suffering when we choose to see suffering from His perspective. Our trials may not seem good to us, but God can bring good from them.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

The central truth of this weekend's message was that while not every trial is good, God can bring good from every trial. In your own experience, how have you seen God

take your trials and turn them into something positive? How did this experience grow your faith?

Knowing that suffering is a matter of “if” not “when,” how can we prepare ourselves to support one another during trials? Why should we consider how we will respond before the trials come?

What impact do you think it has upon a non-believer to see Christians suffering with dignity, faith, and the support of a loving community? How might an example like this be included in God’s purpose to reveal Himself to that non-believer?

PRAYER

Praise God for being near to us in our suffering and trials. Thank Him for using painful experiences to give you more of His grace and to advance His mission in the world. Pray for those you know who are walking through trials, and ask God to show you ways you can support these brothers and sisters.

COMMENTARY

| James 1:2-4

1:2. Trials are of many kinds, but believers can triumph over them. Verse 2 presents a command concerning trials: Count it all joy . . . when you meet trials of various kinds. We should look at trials as an occasion for joy because of their potential for producing something good in us. This calls us consciously to develop a positive attitude toward trials, quite contrary to our normal response. Similarly, Hebrews regards trials as the discipline a Father gives to help us share in God’s holiness (Heb. 12:10).

1:3-4. Verse 3 explains how believers can show pure joy as they face trials. We are to realize that God intends the testing of our faith to produce perseverance. Without these trials, some character would be undeveloped. God also uses trials to purge and remove defects from immature faith. Perseverance suggests endurance or stamina. Verse 4 presents the spiritual outcome or result of a perseverance which attains its appointed role within the believer. A believer with perseverance is perfect. This does not mean sinlessness or moral flawlessness. It describes maturity, the state of being fully developed. Complete pictures someone who possesses all the spiritual traits needed for moral completeness. People who endure trials with faith in God can develop every trait needed for spiritual victory.