

Before the Lesson

Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.

Scripture passages: James 1:1-4 and Genesis 22:1-14

Personal crises, conflict, chaos, confusion ... how do you live out your faith in the midst of these life circumstances? Just as believers in the first century struggled with this question, so believers in all centuries struggle to learn how to navigate through the storms of life, and we are no exception. The book of James gives believers then and believers now practical guidance, wisdom, and encouragement in the daily strains and pains of life.

In the opening sentences of chapter 1, James reminds us as Jesus did that “we *will* have trouble,” but he quickly tells us the most efficient and productive way to make the grade during the “tests” that will surely come our way. Perspective, patient endurance, and dependency are key answers to the difficult questions in life, and this week we will learn to apply these truths to our lives. To ultimately pass the test, though, we must always remember the main idea in James’ practical guide: *Keep Calm and Carry On*, for in due time we will receive the “crown of life.”

Focus question: How does the Gospel influence your response to trials?

Group Discussion

- James lived in the shadow of his half brother, Jesus, his entire life, yet when he introduces himself in James 1:1, he says, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - What does the introduction say to you about the way James views himself, the way he views God, the way he views Jesus?
 - How do you introduce yourself to others? What first impressions do you think others make of you based on your words, actions, attitudes, or demeanor?
- Read James 1:2-4 along with 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Romans 12:12, and Philippians 4:4-8.
 - Is joy a feeling or supernatural perspective, based on who God is?
 - When are we to rejoice? Why are we to rejoice? (See 1 Thessalonians 5:18b.)
 - What are two companions of rejoicing? (See 1 Thessalonians 17-18a, Philippians 4:6 and Romans 12:12 last phrase.)
 - Why are prayer and thanksgiving so important in the midst of conflict? How can they help produce a new perspective?
 - Based on your understanding of Scripture, how does a person choose joy in the midst of trials?
- Discuss Genesis 22:1-14. How did this trial produce steadfastness in the life of Abraham?

- Steadfastness (or patient endurance), as referred to in James 1:3, is the byproduct of trials and according to verse 4 makes us “perfect and complete.”
 - How does this knowledge and application of Scripture enable you to not only survive but to strive toward greater obedience and honor to Christ in the midst of your current suffering?
 - How has God used trials to create life change in you?
 - How does this knowledge of the Gospel help you guard against bitterness?
 - How does it help you change your prayer for relief from the pressure of the conflict to a prayer of renewal because of the refinement that will come from the conflict?
 - According to the Bible, on whom must we depend to help us endure with patience and joy?
 - 2 Corinthians 4:7-10
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
 - Hebrews 4:14-16
 - Psalm 46:1-7 and 10-11
 - Psalm 91:9-10
 - Romans 8:38-39
 - Colossians 1:11-14
- In light of your knowledge of the Gospel regarding suffering, when you are facing a trial how can you be a better witness to those you know who are not believers?

Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)

In the Christian life, the idea behind “*keep calm*” must be related back to the person of Jesus Christ. We keep calm in the midst of conflict by trusting in and focusing on God and His Son, Jesus. “*Carry on*” relates to remaining steadfast through the journey of life, remembering that God is working behind the scenes for our good and His glory. **Keeping this in mind, what are some ways you can:**

- **Focus your thoughts on Jesus during a trial?**
 - **Remember who God is:**
 - *Exodus 15:2* – You are my strength, my song and my salvation.
 - *2 Samuel 22:1-3* – You are a rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, and the horn of my salvation.
 - *Psalms 102:25-28* – You are unchanging.
 - *1 Chronicles 29:10-13* – You are sovereign, great, powerful, full of glory and majesty, victorious, and ruler of all
 - *Revelation 5:12* – You are the worthy lamb. You are full of might, honor and glory.
 - **Surrender to God’s works:**
 - Praise God for who He is. *Psalms 35:28, Psalm 43:3*
 - Thank God for all circumstances. *1 Thessalonians 5:18, Psalm 92:1*
 - Ask God to deliver you through your circumstances not from your circumstances, in His perfect way in His perfect time. *Psalms 18:30, Philippians 4:11-13*
- **Patiently endure under suffrage?**
 - *Jude 1:24-25, Romans 5:3-4, Hebrews 12:1-3, Philippians 4:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Romans 15:13, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 11:28-30*

Will you choose to see your life as a tragedy, or as a story that is unfolding for God’s glory?

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