

FAITH IS FORGED THROUGH ADVERSITY

YEAR: TRANSFORM / FOCUS: LIVING FOR JESUS / SERIES: JAMES

BIG TRUTH: FAITH IS FORGED THROUGH ADVERSITY

Ecclesiastes 7:14; Isaiah 30:20; 1 Peter 1:6-7; Job 36:15

BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 1:2-4

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

BIG IDEAS

- The foundation of our faith is Jesus, and we are His servants.
- Faith grows when pressure pushes us to turn from doubt, temptation, and sin to trust in God.
- We can have joy in trials because God is good, sovereign, and unchanging.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JAMES 1:1-18

TRANSFORM: LIVING FOR JESUS

In High School, the Transform Year is an exploration of what it looks like to have transformed influence as we seek to live for a Kingdom that is greater than our own. First, we recognize that we will never be transformed if we are not Living for Jesus. To do this, we must first know who Jesus is by looking at who He says He is (John 8:58), and then look at what the Bible says about how in Him, we live by faith (James 1:6). Next, we recognize that to have transformed influence means that we must live as disciples in pursuit of Christ and His Kingdom over ourselves and our own kingdoms.

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know...

- God is a God of compassion and mercy.
- We are prone to self-deception.
- If our faith does not have works, it is dead.



Every student should feel...

- Joy, even in trials, because of God's goodness.
- Thankful for every good and perfect gift from the Father.
- Responsible to use their influence for Jesus alone.



Every student should strive to...

- Read the entire book of James.
- Memorize the Bible verse each week.
- Reject and repent of faith without works.



Every student should want...

- To grow in their understanding of biblical faith.
- To practice religion based on what Scripture says, not the world, culture, or our feelings.
- To know and generously show mercy.

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 1:2-4

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Our faith is tested by different types of trials.

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness..."

- Our earthly lives are filled with difficulty and struggle. This is so because this world is broken and fallen. We also are sinful, and we struggle against our sinful flesh that tempts us to fall into sin again. As we face the difficulty of living in this fallen world, our faith grows.
- We face different types of trials throughout our lives. We face the loss of loved ones, sickness, and the betrayal of friends. We may experience economic difficulties and feel persecution for our faith. Regardless of the nature of our trial, what is true is that our faith in God grows as a result of our struggles when we turn to Him and seek His glory.

Joy is the right response when our faith is tested.

"...for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness..."

- It seems unlikely that we would experience joy when we are going through a trial or struggle, but James says otherwise. The joy that we have is not a happiness at our circumstance, but a rejoicing that our faith in God is increasing. The testing of our faith is for our good. We benefit when our faith is tested because we grow stronger and this makes our journey on this earth better.
- As our faith increases and we become more steadfast, we can endure hardships better. We are not moved and tossed to and fro by the things of this world. Instead, we remain steady and fixed because we are trusting in God and not our circumstances or position in this world.

The testing of our faith matures us and makes us Christlike.

"And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

- Christ Himself is our perfect example of steadfastness and perfect faith. As He endured great hardship and trial on this earth, He is set before us as our example to follow. He counted His sorrow as joy because of what the end result would be.
- As our faith is tested, we, too, will mature and become Christlike as we grow more and more steadfast. We will see that struggle and difficulty are a part of this world and like Christ, we will look to our future home and the glory of God as worth anything that we endure in this life.

FAITH IS FORGED THROUGH ADVERSITY

BIG IDEA #1: THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH IS JESUS, AND WE ARE HIS SERVANTS.¹

[THIS]

James was the half-brother of Jesus and the leader of the church at Jerusalem. He could have begun his letter to the twelve tribes of Israel by listing his connection to Jesus and identifying himself as the leader of the Jerusalem church. These would have been true things and perhaps would have even given him some clout, but instead, he identified himself as a servant. His choice of words is not casual. James had grown up with Jesus. He had not always believed that Jesus was the Savior. Not until Jesus' resurrection did James have saving faith in Jesus. James' introduction makes it clear that the foundation of his faith was Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. James' foundation wasn't built on his personal achievements or familial connections. Those would do him no good. He wasn't a servant of Jesus his half-brother. He wasn't a servant of Jesus the man who gathered a following and started a few churches. He was a servant of the one true God and the one who had saved the world from its sin. Though James had spent his life with Jesus, grew up in the same home, shared many a meal together, had many boyhood encounters with him, it was clear that he had encountered the Savior and truly believed in the power of Jesus Christ to redeem him. James' faith was built upon that foundation and nothing else.

[THEREFORE]

What is the difference between a foundation of faith in Jesus and one in religion?

It is one thing to profess a faith in an idea or ideal. It is another to have saving faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. Matthew 7:21-23 and Titus 1:16 offer a warning about the deception that can occur when we build the foundation of our faith on the wrong thing. Our faith is in Jesus alone and the work He did on the cross and nothing else.

How can our pride lead us to resist trusting in Jesus alone?

In Luke 18:10-14, we see the example of two different responses to sin. It is our pride that keeps us from acknowledging that we are sinful, and this keeps us from trusting in Jesus alone. We then build our faith on our works or the things of the world.

[THIS]

Jesus as the foundation of our faith requires our submission to Him. First, we must submit our lives to Him. We recognize that we are sinful and unable to save ourselves. We then give our lives to Him and become His. Just as James chose servanthood rather than to be exalted, we choose servanthood. We choose to value being Christ's servant rather than being exalted in this world. Jesus is our perfect example of what it looks like to be a servant. He came to the world fully submitted to the Father's will. He did not count the equality that He has with God the Father as anything worth keeping because He valued saving lost people and fulfilling the Father's will above His own. Because Jesus became a servant, we have a firm foundation for our faith. Being His servant is our privilege. We serve Him by obeying His Word and following His example. We walk in the Spirit and seek the Father's glory above our own.

[THEREFORE]

What are some practical ways you can live as a servant this week?

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 teaches us that we should be seen as servants of Jesus. As we seek to put on the attributes of God as Colossians 3:12 shows us, we will be seen as servants. Living this way will result in our being seen as servants of Christ.

1. James 1:1: We are all Christ's servants just as James was Christ's servant. We exist to serve Christ and to make Him known in the world.

FAITH IS FORGED THROUGH ADVERSITY

BIG IDEA #2: FAITH GROWS WHEN PRESSURE PUSHES US TO TURN FROM DOUBT, TEMPTATION, AND SIN TO TRUST IN GOD.²

[THIS]

Our world is fallen and broken. Living in it means enduring trials. A trial is more than a bad day. A trial is a great struggle or burden that weighs us down and changes us. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus promised that His people would face many trials. Just as He experienced struggle and persecution, those who follow Him can expect the same. James addresses trials in verses 2-8 of chapter one. Often, when we experience difficulties, our faith is put to a test. We may doubt God's power or ability to overcome the obstacle we're facing. We may doubt God's goodness or His love for us. James reminds us to turn to God and not away from Him. We turn to Him by seeking wisdom from him. We turn to Him by trusting that He is working on our behalf even when we don't really understand our situation. We grow in our faith when do this because we will see His faithfulness.

[THEREFORE]

What are some situations that cause you to doubt God's faithfulness to you?

When we face disappointment or experience obstacles in life, we often doubt that God is good or that He is faithful to us. When He seems distant, we are tempted to believe He is not faithful, but what is true is that He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Psalm 145:9 and Proverbs 3:5-6 help us understand the faithfulness of God and that trials grow our faith.

[THIS]

In James 1:2-4, James teaches that a product of our faith growing is that we become more steadfast. It's important that believers become steadfast if they are to live lives that please God. We are created to bring God glory and we do this by living for Him and becoming more and more like Christ each day. Jesus is the perfect example of steadfastness. When our faith grows during a trial, the next time we face a trial, we will do so as a stronger person. We will be firmer in our trust of Jesus. We will not doubt as easily. We will not turn away from God as easily and we will not be tempted to sin in our hearts as quickly. We will remember the times before that God has brought us through. We will remember His faithfulness and the ways He has carried us through whatever difficulty we have faced and we will endure the current hardship trusting in His faithfulness. As we do this again and again, our faith grows and even as the struggles become harder and the trials are greater, even if the trial requires our lives, we endure it with steadfastness because our faith will tell us that God is trustworthy.

[THEREFORE]

How are trials important to our faith? When has a trial served to increase your faith?

Trials teach us about God and help us live for Him in this life. 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Romans 5:3 show us the importance of going through trials in order to live a godly life. When we endure trials, we grow in our understanding of who God is and our faith is increased.

What does it mean to be steadfast? How has steadfastness been important in your spiritual journey?

Steadfastness helps us remain faithful and keeps us from being anxious and worried. Philipians 4:6-7 reminds us to turn to God when we are anxious, but steadfastness is how we will repeatedly do that in times of trial.

2. James 1:3: Trials increase our faith and produce steadfastness.

FAITH IS FORGED THROUGH ADVERSITY

BIG IDEA #3: WE CAN HAVE JOY IN TRIALS BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD, SOVEREIGN, AND UNCHANGING.³

[THIS]

In James 1:2, James writes that we are to have joy in our trials. Joy during a trial seems like an absurd thing, but he explains how this joy is possible in verses 16-18. After he warns of the consequences of doubt and a lack of steadfastness in verses 5-15, he turns his attention to the very nature of God. By reminding his readers of who God is, he turns their focus from their circumstances to the one true God. The same is true for us. When we focus on ourselves and our circumstances, we will not often have lasting joy. Instead, we'll feel sorrow and sadness. We will suffer through anxiety and doubt. Our faith will not grow. When we, instead, focus on God and remind ourselves of who He is, our joy is everlasting. Our faith grows and we can have joy in even the most difficult of circumstances because our joy is not based in our circumstance, but in the very nature of the holy and perfect God.

[THEREFORE]

Why does your focus and perspective during a trial matter?

What we focus on is what we think about. When we focus on our situation, we will think about it and that will affect our mood and emotions. When we think about God, we will focus on who He is. Hebrews 12:2 and Psalm 91:1-2 help us see that a focus on God helps us remain joyful in the darkest of times.

[THIS]

Our circumstances change. Often in the middle of a dark time, we may feel like our situation is never going to change, but our circumstances always change. Throughout our lives we will have good times and bad times. We will experience many highs and many lows. No person escapes this world without some sort of heartache or hardship. One moment we may be financially stable and the next financially destitute. One moment we may have many friends and the next none. What doesn't change is God. James reminds us of this in 1:17. God is the Father of light who does not shift or change like the shadows. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is good and always has been. Because God doesn't change, we can always say that He is good and faithful because He always has been. What He is in our greatest moment is what He is in our worst. His character does not shift with our circumstances. This is how we can have joy in the darkest of times. Not because we are happy at our situation or we do not feel sorrow, but because we are resting and trusting in God who is always good, always sovereign, and who never changes.

[THEREFORE]

How does knowing the character of God help you endure a trial?

Deuteronomy 7:9 tells us to know that God is faithful. Knowing the character of God helps us have faith in Him during a trial. When we do have faith in Him, then we can trust in who He is during difficult times like John and Paul in 1 John 4:16 and Titus 1:2.

How can you discipline yourself to focus on the character of God during a trial in order to have joy in the Lord?

Colossians 3:2 tells us to set our minds on the things above. Setting our minds means to determinedly seek to think about our future home and to think about Christ, our example. Psalm 119:15 teaches us that meditating on His Word is a way to do this.

3. James 1:17: Every good gift is from God who does shift or change. We can have joy and trust in God because He is always the same.