

When Things Don't Go Our Way

Problems and disappointments come in all sizes. The big ones like losing a loved one, the diagnosis of a serious health issue, losing a job or the ending of a relationship can be challenging for us. The little ones we can handle better - as long as there aren't too many of them. Most of us don't enjoy going through tough times.

It's interesting how we go through life praying that we won't face difficulties. But when we look at some of the heroes of the Bible – Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Paul, Jesus and others – we see that adversity was a huge part of their life story. James puts it simply: Christians should expect problems. *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,"* ([James 1:2](#)).

We live in a fallen world, so we know we'll experience difficulties and disappointments. But here's the most intriguing part: In the same verse, James says that when trouble comes our way, we should **"count it all joy."** That means difficult situations can be *"an opportunity for joy"* because God says there's purpose in our pain.

Our natural response to difficult seasons is often ... **"Why?"** If God is in control of everything, why does He allow so many trials in our lives? We should start by shifting our focus from "Why?" to "What?" That is, **what is God trying to teach us through these experiences?**

The very next verse gives us one answer, *"knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience"* ([James 1:3](#)). Paul echoes these words in [Romans 5:3](#), *"...but we*

also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;"

Even with an understanding that God uses difficult situations to build endurance, it may not be easy to feel "joyful" about the prospect. James probably anticipated that reaction when he offered reassurance in the next verse: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."* ([James 1:5](#)).

In other words, *pray!*

Even on the worst days, we can cling to the promise that we'll be rewarded for our endurance. [James 1:12](#) says *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the LORD has promised to those who love Him."* The writer of Hebrews reminds us: *"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:"* ([Hebrews 10:36](#)). **In the end, there will be no more death, crying, or pain** for it is written, *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

Remember, Jesus fulfilled the words of [James 1:2](#) before they were even written. He took on the greatest trial of all with a mindset of joy *"... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,"* ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). Even when we think things aren't going our way, God's Will is being done, and for that we can rejoice!

- Ron Reid