

Bible Studies for Life: September 4

Faith on Display in Hard Times • James 1:1-12

By Laura Lee Leathers



Leathers

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wrote a letter known today as The Epistle of James. There are five chapters,

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What is James’ background? He is the half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3), a skeptic (John 7:5) who became an eyewitness to the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7), and waited with the apostles in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14, Acts 21).

“Camel Knees” describes this mighty man of prayer who went on to be a pillar and the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Gal. 1:19; Acts 12:17). He was martyred in 62 A.D.

As you read the letter, notice the short and powerful sentences. Its style resembles that of the Book of Proverbs. Notate the fifty commands, underline the Old Testament quotes, and highlight the references to Jesus and God.

James doesn’t mince words about what is right and wrong and black and white. He writes about the theology of genuine faith, suffering, sin, wisdom, and the Word of truth.

In verse one, James introduces himself as “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word for servant is *doulos*, which means total surrender to the master. Next, James addresses the letter to the “twelve tribes in the Dispersion,” referencing the scattering of believers that occurred between

35 and 37 A.D.

Scholars put the writing of this letter around the mid-40s.

Trials can strengthen our faith (James 1:1-4 ESV). James is addressing believers. He gives the command, "Count it all joy," and the condition, "when you meet trials of various kinds." Trials are used for God's sovereign purpose, to develop perseverance, and to mature our faith (Romans 5:3, 1 Peter 4:12-13).

"For James, joy is not the product of circumstances but rather the most fundamental expression of faith. Faith is not so much a means of accomplishment but rather a means by which to become open to the instructional wisdom of God.

"Wisdom is not so much a question of evaluating a person's performance as a means toward acquiring the maturity in faith that characterizes a true child of God" (The New American Commentary by Kurt A. Richardson, page 57).

Trials require the wisdom of God (James 1:5-8). "When we walk through trials, we realize we don't know all that is going on (knowledge); we don't see our situation from every angle (perspective); we oftentimes lack experience in what to do (experience).

"God, on the other hand, possesses all knowledge, He has an eternal perspective, and in Christ He has experienced every kind of test and has prevailed. And we can ask God because He 'gives generously to all without reproach'" (Christ-Centered Exposition, Platt, Akin, and Merida, page 8).

God's wisdom gives spiritual insight. We ask. He gives willingly. He wants to see you and me through the trial so our obedience and trust grow in Him. He wants us to succeed because it shows that in our weaknesses, He is made strong (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. The verses remind us to trust God and depend upon Him to direct our paths. Study the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes to glean insights from the wisest man who ever lived – Solomon (1 Kings 3) – but first, ask God!

Trials can help us keep the right perspective (James 1:9-12).

A test will reveal our humility or pride, our desire for worldly things or the kingdom of God, and our character. It asks, “Are we relying upon the abundant sustaining grace of God or material possessions – our wealth?”

We are to live in the light of His reward. In verse twelve, James writes, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast through under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God promised to those who love Him.”

Did you read the Sermon on the Mount? Do you see how James alludes to this passage? The reference to the crown of life is about the glorious reward of eternal life.

A proper perspective means we are to have a joyous attitude, an understanding mind, a submissive will, and a believing heart (John MacArthur).

Use the following acronym to remember the purposes of a trial: **T**rials test your faith. **E**mbrace your trial depending upon God’s grace. **R**ely upon the **S**overeignty of God. **T**rust produces joy.

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