



## Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

James - Week 1

July 12, 2020

A former boss and mentor of mine once shared a quote he had read to a group of employees during a training session. He said, “circumstances plus perspective equals experience.” His point was that it is not just the external circumstances around us that dictate how we experience a situation, but our perspective plays a big role in our experience. How true this is in the life of a believer!

This week we begin our series in the book of James, and right out of the gate he tells us that as followers of Jesus we will experience trials - not some of us, or we might experience some, but we will experience trials. When they come, James tells us that we should count it as joy. I don't know about you, but my natural inclination is not to be joyful when trials come my way. I can get frustrated, discouraged, angry, etc. How then do we not only tolerate it when trials come, but actually take joy in it? The key is our perspective with which we see the situation.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” The goal of a Christian is not to accept Jesus as Lord of our lives, get our ticket into heaven, and then just coast through life. Jesus calls us to grow in our faith - to become spiritually mature. The way this happens is when we seek God and His kingdom first. We must be intentional about reading our Bibles, spending time in prayer, acknowledging that we continually need His grace, and desiring to see God glorified in our world.

When we do that, we can begin to see trials not as God punishing us, and not as inconvenient situations that we must suffer through and will just be thankful when they are over, but as opportunities for us to grow more into the image of Jesus. We can begin to approach trials with the perspective that God loves us so much that He wants to shape us more and more into the image of His Son - into the people that we were truly created to be. That is when we will begin to count trials as joy.

Pastor Bill gave the example of how a silversmith refines the precious metal and that he or she knows they are done when they can see their reflection in the metal. Jesus wants to see His reflection in each of us. Trials are the means by which we are refined. Let us be people who seek God and His kingdom first. When times are good, let's praise God for the good. When trials come, let's praise God because we know that means we have the opportunity to grow in our spiritual maturity.

### **SO, CONSIDER:**

1. Think about a trial you have faced. Did you approach it with joy? If not, what could you have done differently? If you did, how were you able to do so?
2. After a trial you have faced ended, what did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about God?
3. What does spiritual maturity mean to you?

### **TAKE ACTION:**

It's not easy to seek God's kingdom first and in all circumstances. It takes intentionality and discipline. Over this next week, let these words repeat in your mind throughout the day, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Say them when you wake up, before starting work, when you begin to feel frustrated, say them all day long. See what impact the constant reminder to seek God first, in all circumstances, has on your perspective as you go about the ups and downs of your day. Be intentional about allowing this to be the lens that you see all situations through.

Blessings, Pastor Justin