

BIBLE EXTENSION COURSE PROGRAM

Trials and Temptations

Lesson No.2

Required Reading
James 1:1-27

Epistle of James – **EJ Series**
by Clifton H Carpenter

- **Handling Our Trials**
- **Handling Our Temptations**

Key Verse: James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

INTRODUCTION The Epistle of James is considered “*Wisdom Literature*” written the same as Hebrew poetry.

Hebrew Poetry, this poetry is intended to instruct and teach the reader. Almost every part of the Bible contains some poetry. Unlike modern poetry, Hebrew poetry rarely rhymes; although Hebrew poetry is easy to recognize, it is much more difficult to define it.

However, the main feature of Hebrew poetry is called “*parallelism*” where two members or parts of the verse are balanced. If the first half is unclear then usually the matching verse can shed light on the meaning. This is an invaluable tool in interpreting the Epistle of James.

Instruct and teach the reader. James sets a picture before our eyes. He does not discuss things in general, but things in particular. The five topics that ties all of James’ letter together is “*a demand for reality in our faith.*” He insists that faith shall be proven or tested by works.

The Epistle of James does not lay the foundation of Christian faith. It shows how, upon that foundation “*gold and silver and precious stones*” is evidenced by an honest Christian life. 1 Corinthians 3:9-23

The Christian’s character should correspond to Christian profession.

The Goal is “*Practice What You Preach*” James sees in the Church, failure on the part of many to put into action what they know. He senses that the Christian needs an attitude adjustment. Most Christians are familiar with the facts of the Gospel, but they are failing to apply what they believe to their everyday life. The world is corrupting and hardening them, and has instilled in them a secular worldview.

James provides for us a series of tests in which we can examine and measure the faith we profess.

Trials of Our Faith. In order to attain Spiritual Maturity and Holy Conduct it is essential to have a firm foundation.

The believer must be able to stand with confidence. We dare not be pushed by our trials; or pulled over by our temptations.

How can we achieve this high calling? A believer can stand by “*pursuing*” “*perceiving*” “*practicing*” the **Word of God**. Trials from without and temptations from within are common to all. 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What are Trials and Temptations? Trials are designed to prove a person’s integrity, virtue, and constancy. **End results are positive.** God permitted Satan to “*test the character of Job*” Job 1:6-12

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Temptations are designed to turn us away from the will of God. **End results are negative.** “*Jesus was tempted by Satan*” **He did not Sin.** Matthew 4:1-11 and Hebrews 2:18; 4:15

The Process of Spiritual Maturity.

Growing up in the Lord is God’s greatest desire for each of His children. Nothing is more disappointing than to see your child out of balance; an adult chronologically, but a child at heart, unable to function **intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.**

Trials are the means God uses to make believers the kind of people that bring honor to His name, namely, mature Christians. These are **Trials of Our Faith** in the sense that “*our trust*” in God is being stretched to the limit.

The Need for Endurance. Trials will result in endurance, steadfastness and perseverance. Endurance describes the quality that enables a person to stay on his or her feet when facing the storms of life. James 1:3

If we submit to them, they will eventually make us **Mature** “*fully developed*” and **Complete** “*developed in every essential area of our life.*” James 1:4

Attitude in Trials. The trials are of many kinds: They could be people related; finance related; health related and job related.

We face – Lit. “*to fall into*” these trials like the man who fell among thieves. Luke 10:30 and James 1:2

When confronted with trials, James did not say that we are to be joyous “*for the trials*” but joyous “*in the trials.*” Spiritual Maturity is developed only in the laboratory of life.

Advantage of Trials. The burning heat of the sun, when there is a balance of sun and rain upon the earth, it makes for a beautiful landscape. But when there is an absence of rain, it makes for a desert. So it is with our faith.

Without the trials, we wither and become barren. True faith, like pure gold, endures. James 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:7

Three Elements of Christian Faith. Trials help us grow in:

- **Knowledge** – about God
- **Conviction** – to submit our will to God
- **Trust** – to depend upon God with our heart

Assistance for Trials. To those who feel confused and frustrated there is help available. James 1:5

Divine Wisdom. The Christian is apt to take the world’s view toward his or her trials rather than God’s and try to escape them at any cost. Most people count it all joy when they escape trials.

Wisdom Literature. James speaks of wisdom “*a fixed, righteous order to which the wise man or woman submits their life.*” It requires a diligent search to know God’s will. God will not only provide you Wisdom, but “*will do so generously, not grudgingly*” Jeremiah 29:13

Prerequisites to God’s Provision.

Be persistent in faith, **not double-minded** Lit. “*like an unsteady, staggering drunk, having a split-mind.*” James 1:6-8

- **On the one hand** – “*they trust God*”
- **On the other hand** – “*they doubt God*”

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The Goodness of God. Christians seem to have the idea that because God is good, He should not allow His people to suffer or be tempted.

They forget that God wants His children to grow up and experience new blessings of His grace. Every “*good gift*” and every “*perfect gift*” is from above. James 1:17

Distinction between Trials and Temptations. God send trials “*to bring out the best in us*” i.e. Abraham, Joseph, Paul and Peter. But Satan sends temptations “*to bring out the worst in us.*”

Deadly Attacks. Believers are in danger of falling before the “*attacks and pressures of trials*” but we are also subject to falling before the “*attractions and pleasures of temptations.*”

Just as a wrong response to trials will obstruct spiritual growth so will a wrong response to temptations. James offered a sharp rebuke to those who find an easy excuse to their sinning. James 1:13

God cannot be Tempted. To free themselves of human responsibility; Christians say, “*I am tempted by God*” denoting that temptation’s origin and agency is God.

James makes it abundantly clear there is nothing in God to which evil can make an appeal. God cannot be tempted. It is an attribute of God – “*He cannot be tempted*”

Source of Temptations. It is from within you and me, it is our wrong evil desire, lust or inner craving. Good wholesome desires are not wrong, but desires that are contrary to the will of God are the ones we should avoid. Ephesians 5:1-8 and Philippians 4:8-9

Steps in Temptations. We are dragged away and enticed – Lit. “*to bait*” as to catch a fish with bait, or to hunt with a snare. Our inner craving draws us toward the temptations; like a fish or an animal that is drawn from its hiding place, and finally caught. So the Christian both “*builds and bait his own trap.*” James 1:14

Sin gives Birth to Death. James speaks of physical death in contrast to physical life. Sins must be dealt with from both the divine and human perspective. Sins that are “*not checked and not confessed*” could bring physical death. **God will judge.** 1Corinthians 11:29-34 and 1 John 1:8-9

Solution for Temptations. Satan who is “*the father of darkness*” generates the offspring of sin and death. God who is “*the father of heavenly light*” gives good gifts and perfect gifts from above. Acts 26:18 and James 1:17

The solution for temptations is to be found in a close relationship with our Heavenly father, and “*a constant response to His Word.*” It becomes a lamp unto my feet. Psalm 119:105 and James 1:18

Resisting Trials and Temptations. A Proper Action plan is the key to our resistance. The Process includes being “*receptive*” “*responsive*” “*resigned*” to the Word of God. Spiritual Maturity comes from a **Proper Action Plan.**

STOP! It’s time to challenge your thinking. How will you choose to handle your trials and temptations? The Ladder of Inference can be used in conjunction with the following:

Personal Goal Setting: The Process, Goal, Strategy and Schedule.

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What do you want to achieve in reference to your trials and temptations?

Your Achievements Must Be

- Concrete
- Specific
- Believable
- Challenging
- Put to Action
- Approached in a Balanced Way
- Measurable

Your Past Attitude

- I failed to make time
- I didn't know how
- I wanted to please others
- I have a fear of failure
- I had no perceived need

Your Present Attitude

- I agree to be honest and positive in my outlook
- I will seek the Lord's help in maintaining a positive attitude
- I will seek a friend to help me stay on course
- I will set new goals whenever one is reached

The Value of Trials. Having the **Proper Attitude** and taking the **Proper Actions** during trials and temptations will result in receiving "*blessings*" namely, happiness in life.

James uses "*parallelism*" as he reflects on Jesus' **Sermon on the Mount**. "*blessed*" speaks of happiness as a result of obedience, while we live upon the earth. James 1:12; Matthew 4-7 and John 13:17

The Believer's Crowns. Crowns as "*a metaphor*" rather than literal crowns.

- **An Imperishable Crown:** for leading a disciplined life. 1 Corinthians 9:25
- **A Crown of Rejoicing:** for evangelism and discipleship. 1 Thessalonians 2:19
- **A Crown of Glory:** for shepherding God's flock faithfully. 1 Peter 5:4
- **A Crown of Life:** for enduring trials. James 1:12

Define Your Goals

- **Identify** – recognize the trials and temptations you face
- **Analyze** – see the trials and temptations as they are
- **Prioritize** – list the trials and temptations in order

Commit Yourself to Strategy

- I have a clear sense of purpose and direction in handling my trials and temptations
- I am willing to take a chance on a positive outcome in handling my trials and temptations
- I am willing to persist in the face of difficulty as I face my trials and temptations
- I am committed and determined to accomplishing my goals by trusting the Holy Spirit to help me

Measure Your Progress

- Stay Focused
- Stay Motivated

Ladder of Inference – Answer the five questions on the chart and make adjustments