

Small-Group Material: James 1

When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

Welcome 5 mins

Opening question: What has been one of the hardest challenges you've experienced in your faith and how did you deal with it?

Leader to introduce the theme: We're looking at how we respond in faith during difficult times of trials, tribulations, and even temptation. The passage encourages us that such experiences bring a deeper joy, perseverance, and strengthening and maturing of faith.

Worship (10/15 mins)

Meditate on Psalm 77. Read it together taking a verse each. Feel free to reflect on it, but only briefly. Pray prayers of thanksgiving and praise. If you have time and would like to sing together 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTpTQ4kBLxA>)

Word (35 mins) James 1: 1-18

Begin by asking someone to read the passage.

1. Do you think that the faith challenge you discussed at the beginning has brought about perseverance and maturity as James writes in verse 4-5? How does Romans 5:1-4 help us understand more about the value of trials?
2. What does James mean to 'consider it pure joy'? In what ways might we put this into practice when facing trials?

3. Look at verse 12. James says that we can be blessed in our trials. How might this be and how does it compare with blessings that come in what we might think of as the 'good times'?
4. James moves on from verse 13 to 15 to talk about temptation. Read these verses and think through in what ways are trials and temptations are similar and/or different? What steps can we take to deal with them?
5. Look carefully at verses 17-18. What are these good gifts that James is talking about? *Leaders note- (new birth in Christ), the word of truth (the gospel) and being the first fruits (our redemption and renewal in Christ).*

How does this offer perspective over the passage as a whole?

Witness (20 mins)

Leaders note: Whilst this topic has very personal implications, sharing our stories of challenges and what God has done through them can be a real gift of faith to others. This includes Christians in the community but also people outside of the Church, almost as something relationally evangelistic. This exercise should help us to put this into practice:

- Each takes a pen/pencil and a piece of paper if it's helpful. Reflect for a few minutes on how God has strengthened your faith in difficult times and how you would articulate this to others.
- If you feel comfortable, share some of these. Discuss how your experiences of faith in difficult times might help 1. those in the Church community and b. those who are not yet Christians.
- *Close in prayer.*