

“Trials” **James 1:1-12**

Introduction

Born blind in one eye, a young boy in Nigeria was sent by his parents to live with his uncle in the United States. His parents hoped he could receive medical help that would restore his vision. Sadly, an accident caused him to lose his vision completely at age 10. Thanks to his hard work and the support of his music teachers, this boy learned to play the piano and developed his singing voice. Today, he is the singer/songwriter known as Blessing Offor. Although Blessing's life has been fraught with drawbacks, he would not trade his trials for the closeness of his relationship with God. Trials are adverse circumstances that God causes or allows to take us to the next level of spiritual development.

Although we often view our trials through worldly lenses, focusing only on our painful circumstances, we are to look at them through spiritual lenses. The reason for trials is three-fold. Trials are designed to increase our spiritual endurance, develop our spiritual maturity and address areas of our spiritual deficiencies. Without trials, we cannot go further and deeper with the Lord. We cannot become more spiritually mature. Maturity is expressed when we reflect Christ in our decision-making. God allows us to experience trials that are specifically made to address the areas in our lives that need correction, change and empowerment; otherwise, those areas would remain stagnant.

Once we see our trials through spiritual lenses, we can react to them spiritually. We can consider our trials a joy, not because of the pain they cause but because of the great purpose behind them (James 1:2). Joy is a decision we make to look at things from God's perspective, which in turn changes our attitude. We can praise God *in* the trial for what He is doing *with* the trial. Our suffering should also elicit prayers for wisdom in navigating our circumstances, trusting that God will give us clarity. Finally, we can be grateful for trials because they lead to experiencing a new level of spiritual intimacy, victory and blessing. God will increase our intimacy in our relationship with Him when we overcome trials, and He will bestow incredible blessings and rewards on us for our endurance. We can charge ahead with confidence despite our difficult circumstances, knowing God has a kingdom purpose for us to accomplish in our lives.

Getting Started

1. How does the world today tell us we should respond to difficult circumstances?
2. What stories have you heard or movies have you seen where someone overcame significant trials? How did those stories impact you?

Let's Get Personal

1. What trial in your life have you been viewing through worldly lenses? If you view it through a spiritual lens, how does that change your perspective and attitude toward it?

2. In what areas do you lack spiritual maturity and the ability to make Christ-minded decisions? How do you want to see growth and change in those areas?
3. Is your life characterized by joy and praise? What prevents you from praising God in your struggles?

Take the Next Step

1. What steps can you take this week to begin having God's perspective on your trials and to turn your complaining into joy for the ways God is developing you?
2. Where do you need to pray for God's clarity in your life? Write out a prayer to the Lord asking for His guidance on navigating the trials you are facing. Ask a friend or accountability partner to pray for you about clarity this week.
3. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: James 1:1-12; 1 Peter 1:6-9; Hebrews 10:35-39; 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Isaiah 43:1-2; John 16:33; Romans 12:12; 1 Peter 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 5:3-5.

Renew Your Mind

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

James 1:2-3
