



Main Verses: James 1: 2-4, 1:12-18  
(All Scripture taken from New Living Translation)

### ***Introduction:***

This is the first message in a series we are starting on the book of James. The book of James is full of wisdom for us on how we should live our lives. We will spend the next few weeks looking at some highlights. In this first week, we are going to focus on the first half of chapter one, where James discusses both Trials and Temptations.

**Definition of Trial:** the act of trying, testing, or putting to the proof.

Think of it like a test you take in school. What is a test designed to do? It tests your skills, how much you learned, and what you can do with what you have learned. Even though a test may seem like a spiritual trial sometimes, it's not. It is simply there to see what you know. The more you study, the better you do on the test. I always hated tests. They stressed me out, even when I had studied for them. The best feeling in the world was knowing I aced a test!

**Definition of Temptation:** to entice or allure to do something often regarded as unwise, wrong, or immoral.

We think of temptations as things trying to draw us to sin.

### **The Lesson:**

*James 1: 2-4 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So, let it grow. For when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

## 1. Trials

Does God put us through trials? Yes, He does. Scripture tells us to consider it joy when we go through trials. Joy, really?! Trials don't sound too fun to me. However, trials are designed to test our knowledge of faith. They are there to refine us. No pain, no gain.

Why would God allow us to go through trials? Well, it's simple. He wants us to grow stronger by learning to rely on Him for everything. Trials are God's way to make us stronger. Trials are God's way to test us. They show us where we are weak in our faith and point us to areas where we need work. We should have joy when we go through trials, because we know that it is going to bring about something good, namely, increased strength in our relationship to Christ. The joy comes from a strengthened relationship with Jesus!

My endurance is bad. If I were to get on a treadmill right now, I might last five minutes. It's bad, because I haven't done anything in a long time to improve on it. I'm trying to get back in shape this year and I'm taking baby steps so far because my endurance is nowhere near where it should be. My plan is to keep on pushing and over time, so that I can last longer while I exercise. Endurance is the power to hang on during hardships, to be able to bear pain.

[Illustration: Bring two people on stage and have them hold weights. Take the weight, hold it straight in front of you and see who can hold it the longest. You can pick anyone of any size. It's who has the best endurance that wins. I did this with a big guy who played football and one of the smallest girls in the room. She won!]

Who holds it longer? Why? The one who holds it longer is the one who lifts weights or exercises every day. They have the endurance to win. The key to winning this game is not how much can you hold, but for how long. The biggest doesn't always win; it's the one who trains every day.

Endurance is the key to gaining strength. If you want to be strong, you go through some pain in your workout so that you can get bigger and stronger. When you lift weights, your muscles are torn down. The strength returns as your muscles heal. They heal stronger. When you grow spiritually, you go through trials that test your faith. During the trial, you may feel weak, or

even think that maybe Jesus has abandoned you. The good news is that He is still with you. Relying on Him allows you to understand His ways more, and you get stronger in your faith.

Trials are not the same thing as a temptation. So, what's the difference?

*James 1:12-18 (NLT) God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. So, don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us His true word. And we, out of all creation, became His prized possessions.*

## 2. Temptation

Temptation is something that comes from us, not God. He is not evil. Remember the definition of temptation I shared earlier? It's regarded as enticement to do something unwise, wrong, or immoral.

Scripture tells us that *"temptation comes from our own desires."* (verse 14 above) Temptations come into our lives when we take our eyes off of Jesus and start trying to run our own lives. We think we can generate our own happiness. We can for a short time, but it can never be sustained. Sustained happiness is joy.

[Illustration: Bring someone up in front of the audience. Have them stand on the opposite end of the stage as you. Explain to the crowd that the person represents something that is a temptation for you. (Make it specific, e.g. too much TV time, eating too many cookies, losing your temper, gossiping, etc. If you don't get specific, it could get cringeworthy as if you're a creepy youth leader who is tempted by the actual student. Ugh.) While slowly walking toward the person, explain to the group that God helps us avoid temptation, but we, most of the time, don't look for the way out.]