



The Purpose of Trials
James 1:2-8 // January 20, 2019

Sermon Summary: James 1:2 is one of those famous verses that we've probably heard at church several times. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds...". Have we ever stopped to ask, "Why?" James tells us pretty quickly that when our faith is tested it actually produces perseverance. Then he says that when perseverance does what it's supposed to do, we're made mature and complete and that we lack *nothing*. James knows that when we face times of trouble, it will test our faith. But he also knows that if we persevere through those trials, we will become stronger. In fact, to be made mature and complete means that we are actually made into the people that we were created and saved to be. We actually can't become those people *without* going through those trials. But even that isn't automatic.

Most of the time, when we're going through those trials, it's hard to remember who we are becoming through them. We need God's help. We need to remember that disciples of Jesus are *Prayerfully Submitted* and we have to go to God. James tells us that if any of us lacks wisdom then we should ask God. He gives wisdom generously to everyone without finding fault. But we have to *ask* and we have to *believe*. We must trust and have faith that God will answer us when we call to Him. When we don't trust God fully or when we seek wisdom in other places, James tells us that we are double-minded.

It's important that we remember that as we go to God through our trials, we're able to do so honestly. We can acknowledge our pain and our need for him. All too often we think that we have to have it all together in order for God to answer us. But what is required of us is trust and authenticity.

Discussion Guide:

1. Read through James 1:2-8. Can anyone share a story where you were able to consider it pure joy when you faced a trial? When did that joy come? Was it during the trial or after?
2. We know that in order to grow we need to struggle through things. We need to come out on the other side of pain and testing and trials. If we know that, why do you think we spend so much of our lives seeking out comfort?
3. We're told that God will give us wisdom if we ask. When you are facing trials, is your first ask to God for wisdom or is it for something else?
4. What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? What is the significance that James tells us that God gives us wisdom but not knowledge?
5. We read in James 1:6 that if we doubt when asking that we will not receive anything. What place has doubt played in the formation of your faith? Is it wrong to doubt? Are there different levels or types of doubts?
6. James eventually tells us that the one who doubts is "double-minded and unstable in all they do." To be double-minded also means double-souled. They might seek wisdom from God when it works for them or they might seek wisdom from somewhere else if that suits them better. What does this type of position say about someone's trust? As you look back on your life, have you ever been double-minded? What was the result?