



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Maybe you've asked with the psalmist of old:

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me? (Psalm 13:1)

David's extended period of adversity had started to erode his confidence in the Lord's presence. Ever been there? Are you there today?

Adversity is part of the human experience. In fact, you probably know by now that it's not a matter of *if* hard times will come but *when* hard times will come.

In this study, we will look closely at how James explained both the significance of trials in our lives and how God uses them to deepen our spiritual character.



Getting Started: God's Intent for Our Trials

As we begin, remember that when searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Motivating Christians to take time to search the Scriptures can be a challenge. Most people lead very busy lives. But the need for encouragement and direction in hard times often drives people to consider turning to the Word of God for answers.

Quotable

God flings upon us a particular kind of test, and then another one comes along. It's as if God is saying, "My child, I'm allowing this so that you might know this area of your life needs much attention." Trials have a purpose.

— Charles R. Swindoll



In the space provided, describe a time in your life when you found hope and encouragement from your personal study of the Scriptures.

James wrote to a group of Christians who were experiencing adversity as a result of being scattered from their homeland. He wrote to “the twelve tribes who are *dispersed* abroad” (James 1:1, emphasis added).

In the last study, you discovered the meaning of the word *diaspora*: Christians who fled their homeland because of religious persecution in Jerusalem. Describe how you think it would feel to be a Jewish Christian family forced to leave their homeland and live among non-Jewish people in a completely strange culture.

What are some of the “trials” they may have faced as a result of being “dispersed”?



Helpful Hint

This would be a good time to consult one of the maps in your study Bible or skim through a Bible atlas. Look for a map that indicates the various places where Jewish Christians fled during the first-century persecution in Jerusalem (**page 2**).





Your Turn in the Scriptures

In this message from James chapter 1, Chuck mentions two truths about trials we all must embrace.

Trials are *inevitable*. Life can cave in on us in many different ways. James referred to these events as “various trials,” meaning they can take on many forms and carry varying degrees of intensity. Also, trials may originate purely from outward circumstances—such as religious persecution, threats from a political enemy, a tragic personal event, illness, a job loss, or even some catastrophic weather event. But trials can also come from within—emerging from the shame of our past, the weight of guilt from a recurring pattern of sin, or a debilitating sense of inadequacy or low self-esteem.

That leads us to the second truth about trials. Trials have *a purpose*, whether they originate from without or within. God allows and uses these periods of adversity to shape our character and deepen our trust in Him.

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

Read again James 1:1–4 Read the verses slowly and make notes below or on a separate sheet of paper about what you observe. Is this a warning passage? Or is it meant to be instruction? How do you know? What clues does the text offer you?

James began verse 2 with the word *consider*. What kind of word is “consider”? Is it an action (motion) word, an attitude word (mind-set), or a feeling word (emotion)? Explain the reason for your answer.



Now pay close attention to James 1:3. Based on this verse, what did James say is the purpose of our trials? And what is the primary target? Explain your answer in your own words.

Locate your Bible dictionary or read through the section on James 1:3 in your Bible commentary. Try to discover what James meant when he said, “The testing of your faith produces endurance.” How would you explain the meaning of the word “testing”?

Select the word below which you believe (based on your study) best reflects God’s purpose in testing our faith:

Correction

Approval

Growing

Now read James 1:5–11. As you read, make some notes about what you see. Did James repeat any words? If so, what are they?

James made clear that receiving wisdom from God is particularly important for enduring hard times. According to James 1:5, how is such wisdom gained?



How does James 1:6 relate to James 1:5? What illustration from nature did James use to stress the significance of praying without doubting? Explain how that helps us pray during trials.

In James 1:9–11, we see the contrast between the response of a person of humble means to adversity and the response of a wealthy person to adversity. Make some notes in the space provided about the differences between the two.

What illustration from nature did James use to make his point about the fleeting nature of earthly success? Why is this significant?

Whether rich or poor, humble or exalted, everyone will experience hard times. James made that abundantly clear. Left to ourselves, we are tossed about like a wave on the sea—directionless and without purpose—and our faith quickly wanes like grass and flowers wilting under a scorching sun. But when we invite God into our circumstances, everything changes. By turning to Him in prayer, our trials become a joyful experience of gaining greater wisdom and developing more resilient faith—and both promise to outlast any present heartache or temporary trouble.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how thankful I am for this trial because it has forced me to turn to You and to Your Word. I ask for wisdom to know Your purpose and plan and the faith to believe what You reveal to me through it. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



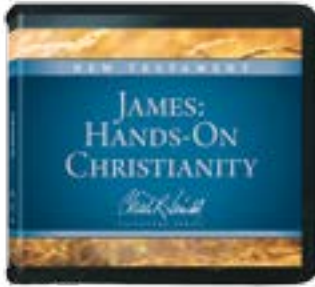
JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
When Troubles Won't Go Away
James 1:1–12

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

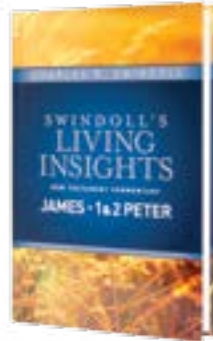
STUDY



Tools for Digging Deeper



James: Hands-On Christianity
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For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts.



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