

Introduction:

1. Think of a brother or sister in Christ who has a quality of godly perseverance that you admire. How does this look in their life? How does this encourage you in your own faith?
2. Would you agree or disagree with the statement, "Life is 90 percent what happens to you and 10 percent how you respond to what happens to you"? Why?

Understanding:

3. Jesus was tested in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–13). We are tested too. When the heat gets turned on, the Refiner is burning off the junk in our life. Sometimes we don't submit to the process. We may get frustrated with God, and instead of praying, turn on the TV or some other kind of quick comfort. What is your area of "quick comfort" that is most likely to short circuit God's change process? How does today's scripture give you hope for change?
4. Verse 5 speaks of wisdom. : **If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.** When life gets all twisted up, sometimes you realize you don't have the inner capacity to handle it. Wisdom comes from prayer for God's help. But sometimes we go back and forth between trusting God and trusting the world or our own natural abilities. This makes us unstable like a wave of the sea. What makes us start to pull back from receiving God's great wisdom? Do you have an area that is going back and forth? What is the remedy?
5. Verses nine and ten say **"9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower."** What the world values—in this case, financial prosperity and social status—are not the things that God values. What is something in your life that you need to better understand is temporary and will fade away?
6. Verse 12 says: **Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.** When hard times come, they can awaken that part of us that longs for God's presence and God's rewards. Here's what the Lord says: Allow the trials in your life to stir up your desire for that world where there will be no more trials! Read 1 Cor. 9:25. Why can it be so hard to focus on the permanent crown? What is the remedy?
7. In verses 13-15 James discusses temptation and sin. Do you ever think that God is tempting you and trying to get you to fail? Oswald Chambers said, "The root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good." Was this true of Adam and Eve when they fell? Is it true of you when you sin? How do these verses explain it?
8. Read verses 16-18. The best evidence of being a firstfruit is that He gave us new birth. Because of the gospel—the fact that Jesus went to the cross and absorbed God's justice for our sins—all we had to do was believe in him, and we were given new birth. What exciting thing does this say about our identity? Think of a lie or deception that you are tempted to believe, and refute the lie in the light of these verses.

9. Read Hebrews 4, verses 15 and 16. Do we need to be fearful about approaching the throne of grace? What is something that you are hesitant to bring to the throne of grace, that these verses give you the confidence to bring?

Application:

10. When a trial enters your life, you have a decision of how you will interpret it. James says **consider it pure joy**. So you actually get to decide how you will *interpret* or *process* or *consider* that thing. This week talk to the Lord about a trial that you are interpreting incorrectly. You can't just order yourself to look at it differently. Begin to ask God to change your heart.
11. James reminds us that the key difference between thankful and bitter people is how they *consider* or *count* trials in their life. What is an area of bitterness in someone's heart whose trials have driven them away from God? Don't try to reform them. Ask God to change the bitter root in their heart that so that the trial will drive them closer to God.
12. How would you talk to someone who needs to hear that good can come from the trials they are experiencing in a way that is more helpful than just finding a quick verse to fire at them?