

To Dig Deeper: Compare the book of James with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) – note the common teachings or themes.

Topic	Passage in James	Passage in Matthew
Blessed when persecuted	James 1:2	Matthew 5:11
Rejoice when persecuted	James 1:2	Matthew 5:12
Prayer, asking God	James 1:5 and 5:15	Matthew 7:7-8
Christian perfection (maturity)	James 1:4	Matthew 5:48
The poor	James 1:9	Matthew 5:3
Anger	James 1:22	Matthew 5:22
Showing Mercy	James 2:13	Matthew 5:7 and 6:14-15
Illustrations of source	James 3:11-12	Matthew 7:16-20
Serving 2 masters	James 4:4	Matthew 6:24
Humility	James 4:10	Matthew 5: 3&5
Judging others	James 4:11-12	Matthew 7:1-2
God is giver of good	James 1:17	Matthew 7:11
Temporary riches	James 5:1-2	Matthew 6:19-21
Rewards	James 1:12	Matthew 5:12
Prophets were persecuted	James 5:10	Matthew 5:12
Swearing and oaths	James 5:12	Matthew 5:33-37
Did you find other comparisons?		

DAY 2: Read James 1:2-4 (in class you may want to read this out loud in different versions of the Bible)

- 1. According to James 1:2 what attitude are Christians (as disciples) to have when facing trials? How do you react to this verse?** The word joy is the Greek word chara (khar-ah) meaning cheerfulness, calm, delight, gladness. The New Testament relates joy to suffering, as seen in the following verses.

Matthew 5:11-12 – suffering includes: being reviled, persecuted, falsely accused
rejoice because: "great is your reward in heaven"

1 Peter 1:6 – suffering includes: distressed by various trial
rejoice because: born again to a living hope; an imperishable inheritance

1 Peter 4:12-13 – suffering includes: share in the sufferings of Christ
rejoice because: will see Christ in His glory
- 2. James 1:2 indicates that trials are inevitable; it's a question of "whenever," not a question of "if." Is there something in your life that you would call a trial? What makes it hard to be joyful in the midst of that difficulty? Read Acts 5:41 and 2 Corinthians 12:10 for two examples of rejoicing during trials. Who were the people, what was the trial, why did they rejoice? Where does joy come from? (See Galatians 5:22 and Philippians 4:4-7 for other insights on rejoicing.)**

Acts 5:41 – the people are Peter and the apostles (vs 29); the trial – they were arrested and instructed not to teach in the name of Jesus (vs 27-28); they rejoiced because "they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name." 2 Corinthians 12:10 – the person is Paul; the trials are weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions and difficulties for Christ's sake; he rejoiced because when he is weak, then he is strong.

Where does joy come from? It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Philippians 4:4-7: we can rejoice in the Lord rather than worry because we can take all to God in prayer.

3. **Read James 1:3. What is the result or the benefit of facing our trials and the testing of our faith?** Endurance. The testing of our faith is a concept throughout the Bible. Read Genesis 22:1, Deuteronomy 8:2, 16, and 1 Peter 1:7. **How do these passages help you to understand the purpose of testing?** Abraham, Israel, Peter and others were tested by God to see if they would obey Him. Testing comes to us to prove the genuineness of our faith, to humble us, to produce endurance in us, to bring good to us at its end and to result in praise, glory and honor at Christ's return. **Have you experienced a trial that brought benefits to you, such as maturity or deepening of your faith?**

To Dig Deeper: A word study on perseverance, patience, endurance.

With a concordance such as *Strong's or Young's Exhaustive Concordance*, look up the Greek word used in James 1:3 and 4 (it will be the KJV word for patience unless you have an NIV version of one of these concordances). Write down the meanings and uses you find.

Patience (or perseverance in NIV, or endurance in NASV) is the Greek word hupomone (hoop-om-on-ay). It comes from the word hupomeo which means to stay under, remain, undergo, bear, have fortitude, persevere, abide, endure, take patiently. Hupomone means cheerful or hopeful endurance, constancy, enduring, patience, patient endurance (waiting). **Read Galatians 5:22; Romans 5:3-4, James 5:10-11. What do these passages say about why this virtue is so important?** It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it brings about proven character and the one who endures is blessed – like the prophets and Job.

4. According to the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, in James 1:2 the word "face" might more literally be expressed "fall into," like when the Samaritan traveler fell among thieves. The reference is to external trials. The NIV Study Bible footnote says that the same Greek root is used for the word "trials" in verse 2 and "temptation" in verse 13. In verses 2-3, the emphasis is on the difficulties that come from outside the person, whereas in verses 13-15 the emphasis is on inner moral trials such as the temptation to sin.

Remember that the first century Christian Jews to whom James wrote were persecuted by the Roman government and the non-Christian Jews; their trials came from without. **What are some trials from without that we face today as individuals? As Christians collectively?** We may be labeled as "hater" if we express Christian viewpoints with those who disagree, pressure to set aside obeying Christ to please society or another person, maybe taken to court because we practice our faith, loss of property and/or business or even prison, job loss, restrictions on practicing or speaking about our faith at work or in public places, attacks on person or property, lawsuits, shunned or no longer included in some groups or by some friends. "Every new trial that comes into our lives is another opportunity for God to show Himself mighty in delivering us." (*Faith That Works*, Frank Gaebelien, page 35).

5. **Compare how different translations of the Bible present James 1:4:**

NIV – "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

NASV – "And let endurance have its perfect result that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

KJV – "But let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

NLT – "So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."

How does using these different translations help you in understanding this verse?

It clarifies words and expands thoughts. The goal according to James is to become a mature, complete Christian by letting endurance be fully developed in us through our trials.

DAY 3: Read James 1:5-8

1. **What phrase in verse 5 is linked to verse 4? “If any of you lacks . . .”** *“linked to “lacking in nothing”.* (Note that James is using a literary technique of linking together clauses and sentences by repeating a word or thought.) **If we need wisdom in our situation, what can we do?** Ask God for wisdom. **Why?** Because God is generous and does not reproach us when we ask. **What will God do for us?** He will give us wisdom.
2. **The need for wisdom is linked to verses 2-4. What connection do you see between wisdom and the process described in verses 2-4?** Wisdom enables us to face our trials with endurance so we can grow and mature through them. The NIV Study Bible footnote says: “Wisdom is not just acquired information but practical insight with spiritual implications.” (See Proverbs 1:2-4; 2:10-11; 4:5-9 and 9:10-12 for more about wisdom.) We can know wisdom. It gives us discernment and understanding, leads us to deal rightly, justly and with equity and leads us to become prudent and act with discretion. Wisdom, knowledge, discretion and understanding are all linked. According to Proverbs 4, wisdom is the principal thing; it leads to promotion, honor, grace and deliverance. The source is God, so it makes sense we should ask him for wisdom.

“James’s Jewish audience recognized this (wisdom) as the understanding and practical skill that was necessary to live life to God’s glory. It was not a wisdom of philosophical speculation, but the wisdom contained in the pure and peaceable absolutes of God’s will revealed in His Word (see 3:13,17) and lived out. Only such divine wisdom enables believers to be joyous and submissive in the trials of life.” (quote from *James* by John MacArthur, page 5)

3. **James 1:6 says “But when he asks, he must _____ and not _____.”** “ask in faith” and not “doubt” or “without doubting”
What is the condition to receive what we ask? (see also Hebrews 11:6) The condition is “faith” – believe that God is and that He will give what we ask. **In verses 6-8, what description is given about the one who doubts when praying?** (See also Matthew 8:25-26.) The one who doubts is described as being tossed about like a wave on windy day. He should not expect to receive what he asks. Jesus described them in Matthew as being timid with little faith. The disciples at first looked at Jesus, but then they focused on the waves. **When I am praying, why do I find it hard to believe God will give me what I am asking? Think about a time in your life when you had doubts about God. What helped you through that experience?**
4. **What does James 1:8 say about someone who is double-minded?** He/she is unstable in all their ways. **Look at Joshua 24:14-15; 1 Kings 18:20-21; 2 Kings 17:41; Matthew 6:24 and Mark 9:21-24. What do these verses indicate about being double-minded?** They say it is like trying to serve God and other gods at the same time, like limping between 2 sides, believing yet not believing.
In what situations in life do I find myself most likely to be double-minded? What is the remedy for double-mindedness? Choosing one master, one way, to believe God will answer. “The child of God cannot be facing two ways at once . . . We must be anchored on the rock of salvation, or we will flounder on the rocks of despair.” (George Sweeting, *How to Solve Conflicts*, page 20)
Double-minded man – “a literal translation of the Greek expression that denotes having one’s mind or soul divided between God and the world; this man is a hypocrite, who occasionally believes in God but fails to trust Him when trials come and thus receives nothing;” (John MacArthur, *James*, pg 5)
“To doubt is to be in two-minds – to believe and to disbelieve simultaneously; to be torn between two impulses – one positive, one negative” (Coleman and Peace, *James*, page 19)

To Dig Deeper: Start writing down what James teaches about faith and believing as we go through the book of James in this study.

From 1:3 – trials test our faith

From 1:6 – faith is necessary in prayer and its answer

DAY 4: Read James 1:9-11

1. **Describe the two types of people found in verses 9-10.** They are described as rich and poor. **What are their circumstances?** One is of humble circumstances; the other is rich. **How should each person look at themselves?** The poor man should see himself as having a high position; the rich man should accept his humble state.
2. **In what sense does a poor person who is a Christian have a “high position”?** (see Matthew 23:12, Galatians 3:28, and James 2:5) The poor person is humble and has been exalted by Christ, he/she is one with everyone else in Christ, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God. “In the early church, the poor gained a new and quite remarkable sense of self-respect. The slave found that traditional social distinctions had been obliterated. A slave might minister to a congregation in which his or her master sat. In Christ, slaves found a God-given purpose. They were not useless. The judgment of society on them was not accurate.” (Coleman and Peace, *James*, page 19) **In what sense does a rich person who is a Christian have a “low position”?** Consider what verses 10-11 indicate about those who are rich. The rich person is also one with everyone else in Christ – his riches cannot save him – they can be here today and gone tomorrow, and he also will die like everyone else. “low-position – Jewish culture understood wealth to be a sure sign of God’s favor. Here as elsewhere (verses.2,9) James reverses conventional expectations.” (Coleman and Peace, *James*, page 19) **How is being wealthy a trial?** Being wealthy can be a trial because one feels the responsibility to handle wealth properly, and one worries about losing their wealth. Many people and organizations come to them for money. **Can you think other ways being wealthy can be a trial?**
3. **How do verses 9-11 relate to facing the kinds of trials presented in verses 2-3?** Trials come to both the poor and the rich. **How do trials act as an equalizer between rich and poor?** For both, trials are a test of their faith and produce endurance, growth and maturity as a Christian. *NIV* footnote: verses.9-10 – “Since James’s discussion of the poor man and the rich man (verses 9-11) appear between the two sections on trials (verses. 2-4 and verse 12), verses 5-11 may also have to do with trials. The Christian who suffers the trial of poverty is to take pride in his high position (verse 9) as a believer (see 2:5), and the wealthy Christian is to take pride (verse 10) in trials that bring him low, perhaps including the loss of his wealth.” **If your wealth and possessions were gone, what would you have left?**

DAY 5: Read James 1:12

(Note: Different translations place this verse in different paragraphs – some put verse 12 with verses 2-11, others put verses 12 with verses 13-15 or 13-16, the NIV has the verse standing alone. Remember verse numbers and divisions of texts into paragraphs were added years after the original texts were written.)

1. **What connection do you see between verse 12 and verses 2-11?** Verse 12 relates to the person who is going through trials. Those people are blessed and will be rewarded by Christ. This gives the person something to look forward to beyond the trial. And, there is an end to the trial indicated by for once he has been approved”. **How does this verse add to your understanding of verses 2-4?** There is a purpose to trials, an end to trials and a reward for enduring trials.
2. **“Blessed” is the first word of this verse. What other scriptures come to mind that use this word?** Matthew 5:1-11; Psalm 1:1. “Blessed” means more than happy – it refers to the “ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy” of the Christian (taken from the footnote on Matthew 5:3 in the *NIV Study Bible*). **In what ways does blessing come to those who persevere through trials?** It comes through the endurance and maturity that results. It comes through the strengthening of one’s faith and confidence in God. **Have you experienced this kind of blessing?** “All of life is a test – sometimes we are tested by sickness, conflicts, even by death. One of the purposes of these trials of life is that we might be strengthened – that all of the waste of our lives might be removed – so that we might reflect the image of Jesus Christ.” (George Sweeting, *How To Solve Conflicts*, page 25). Note this promise in verse 12 is “to those who love Him”.

To Dig Deeper: What is meant by the crown of life? Some versions say “the crown which is life”. Both refer to eternal life – living with God forever. It is a reward. NASV footnote on 1 Corinthians 3:14 - ‘Salvation is a free gift, but rewards, for those who are saved, are earned. The quality of our service (verse 13) is the criterion. Rewards are often spoken of as crowns.’ Check your study Bible footnotes or a Bible commentary and look up cross-references. Start with 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 for the idea about rewards; then see 1 Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 2:5 and 4:6-8; 1 Peter 5:4, and Revelation 2:10. Some questions to think about: Who receives the crown? The one who wins (1 Corinthians 9:24-25), the one who has been approved. C.R. Erdman says in his *Commentary on James*: “by which he means that one whose faith stands the test, one who views each event of life in light of the wisdom which God gives, receives as a reward, as an inevitable result, life in even fuller, larger degree, life more abundant, life for time and for eternity.” What is the condition for receiving the crown? Competing, persevering, finishing the course. How is the crown the Christian receives different from the crowns of royalty or the crowns that athletes achieve? The crown the Christian receives does not fade, and is given by Christ. In the first century, crowns (wreaths made of leaves or flowers) were received for winning athletic competitions – they didn’t last long. The crown signified victory and honor. They were also worn at weddings and feasts and signified joy. “The way to be in God’s winners circle is by loving Him and staying faithful even under pressure: (*NLT Study Bible* footnote)

DAY 6: Reread James 1:1-12

- 1. Throughout this study we will focus on what James teaches about how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. As you read James 1:1-12, write down two or three things you learn about discipleship. For example, how does a disciple face trials, grow into maturity, pray, and deal with poverty or riches? How can you use this wisdom from James to be a disciple of Christ?**
- 2. Identify a verse in James 1:1-12 that is particularly meaningful, write it down, and memorize it (perhaps James 1:12).**
- 3. As you think about trials, remember the words of the song “It Is Well With My Soul”**

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blessed assurance control;
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has shed his own blood for my soul.*

or this verse from “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

*And though the world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*