

# PERSEVERANCE THROUGH TRIAL

FAITH THAT WORKS | JAMES 1:1-4

Study Focus	To learn the value of persevering and relying on God through our trials		
Sermon Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hong Kong protesters story</li> <li>- Looking at the Epistle of James this series, a very practical letter about how to live out our faith in all circumstances.</li> <li>- (v1) James didn't introduce himself with his credentials, as Jesus' brother, but rather focussed on the fact that he was God's servant.</li> <li>- We often focus on titles and accomplishments, but James focusses on who he is in Christ, which forms his identity as a humble man.</li> <li>- James letter was written to Jewish Christians who had been dispersed when persecution came, people who knew all about trials!</li> <li>- (v2) the advice to consider it pure joy when we go through suffering seems incredibly counter-intuitive! Where do trials come from?</li> <li>- Sometimes they are the direct result of our brokenness and sin, sometimes they are the result of us living in a fallen world, and sometimes (although not often) they are the result of spiritual attack</li> <li>- (v3-4) we learn that perseverance through trial produces maturity. Our trials are not to test if we have faith, but through testing, strengthen our faith. Our surrender is sanctifying.</li> <li>- Jesus is our example – look at how He suffered for us</li> <li>- Jesus is our strength – in the highs and lows, He is enough</li> <li>- Jesus is our goal – one day, we will become like Him, and in perfect relationship with Him.</li> </ul>		
Question One	Question	Stu talked about how we often find our identity in our credentials or our accomplishments. What are some examples of where we personally have done this/struggled with where our identity is?	
	Answer	<p>Some suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Performing well at school, uni, or work. This may also apply to other spheres, like sport or anything else</li> <li>2. Relationships, how many we have been in and whether we are in one now, or how successful our relationships are.</li> <li>3. Money, how much we have and can spend. This might also look like needing to have the latest material 'things' whatever they may be or having a lovely house.</li> <li>4. The idea of "being a good person" or how we serve/are seen to serve at church. This is putting our worth and merit in our own accomplishments, rather than trusting our identity to Christ.</li> </ol>	<p>Thoughts for leader:</p> <p>There will be many answers. For each, note that they aren't bad things in and of themselves, but they are bad to find our identity in.</p> <p>Encourage your group to discuss what it might look like to engage with these things in a healthy, Christ-centred way. E.g. rather than viewing uni as a place to succeed, what if we saw it as a mission field?</p>

Question Two	Question	Stu commented that we will have trials in our lives and these trials are, ultimately, worked together for our good. Is there anyone who is currently going through a trial that we can pray for, or someone who can share an experience of a past trial and how it grew them?	
	Answer	<p>There could be a multitude of answers here, and it's really important not to belittle some answers. What may seem a great trial to others, might seem trivial to us, and vice versa! It's important to give those who are struggling a chance to share and to be prayed for.</p> <p>This may be a good area to lead with one of your own experiences to break the ice and get people comfortable sharing.</p>	<p>Thoughts for leader: If anything comes up that worries you or you feel you cannot handle, refer it up, talk to one of the pastoral staff about it and make sure you and they get the support needed.</p>
Question Three	Question	<p><b>John 15:1-11</b> Jesus tells us to abide in Him "...that [His] joy may be in us and our joy may be full." How can we abide in Jesus, even through times of suffering?</p>	
	Answer	<p>There are lots of suggestions here that can help us.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. His words should abide in us (v7). How will they abide in us if we won't read them? Thus, remaining in a habit of bible reading, even when it is tough, is a sure source of lasting and deep joy, even if we don't always feel like it at the time.</li> <li>2. We are also called to bear fruit and to be obedient. When we suffer and go through trials, rather than pulling away from God, what would it look like if we saw our trials as an opportunity to press into God and His mission?</li> <li>3. A big one is how God abides in us. The truth is, He has already put His spirit in us if we are believers, and it is by abiding with the Spirit and abiding in His love for us, that we can have true joy.</li> </ol>	<p>Thoughts for leader: Some of these suggestions (particularly the first two) might be the opposite of what people want to hear when things are tough. However, the Bible tells us that these things are for our joy, and we are called to trust God's Word above any other word.</p>
Conclusion	How can we be praying for one another and encouraging one another in times of trial? Take plenty of time to pray today, because it is likely that there will be those in your small group who will need it.		