



Who you trust during the tough times changes the question from
"Why must I GO through this?" to
"How will I GROW through this?"

This letter was written by a Jewish man named **Jacob**, although English translations usually call him James.

* Greek scholar Bill Mounce says, "The consensus is that the name goes from Hebrew to Greek to Latin to French and finally to English, and it is the succession of changes that account for the changes. One person wrote: Ya'aqov (Hebrew) → Iacobus (Greek) → Iacomus (Latin) → Jammes (Old French) → James (English)."¹

James/Ya'kob/Jacob is none other than the half-brother of Jesus, leader of the Jerusalem church - the Jewish followers of Jesus.

How is Jacob a half-brother? Jesus & Jacob had the same MOTHER, but different FATHER. Mary was a virgin until Jesus was born (Matt. 1:25), and his brothers are named in Matt. 13:55-56.

• Another brother of Jacob & Jesus is **Judas/Jude**. See his brief letter that echoes the opening of James/Jacob where both call themselves **slaves/servants of Jesus Christ** (James 1:1, Jude 1).

☀️ **A.W. Tozer** writes about the difficult days we face being like **the fallow field** - an uncultivated piece of farmland.

Safe and undisturbed, it sprawls lazily in the sunshine, the picture of sleepy contentment. But it is paying a terrible price for its tranquility: Never does it see the miracle of growth; never does it feel the motions of mounting life nor see the wonders of bursting seed nor the beauty of ripening grain. Fruit it can never know because it is afraid of the plow and the harrow.

In direct opposite to this, the cultivated field has yielded itself to the adventure of living. The protecting fence has opened to admit the plow, and the plow has come as plows always come, practical, cruel, business-like and in a hurry. Peace has been shattered by the shouting farmer and the rattled of machinery. The field has felt the travail of change; it has been upset, turned over, bruised and broken, but its rewards come hard upon its labors. The seed shoots up into the daylight its miracle of life, curious, exploring the new world above it. All over the field the hand of God is at work in the age-old and ever renewed service of creation. New things are born, to grow, mature, and consummate the grand prophecy latent in the seed when it entered the ground.

Nature's wonders follow the plow.

Faith Under Fire

James 1:2-4 (NET) ² My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, ³ because you know that **the testing of your faith produces endurance.**

⁴ And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete [mature], not deficient in anything.

Jacob's audience had experienced/would experience **all sorts of trials**. The difference between the believer and the non-believer isn't WHAT we face, but HOW and WHY we face it.

¹ <https://www.billmounce.com/monday-with-mounce/why-tákwβoc-james-and-not-jacob>

Trials test our faith. Difficult days help us to see if our faith is the real deal or just an empty shell. It's easy to say we trust God when things are good...but when things go bad, will we still trust Him? Trials help us to re-prioritize - to see what is really matters most. Trials make us consciously aware of our need for God.

TESTING ➡ ENDURANCE ➡ MATURITY

When we see tough times through these lenses, the question changes from: ***Why must I GO through this*** to ***How will I GROW through this?***

Just Ask!

James 1:5-8 (NET) ⁵ But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, **he should ask God, who gives to all generously** and without reprimand, and **it will be given to him.** ⁶ But he must **ask in faith without doubting**, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ since he is a double-minded individual, unstable in all his ways.

God WANTS to give us His wisdom! We must **ask in faith without doubting.** We must remember that we are asking GOD - the Creator of all things - for help!

BIG TRUTH: Faith is more about WHO we trust than HOW we trust.

Mark 9:22b-24 (NET) ²² But if you are able to do anything, have compassion on us and help us." ²³ Then Jesus said to him, " 'If you are able?' All things are possible for the one who believes." ²⁴ Immediately the father of the boy cried out and said, "**I believe; help my unbelief!**"

All Experience Tough Times

James 1:9-12 (NET) ⁹ Now the believer of humble means should take pride in his high position.¹⁰ But the rich person's pride should be in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a wildflower in the meadow.¹¹ For the sun rises with its heat and dries up the meadow; the petal of the flower falls off and its beauty is lost forever. So also the rich person in the midst of his pursuits will wither away. ¹² **Happy is the one who endures testing**, because when he has proven to be genuine, **he will receive the crown of life** that God promised to those who love him.

Jesus said is hard for the rich person to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:24-25), because the rich tend to put their faith in their wealth rather than humbly approach God as needy sinners seeking forgiveness.

Those who endure testing have their focus on an eternal **crown**, not an earthly crown.

Blaming God for Sin?

James 1:13-16 (NET) ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. ¹⁵ Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to death. ¹⁶ Do not be led astray, my dear brothers and sisters.

The good news is that we don't have to be **led astray**. The Scripture elsewhere encourages us with these words:

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. **God is faithful**, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation **he will also provide the way of escape**, that you may be able to endure it.

We can make it through the trials & temptations, because God has not left us.

Good Gifts from God

James 1:17-18 (NET) ¹⁷ All generous giving and **every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights**, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.¹⁸ By his sovereign plan he gave us birth through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

What good gifts have you been given...and WHO did they come from? When's the last time you thanked God for health, senses, relations, provision, and spiritual **birth through the message of truth**?

The next time difficulty comes into your life, you might ask a different question: **Why must I GO through this** to **How will I GROW through this**?

Faith is more about WHO we trust than HOW we trust.