



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

February 13, 2005
James 1:17-18

OVERVIEW

If you've been discussing James in your small group as we have launched into this series, you will quickly become convinced of the realistic view James has. Christians inevitably face trials! That's the given. What James wants for us to understand is how we are to respond in faith to trials. And, at the heart of his call, is an invitation to joy in the midst of trials. This week we pick up on a few verses at the close of his initial discussion about trials to focus on a fundamental "root" for joy: Our understanding of the nature and character of God.

DISCUSSION

Anyone who is familiar with the story of Job will know that he is a great example of a friend of God facing trials. So, we are going to start our discussion there. (You might consider reading Job 1:1-2:8 in preparation for the discussion to familiarize yourself with all that Job experienced.) After summarizing Job's "adventure," turn to Job 2:8-10 and look at this small snapshot.

Listen to the words of Job's wife. Try and understand her point of view. (It is the view that many end up adopting when facing trials they feel they cannot handle.) Then look at Job's response. You have to do some thoughtful reflection—seeing as we are not told what Job is thinking—as you explore what prompts Job's reply.

From there, remind the group of what James has been telling us. Recall his admonition to us to have joy in the face of trials. Feel free to review a bit of what you have already covered before turning to James 1:17-18.

The focus here is clear. James wants us to get a firm grip on the character of God and recognize that He always, only, forever, and intentionally does what is good. Although that is often hard for us to grasp (particular when what we want to happen isn't happening), James underscores the point here.

What will you do when facing a trial? Will you conclude that the trial proves that God does evil? Will you decide that He can't be trusted? Or will you reach out to Him, trust His proven character and conclude that maybe you don't see the whole picture? That maybe He could be doing something in your life through this trial that you can't really see?

If we can hold on to the view of God that James (and Job!) had, then James' counsel to us makes great sense. We can consider it all joy when we encounter various trials because we know that they come through the hand of our great God, the one who loves us and always intends to only do what is ultimately for our good.

BIG IDEA

The root of having joy in the face trials is found in the way we view our God. Those who are certain of His goodness can face whatever comes with joy.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

February 13, 2005
James 1:17-18

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

You may recall the story of Job; a righteous man who ended up facing "various trials" (to put it mildly!). After wealth and property and children and health were taken from him, his wife brought him some "advice." Read Job 2:8-10 to see what advice she gives and to see how Job responds.

What is Job's wife's attitude about the adversity that has come upon him?

What is Job's attitude about the adversity that has come upon him?

What does Job's statement reflect about his attitude toward God?

How must Job conceive of God in order to have such an attitude?

James has been encouraging us, through his epistle, to "consider it all joy when you encounter various trials" (1:2). Read James 1:17-18 to find one of the anchors James has for this call to joy.

What prompts James to call us to a joyful response to trials?

What do you think James would have said to Job had they been able to talk? What do you think Job would have said to James?

James is a realist; he knows we will encounter trials. What disposition toward God do you think he would tell you to hold on to as you face the trials of life?

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