

James Chapter 1:2-4 – Faith/Action

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By Rev. Dr. Vance Mortensen

A Brief Summary of Chapter 1

James Chapter 1 calls us to embrace a faith that is tested through trials and lived out through action. It begins with a bold challenge—to find joy in our struggles, knowing that perseverance leads to maturity. In a world where hardship often overwhelms us, this teaching reminds us to look beyond immediate suffering and see God’s greater purpose. James emphasizes the importance of seeking wisdom from God, not in wavering doubt, but in confident faith. He then shifts to the responsibility we bear to act, not merely listen, as the true mark of a believer. The chapter warns us against the dangers of wealth and pride while highlighting the call to humility and service. Through it all, James weaves a vision of faith that is resilient, reflective, and rooted in love, showing us how to live authentically in today’s world, with God’s unchanging goodness as our guide.

Perseverance in Trials (James 1:2-4):

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

After reading James 1:2, most of us immediately recall our own personal trials and tribulations. And we probably don’t immediately find “joy” in these challenges!

We may be going through a tough time at work or struggling in a relationship. Instead of giving in to frustration, we should think of it as a chance to develop patience and resilience. When things get difficult, we should lean into our faith, trusting that God is working something deeper in us.

James 1:3-4 tells us these challenges are like exercises for our faith—they strengthen it. If we let them, they’ll make us mature and grounded, lacking nothing.

Just as muscles grow through exercise, our faith grows when it’s tested. So if we’re facing financial strain or personal loss, we remember that these struggles can help us develop inner strength and endurance. Over time, we become wiser and more compassionate, prepared for even greater challenges.

James 1:2-4 Today:

We live in a world of constant trials and challenges. Yet, living in one of the most bountiful countries in the history of humankind, when we step back and take an honest look at our lives, we find we are so blessed through God’s grace compared to the poverty, disease, and

oppression that others experience in our world in modern times. Here are some sobering comments about our world:

On-going Conflicts and Wars

The human cost of these wars is staggering. For example, the Costs of War project estimates that the post-9/11 wars have resulted in over 900,000 deaths and cost around \$8 trillion. Additionally, the World Economic Forum reports that war and violence cost the global economy approximately \$14.4 trillion in 2019, which translates to about \$5 a day for every person on the planet.

These conflicts have led to countless lives lost, homes destroyed, and communities displaced. The human suffering is immense, and the long-term impacts on affected regions are profound. (source #4)

The countries / areas currently at war are: Russia-Ukraine Conflict; Myanmar Civil War; Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Yemen Civil War; Ethiopian Civil War; Afghanistan Conflict; Syria Civil War; and Sahel Region Conflicts (Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso). (source #5)

World Poverty

Around 700 million people live on less than \$2.15 per day, the extreme poverty line. Extreme poverty remains concentrated in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, fragile and conflict-affected areas, and rural areas.

After decades of progress, the pace of global poverty reduction began to slow by 2015, in tandem with subdued economic growth. The Sustainable Development Goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030 remains out of reach. (source #6)

Endemic Disease

The World Health Organization reports current and resurgent diseases in our world today such as Cholera, Malaria, TB, dengue Fever, and COVID-19. Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses are taking an increasing toll globally. By 2050, these diseases are expected to account for 86% of the 90 million deaths each year. (source #7)

In light of James 1:2-4, our response to the pressing issues of wars, poverty, and disease should reflect a deep faith in God's purpose for our lives, even amid trials. When confronted with such overwhelming global suffering, it is natural to feel a sense of despair or frustration, but this passage invites us to view challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth. Just as reconciliation with those who have wronged us can be one of the hardest things we face in life, enduring through these global crises calls us to strengthen our faith. Through perseverance, we grow in maturity and find peace in trusting God. Whether advocating for peace, working to alleviate poverty, or addressing the health crises that

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plague our world, we are called to respond with a spirit of hope and compassion. By doing so, we embody the love and resilience that can only come from walking closely with God.

I think an attitude of widening our view of trials and tribulations is important for us. Certainly, we all face challenges. Our neighbors may be facing more and worse, and often we are unaware of that reality. The web of life to which we belong connects not just next door neighbors but our neighbors in our country and half way across the planet!

James Chapter 1 calls us to embrace a faith that is tested through trials and lived out through action. It begins with a bold challenge—to find joy in our struggles, knowing that perseverance leads to maturity. In a world where hardship often overwhelms us, this teaching reminds us to look beyond immediate suffering and see God’s greater purpose.

Sources

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