

HELPING OTHERS FACE TRIALS THROUGH THE LENS OF JAMES 1



Jim Berg, DMin; Professor of Biblical Counseling, BJU Seminary; Founder, Freedom That Lasts®

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ABOUT TRIALS

Trials are the “hot water” situations that expose what is in the “tea bag” of the heart. Teaching enslaved individuals how to handle trials biblically is critical in helping them grow out of addiction (i.e., overcome life-dominating sins). Their addiction to mood-altering and/or mind-numbing experiences has been their “go to” strategy for hard times.

1. **Trials** are the *hurts and hardships* we face because we live in a broken, fallen world with fallen, sinful natures ourselves, and among others who sin against us because they have fallen, sinful natures.
2. Satan’s primary weapon against us is **deception**. The lies we believe corrupt our **interpretation** of what is happening to us. We then form the wrong **conclusions** about what is happening to us and are tempted to make the wrong **decisions**.
3. When our sinful **desires** and super-sized legitimate desires motivate us to **choose** what we want apart from God, we sin. Sinful choices bring more losses, and our lives disintegrate spiritually, morally, emotionally, relationally, cognitively, and physically. According to James 1:14 this is a universal dynamic (i.e., “every man”). This disintegration is both predictable and preventable.

JAMES 1 LESSONS FOR GROWING OUT OF ADDICTION/LIFE-DOMINATING SINS

1. We must see that our *core identity* is whatever God calls us (1:1-2).
2. We must expect *trials* of all sorts while we live in a broken, fallen world (1:1-2).
3. We must embrace God’s *purpose* to develop the character of Jesus in us through our trials (1:3-4).
4. We must ask for *wisdom* from God through His Word about how to respond to trials (1:5, 21-25).
5. We must ask in *faith*—confident that God is working out His good purpose for us in the trial (1:6a).
6. We must not sabotage God’s work in us through the trial by *double-mindedness* (1:6-8).

7. We must remain *faithful* to God's purpose of perfecting us through the trial because we *love* Him (12).
8. We must understand how mishandling the trial causes our spiritual and physical *disintegration* (14-16).
9. We must be *swift to hear* God's words, *slow to speak* our own, and *slow to be angry* in our trials (19-25).

GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR FACING THE TRIALS OF LIFE BIBLICALLY

1. God is on a mission to redeem and restore fallen people to the likeness of His Son to the praise of His glory.
2. Unless we understand this mission and cooperate with it, we cannot make sense out of what is happening to us and to those around us. The world says, "You do what you do because you have a mental illness, or you are an addict, or you are damaged freight, or you are a failure, etc." The Bible teaches that we do wrong because we are fallen people. The Bible also teaches that believers can overcome the wrong responses to the trials of life because God has made robust provisions for us to grow in likeness to Christ through the person and work of Jesus Christ, His Spirit, His Word, and His church. Start by looking at God's provisions.
3. Ask yourself, how many of the challenges listed below am I facing right now?
 - Uncertainty and vulnerability - Adversity and trauma - Overwhelming situations
 - Lusts (strong desires) and temptations - Unfulfilled desires and expectations - Injustice
4. For each one of these challenges, ask for wisdom from God's Word, confident that God in His Word has provided everything essential for you to handle the trial wisely and to grow through the trial (2 Peter 1:2-4). If you are not familiar with the Bible, ask your pastor or a mature believer in your church to help you answer these questions from God's Word.
 - a. Who in the Bible faced (fill in a challenge from those you checked above)?
 - b. What did God say to the person(s) facing this challenge?
 - c. What did God reveal about Himself to the person(s) facing this challenge?
 - d. What did God promise to the person(s) facing this challenge?

THE PROPER BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO TRIALS

BOW—We must come to God in submission, repentance, and dependence.

TRUST—We must trust what God has said about Himself, about us, and about His ways.

OBEY—We must give instant obedience to God's Word in the power of the Spirit of God.

