

## How to Grow In Your Faith

James 1:1-12

By Dr. Vander Warner, Jr.

The book of James is about faith, its behavior and growth, but I've recently discovered it is about the *joy* of the growth of one's faith. James sets that forth in the very first verse when he uses the word "greeting." The word there is an imperative, and it means "to be joyous, be joyful or have joy." Then he gives us the principles for the testing and growth – and the joy in the testing and growth of one's faith.

First: What does it mean to grow in your faith?

It means you increase the number of times your response to life is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Or differently put: Spiritual maturity is to maintain a growing up relationship to the HS.

### Here are some principles to help your faith to grow:

1. Get a growth spirit; that is, cultivate a spirit conducive to growth. V2 says to "**count** it all joy when you fall into various trials." That is a very revolutionary concept. This mindset means that you are more open to learning and benefiting from what is happening. You are not so self focused and therefore self-protective and self-pitying; which will lead you to developing a "shell", hardened and impenetrable. No one can get through to you.

2. Develop positive, optimistic presuppositions.

[ie from "7 Habits..." get a new spiritual paradigm.]

V3. "for you know that this testing is producing patience." The word "patience" there means "cheerful endurance." A good translation is "perseverance". Patience also means the ability to weigh both sides of the matter before speaking or committing oneself. It enables one to "weigh" not just see the circumstances. It reminds one of Romans 8:28, "And we know..." that this is producing good. So James is saying that the way we can count it joy when we fall into trials is to know that what's coming down the road is going to be something good and good for us.

\*The note left on my car one Sunday....Without my glasses I read: "Your inspiring sermons have expired." Later with my glasses: "Your inspection sticker has expired!" Maybe we need to keep our spiritual glasses on.

3. Allow patience to develop and produce. Don't always run from troubles and trials.

We all know about the "fight or flight" syndrome. But there are other responses: ie, "fake it or faith it."

V4. Let patience do its job of making you mature and complete. Patience, steadfastness, or perseverance is an essential component of growth; that is, between our immaturity and our maturity stands the bridge of patience.

We have the responsibility to wait. "Response – ability", ability to choose our response.

Ron Dunn, "We are strong or great in faith when the first and natural response to crises or needs is trust. It is trusting God by choice rather than by circumstances or force."

How can patience be developed? Paul gives us that in Romans 5:3,4. He says there that we are to "glory in tribulations" for going through the trial produces patience.

Patience produces experience; that is, the experience of a test and the victory in it. And going through that experience produces hope; that is, the anticipation of ultimate victory. Having gone through something, we can turn around, look at it, and say, "Oh, I can go through that" so that when it appears again in our life, we can say, "Oh, I faced that before, I can do it again."

**4. When going through testing stay in touch with a source of truth.** V5 "If any of you lack wisdom,"[that is possession of knowledge and ability to make right decisions,] "ask God". Satan always has a rumor mill of lie going. He'll make you think the opposite of truth. \*\*\*Charles Stanley's story of being asked to leave 1<sup>st</sup> Atlanta, saying the people didn't want him as pastor.....He has stayed 30 years more! And with great blessing.

A good definition of wisdom: "That moral discernment that enables the believer to meet life and its trials with decisions and actions consistent with God's will." (James Motyer)  
Or this: Wisdom is God's perspective on reality; so get God's view. His is higher and of wider range. Why is it we wait so long to ask wisdom of God? We turn in every direction – books, people, professionals, etc., when the first move ought to be in prayer ask God for wisdom.

Wisdom: Knowledge and ability to make right decisions and to be have right.

SO: Pray: Ask God; Search the Word: Spurgeon, "The sight of the promises themselves is good for the eyes of faith..." The more we look at the promises the more we rely on them..

\*\*\*The college students at Grove...sent their deacon leader up to ask me what they were asking, ie, "What is truth." He came in white faced to my study asking me to come down with him to answer the question....When we opened the door to their room....someone met us and said, "We got it, don't worry....and then quoted this verse "Thy Word is truth..." Jo. 17:17.

**5. Stay bound to God no matter what. V.6-8**

- These verses make it clear that we have to approach God in faith when we ask Him for wisdom. The Bible says, "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him."

- These verses (6-8) raise the issue of our sincerity.

- The word "faith" is from the Sanskrit and it means "bond". So "faith" is to be bound to Him unwaveringly and unswervingly at the center of your life.

That's why James would say, in v6, "Ask, not wavering.." That is not doubting. Approach God not as a wave, tossed by the winds of life, tending in one direction but pulled in another. The cross-currents of life will come, doubts will descend, but don't be a wave at the mercy of them.

- Waves of
1. Indecision,
  2. Corrupted doctrine.

We are to approach God in good faith, really wanting to know His mind of the matter, not “wobbling on the WILL”, bound to Him no matter what. James goes on to say that, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” and he’s not going to get anything from God.”

- Let us come to God without inner reservations. (His will ahead of time.)  
Don’t be two faced with God.

6. Maintain God’s perspective on possessions. This is taken from Vs 9-12.  
Because there is a fair amount of testing here! These things can throw you off course.

James mentions 3 tests here:

- a. Standing the test of being poor.
- b. Standing the test of being rich.
- c. Standing the test when life’s circumstances are reversed.

Can you be steadfast to the Lord when, as a rich man, you become poor or as a poor man you become rich?

Job did! Job said, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

A final word of application:

Real wisdom, real faith enables a man to face the circumstances of life and go on with God. We say we believe God is our Father and that we are committed to Him. But as long as we remain untested on that point, our belief falls short of steady conviction.

**Beliefs become convictions when they go through the fire of radical obedience.**

So, if in our worst moment of despair, when all outward signs mock our testimony; if, in that moment, we can stumble to our feet and say, “*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth*, your faith has passed it’s test.”

Here’s an illustration of this, from the life of a dear friend, when life’s circumstances are reversed:

Willis Hall, lost everything....hundreds of riverside acres, 19<sup>th</sup> century home, filled with museum quality antiques, all he ever worked for....I stood by his side as it was all auctioned away....His dear wife whom he called “Pet” told me that during it all “He never raised his voice at me, not once.”

His Christian maturity gave Him stability through it all. The motivation to go through trials and tests is that he Lord himself stands with crown in hand waiting at the end of it all! [V 12 of James]

*He hasn't forgotten us*

I'm reminded of the old song that says:

***"It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,  
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;  
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,  
So bravely run the race 'til we see Christ."***