

“The Path to Perfection”
James 1:1-4
Series: Got Faith? Get to Work!

Why? That’s the question that hits the hardest; it’s the question that hurts the most; it’s the question that lingers the longest; it’s the question that every follower of Jesus Christ has asked. You’ve asked it, probably on many occasions. Why, God? Why me, why now, why do I have to face this struggle? James gives us one answer in the opening of his letter.

I. The background for the letter (vs. 1).

- A. The author of this letter is James is the half-brother of Jesus.
- B. The readers were primarily Jewish Christians who had left Jerusalem in the face of early persecution.
- C. The style reminds us of the Proverbs and it also has many similarities to the Sermon on the Mount.
- D. James’ goal is to demonstrate what faith applied to real life looks like.

II. Right away James says, “See your trials as joy.”

- A. There is a difference between joy and happiness:
 - ▶ Happiness is an emotional response to an event.
 - ▶ Joy is a deep sense of being settled and secure.
 - ▶ We can consider it joy because we know the final outcome!

- B. See them as joy “when” you encounter trials.
 - ▶ You are going to encounter trials in your life.
 - ▶ You can choose your attitude while going through them.
- C. We can do this because we know that the testing of our faith produces a good result. It produces:
 - 1. Endurance – the ability to remain under and endure to the end.
 - ▶ The Christian who doesn't endure will never see the purpose for the trial accomplished in his or her life.
 - 2. Perfection and completeness.
 - ▶ He will make us complete, perfect for His service and His glory.
 - ▶ He is bringing about our maturity in Christ.
 - ▶ The path to perfection, the mature Christian life, is only through trials.

III. Going Deeper

- A. To prepare for our study in James, read through the book in several translations this week. What impresses you most about this letter? What questions does it bring to mind?
- B. Studies show that the most common responses to trials are to complain, to blame them on others and to bail. How do you normally respond to trials? How does James challenge you to respond differently?
- C. Create a chart showing your past trials, your purpose for existence and how you can use your trials to help fulfill your purposes.