

How does faith work when you are in a trial? James 1:1-8

- Wow! Happy fifth birthday! What a great day! We're so glad to see you. We're so excited to have you. God's been faithful for five years, and we're fired up! Amen? And we get to do one of my favorite things. We're starting a brand-new book of the Bible. If you've got your Bible, go to a New Testament book called James. Epic, incredible 12 weeks. We'll be in it together. You can read it in about 30 minutes. And you should be reading it every day, 'cause the more you get God's Word into your life the more God does to change things in your life. And so we're gonna have a great time together. And the theme for this sermon series is Faith Works. Faith is what you believe in here, it's how you behave out there. And the point is, to quote that great New Testament theologian, Larry the Cable Guy, when it comes to stuff we gotta git 'er done. We got stuff to do. Now, I don't know if you trust the CDC; but good news, we got a great physician. I'm not super sure whether or not you're all gonna get the vaccination, but I want you to be filled with the Spirit. And sadly, our commander-in-chief just surrenders and retreat, but our King of kings and Lord of lords says go forward and make disciples. So we got stuff to do. We got good work to do and faith works. So we got a lot we're excited about and looking forward to. Now, this book is written by Jesus' brother, His kid brother James. Now, if you think about it for a moment, would it be awesome to be Jesus' brother? Yes and no. Yes, it would be awesome, but there would be a downside if you think about it. You're arguing with Jesus. You're like I disagree. He's like, "You probably shouldn't. You know, you're wrong." And every time you fight with Jesus it's your fault. Mary's in the other room cooking dinner. What's going on boys? I hear a little fight. Yeah. Jesus and I are fighting. Well, I'm busy James. Just spank yourself. I'm sure it's your fault. And all the WWJD bracelets, it'd be like, "What would James do?" I mean, it's just frustrating. But nobody knows you quite like your family. They shared a bunk bed. They spent weekends together. They're shooting hoops together. They're doing life together. And here is James worshiping his brother as his Lord God and Savior. And what he's gonna tell us is that life has trials, pains, problems, perils. And here's the three big ideas for this sermon. You gotta find God over it, you gotta find joy in it, and you gotta find wisdom through it. And that's what we're gonna spend our time together today. Alright. Let's just jump right in James chapter one. Find God over your trial, that's gonna be our theme. James 1:1. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." He calls his big brother Jesus the Lord. How many of you would not call your brother lord? How many of you would not worship your brother as God? Now, you would testify in court that he was Satan, but you would never worship him as God. James knows Jesus the best. He's a devout Jewish guy. If Jesus wasn't perfect, he would tell us. If Jesus didn't declare Himself to be God, James wouldn't believe that. And if Jesus didn't rise from death, James wouldn't follow Him. This is one of the great arguments that Jesus is God, He was without sin, and He did rise from the dead. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion: greetings. Okay. What he's talking about here is who's sending the letter and who's receiving it. Anytime there's communication you need to understand sender and receiver to best understand what the purpose and meaning of the message is. He writes to those who are dispersed. These are probably largely Jewish Christians. Christianity is the

fulfillment and Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament Jewish prophecy. And what has happened here is that the gover... This sounds crazy, I know. You can't even hypothetically consider this. The government was bad, and they made it very hard to live a good life as a believing family. And so people moved. I know you can't even hypothetically consider that. But just for a moment just get crazy with me and think about blue cities in Rome. Okay? Just for a minute. And this is what it means by the dispersion. The believers are like, "We can't do faith, freedom and family. So we're going to relocate and move." So how many of you are new to the Valley? We're experiencing a great dispersion. People are leaving blue states. They're moving to red states. If you're here from California, you just found your word in the Bible: dispersion. We love you. We're glad to have you. You're not allowed to vote. Other than that everything's fine. Okay? Alright. It's very offensive. Yeah. It's why we came. It's guaranteed every time. So the people are moving so that they can have faith, freedom and family. That's the dispersion. And the person writing to them is James. He is Jesus' little brother. Now, how many of you were raised Catholic? Raised Catholic? My name is Father Mark. Welcome to our Mass. If you're raised Catholic, what you were told is Mary was ever-virgin, *semper virgo*. Okay? And if you're a husband and you're thinking about Joseph, you're like, "Hmm?" I shouldn't say this, but of course I will. It's great to marry a virgin. It's not great to be married to a virgin. If you know what I'm talking about. Now, Joseph did not consummate his marriage with Mary until after Jesus was born. And then they had a normal marriage and a ton of kids. A big family. Many of you didn't know that. And it says this in Mark chapter six. They come and they say, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James?" And then it mentions a few other brothers; Joses, Judas and Simon. Are not his sisters here as well? So He's got brothers, He's got sisters. Jesus comes from a very large family. James is part of this large family. Jesus is the oldest brother. He is the biological child of Mary. He's the adoptive child of Joseph, Jesus is. And then they have other children. This is a bit like some of you have a blended family. That this is a bit like a blended family. But what's interesting with James, he didn't start having a good healthy relationship with Jesus. And his trials in relationship to Jesus he did not initially succeed at. The point is this, you may be here and you may know about Jesus, but you may not really know who Jesus is. That's where we all start, that's where James started. In addition, as Jesus is going through His trials, you would hope that His family would support Him. In the same way that as you go through your trials you would hope that your family would support you. But they didn't. They didn't. It says in Mark chapter three that His family came and they came to Jesus, because He kept saying He was God. And He's the only founder of any major world religion who has ever declared Himself to be God. And what they said was, "Please get us Jesus. We need to take Him home. He's lost His mind." Sometimes the people who are closest to you don't have the best perspective of you. Sometimes the people who grew up with you don't understand who you have ultimately become. Jesus' family loved Him, but they thought He had lost His mind. He's saying He's God. So then they come to take Him home. Your family's here. What do they want? Well, they've got a coat with no sleeves and they want you to put it on. And they've got a round room. They want you to sit in the corner. And they've got somebody who's gonna come and give you a prescription to deal with this Messiah complex you seem to have. They think He's crazy. It says in John 7:5 that even His brothers didn't believe in Him. That would include James. The point is this, Jesus is going through His trials just as you're going through your

trials, and His family is not the most helpful. If your family is not helpful, congratulations, you've got a biblical family. In addition, the good news is that though James' relationship with Jesus started poorly, it ended well. And that's my prayer for you. You may have heard about Jesus. You may not fully have received Him yet as God and Lord and Savior and King and Christ. But that's why you're here. This is part of your journey, coming to understand who Jesus is and to trust in what Jesus does. Everything changes in James' life when Jesus rises from death. So James is His kid brother. He's there at the cross. He's seeing his brother die. He goes to the funeral. He sheds his tears. He enters into the grief process. And then three days later Jesus returns. It says in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus appeared to James. That had to be quite a day. I hope the first thing James said was sorry. I mean, he didn't believe that Jesus was God or would rise from the dead. As soon as He rose from the dead, James knew this is God. Only God forgives sin and defeats death. We then read in Acts chapter one that the first Christians all get together after the resurrection of Jesus. That includes Mary, Jesus' mother. And it says Jesus' brothers are there. James is there. By Galatians 1 and 2, he becomes a leader in the early church. And Paul says when I was commissioned by God the ministry, I needed to go meet with the senior leaders. So I met with Peter, the leader of the disciples; John, Jesus' best friend; and James, His brother. The point is he started by disbelieving in Jesus. He ended by believing in Jesus. That's my prayer for our time together today. If you begin by disbelieving in Jesus, you would end by believing in Jesus. If your relationship with Jesus has started poorly, by God's grace like James, it can end very, very well. Now just for a moment, get your heart and mind around this family. And just listen, just consider for a moment what James could have said regarding himself. What he says is James a servant. How many of you would have added a little more? You may have heard of my mother Mary. You may have heard of my father Joseph. Oh. And we have my big brother. His name is Jesus Christ. You may have read about my brother and myself and my family. We're kind of a thing. Merry Christmas. We're kind of a thing. You may have read of us in this book called the Bible. My name is James. He doesn't flex or name drop. Instead what he says is my name is James and I'm a servant. What he's come to conclude is that Jesus serves us, therefore serving others on behalf of Jesus is the highest and noblest calling. Now, church history does give him some great nicknames. He's called James the Just by some early theologians. That means he's a good guy, high character. He does and says what's right. He's got integrity. In addition, they call him Camel Knees. Dude praise so much he's showing it. He's got some knee problems. He walks with a bit of a limp and a gait, and it's like why? 'Cause he's down on his knees praying so much to his brother who is in heaven that his knees look like a camel. Now, this family is extraordinary. In addition to Mary and Joseph, there's James, there's another brother named Jude who also wrote a book of the New Testament. Mary and Joseph did great. They had two sons that wrote books of the Bible and one who was God, that's a great family. Good job, Mary. We're gonna let you teach the how to be a mom class. In addition, they've got extended family that serves the Lord as well. His uncle is named Zechariah. His aunt or their aunt is named Elizabeth, and their cousin's name is John the Baptizer. He's the freaky, rural homeschool kid who eats bugs and honey, wears a Jedi robe, lives in Jerome. And he's eccentric, has a banjo. He's that kid. He's good with a sidearm, right? He's that kid. Now what's amazing is wouldn't it be incredible to be part of that family? That one. And here's the good news. He's gonna tell us in just the next verse that if you believe in Jesus,

He calls you His brother. Jesus says in Mark 3:35, "Anyone who does the will of God is My brother, My sister, My mother." The point of this: if you belong to God, if you've been adopted into the family of God, then Jesus Christ is your big brother. And James is your brother. And you are part of God's family. That means that God is part of your family. And what he's setting up is who God is. God is the Lord Jesus Christ. And what he's saying is over our life in human history and the trials, troubles and tribulations that we face, there is the Lord Jesus Christ, his brother. So the first thing he's telling us is you need to find God over your trial. And then the next big idea is to find joy in your trial. James chapter 1, verse 2 and 3. "Count it all," what's the word? Joy.

- Joy, okay? Our world is lacking in joy, true or false?

- [Congregation] True.

- It is a joyless, cheerless world. Count it all, all of it, joy. There's the theme. "My brothers," you're in God's family if you believe in Jesus, "when you meet trials." Not if. The question, friend, is not if you will meet trials, but when you will meet your next trial. A trial is a walk, the Bible says, through a valley of the shadow of death. What oftentimes happens is like there's the valley. Can I book a flight over it? No. Can I pay a toll and go around it? No. I've got to go through it. "Count it all joy when you face trials of many kinds." He goes on, "For you know." It's a promise. It's a certainty. It's a guarantee. "That the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." What he's talking about here is joy in the midst of trials. Now, trials come up. And then God's help comes down. That's what he's saying. Trials sometimes come up from this world. It's just a broken, crooked, flawed world. And sometimes trials come up literally from the culture of hell. It's demonic, it's evil, it's wrong, and it's devastating. And this word trials in the original language, not to nerd out on you too much, but it's a complex word. You know why? Because trials are complex. It's a bit of a confusing word, because sometimes our trials are confusing. And it's a multifaceted word, because trials have multiple kinds of troubles within them. I want you to think momentarily about your trials. And some of you will be looking at different English translations. And on this particular word, it sometimes is translated trouble or difficulty. That's how we experience our trial. It's trouble. It's troublesome. It causes anxiety, worry. It's confusing: I've never been here before. I've never dealt with this before. This is new to me. I'm confused. I'm scared. I'm hurting. I'm worried. I'm in danger. Sometimes it experiences in our life as trouble or difficulty. Some of your English translations will translate this word trials or temptations. This is two sides of the same coin. Something happens and you will decide whether it is a trial or a temptation based upon your response. If you side with Satan, you'll turn it into a temptation. You'll excuse sin. You'll rebel against God. You will give in to that thing, which is concerning or tempting to you. If you yield and submit to the Holy Spirit when that trial comes, it'll be for you a test. And some of your other translations will use the language of test. And the test is something that you take so that you can graduate. We've all been in school. In school you're like, "Okay, it's a test. And if I pass my test, I graduate." Life is a class that's always in session and every season has its test. And if you pass that test, you can graduate to the next level of maturity. Now the good news is even if you fail your test does our God let you

retake your test? He does. With James, throughout Jesus' early life, he kept failing his test. He needed to know who Jesus was and support Him. And he failed and he failed and he failed and he failed. But God was gracious and James kept retaking his test until he passed his test. God is gracious with you and me. Just because you failed your test in the past, doesn't mean that God is done with you. You get to take it again until you pass and graduate. So for a moment, let's just think about trials, troubles, difficulties, temptations. What are you dealing with? Every person is dealing constantly with trials be they big or small. And what's difficult in our day is that we have more trials than ever. Because in the day that James wrote the world wasn't as interconnected. You didn't have global problems. They live in their village. You live in your village. There's no internet. You don't know what's going on in Wuhan and you don't care. Okay? Now we have multinational companies, and we have trade between nations, and we have travel. And all of a sudden you can have global problems. In addition, you can have national problems. True or false? We potentially have at least one national problem, true or false? Right?

- True.

- I don't care where you're at on the political spectrum. You're like, "I can agree with that." Good. In addition, we have local problems. We have state problems. We have regional problems. In addition to all of the problems beyond us, there are people that we love and they've got their own problems. You have family or friends. They're hurting, they're struggling, and you're burdened for them. And you're participating in their trial because of your affection for them. I was on the phone here a couple of days ago with a buddy of mine. He pastors a church in a very liberal area. And with recent government mandates that have been enforced by a very progressive governor, he called a meeting at his church. And he said, "Everybody who's looking at having to lose their job or their career based upon their inability to submit to certain requirements because of their conscience, please come to the church for a prayer meeting. We want to pray for you to help you make your decision." Over 500 people showed up.

- [Congregant] Wow.

- He says a third of my church is looking at losing their job or career. See, he loves them so that burdens him. And we're all feeling this. We're all sensing this. We're all carrying this. We're all enduring this. In addition to the global, the national, the regional, the local, and the problems of those that we love; we've got our own problems, troubles, trials, tribulations, pains, problems and perils. How many of you right now it's financial? Things are difficult. Maybe you're a business owner. It's hard to find workers, let alone good workers. Maybe your industry has been crushed. Maybe your investments have tanked. How many of you right now it's spiritual? You know that God loves you, but you're not feeling it. It says that God is near you, but you don't sense it. How many of you right now your struggle, your trial is relational? There are people that you know and love, but it's distant, it's fractured, it's complicated, it's conflicted. And you love them but somehow it's hard to do life with them. How many of you right now it's emotional? You're just anxious. You're tired. You're worn out. How many of you it's mental? Like I don't know how much of this I can handle. I've sort of hit the limit of my humanity. And what happens

is sometimes our trials come so sequentially close together the counselors will call it complex grief. Complex grief is like an avalanche for your soul. One thing happens then another thing happens and another thing happens and another thing happens. So you don't have time to process any of it, because you're overwhelmed by all of it. We now call this America. It's why we're seeing record mental health problems. There's a guy in the Bible named Job. He experiences complex grief with trial after trial after trial, and no opportunity to process one before he's hit by the next. It says that Job is at the house. And at the end of the driveway, there comes a courier with a frantic look on his face running down the driveway. Job, I've got bad news! Your kids have all died. Crisis. Trauma. Before they even get done with that message, there's another courier at the end of the driveway. Frantic look on his face; more bad news. Your business burned to the ground. And over and over and over. What happens in complex grief, you are so overwhelmed by everything that you don't have time or energy to process or heal or recover from anything. Now what happens is sometimes we think it's just a bad season and I'll wait for the other side. Remember the 14 days to flatten the curve? Barely. That was a long time ago. How many of you were saying, "Well, it's gonna be a rough month and then we'll get to there." Now it's been a rough year. It'll be a rough decade. Be a rough life. It seems like a long time. I was driving around with an evangelical leader some years ago. I've shared this story before. And he said, "I used to think that life was bad seasons and good seasons. You get through the bad season to get to the good season." He said, "I've now learned that it's like train tracks. Every season has good and bad." That there is rejoicing and trial. That's what James is saying. And what's happening in our day is I would submit to you that this word trial is the perfect word to describe the mood that any functioning, sane human being is feeling. And for those of us who were just hoping it'll be over soon, we've just let that balloon go. It's flown away. This is our reality. And the question is, how are we gonna find our joy in it? Because a cheerless Christianity is a bad advertisement for the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the party that never ends in the kingdom of God. And so what he's talking about here is finding joy in your trial. Now, let me talk to you about your trial. It's just you and me. I'm your pastor and I love you. And what I wanna share with you is just 25 years of being a senior pastor. Now if you will receive the trial. Now, the trial itself may not be a gift, but it could be used of God as a blessing to you if you receive it and use it. And what trials do, number one, they strip away other objects of faith that we're trusting in. Sometimes you don't even know. I was leaning on my parents and their faith until they passed away. I didn't know that I just trusted in my health until I was sick. I didn't know that I had a bunch of money in the bank, so I slept good at night; and as soon as there was less money, I had less sleep. What happens when trials come, people and things that we have our faith in are shaken or removed. And it reveals to us that truly only God can be unshaken and unmoved. In addition, in seasons of trials it reveals our true selves. This is positive and/or negative. Sometimes pressure doesn't change us, it reveals us. Negatively, some of you under pressure, some of you in a trial, you're kind of shocked at who you really are in a bad way. You're like, I'm a very angry person. I'm a very fearful person. I'm mad at God as if He sinned against me. I'm taking it out on my spouse, my kids, my friends. I'm spending a lot of time online. I'm arguing and fighting. Is this who I really am? Okay. Lord, this is a hard revelation, but it's one that can be changed. Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Sometimes pressure reveals us and our true selves come out, and we're shocked.

You're like, that was godly. Who would've thought? I prayed for my enemy. Whoop-whoop! Didn't even mean to. Like the Holy Spirit is working through you sometimes in trials in a way that is supernatural and unusual. I've seen people go through the worst times and reveal the best character. In addition, trials reveal not just who you are but who others are. There are people that you think are your best friend. And then hardship comes. They're like, "Yeah, good luck." And they're gone. And then there's people that you hardly even know, and they walk into your life. They're like, "Hey, I'm so sorry. How can I help?" I wasn't expecting them to walk out and you to walk in. The Puritans used to talk about swallow friends. They leave when the fall comes. When it gets cold, they fly away. What trials do they reveal who we are, and it reveals who others are positively and negatively. In addition, what trials do they remind us that something has gone terribly wrong with our planet and someone needs to fix it. I don't know if you are aware of this, but more than any time in world history we realize that the whole planet is cursed. There's nowhere you can go that doesn't have the curse and the fall and brokenness and death. It's everywhere. It's just all-consuming. And it doesn't matter how many wars we wage, or how many prescriptions we hand out, or how many elections we have, or how many stimulus checks we send. It's still broken and it's flawed. And everybody's frustrated. They're like, "What's wrong!" We broke everything. And we have a God-sized problem. And so the hope of the believer is this. This is as close to hell as we ever get. Jesus is coming. He's going to lift the curse. He's going to raise the dead. He's going to heal the sick. We won't have any more elections. We won't have anymore vaccinations. You can travel freely without a mask. And it's going to be a great forever. That ultimately our planet has a God-sized problem. And until Jesus returns, we're still in the middle of the mess that we've made. And sometimes trials just remind us I'm not in heaven yet. And see, sometimes what happens when we tell people about Jesus. We're like, accept Jesus and go to heaven. They're like, yay. We don't tell them, and you gotta go through a little hell to get there. Heaven is coming, but hell is still in the middle of the journey until you get to the destination at the end. Also, what trials do they reveal to us our contribution. Hey, what did I say? What did I do that would contribute or has contributed to this trial? I was mean to that person. I didn't pay that bill. I didn't honor my boss. I said or did some things that contributed to the pain that I'm enduring. And even if you are a victim and what has happened to you is not your fault; if you are reaping rebellion; you'll be sowing pain through your trial. In addition, one of the things that a trial does it simplifies life and it reveals who and what really matters. Right? I mean, I was talking to a guy some years ago. His whole life, his dream was save up for this classic car. This very expensive, very amazing classic car. And so he calculated. Every year he's saving his money. Then he knows if he waits till retirement, he's gonna get a bonus. Between the bonus and the money he saved he's gonna get his classic car. He's gonna retire. He's gonna put his wife in the car with him, and they're gonna road trip in the classic car. This is his dream! And he finally retires. He gets the bonus. He buys the car. His wife gets diagnosed with cancer. And I remember meeting with him, I was like, "Okay. What's going on? I'm so sorry." He said, "Well, the first thing I did was sold that car." I said, "Why?" He said, "I want all of that money to be available for whatever treatment my wife needs." He said, "My dream was to drive in the car, but I'm not driving in that car without my wife. I would rather not have the car and have my wife." It's amazing. Sometimes there are things or experiences or positions or possessions that we treasure until a trial comes. You're like I don't even care about

that. I don't even care about that. I mean, right now there's somebody online. Thanks for joining us. And you've got bad internet connection. So you're very frustrated you go, aah! Thank you for joining us for ser... Aaah! And it seems like a big deal until your kid calls and says I was in a car wreck. You're like, "I don't care about Netflix." What can happen is trials jolt our sort of normal routine of life, and they reveal to us who and what really matters and who and what really doesn't. And in those ways the trial could be used of God as a gift. And so what a trial is he calls it here a test. The testing of your faith. Your trial is a testing of your faith. Now when we take a test, you could fail it or pass it. There are some ways to fail your test. There's only one way to pass your test. I'll walk through them briefly. Now if this is you, don't raise your hand. And if you're with your spouse, don't raise their hand. Just this is between you and the Lord, okay? Some of you when the trial comes you're the avoider. I don't do conflict. I don't do problems. I don't do hardship. I avoid it. And sometimes we come up with spiritual answers. I just trust the Lord. It's in the past. I just moved on. No. You gotta deal with it. You gotta take your test. And you can't just skip class. Some of you are not the avoider. You are the fixer. You're the fixer, you're like, "I'll fix it. Whatever the problem is I'll fix it. We'll make it all better, and then we'll just be happy and it'll be fine." You people are annoying. You're totally annoying. You're very pushy and demanding. You're like, "We gotta fix this." Let me say this: true or false? There are some things you can't fix. True. In addition, when other people are involved you can't control their decisions and behavior. Here's what I would say: if you can fix it, please fix it. But if you can't, you need to pass that test. You need to endure that trial. You need to find the joy in it. In addition to the avoider, there's the fixer. In addition to the fixer, there's the worrier. It has been a hard year for you guys, right? Every day is a "Scooby-Doo" episode. Like the earth is a haunted house. Oh my gosh! Election! Election! Election! Covid! Covid! Oh my! Delta! Covid! Delta! Covid! Aaah! Boom! And you people live online. How do I know? You keep texting me the worst garbage. I get that all the time, they're like, "Oh my gosh! Have you read this!" No! Why? Look at you! I don't want that! Right? Freaking out is not a fruit of the Spirit. I was doing fine until you texted me. And now we're both freaking out! And you worriers you're the false prophets in your own life. The Bible denounces false prophets. The most dangerous false prophet in your life is you. You catastrophize. You look into the future. Everything's apocalyptic. You're like, "What if God doesn't show up?" Well, of course you're gonna freak out. You're gonna sleep with a helmet on, and a cop, and a loaded firearm if you don't believe that God is in the future. It's gonna be terrible! We're all gonna die! We're all gonna die! We're all gonna...! Let me tell you. We're all gonna die. And it's better. Like, oh. Okay. So I'm not saying that you don't care about your life. But what I am saying is we know who meets us on the other side of this life, so it changes how we live this life. We have a Lord over this life who's been through this life. And rather than worrying, it's a lot better use of your energy to be worshiping the One over it than worrying your way through it. Some of you are the grinder. You're like, "It's hard but I'm gonna power through. I'm gonna muscle up. I'm just gonna get up every day and I'm gonna go forward!" You're cheerless. How do I know this? I know a guy who's a grinder. And what it says is not just go through your trial, but to count it all joy, or to rejoice, or find the joy in. The grinder goes through it, but they're not cheerful and joyful. As a result, people don't like to be around them. You're not fun to do life with. There's no hope. You're just a duty-bound person not a cheerful person. In addition to the grinder, there is the blamer. The blamer is only and always a victim. Anytime

something happens, there's a little attorney that lives in their heart that rises up with a legal brief. Not my fault. Here's what they did, here's what they did. The government, election stolen. Blah, blah, blah! Blah, blah, blah! Victim. Send me a check. This is America. And what can happen with the blamer is they never ask, did I contribute to the pain that I'm enduring or the problem that I'm facing? And they always have their terrible tale. They have architected their story in such a way that they should only get compassion. They should get no conviction. That others should accommodate them. And that they don't need to in any way repent. In addition, another way to fail your tr... Some of you look convicted, by the way. There's a few of you, you're like he's picking on me. No, I'm not. His name is the Holy Spirit. I just say stuff and then He convicts. So if this hits home to you, you're welcome. In addition, there is another way to fail your test. And that is the martyr. The martyr is I'm going to die. I'm going to suffer. Every day is gonna be terrible. For you, Lord. The Lord would tell you, I already died. Check. We took care of that. He died so you could live. God is not asking you to be the second crucifixion. Furthermore, it says that Jesus for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. Jesus even found a way to rejoice through His trial. He wasn't just a cheerless, joyless martyr. And God is not asking you to die for Him. He already died for you. He's asking you to live for Him and find the joy in your life. Another way that we can fail the test is the rebel. The rebel is the one who you can always tell. They wear black leather, boots. They just kind of have an attitude. So watch out for these people. The rebel is the one who when they are under hardship, they feel like, you know what? I've earned a little me time. I was gonna go to Trinity, but instead I hit the blinker, and I went to the casino on the other side of the freeway. That's what I did. My wife wasn't nice to me so I cheated. Or my kids weren't nice to me so I yelled and avoided them. My God doesn't come through for me so I'm taking a break from God. I'm not gonna read the Bible or pray. You do you! Which is the ad for hell. And sometimes what can happen is you're going through hardship, and here's what I'm telling you: rebelling against God doesn't help anything. Running from God doesn't help anything. Running to God, it helps everything. What he's talking about here is your trial is coming and that is your test. And let me say this, I love you. We're having a little fun. I am truly sorry. I know that you're all going through something. And some of you are going through that which is catastrophic, traumatic and overwhelming. And it is for you a trial and it is a test, but I want you to pass it so you can graduate to the next level of maturity. The only way to graduate is to learn to rejoice. The world knows nothing of this, because the world doesn't know God. There's a little line in the Bible that will change your life if you will receive it, embrace it and apply it. Rejoice in the Lord. The reason that the world can't rejoice is because they don't have the Lord. We don't rejoice in the world. We rejoice in the Lord to get us through the world. What he's talking about here is the trial is out there, but there can still be joy in here. It may not change things, but it changes you as you go through things. I am telling you that I don't think that our world will be a joyful place in our lifetime. Once something is over something else will happen. Now what this is not, this is not a denial of reality. Some people deny reality. How are you doing? Great. What? Did you just fly in from another planet? Like where do you live? Anything I could pray for? No, it's all going good. We need to drug test you. You are not well. This is not a denial of reality, but it is the awareness of the presence of God in your life as a greater reality. It doesn't deny what's happening out there, but it has faith that the Holy Spirit is in here. And the fruit of the Spirit includes joy. Nehemiah says that the joy of the Lord is your

strength. The reason He's going to set before us this pursuit of joy is because your body needs air. It needs water. It needs food. Your soul needs joy. That's why people are experiencing epidemic mental health. They are self-medicating. They are self-destructing. They are raging. They are sleepless. They are traumatized. And the question is who or what will fix it? Well, you can only rejoice in the Lord. And once you learn to rejoice in the Lord, the joy of the Lord is your strength. It strengthens you to deal with reality. Now... How many of you right now...? Can I just be honest? I've struggled with anxiety the last few weeks, and I don't know why. Maybe 'cause I'm preaching James. I'm glad I didn't pick Lamentations. I mean, I don't know where I'd be. Okay? How many of you are like me? My life is very blessed, but some days lately have been very hard. And the question is why rejoice? Or how do you rejoice? I wanna share with you some things that just came to my mind as I was praying for you, 'cause I do love you. One way we can rejoice in our trials is to remind ourselves that Jesus He's been through it. See, you and I we go through trials, 'cause we help break the world with our sin. God who was above it all, no sin. He looks down and He says, boy, they've made a total mess. And He says, I'm gonna go down and get involved. He didn't have to. He did that 'cause He loves us. He loves you. And Jesus has been through trials. And now we have a God who sympathizes and identifies with us. So when we talk to Him and we invite Him, He understands where we are because He's been here. In addition, the trial can grow you in character to become more Christ-like. As soon as you stop enduring you stop maturing. This is why even addiction counselors will say at whatever age that you start self-medicating, let's say with drugs or alcohol, that's the age at which you cease to mature emotionally. So let's say you're 16 and trial comes. You're like, "I'm just gonna get high. I'm gonna get drunk. I'm just not gonna deal with it." You can be 56 years of age, physically 16 years of age emotionally, because the only way to be maturing is to be enduring your trials. The Bible has this crazy line. It's a mindblower in Hebrews. It says that Jesus was made perfect through His suffering. What? Jesus was perfect before His suffering. Yes. And what it's talking about there is an experiential knowledge. There are things that you know in theory, that then you really know when you experience them in reality. You're like, I know that God hears and answers prayer. And then He does, you're like, "Now I know that He does." I know that I know that He does. God rescues the godly from trial. You're like, I believe that. And then you're in a trial and you're like, He rescued me. Now I know that I know. Your faith is in a faithful God. And your trial is an opportunity for Him to prove His faithfulness and for you to prove your faith in His faithfulness. It can mature you in Christ-like character. Another reason to rejoice in your trial. You can graduate. If you pass the test, you can graduate. Another level of maturity, which means that could unlock the next season of life in ministry. Once you learn this lesson, you'll be ready to be married. Once you've learned this lesson, you're ready to have kids. Once you learn this lesson, you're ready for whatever God has for you next. In addition, once you graduate you now have the ability to do more meaningful ministry. Once you've been through a trial, you've taken the test. By God's grace you passed the test. Okay. You've got cancer. I've had cancer. You're going through a divorce. I went through a divorce. You're a blended family. We've got a blended family. I've been through some stuff. Let me say this. I've been on the same road as you. So let me go back. I've been here. Let me put an arm around you as a friend. I love you. Let me walk with you into the future. God has been faithful to me. God will be faithful to you. And He sent me here to remind you of His faithfulness. In addition,

another reason to rejoice in the midst of your trial. Another way is... I was praying for you yesterday and I felt like God spoke this verse over this sermon. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. If you're having a hard time rejoicing, here's what I want you to find. Somebody who's having a better day than you. Somebody who's having a worse day than you. What can happen is when we're in our trial and we're suffering, we can get super selfish. We're so consumed with what we're going through. We sort of forget that others are going through their own thing. It's like, do you know what I'm going through? We're all going through it, buddy. When you find somebody who's weeping and they're having a worse day than you, it actually helps you to rejoice. I'm having a bad day, but I don't even know how they survive. I was talking to a guy recently. He's like, "My wife is in the hospital. She is dying. I'm not allowed to visit her." Oh. I don't have any problems. You can't even say goodbye to your wife. I thought I was having problems until I prayed for that guy. And rejoice with those who rejoice. Sometimes your joy is not found in your life. Sometimes your joy is found in their life. If my wife's having a good day, I'm having a good day. If my kids are having a good day, I'm having a good day. Because sometimes your joy is in their life. And if you can't rejoice in your day, rejoice in their day. And here's the good news to encourage you. This should give you joy. Whatever you're enduring, whatever you're suffering, you're storing up your treasures in heaven. We all worry about our retirement, or at least we should. God's got this internal rewards plan. It's an inheritance plan. It's an eternal retirement plan. What it says in the Bible is you're storing up your treasures in heaven. I'm sorry for what you're going through, but I'm telling you that there will be an eternal inheritance and reward for faithfulness through hardship, trial, strife, suffering and difficulty. So here's my assignment for you. Find joy. I've got a little planner, a notebook. The last page I have the to-do list for every day. Every day for the Book of James I'm putting as my top priority find joy. That's my assignment to you. This week I went for a hike in the woods. And I just told the Lord, I was like, "I need to prepare to preach James." And God the Father said, "Turn your phone off. Let's talk," so I went up to the mountains. I hiked for miles. And the entire hike all I did was just think of things to thank God for out loud. I hiked miles. And I'll tell you this, it took a while. I'm not fast. And I found that I could spend hours doing nothing but thanking God for specific things in my life. It didn't change my life, but it changed my soul so I could endure my life. Find joy. Every day assume that it is there and find it. So you need God over your trial. You need joy in your trial. You need wisdom to get you through your trial. James 1:4-8. "Let's steadfastness, consistency have it's full effect that you may be perfect." When God is done with you, there is a perfect version of you and the trials are part of the process to get you toward perfection. "And complete lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom," which is kind of cute. Let me just say this. Has any of you ever not known what to do? You're like, "Yeah, that's Tuesday." We all reach. So you're like, I don't know what to do. That's lacking wisdom. There's a difference between is that sinful or holy and is that wise or foolish? Should I get a vaccine, not get a vaccine? Should I keep my job? Should I lose my job? Should I forgive that person and reconcile? Or should I forgive them and have a boundary? What should I do? Should I go to that college or this college? I got cancer: should I do traditional treatment? Should I do naturopathic treatment? Should we get divorced or should we get a therapist? Aah! What? I don't know what to do. You ever been there? How many of you are there right now? There are some of you, you're like, "I don't know what to do." Here's what he says. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him

ask God." Oh. There's a God over it. He'll give you joy in it and give you wisdom through it. As things get darker, friend, you're gonna need to go deeper. As you have more problems you need more prayer. When you don't know what to do, God should not be the last person you talk to. He must be the first. He says ask who? "God, who gives generously without finding reproach." The reason sometimes we don't ask people for things is we know they're not generous. God is. Your Father is a generous father. "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting. For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He's double-minded, unstable in all his ways." Here's what he's saying. When trials come you've not been there before. This is new to you. You're learning it for the first time. You're gonna need God to take your hand like a child and walk you through the valley of the shadow of death. This requires wisdom. Let me juxtapose knowledge and wisdom for you. And here's why. Our world has way too much knowledge and way too little wisdom. The amount of knowledge or information on planet earth is doubling every year, which means this year there's twice as much information as last year. And next year there'll be twice as much as this year. There is an abundance of knowledge and there is a scarcity of wisdom. You can go to college and get a lot of knowledge and be a fool. Or even be evil. There's a difference between knowledge and wisdom. I've got a little list. And this is the theme of James and it's a genre of literature in the Bible called wisdom literature. So it's about how to get wisdom from God. Knowledge is knowing the truth. Wisdom is knowing what to do with it. Knowledge is theoretical. Wisdom is practical. Knowledge fills libraries. Wisdom fills lives. Knowledge is truthful. Wisdom is useful. Knowledge provides information. Wisdom provides transformation. Knowledge tells you what to believe. Wisdom tells you how to behave. And knowledge finds the problem, but wisdom finds the solution. Let me ask you this. Are you pursuing knowledge or wisdom? Let me say this. Sometimes the greatest obstacle to wisdom is the avalanche of knowledge. So much fake news, narrative making, spin, conjecture. Let me tell you this. The two emotions that drive the internet and cause you to be addicted to your phone are anger and fear. Aaah! Aaah! No-one. No-one will find that their phone is the source of their joy. That ultimately the phone exists to cause you to be angry and fearful. To be emotionally triggered by angering and fearful information, which is often misinformation. And then to emotionally respond and send it to someone else to trigger them for clickbait, ad revenue and platform building. It's emotional abuse and it does not cause joy. True?

- [Congregants] True.

- That's the world we live in. So we rejoice in the Lord. We find the Lord over it. We find joy in it. We find wisdom through it. And wisdom ultimately... I used this analogy last night. So at your house, many of you have got a septic tank and a pool. I don't know if you've noticed this. It's hot. Some people are like, it's a dry heat. It's still hot. Okay? Now if you wake up and you're like, "I need to go for a swim." I would strongly recommend the pool not the septic tank. When you start your day if you start on the phone with the enemy of the day and the rage of the day, you're starting your day by swimming in the septic tank. If you open the Word of God and start in prayer, you're starting your day in the pool. I want you to be healthy. I want you to be holy. I want you to be hopeful. I want you to be joyful. I want you to be in the Spirit. I don't want you to be in

the flesh. So you need to be in the Word. You need to be in the truth. I'm gonna encourage you just to read James every day. You can do it in 30 minutes. We're gonna spend 12 weeks together. God will use it to transform your life and your mindset. And it may not change what happens out there, but God will use His Word to change who you are in here. Now, when it comes to this issue of finding wisdom through your trial. How do I say this without shaming you or condemning you? 'Cause I really do love you. Don't run from your pain, run to the Lord over your pain. Because oftentimes what can happen is like this marriage is hard, I'm out. Get married: this marriage is hard, I'm out. This job is hard. I quit. This job is hard. I quit. And some of you, like where are you going? I don't know. I just know I'm going away from what hurts. You need to go to the One who heals those hurts. You and I, more than ever, we've got to find the Lord over it, the joy in it, and the wisdom through it from the Lord. Wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit. All wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of wisdom. The means that He has chosen to give you and I wisdom, first of all, His Word. It's why we're reading the Book of James. It's wisdom. How's your time in God's Word? And how's your time with God's Word in you? Secondly, it's prayer. He says ask God. You're going to need to ask God some things and then listen for Him to tell you what to do. In the same way that a child goes to a parent and says, I need help! Okay. Great. I'll tell you this. I love my kids with all my heart. I got five incredible, beautiful, wonderful kids. And if any of them comes to me like, "Dad I need to talk to you, I need help." Answer: absolute thank you for inviting me in. I'm your dad. I'm here to help. God's a Father. He gives generously to all without finding fault. And all you gotta do is just say dad help, and then talk to Him and listen. And lastly, God gives wisdom through wise counsel. There are people that know the Scriptures and they pray and they have the Holy Spirit. That's what James is doing for us here. He's serving as wise counsel. Look in your life for those people who can give you wisdom to navigate the trial that is set before you. And let me just I'll say this. And then we'll have a little bit of fun together. This is not a lesson that I've learned. It's a lesson that I'm learning. And I don't think I'm gonna learn it fully in this life. This is the test I keep taking. I'm not up here saying, I used to struggle with anxiety and fear and worry. And I've graduated. No. Twice I've had intestinal ulcers. Twice I've blown out my adrenal glands. I've always got something to be worried about or somebody to be worried for. I struggle with this. I was praying for you recently. I was driving into church. This is maybe a month or two ago. God gave me a revelation. I wasn't expecting. I'm just driving and I'm listening to like Chris Stapleton driving a truck. I mean, it's not a super spiritual moment. There's no harp, angel, wings. It's me and Chris Stapleton and a truck. But I'm driving in and God gives me a vision. I'm just driving. Right where the visor would be it was like a scroll or a sheet of paper. And I just saw all the things in my life that were a blessing from the Lord to be thankful for and rejoice in. And I just felt a joy that exceeds understanding. And I was like, "Thank you, Lord. All these things in my life to rejoice in." And then it turned over. I kid you not. And it was all the problems and the trials and the hardships and the struggles that I've been through to get where we are today. And I felt this rising sense of anxiety in my soul. And then the Holy Spirit showed me that what was on the rejoicing side actually started on the trial side. Almost everything on this side started on that side. And it was a trial, and then God proved faithful. And then it became a blessing. It was something that I was worried about, and then it became something I was worshiping for. Oh my gosh! We're gonna move across the country! And we're in Arizona. And we don't know what's

gonna happen! And God will provide a wonderful church family. And we don't know what the future holds, but it's better than we could have asked or imagined. I'm so honored to tell you this on our fifth birthday, 'cause we're a miracle and here we are. And there's so much to rejoice in. There's so much to be grateful for. And you are evidence of God's faithfulness. And in a moment what we're gonna do we're gonna rejoice, because our God is Jesus Christ. Our God made this world. Our God visited this world. Our God lived without any sin. And He suffered because He loved us so much that He chose to go through it with us, to identify with us, to die for us, to rise for us. To go into His kingdom to prepare a place for us. To send the Spirit to comfort and lead and guide us. To give us His Word. To give us His Spirit. To give us His people. To give us His peace. To give us His hope. To lift our burdens. To guarantee our eternity. To give us a reason to rejoice in our Lord whose name is Jesus Christ. He's been faithful here for five years. And He will be till the day that He returns and we resurrect from the dead, and our tears are no more, our trials are no more, our problems are no more. Because our God returns to reclaim everyone and everything that belongs to Him as Creator. We're gonna celebrate God's grace. We're gonna throw a party. We're gonna rejoice. And if you have never given your life to Jesus, today is the day of your salvation. You need God over your life. You need joy in your life. You need wisdom through your life. And it's only found in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm inviting you to turn from sin, to trust in Jesus, to go to the back, to surrender, and then to be baptized, showing the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ. That it doesn't matter what you're going through. Jesus went through it for you. He'll go through it with you. And I promise you He'll get you through to the other side. Amen? Howdy. Pastor Mark Driscoll here with my best friend, 28 years running, my wife Grace. And we have a big announcement, at least it's big for us and for our family. We have moved to Phoenix. We love it here. Healing up, making new friends. And excited about this city and the future that God would have us to play in serving the people here along with some other great churches in the Valley. And so Lord willing, we're hoping, trusting, praying, planning, and also a little bit worrying about planting a church here in early 2016. We moved to the Valley. What month was it?

- [Grace] July.

- July, hottest month of the year. Not the most strategic plan.

- Our whole family drove down here and it was 116 degrees at 11 o'clock at night. And we're like, "What is this? It's dark out. Why is it this hot? This should not be possible."

- We went around to see different churches just 'cause we wanted to understand the churches in the Valley, and see what God was already doing. Finally, the kids just said, "Hey, we want you to plant a church. And we want to hear your preaching again." And so we took that very seriously, because coming from teenage kids that's a big deal.

- It just so happened right off the 101 that we saw the Trinity Church. And we stopped by. We walked around it, scouted it out. And then we stopped and we laid hands over it and we prayed over it. And God told me that this was gonna be our church.

- Well, howdy. Pastor Mark Driscoll here at the Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, gearing up for our public launch. We're about four weeks away launching. And if I'm a little sweaty, it's cause we've been working really, really hard.

- I got news that Pastor Mark had opened up the Trinity Church. And it was starting with work teams. And so I showed up with some tools, and some shovels, and we just started knocking down walls and ripping up carpet.

- Taking out trash that had been there for 30, 40, 50 years. And just working on something, building something as a family and with our new community.

- It definitely did not look the way that it looks today. There was a lot of work to be done.

- There was that awesome blue dome that cast a Smurf light all over everything.

- Yeah. I recall us all standing around in a big circle praying. And I just felt at that time like, "Wow, God is really gonna build an outpost for His kingdom."

- We all prayed together. And then we all signed the floor, actually the concrete underneath all the carpet. So that was pretty cool.

- Here we go. You ready? Big vision for the Trinity Church. First thing, flexibility. Everything is subject to change. Let me just say that.

- [Michael] In the very beginning, there was no audio in there. We would just do Bible studies out front with about 20, 30 people.

- As soon as I started hearing the message about the love of God, specifically the Father love of God, my heart, I mean, was immediately captured.

- Seeing people who have never been through a book of the Bible really learn to go through a book of the Bible, and then enjoy that, and then start to build momentum in their own study. As a Bible teacher, that's the best thing in the world.

- When I moved to Arizona, when Michael and I got married, I already had a family here in Arizona. I never felt like I was leaving home. I felt kind of like I was coming home.

- When the church first opened up back after Covid in June of 2020, it was packed and it was alive. The worship was unbelievable. It was like Christ church had been released.

- Well, Merry Christmas in July. We're bringing in 50,000 pounds of snow. Why? Because we can.

- We're all in and serving. And our children have also gotten involved as well. We love the journey that we get to share with our kids and ourselves along with Jesus.

- Being able to serve has definitely been impactful on me to where I enjoy seeing how God's moving. And I get to do that from a place of service. Getting that fulfillment only comes from God.

- We've changed so many things and we've just started so many life groups and ministries. And seen so many people baptized and married and meeting the Lord, and dedicating their kids to the Lord, and raising their kids in the church. It's so, so exciting to see. And that the Lord is blessing what we're doing here.

- God showed up all along the way. We saw Him show up through the building, through giving and praying for it, through God bringing people, through money, financial provision. I mean, just over and over and over we saw God show up.

- The church is very strong, very healthy. Moving very, very, very quickly. But there's still that strong sense of church family. A lot of people have asked, "How did all this happen?" And it's very, very simple: God showed up.

- Yeah. He did.

- He showed up to plant the idea. He showed up to plant the church. He showed up to build it and grow it and mature it. And I'm really excited to see what He has next for us.

- Me too.

- My absolute favorite is baptisms. I know so many people say it, but there's nothing like it.

- I think how God has showed up it's in our children. Our children are gonna be bearing fruit for the Gospel I hope for generations to come.

- When you're at the Trinity Church, you're part of an amazing community of people that open their Bibles to learn. And it's such a bigger impact than we can even see just here in Scottsdale.

- I've just seen God working in that church and you just feel the presence of God there. And that's what you see when you're at Trinity.