

#2 Faith Works: A Study In James - How does faith work when you are tempted?

- You are brand new. We're so glad to have you. And we're in a great book of the Bible called James, it's written by Je... We got one guy excited. That's good, it's a start. May it continue All right, all right, all right. So as we're jumping into James, it's Jesus's little brother and they grew up in a blue-collar family. So I like to say that in the New Testament, James is the blue-collar scholar. Their dad was a carpenter, construction worker, like my dad, they grew up working with their dad, putting their boots on in the morning, grabbing their tools, going to do carpentering, construction. These are not guys who were raised in the institution. Instead, they were raised by a blue-collar dad who went to work every day. And so what James is talking about is really practical and it's about how to take your faith and put it to work in your life. And so our theme is, faith works. So we're gonna be in James 1. And we looked at it last week. The theme for the book, the hook for the book, James 1:2-3, count it all joy. My brothers, when you face trials of various kinds, you know that your testing produces steadfastness. So here's what he says, life has trials. There are hard seasons, difficulties, obstacles, and those are opportunities for you and I to seek joy. You're gonna go through trial. The question is, will joy come into you to get you through your trial? If you can find joy in your trial, you'll have steadfastness through your trial. This week, the theme continues in chapter one, verse 14. He says regarding the temptation, so there's a specific kind of trial that he's referring to, and that's a temptation to sin against God. He says, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. What he says is when there's trials out there, there's more temptation in here. And I wanna just pivot for a moment. I've been doing some work in the brain sciences and what they are finding actually correlates with what the Bible teaches, which makes sense. God made us, He hardwired us, He created us, He instructs us. And then 2000 years later, the scientists catch up and so appreciate them finally agreeing with God. And so what the brain scientists have found is that when there is increased trial out there, pressure, pains, problems, difficulties, troubles, hardships that ultimately what happens inside of you determines the kind of life you live, the kind of decisions you make. And so when there's a trial out there, what begins to happen, it triggers anxiety in the mind. All of a sudden now, you're dealing with the trial and your brain is trying to process the information. And then what that does, that increases the temptation in your body. So the trial around you, it triggers anxiety in the mind, which can trigger a lot of temptation in the body to make bad decisions under distress and duress. Now, the problem, is we live in a time when we have perhaps an unprecedented complex number of trials that people are going through; global, national, regional, local, personal, relational, mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, you just start to get the categories. You just kind of feel your brain just processing all that data and just thinking of your own trials, and that can increase your anxiety. The clinical definition of anxiety is a feeling of worry or nervousness or unease about one of two things, an imminent event that is in the process of happening or a future event that you anticipate is coming. And you're dealing with both of those trials right now. Some of you have got major decisions right now. Some of you, if you make a certain medical decision, you could lose your job. You could lose your career, trying to figure out what to do with your life, with your finances. You're trying to figure out what God's plan for you is in this immediate moment. You're reading James 1. It says, if you lack

wisdom, ask for it and God will give it to you. And you're like, that's what I need. I've got a decision to make right now. But I don't know what the decision is right or wrong, good or bad wise or foolish. And then you look at the future. You realize, oh my gosh, there's more problems. How many of you looking at the future, you're not real hopeful? Now, if you're hopeful, we're gonna drug test you. You're not sober. Like you're not dealing with reality. You're not processing the data. Remember, last year we had the 14 days to flatten the curve. You're like, that seems like a while ago. And some people were wait, well, you know what? We'll just wait now at world to get better. We'll have an election that affects it. Lo, spoiler alert get it in. I mean, so we still got a lot of complex things that are happening and people are processing, both in the present and in the future. You have anxiety for decisions you need to make today and you're trying to prepare for what's gonna happen tomorrow. Now, the counselors tell us that there are four first categories that cause anxiety. These are the trials that can cause the greatest anxiety in the brain. Are you ready? Health, safety, politics, and relationships. Has anyone noticed that perhaps we had some health and safety issues in the recent history of planet earth that were exacerbated by some political conflicts that had some consequences for our relationships? The clinicians will tell you that the four categories of trial that cause the greatest things hide here in the brain and bring the greatest stress and temptation to the body have been literally a vice that has been pressing on every human being for more than one year. So that's the world that we live in. All right. So we're close in person. You home, good luck with that. Now, you know you got some stuff to deal with. Is there any hope? No. No, you're on your own. No, there is hope. That's where God's timeless word is timely and God knows how He has hardwired and created you. And so His word specifically speaks to you because what God wants to do is have you change your mind, create new patterns, new neural pathways, so that you get out of whatever loop you have been in, where there is a trial, there is anxiety and then bad decisions you made that cause more pain in your life. And so what happens when there are trials around us and anxiety in the brain, the brain gets an insatiable desire for more data and information. I just need to know more so that I can control more. So people are wanting information so that they can prepare for what is happening and then they can make a plan to keep them safe and have control over the future. We live in a day when the amount of information on planet earth is doubling. Here's the problem, trial happens, you're trying to get all the information, you can't get it all. There's too much information. In addition, the information keeps changing. True or false?

- Right? The, you're like, well, they said this, and now they said that! I followed the science and they're drunk driving. I don't know where we... I don't know where we're going. Probably shouldn't have said that. And it'll happen again in a minute. So in addition, the problem with trying to collect all the information to figure out, okay, what is happening in the world so that I can make a plan, so I can be in control, so I can be safe and I can have a good future is not only is there too much information, the information keeps changing. And we are scared that we're gonna miss some of the information. So we set alerts, we set alerts for certain media, social media platforms. You've got your phone and it rings, it dings. It buzzes. And you're just... You're on all the time like, I don't wanna miss any information 'cause the information maybe important information and I'm in a trial or I have a difficulty and I need to get the information so that I can process it so that I can make a plan. Now we're all stressed and freaked out. Now our phone is

our enemy and you can't stop looking at it. And you're fearful of what you may miss. And then the problem becomes as well with more information. The more information you get, the more anxiety you have in your mind because the more problems you're like, I didn't even know about these things. And now there are crisis and problems. And then the more I study, the more worried I get. And if you had anxious personality, this has been a rough year for you. In addition, the problem is a lot of the information we get, it's fake news. It's just false. How many of you this last year, you got to be like, oh my gosh, I'm thinking about this. I'm sending it to my friends. They're sending it to me. We're now triggering one another. They call this a social contagion. Have you read this? No. Oh my gosh! You got to read this. And now everybody's living in a Scooby-Doo episode and totally freaked out and, oh my gosh! And then you realize that's not true. Statistically, they've shown that fake news and misinformation travels six times faster than the truth because it triggers anxiety, and that causes people to make short-sighted emotional decisions. There was an old preacher once said that a lie can get around the world before the truth can get a chews on. And so this is the world we live in. Okay, so lemme just recap. Okay. This is safe we're all together here. Are there trials in your life right now? Okay. Is your brain having anxiety, trying to process all the data to figure out what to do? Okay. Or any of you seeing this manifest physically? Nobody said yes. So I, somehow we got all the liars to join our church. Okay, so is it showing itself physically? Well, here's the little punch list of what to look for. Edginess, grumpiness, restlessness. If your spouse is doing this, it's you, okay? Irritability, fear, just general unwellness, muscle aches, headaches, trouble sleeping. And so what happens is you wake up in the morning, you turn on your phone, you get bad information. You've got your own trials. You look at your schedule. You look at people, you're in personal relationship with, okay, what are the trials for the day? This is like, you turn the stove on. You're the tea kettle sitting on the stove. Now, it's warming up. Throughout the course of the day. You get more trials, you get more information, creates more anxiety. By nighttime, by bedtime, you are the boiling tea kettle. You're like, I can't get... I'm overwhelmed, I'm exhausted. I can't handle anymore. It's been a full day. And so what happens then is you're stuck on and you can't turn off. During the course of the day to control the reaction of your body, you're trying to stay awake and alert. So you're eating junk food, You're eating fast food, you're eating carbohydrates, things that could convert it into sugar. And then nighttime comes and you're so stressed and your body so weak. Now you need alcohol. Now you need sleeping pills. Now you need some sort of comfort because what your body is saying is, we can't handle any more. The trials out there, the anxiety in here, is costing us so much physically. We want comfort. We want relief. We want rest. We want diversion. We want a break. Now, I know not you, 'cause you love the Lord and you're filled with the Spirit, and you just read the Bible and pray in tongues until you fall asleep. But for other people that have bad habits, those people they'll be at the next service. So pray for them. So... But for you people, just think of others that you know. What are some of the things that we do when there's trials out there, there's anxiety in here, and then physically, our body wants a break and comfort. What are the things that we tend to give our body? Food? No, don't raise your hand. I wouldn't want you to exercise, but how many of you put on weight in the last year 'cause you were just stuck at home, you're like, I'm just gonna order more food and put on something that has an elastic waistband. And so, and just whatever happens, happens. Okay, what else do we use to comfort ourselves? Sex, one honest person, that's good. And/or pornography, what

else do we do or use? Alcohol, addiction, this can be legalized drugs, this can be prescription drugs, this can be illegal drugs. We Netflix, binge-watch where surfing through social media, we're playing video games. We call this an American. And what it is, the trial out there creates the anxiety in here. The body is overtaxed, and now it's making bad decisions because as there's more trial out there, more anxiety in here, there's more temptation in here. So he's connecting the trial out there with the temptation in here, and what he's going to do, he's going to speak to our mind and he's going to want to rehardwire it so that we deal with information differently and we are less susceptible to our trials. Now, what he's gonna tell us today is when there's more trials out there, there's more anxiety in here, there's more temptation in here, to soothe ourselves or to seek some sort of satisfaction in our stuff and our sin. Those are the two categories. So he's gonna start with our stuff. And here's the first concept. Your joy ain't found in your stuff. And I know that's not really good grammar, but I went to public school. So James 1:9-11, "Let the lowly brother", the poor guy, the guy who wrote the verse here, "in his exaltation, let the rich," the guy who has the really nice car from the Barrett-Jackson auction, who's frustrated 'cause we made him park in the dirt lot, "because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. But the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass, its flowers fall, its beauty perishes. So will also the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits". He's comparing here two kinds of people that are going a trial, the rich and the poor and how they will use their stuff to try to increase their satisfaction. So let me say this, when it comes to rich and the poor, these categories are very subjective globally and historically. How many of you have traveled, and you thought you were poor until you went somewhere else, you're like, I'm doing good. If you go to the bathroom in your house, you're doing good. If you can heat your house without chopping down a tree and starting a fire in your house, you're doing good. If you can flip a switch to turn the lights on in your house, you're doing good. Historically and globally, the average American lives at a lifestyle that has never been previously possible. And we are in, where? Scottsdale. If you're having a bad day in Scottsdale, you're still having a good day. Go to Detroit. I mean, and then catch a flight to Haiti or to Afghanistan. You're having a good day. So the rich and the poor are, they are sliding scales and we need to keep reality and perspective. In addition, what happens when it comes to trying to find satisfaction or joy or comfort or relief in our stuff, the way Christians deal with this is one of two polarities. There's the prosperity and the poverty people. The prosperity people think, the more stuff I have, the more joy I'll have, the better my life will be. So I'm going to have some weird concept that God is a vending machine and that faith hits the button and gives me the stuff that I want, prosperity theology. On the other side, the poverty theology people say, you know what? Your joy is not found in more stuff, but less stuff. So give all your stuff away. Go tiny house nation, spark joy, have a yard sale. And what is crazy is, people will just change teams. So the prosperity guys, like I bought a ton of junk and it's not making me happy. So I'm going to sell it. And then the poverty theology guys like, yeah, it's not working. So I'm gonna go to your garage sale and I'm gonna buy all the stuff that you got rid of. And all we're doing is making the same mistake, thinking that our joy is tied to our stuff, 'cause here's the big idea; you don't just have things, things have you. And right now what's happening is as people are experiencing more trials, they are spending more money to get more stuff, hoping that it increases their joy. And it doesn't. And I'm not saying it's bad to go shopping. I'm not saying it's bad to spend money, but I'm saying that it in and of itself is not

going to fix your trial, reduce your anxiety or transform your future. And what he says here is that wealth and beauty, and they often go together, that wealth and beauty fade. And I, just what he says is hypothetically imagine. Just conceive of a desert environment. So I know it's hard. So just think about a place that has grass growing and flowers blooming until June, July, and August come, I call them the beast, the false prophet and the anti-Christ. They unleash hell on the valley. That's what they do. And so what happens here when the heat comes, your grass withers, your flowers die. Okay? It's so bad here. When we first moved here, one of my daughters, she wanted to see grass so bad that she took synthetic grass AstroTurf and put it on the dash of her car, and it melted. Not only does the grass wither and the flowers fell, the synthetic grass melts. What he's saying is this, it doesn't matter how beautiful someone or something is. Eventually it fades away. You can't take your wealth with you to Heaven, and eventually, no matter how beautiful you are, and you are a lovely people, gravity wins every time. You wake up one day, and you're like, it's going south. I'll go... I'll pay someone to prop it up, but it's still going south. Okay? The guys thought that was funny. The ladies were like, it's not funny. That's offensive. What that is. Yeah. Do we have another guy? Come, I wanna try the other guy. No, this all you got. Okay. And so, in addition, what happens is in our day, social media exists for one reason, for you to covet someone else's stuff, to then consume and to purchase something for yourself. This is what we do. And the reason we do this, the reason we choose shopping, food, drugs, alcohol, sex, video games, in the front of your brain, there's a dopamine center. And if you hit that button, it's a temporary relief and pleasure. Feels good. And then there's something we call buyer's remorse. Buyer's remorse. But the reason why this is so powerful with your stuff is there was a day if you wanted something, you actually had to work for it. Right? So let's say you wanted a house. You're like, well, we gotta go find land, we gotta chop down trees, we gotta turn it into wood, we've got... Now you just go online, you're like, I could tour a house from my house. It used to be, if you wanted something you would have to, okay, let's say you live out in a small rural town. You're like, I really want some shoes. So I need to, first of all, I either need to walk into town or I need to get a horse, and then I need to get on the horse and now I need to go on to town. And if it rains, I'm gonna be soaking wet because I don't have a roof on me or the horse. And there's no heat or air conditioning. So it's probably gonna be uncomfortable. It's gonna be a dirt dusty road. And then when I get into town, I go into the store and I tell them, I want some shoes. They measure my feet and then some guy is gonna make the shoes. But I gotta come back in a month or two or three. And I gotta wait for the shoes. And then I gotta get back on the horse or walk back to the homestead, and then I gotta come back in a few, that's a lot. Now you're just like, Siri, give me shoes. She's already got your credit card. And then Amazon Prime sends a drone and drops it over your house. And you're like, yay. So what happens is, we're making instantaneous decisions in our trials, thinking that purchasing things will bring us relief, and what this leads to is what the sociologists call conspicuous consumption. And that is you buy things, not because you need them or you even like them, but because other people are impressed by them. So let's talk about women's shoes. I'm not gonna say anything. It's too dangerous. Some chick will take her heel and clump me with it. I don't ha... I didn't wanna ta... So I'll just ask questions. Okay, ladies? We're gonna do a little chat. So ladies, true or false? Some women's shoes are very expensive. True. Okay, that is okay. Are some of the most expensive shoes, the most uncomfortable shoes?

- [Audience] Yes.

- Do you still buy them?

- [Audience] Yes.

- Feel like there's a grenade with a pin pole and I got to be very careful. Why do you buy them and wear them? They're cute. Last night, some guy over here said, fabulous. We talked to that guy. Okay, so they're cute. They're fabulous. And when you wear them, you, and you don't wear them all the time 'cause they're too uncomfortable. So what happens is you're like, oh my gosh! Those are rare, those are expensive, those are uncomfortable, I will put those on, I will wear them out so that another woman looks at my feet and says, cheer out, fabulous. Okay? The whole point is not that you're buying shoes, you're buying their attention. This is why we have social media; to get people to covet and make decisions when they're in a trial to get that little quick dopamine head and they feel good until they get the bill, and then they got credit card debt. And now all of a sudden they've got a new trial of debt in addition to the trial that they spent money trying to deal with. This is the world we live in. Just think... So on social media, there are words, and there are images. People click on the images far more frequently than they do the words. And what we're trying to figure out is what do they have? Now, we get to see, oh, look at their house. Oh my gosh! That's... Oh, look at their car, look at their vacation, look at their kids, they're free kids. Oh my gosh! You know, how do you do free kids with a white rug? You know, like that's a crazy house. Now all of a sudden, there are things we didn't even know about that were covetous of. And we start spending money we don't have, to buy things we don't need, to impress people we don't know. True or false? One guy didn't hear it. He was shopping. He said, I don't know who he's talking about here. So... So all that to say, what he's talking about here are the rich and the poor. He's talking about the godly poor, and then he's talking about the rich and the commentators are split 50-50, whether it's godly or ungodly rich. But here's the problem, when it comes to our wealth possessions and finances, we tend to think culturally, not biblically. So we think in two categories, not four. I wanna show you the four biblical categories. And if you are younger, went to public school and/or a university, you need to pay careful attention because you've been lied to and brainwashed. Okay, here are the four categories; godly poor, godly rich, ungodly poor, ungodly rich. Now, what happens in our culture, the economic discussion politically is largely dominated by Marxism. Marxism is atheistic and godless. It is not biblical in any sense of the word. It manifests itself in communism and socialism and other kinds of evils that end with ism. And the result is that you tend to see only two categories, the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressor and the oppressed. So everything is in those categories. I'll give you an example. So right now, if you're not vaccinated, you are an oppressor, and if you are vaccinated, you're oppressed. So these categories keep getting applied everyday. The way it gets applied economically, the rich are the oppressor, the poor are the oppressed. Therefore, in the name of justice, we vote for politicians who take from the rich, give to the poor, reallocate the wealth in the name of justice. This is the world we live in. So if you are on the political left, you are progressive, you are blue, you are woke, you think

CNN is okay. Okay, okay. First of all, how did you get here? That's quite like, oh, to change your mind. Okay. That's why. So if you are in that camp or category, these are the categories you tend to think of. Put it back up. You think of category three, excuse me, category one and category four. The poor people are good, the rich people are bad. The rich people have set up a system that oppresses the poor people, takes advantage of the poor people, and it's a win-lose shell game. All people who are rich are ungodly. People who are poor are godly or good, justice is attacking the rich and then giving it to the poor. If you are on the right, if you are more traditional or conservative, if you watch Fox News and agree, if you are someone who is read on the political spectrum, you see it differently. Amen? Okay. Somebody just came out of the closet right here in the third row. All right. And that would be cat... You tend to think more in terms of category two and four, two and three, rather. Man, I'm having a hard time with numbers. So it would be that the rich people, they're godly or they're good. They started companies, they took risks, they worked hard, they built a company, they're employing people, they're creating positive economic momentum, they're paying their taxes. These people who are business owners, these are good people. And then there's some poor people who are lazy, they're drunk, they're having kids they have no intent of providing for, they're taking advantage of the government, they're rigging the system, and they're acting like victims, and the truth is they're villains. Okay, so, okay. All right. So what we're gonna do now? We're gonna put turnbuckles in, just, no. So what we're gonna do, is we're gonna think biblically, not culturally. So there are four categories, not two. So I want you to think like God thinks, about your money, wealth and possessions. So are there people in the Bible who are godly and poor? Hey and the way, you know someone is godly when it comes to their wealth, how do they get it? What do they do with it? Or they work hard, they save, they invest, they give an inheritance to their kids. And then the people who received the wealth, they tie it to the Lord, generously, they pay their bills, they pay their taxes, they pay their employees. Godliness or goodness it's how you receive and how you distribute the wealth that you obtain. James, who writes this, his family was category one. He was godly and poor. They were poor if their whole family, married as teenagers, blue-collar, they go to the temple, the can't offer the normal sacrifice, they got to offer the special sacrifice that was designated for the poor. There are people who are poor. There's a widow, all she's got is one coin and she gives it to the Lord. She's poor, but she's godly. There are people who are poor and they are godly. In addition, the godly rich, are there people in the Bible that are godly and loaded? There are. There's a guy named Abraham. We're gonna study Genesis next year. God gives him incredible abundance. At the end of that same book, there's a guy named Joseph. He becomes the CFO of the nation of Egypt, which is the largest economy on planet earth. And he is a godly guy filled with the Holy Spirit and God put him in a position to distribute massive wealth assets. Similarly, there's a guy named Nehemiah. He has this similar sort of role in the Old Testament. So there are some people, they're godly and they are rich. Are there people who are poor but it's because they're ungodly? Yes. Proverbs talks a lot about these people. He calls them sluggards. You ever seen a slug? They're not really motivated. You look at a slug, you go away for an hour, you come back, there it is. Hasn't not a lot of ambition, right? You can threaten the slug, you can yell at the slug, you can scare the slug, slug is not moving. Some people are sluggards. That means they're sluglike. They didn't, you just can't move them. They're not gonna work, there's no sense of urgency, there's no sense of ambition. Proverbs

talks about people too who just don't like to work, or they get a little money and then they try a get rich quick scheme. They're always trying to find a shortcut. And there isn't one. That's why your house is smaller than the casino. The casino wins every time. These are people who they're not thinking logically or acting biblically, so they're suffering financially. Not everybody who is poor is a victim. I grew up in a neighborhood. My family were godly poor. My dad was a construction worker, hung dry wall to feed five kids till he broke his back. My parents were generous. They didn't have much, but they were very generous. But also in my neighborhood, there were a ton of people who were ungodly and poor. They wouldn't get married 'cause then they wouldn't get the benefits from the government. So they're just living and sleeping together. There were some people in my neighborhood that had scams and schemes to sue companies and to fraudulently take from the government. I mean, just all kinds of hustling. And then, true or false, there are some people who are rich, but they're just ungodly. There's a lot of those in the Bible. There are political leaders like Pharaoh in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in Babylon, there are like Herod in the Roman Empire. They're loaded. They live in huge, huge, huge estates. They've got harems, they've got servants, they've got horses, but it's like North Korea. Like they're really winning, everybody else's losing. It's ungodly. There's a guy in the New Testament, his name is the Rich Young Ruler. And here he's got Jesus, his savior and he's got a lot of stuff. So he's torn between his stuff and his savior. And he's wondering, is there a way to do both; to love and worship your stuff and also have Jesus as your savior. So the rich young ruler goes to Jesus, he's like, okay, so I got a lot of stuff and I'd also like you to be my savior. Can we do both? And Jesus is like, no, you need to pick your priority, either your stuff or your savior. And it says that he left very sad 'cause he really liked his stuff. And so what he's talking about here James is the rich and the poor. And then the question is, what kind of home did James grow up in? Godly, poor. Question for you, what kind of home did you grow up in? And it tends to inform your politics. In addition, what kind of person are you? So here's a question. Jesus Christ, rich or poor?

- [Congregant] Yes.

- Yes. Hey, yes. So Jesus started in Heaven. Was He rich or poor? Let me tell you this. Heaven is nice. Heaven is super, like right now, people in Heaven are like, Scottsdales and dope. Okay, that's what they're thinking. Paradise Valley eight, paradise. So Heaven is nice. Jesus, ruling and reigning in Heaven, comes down to the earth. Now He's very poor. He dies and rises, goes back. Today, right now today, Jesus is rich, He is loaded. When we get there, He pays for everything, He takes care of everyone. Says the sacred, the ans eight, nine. Jesus, though He was rich, for our sake, He became poor. The point is this, God doesn't care as much if you're rich or poor, He does care much if you're godly or ungodly. So what happens in our culture, we just look at your income, God looks at your character. Man looks at the outside, God looks at the heart. And so when you're looking at your life, you're going through your trials. There's anxiety in your mind. You're under pressure to make some of your worst financial decisions and its character that is going to cause you to navigate those decisions. And what we're seeing right now is under trials and pressure, people are making some extraordinarily foolish financial decisions. They're going into massive debt, they are consuming products and goods and

services that they simply cannot afford. They're taking risks with their investment portfolio that are not wise, they're cashing in their equity 'cause the housing market bump, they're pulling it all out for luxury goods and not realizing that there will be a leveling and a resettling in the housing market. And here what James is talking about is not just what used to happen, but what always happens. That is that under a trial, with anxiety, people start to make very foolish decisions about their finances, wealth, and spending. And when it comes to our finances, oftentimes our trials are about our finances. And even if our trial is not about our finances, I lost my job, downsize, your trial includes your finances. We had money saved, and then I got in a car wreck and now we've got legal bills and medical bills and it's drained us out. Oftentimes our trials are about our wealth and possessions, or they involve our wealth and possessions. And the result is that we have a lot of impulse spending, where people are just making that dopamine hit and not thinking through the consequence of what they have and what it's going to cost them ultimately and eventually. In addition to your stuff, so let me, so let me ask you this, don't raise your hand. How many of in a trial your first thought is, I need to get more stuff? I need to spend some money. I need to have some comfort. I need to have some pleasure. I need to have some relief. I need to have some diversion. I need to have some distraction. And for others, when they're in a trial, their instinct is not to find joy in their stuff, but to find joy in their sin. When there's more pressure, there are more anxiety in here, there's more temptation for sin. That's where he's gonna go. Joy ain't found in your sin. James 1:12-15. "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial," meaning persevering, enduring, going, not quitting or surrendering to the sin, "for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him. Now, let no one say when he is tempted", doesn't say if you're attempted, it says when you're tempted, we're all gonna be tempted to sin. "Don't say I'm being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, himself tempts no one". God is good, not evil. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." He's talking there about the internal. He's talking about your brain and your body. There are things in you that long for things that harm you. "Then desire, when it is fully conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown, brings forth death." Brings forth death. So what he's saying is this, when you're under pressure, when you're in a trial and your brain has a lot of anxiety, and it's trying to process information and make decisions and keep you safe and control the future and protect everyone and everything that you hold dear, there is something in you that is now more vulnerable to simple temptation. Lemme just say this friends, we saw this this last year. We're still seeing it. Under pressure, people are drinking more, people are eating more, people are spending more, people are online more, people are shopping more, people are more angry, people are having more mental health, people are making more short-sighted decisions, more people are suicidal. The vice is squeezing. And as a result, the flesh is responding. And when he says this, when those temptations come, and they will come, we all have them, you're taking a test that you're either going to pass or fail. If you pass the test, you're steadfast. He told us previously, if you fail the test and sin, you're unstable. Now the good news is this, we've all failed our test, and God is gracious, we get to retake our test. But what happens when we fail our test is we surrender to the sin. We reach the point where it's like, the trial is so great, the anxiety is so high, I just need to hit the dopamine center. I just need to feel good for a minute, I need to do... That's where we get in trouble. And then what we do, he says, we blame God. Now, let me

say there are various ways to do this, but you'll hear people do this all the time. Well, life is hard. I'm in a hard season. And I just, I feel like God kinda didn't come through. So I have a right to do some things that He says no to that I wanna do, 'cause He didn't do what He was supposed to do. But we hear people say, well, if they wouldn't have said that, I wouldn't have said that. If they wouldn't have done that, I wouldn't have done that. Yeah, that was my response, but look at the external pressure I was under that excuses the behavior I've chosen. And then we can even blame God. God, this happens all the way back in Genesis 3. So there's two people on earth, Adam and Eve, Adam is supposed to be the leader. His wife is supposed to be the co-leader. God tells him, okay, you guys get along, eat anything you want. Don't touch thi.. Don't eat that tree. I'll be back in a little bit. God leaves, serpent, Satan, dragon shows up, they're eating, everything blows up. The earth is ruined. God shows up, ask for Adam. Where are you? 'Cause the man is the leader. He's the head. And immediately, what does Adam do? He blames Eve. He's like, oh, so glad you came. This chick is crazy. Alright. This chick is crazy right here. And this is the go-to line for every husband sense. Hey God, I was thinking about it. You made her, you got a defective product here and you are gone. I don't know, like I was on my own. I thought you were supposed to help. And then some dragons showed up. You probably made the dragon and the woman. I'm the victim. I forgive you. You guys figure it out. Get me a new woman who could slay a dragon. So he's just, he's out. He's blaming God. Well then, what happens is Eve, she's gonna blame Satan. And the point is, everybody's gonna blame somebody. And only those who love God are steadfast, own their own responsibility for their own decision-making. And if you're looking at your external circumstances saying, well, let me give you my reason. What happens out there does not determine the response in here. You do. They're responsible for what's happening out there, but we're responsible for how we're responding in here. And the lie is always this, God is not that good, and sin is not that bad. God is not that good and sin is not that bad. And here's the truth. Sin does two things. It defies God and it damages us. So we are like, why do I got to do what God says? 'Cause He loves you and He's trying to save you from yourself, right? Any good parent makes rules not to constrict the freedom of their child, but to preserve the life of their child. Like I make some rules 'cause I love ya. And if you disobey the rules, you're gonna hurt yourself. God is a father, we are his kids. Sin doesn't just defy Him, it damages you. No one under a trial with anxiety who has chosen sin, made their situation better. We've all done this, right? You're like, yeah, I felt the pressure of the trial. I was under anxiety. I needed the quick dopamine hit to feel a little better. So I made a short-term sinful decision for some sort of pleasure of rebellion, and momentarily, I got some physiological relief, but then the Holy Spirit showed up and convicted me. And that's not who I was made to be. And it was very disappointing and it didn't make my life any better. And people are making these kinds of decisions over and over and over. And once you get into a habit, you're now creating a neural feedback loop in the brain to where every time that's your natural default, unless you intentionally start a new process. Okay. When I'm processing anxiety, I'm gonna turn off my phone, I'm gonna turn on my soul, I'm gonna meet with the Lord. I'm going to not just sit in my house all day, I'm gonna go get some fresh air, get in God's creation, have a conversation with Him, Invite the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom, do the James 1:5, ask for help. Rather than picking up the battle, I'm going to pick up the Bible. Rather than watching porn, I'm going to go to a life group. Like I am gonna start some new habits and patterns because there's a triggering

in me that leads to self-destruction and I've got to get out of that loop. What's amazing is what James is encouraging, and Paul uses the language of put off and put on. Now, the brain scientists will say it's creating new feedback loops. It's creating new neural pathways. It's literally the renewing of your mind. And this is possible for the children of God, with the Spirit of God. And so how do you pass your test? And we've all got our test and that is the temptation test. The trial is out there, the temptation test is in here. The way you and I can pass the test when we are under pressure, and we are tempted is two things. First, I want you to know that it's not a sin to be tempted. Some of you are tender conscience folks. Some of you, you love the Lord. You wanna do the right thing. You're the people who, you're trying to do what's right. Your honest in your intent. And what happens is as soon as you're tempted, the enemy whispers in your ear, I can't believe you're thinking about that. I can't believe you're tempted by that. I can't believe you're considering that. I can't believe you like that. I can't believe you desire that. And you just feel immediately defeated. You know that it's demonic when it's in the second person, you. That's not God talking to you. That's the enemy talking to you. He's the accuser of the children of God, and he accuses them day and night, Revelation 12:10. What he's doing in that moment, he's accusing you of sin and you haven't sinned. You're taking your test, but he's telling you that you've already failed. And the truth is, you're taking it. It's not a sin to be tempted. A temptation is a test. And if you choose God instead of sin, you actually pass the test. There is a difference between temptation and sin. And for some of you, this is where you get so discouraged. You're like, well, I thought about it. I guess I need to do it. I mean, I went on a date and I guess I'm going to sleep. I've already run the intersection. So I might as well just proceed forward. No. Did Jesus ever sin? No. Was He ever tempted? Yes. So temptation and sin are not synonymous. They're not the same thing. The Bible says in Hebrews that He was tempted in every way as we, are yet without sin. So Jesus was tempted, tested, passed His test. When you are tempted, that is not a sin. That is a test that you can pass if you say yes to the Lord and no to the sin. How do you say no to the sin? He's got a word here; desire. It's a powerful word. And this word desire, it can be used positively or negatively in the New Testament. Not to totally nerd out on you, but oftentimes when the word is used, it's used in the context of desires of the flesh versus desires of the Spirit. The flesh versus the Spirit. So if you're under a trial, you're feeling the pressure, you have anxiety in the mind, you're trying to amass information and make a plan and you feel overwhelmed or fearful or scared, your body is now more likely to make a foolish sinful short-sighted short-term decision. A desire rises up in you that is a temptation and it's a test. And the frontal cortex, if your brain is just give me the dopamine hit, it'll feel good for a minute, then you ask the Lord, what are your desires? Because those are the desires of the flesh. If you don't know Jesus, all you have are the desires of the flesh. That's why non-Christians don't even understand Christians. They're like, why would you not do that? That feels good. We're adults, we like it. It's great. Who cares? You're crazy. No, no, no. There is another way. It's the way of the Spirit. And it says in Galatians that the flesh and the Spirit are against one another and that the flesh wants to keep you from doing what you want to do. If you're a Christian, this is such good news for you. You have the Holy Spirit, you have a new nature. You're a new creation. You're not perfect, but you're new and you're in a process of being perfected. And what you have are new desires. Desires. Sort of, the Holy Spirit brings to mind, it says really in one of Peter's letters, like a newborn baby, you crave the milk of God's

word. A baby and mi... You don't have to give a kid a class on why they should eat. When they're born, they just have this appetite. When you're born again, you have this appetite. You're like, I wanna learn the Bible. I wanna pray. You know, I used to do these things that I was proud of, and now I'm ashamed of. We used to have parades for them and I've had a funeral for them. Because you've changed and your desires change. So the way that you overcome a desire of the flesh is with the desire in the Spirit, because the desires of the Spirit or the stronger desires. That's why a sinning Christian is a miserable Christian. The things that you used to do as a non-Christian, you're like, I love that. Now, when you do it, you're like, I feel really different after I do that. That's conviction from the Spirit 'cause God loves you. And it's the Father looking at you and saying, that's not who you are anymore. That's not what you do anymore. That's not what you desire anymore. That's not who you're gonna be when I'm done with you, so let's be done with this. How many of you meeting Jesus, receiving the Holy Spirit, your desires changed? And so what it is, it is acknowledging the new desires, feeding those, nurturing those to create new neural pathways, new feedback loops, new response patterns so that you're now living in the Spirit, following the desires of the Spirit, not the flesh, following the desires of the flesh, 'cause this leads to death, and this leads to life. This leads to slavery, this leads to freedom. This leads to self-destruction, this leads to God's deliverance. This is possible for you as the children of God. So when you're taking your test and you're feeling your temptation, you go to the Holy Spirit, you're like, okay, what's the new desire that I need to choose to then cast out the old desire and to replace it with the new desire? So he's gonna use three different analogies to talk about taking your temptation test; sports, fishing, and motherhood. Each of these will give some insight. So he talks about the crown of life. In their day, if you were an athlete in a competition, if you won, you got a crown. So this is like their World Series Ring or their Lombardi Trophy, this is, if you win, you get the crown of life. And what he's saying is, for those of us who are Christians, we need to wait for our reward when Jesus Christ evaluates our life and crowns us with the rewards that we have earned through obedience and faithfulness. Now, you can't earn your salvation, but you can earn your rewards. Jesus saves you to good works and then He rewards those who are obedient to the good works. The worst thing you can do is quit in the middle of the game. Nobody likes an athlete when the team is on the field and they're all in the battle and one guy's like I'm done now. And he just leaves. It's like, no, no, no. We fight to the end. We struggle to the end because there's only victory for those who fight and persevere to the end. And he's appealing like an athlete. And he gives the language of fishing and he said, our desires get us into trouble, our fleshly fallen sinful desires. When we are lured away, that luring, that's the language of fishing. And fishing lures two things. It's a hook and a bait. And the key is to know this, that everything God creates, Satan counterfeit. So Jesus looks at His disciples and He says, you will be fishers of men. And Satan says, that's a good idea. I'll do the same thing with my demons. And I'll send them out fishing. And the way that they're going to be fishers of men and women is by luring them in. Now, the difference between a fish and you is a fish doesn't have a brain. And so what happens is, a fish sees the bait, pays no attention to the hook. God gave you a brain and you need to know that the lure has a bait and a hook, and the bait looks interesting, but you need to pay careful attention and not overlook the hook. And here's the deal. Different fish have different bait, different people have different temptations. And what sometimes happens is, we sort of, we judge their bait. We sort of excuse our bait. I can't

believe you drink all the time. I can't believe you're religious and judgmental. So we're even. So we've all got our thing. For some of you it's sex, it's money, it's food, it's comfort, it's gambling, it's the version, distraction, it's people pleasing, it's fear of man, it's financial security. We've all got our thing. Don't judge their thing. You've got your thing. Their bait may be different than yours. And it's not about the bait. It's about helping one another see the hook. And the lie that Satan tells us is this is going to be enjoyable. And it will be, before it kills you. That's the point of sinful temptation. Satan is willing to give you a little bit of pleasure to bring to you a tremendous amount of pain. That's where he says don't be deceived. The deception is that it's gonna be okay. And it's not. The third is motherhood. And what he says is he uses this language, conceived and gives birth. So again, this, anytime you're talking to the ladies, this is dangerous. So I'll just ask some more questions. So ladies, in an ideal scenario, if a woman wants to be a mother, what would the hypothetical best scenario be for the pathway to that place? Find a man. Okay, now we're talking crazy 'cause we believe in men and women. Okay, so cra... Okay so, low binary, low binary. Thank you. Okay, so a woman finds a man and then what? Married. What about living in sleeping together? No. Oh, never even conceived of this. Just give me a moment to process all this new data. So there's a man and a woman, they don't live and sleep together until they're married. And then they live together and they sleep together. And then eventually a baby shows up in a marriage. This is crazy. That's the best place for the child to be. It doesn't mean if a child is in another context, that the grace of God is not there for them. What he's saying is this, in the same way that we birth life, we birth death. That is, you meet your temptation and you flirt with it, you date it, you sleep with it, and it gets you pregnant and a birth step in your life. That was the death. And that was a death. So what happens is, should you flirt with your temptation? No. Should you date your temptation? No. Should you sleep with your temptation? No. All it's gonna do is birth pain and death. So you create a clear boundary. Say I don't flirt with it. I don't date it. I don't move it into my house and I don't move it into my bed or my life because it's going to birth death, not life. And what he's saying is this friends, true or false? When the trial is the strongest, the temptation is the deepest. And this is where under pressure, we make some of our worst decisions and people are doing it in unprecedented ways. And let me say this, when people are choosing joy in their stuff or their sin, what they're really longing for is a blessing from Him. They really want a blessing from God on their, whether they know it or not. So he starts this section, blessed is the one who is steadfast under trial. How many of you would like to be blessed? Being steadfast under trial, those are the people that God promises to put blessing on them. So let me say this, your blessing is not in your stuff, your blessing is not in your sin, your blessing is only in His Spirit. Now, when we hear and think of this concept of blessing, some of people think, well, why does God bless them and not bless me? Let me say this, God doesn't bless people, He blesses a place. That place is under His word. So He's gonna tell us, coming up shortly, do not merely listen to the word and deceive yourselves. Do what it says. If you wanna be blessed, live in the place that God blesses, that is obedience to His word. There are people who live here and are blessed and they get sort of arrogant and they presume on the grace of God. And then they choose sin for a while. And they're like, why is the blessing stopped flowing? Because I've stopped obeying. In the same way that a good parent doesn't reward bad behavior, God cannot bless those who are in disobedience. If you wanna do what's wrong, God won't help you. If you wanna do what's right,

God will help you. But let me say this about blessing. Blessing doesn't always look like a blessing because oftentimes a blessing is wrapped in a trial, and it takes faith to see it. So talking about James, who was his mom? Mary. Mary was a teenage girl in a rural town, peasant family. An angel shows up and tells her, blessed are you. Here's the word that James uses, his mom was told you're the blessed one. Isaiah said the virgin would be with child Mary, God's picked you. She's blessed. What did her blessing look like? Her reputation was destroyed. Everybody in the small religious town thought she was running around on her fiance and lied to him and he was an idiot. So her whole life, her reputation is destroyed. In addition, her fiance hears that she's pregnant. They've not been together. His first instinct is, I'm not gonna marry you. I'm done with you. Oh gosh! Now, she could be a single mom with a destroyed reputation in a small religious town. True or false? That's a trial. For a teenage girl, that's a big trial. Here's the other trial. I got to be the mother of God, maybe as a single mother with a destroyed reputation in a small religious town. That's a trial. She's raising Jesus. He goes into public ministry. People hate Him, despise Him, oppose Him, attack Him, crucify Him. Mary is at the foot of Jesus's cross, watching her own son get murdered while people are cheering. Trial. I mean, incredible trial. Her son rises from the dead. Yay. Then goes to heaven and she doesn't get to see Him anymore. Trial. And then James, her other son who writes this book, Jude, her other son who writes another book of the Bible, Simon, another brother in church history. They all become pastors. They start preaching and teaching and they get used and abused just like Jesus was now. Now she's seeing all of her kids just get attacked and racked and maligned and destroyed. And then they're murdering another son and they're trying to murder another son. And her husband is gone. Joseph is a devout man. He's there early on, and then he disappears. Most people think he died. She's probably a broke widow whose oldest son is in Heaven, whose two other sons, she's planning the funeral for, and people are still trashing her reputation. The angels said, blessed are you. Sometimes the blessing is wrapped in the trial and it takes faith to see the blessing in the trial. I wrote this down for you, as I was praying for you. It'll take faith to believe that God will use something ugly to make your life beautiful. It will take faith to believe that God will use something that should have destroyed you to deliver you. It takes faith to believe that God would use something that should have broken you to heal you. And this is how our God works. And it takes faith to believe that when you have the worst trial out there, you can have the greatest joy in here, because our joy is not found in our stuff or our sin, but in the Spirit. It doesn't come up from the world. It comes down from the Lord. This is his concluding section. Joy comes from God more than it comes from life. James 1:16-18, "Do not be deceived," lemme say this, a lot of people are deceived. They're just deceived. "my beloved". Lemme just put this on you. And I put this on you. I didn't do this in proofs. I know it's gonna feel weird. Just do this. Okay? Lemme put this on you, beloved, you're not a burden, you're beloved. You're not a burden, you're beloved. That's the Father heart of God. You're like, here's my trials. Here's what I'm going through. I failed my test. I've given into my temptation. I've made bad decisions. The stuff Pastor Mark is talking about, it convicts me, that's true. God says, good thing, you're my beloved. I'm here to help. I'm here to put blessings on you. I'm here to put the Spirit on you. I'm here to put joy on you. I'm here to put hope on you. This is the Father heart of God. And I just want you to receive that. You don't work from the love of, let me say this, you don't work for the of God, you work from the love of God. God's love for you is not at the finish line. It's at the

starting line. It's not for those who earn it. It's for those who believe in Jesus, because He's earned it for us, and we receive it and we live from it. You are not a burden. You are beloved. It want you to receive that. Let's read the rest. "My beloved, every good and every perfect gift is from above". You know what? Trials come up from life, but gifts come down from God. "Coming down from the Father", that's the Father heart of God, "of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change". Here's the good news. Everything changes except for God. Who knows what the future holds? But I know the one who holds the future. "Of His own will, He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a first fruits of His creatures." What he's saying is the gifts, the blessing, the hope, the joy, it's the beginning, it's the first fruits. Let me say this, gifts come down. As trials come up, gifts come down. The more trials that come up, the more gifts that come down. This is the paradox of the Christian life. I'm not gonna get into my junk. Let me just say this. I've been through trials in my life, and I usually just live in a couple simultaneously. And what I find is the more the trials come up, the more the gifts come down. And what happens is, the gifts that come down, they pull me up so that I can endure the trials that are down. If you're not a Christian, let me tell you this. Jesus Christ is God, and He came down as a gift from the Father. And before you can deal with any problem, you need to deal with your sin problem and you need Jesus. And Jesus Christ is the gift that God sent down to those of us who have sinned and failed our test. We have chosen our stuff and we have chosen our sin and He comes down as our savior. If you've never received Jesus, that's why you're here. You are a sinner, He is a savior. You're not going up to God, God came down to you. His name is Jesus Christ. He passed all of His tests without sin, He died in your place for your sin, He rose to forgive your sin, He ascended into Heaven, right now, He is ruling and reigning with riches in a kingdom, and He prepares a place for you, if you will turn from sin and trust in Him. For those of us who are Christians, when Jesus goes up, He sends the Holy Spirit down. The Holy Spirit is the gift that comes down from the Father to the believer. You don't have the strength you need, but He does. You don't have the wisdom you need, but He does. You don't have the steadfastness you need, but He does. You don't have the knowledge you need, but He does. You don't have the fortitude that you need, but He does. And so what the Father does, He sends the Holy Spirit down to anoint and appoint the life of Jesus. Jesus goes up and they send the Holy Spirit down to live in you. As you're going through your trial, I want you to seek your gifts. As you're going through your trial, I want you to find your joy. I can't change everything that you are going through, but everything you're going through can be used of the Holy Spirit to change you. I love Him. Thanks for letting me teach you God's Word. I'm gonna pray and tell you what we're gonna do next. Father, thank you for an opportunity to study the Scriptures. Lord, there is nothing like your Word. We can scroll the internet all day and never be taught these things. Thank you that we now have discernment that we don't need to be deceived. Thank you that now we know the truth and we don't need to be held captive by the lies. Thank you that we know that the trials that we're enduring are not from you, but are used for you to bring us near and closer and dear to you. Holy Spirit, we just invite you to come down. We just confess Lord that there are trials around us and our stuff doesn't make it better, and our sin doesn't make it better. Only the Spirit makes it better. So Holy Spirit, I invite you. Can't command you, you're God. But we invite you, in Jesus's name, to come and fill and encourage and bless and strengthen and deliver your dear people, in Jesus's name. Amen.