



Faith Works When Life Goes off the Rails



BIG IDEA

When life goes off script, James tells us to consider it pure joy, not because trials are good, but because God uses them to test and grow our faith into perseverance, maturity, and completeness. Joy isn't the same as happiness; it's a steady, lasting peace that comes from knowing God, and it can coexist with pain.



ICE BREAKER

1. Think of a time your life went completely "off script." What was the moment you realized things weren't going to go the way you planned?
2. What's the difference between happiness and joy in your own words?
3. When you're going through something hard, is your instinct to talk to God about it, or to pull back from Him? Why do you think that is?



MAIN POINTS

Trials are a "when," not an "if." Pastor Rachel opened by sharing the story of her brother Noah's horse-riding accident, which shattered his pelvis and nearly severed his spine. James 1:2 doesn't say "if you face trials," it says "whenever." Life in a broken world guarantees moments that take us off script: sickness, loss, disappointment, broken relationships. We don't get to plan around them; we only get to decide how we respond.

Joy isn't the same as happiness. Happiness rises and falls with our circumstances. Joy is a lasting inner peace, comfort, and gladness that comes from God, a fruit of the Spirit that stays steady even when life is hard. James doesn't tell us to feel happy about trials; he tells us to consider it joy, because joy doesn't depend on the outcome, it depends on who God is.

Trials don't produce faith, they test and reveal it. "The testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:3). God doesn't send trials to destroy our faith; trials reveal what's already there, so it becomes evident to us and to the people watching our lives. When trials are met with faith, they produce perseverance, patience, and steadfastness. Met with unbelief, the same trials can produce bitterness and hopelessness instead.

Joy and pain can coexist, and lament is part of that. Pastor Rachel challenged us to normalize lament: bringing our grief, anger, and confusion honestly to God rather than suppressing it or only approaching Him with praise. Psalm 13 models this, raw honesty followed by renewed trust. God can hold both joy and pain because He is joy, and He understands pain intimately, including what it cost Him on the cross. As C.S. Lewis put it, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Joy is like an ember, not a bonfire. Faith often gets pictured as mountaintops and valleys, but both are temporary. Joy is better pictured as an ember: quiet, easy to miss, but never fully out, and able to reignite. Whether we're on the mountaintop or in the valley, God is doing a work in us, "let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:4).



1. What's a trial in your life right now (or in the past) that took you completely off script?

DISCUSS	- Why do you think James says "when" you face trials rather than "if"? - What's the difference for you between saying "everything happens for a reason" and saying "God will be glorified through this"? - Have you ever experienced joy and pain at the same time? What did that look like? - Are you currently more on a "mountaintop," in a "valley," or in the quiet ember in-between? What would it look like to bring that honestly to God this week?
NEXT STEP	Jesus First: Read Psalm 13 this week and practice lament, bring God your honest grief, confusion, or frustration, not just your praise. People Always: Reach out to someone you know who's in a hard season. You don't have to fix it, just remind them God hasn't abandoned them, and they're not meant to carry it alone. Made for More: If you're struggling, don't stay silent, talk to a Group leader, the prayer team, or a pastor. And if you're on a mountaintop right now, ask God how He wants to use your story to bring hope to someone else.
SCRIPTURE	James 1:2-4 Psalm 13:1-6 2 Corinthians 4:16-8
NEXT WEEK SNEAK PEAK	Join us next weekend as Pastor Shan continues our Faith That Works series in James with "A Faith That Wins the Battle of Our Minds." Invite someone to join you and don't miss the journey ahead!

	
 IDEA PRINCIPAL	
 ROMPEHIELOS	
 PUNTOS PRINCIPALES	
 CONVERSEN	
 PRÓXIMO PRIMERO	
 ESCRITURAS	
 ADELANTO DE LA PRÓXIMA SEMANA	

Questions or Feedback? Email Groups@CentralAZ.com