

# HOW TO BEAR UP WHEN LIFE BEARS DOWN

*James 1:1-12*

Does your life at times seem to be living proof of Murphy's Law? Have you ever felt like a human punching bag? Did you think that all this would stop as soon as you became a Christian? James writes for people just like us and tells us, without denying the pain, how to weather life's storms.

## What Does It Say?



*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.*

## What Does It Mean?

### Who is James?

Look up James' identity in a Bible dictionary.

Kent Hughes said that James could have introduced himself as "*James the Just, from the sacred womb of Mary, sibling of Jesus Christ, confidant of the Messiah*" but instead what does he say?

What lessons do you think James' personal spiritual history has taught him by the time he writes this letter?

Who did you think Jesus was before you recognized him as your Lord and Savior?

How does 2 Corinthians 5:16 relate to this?

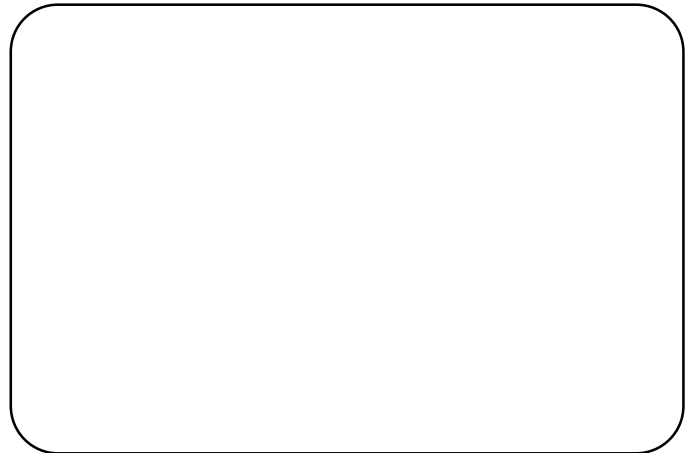
Why do you think James addresses his readers as the "twelve tribes"?

*"James used to enter into the temple and be found kneeling and praying for forgiveness for the people, so that his knees grew hard like a camel's because of his constant worship of God... So from his excessive righteousness he was called James the Just."*

Eusebius

<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

There are 54 imperatives in the book of James, and he starts off with verse 2. Make a list of what you consider to be the key words in verses 2-4. Do **word studies** on any or all of them, until you have a good feel for what James is saying.



Does James say that trials automatically produce maturity?

Using a Bible dictionary or Bible word-book (such as Vine's or Richards), come up with a Biblical definition of wisdom (the following verses may help): Job 28:12-28, Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, 9:10

Read about Solomon's unique request in 1 Kings 3:9.

Does natural knowledge produce wisdom? Listen to this quote from Albert Einstein: *"In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God."*

Does verse 6 mean that if we have any doubt at all, we're sunk?

*"We can choose to gather to our hearts the thorns of disappointment, failure, loneliness, and dismay due to our present situation, or we can gather the flowers of God's grace,..."*

Barbara Johnson

Does **Mark 9:24** shed any light on this?

Summarize James' teaching in verses 5-8 in the form of a **spiritual principle**:

<sup>9</sup> *The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.*

<sup>10</sup> *But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.* <sup>11</sup> *For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.*

*"I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit just hovering over the great gulf; a few months from now I will be seen no more; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing - the way to heaven."*

John Wesley

<sup>12</sup> *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

GK Chesterton said: "a paradox is truth standing on its head shouting for attention." What truth is James trying to point out in **verses 9-11**?

How does **Isaiah 40:6-8** apply?

What do you think is the "crown of life"?

You've already written a principle for the first section of this passage. Now write ones for the last two sections:

2. (vs 9-11)

3. (vs 12)

How do you usually react to problems?

Do you try to ignore them, hoping they'll go away?

Do you try to run over them in a frenzy of activity?

Or do you freeze up and worry about them?

How can God help?

*"My life is but a weaving, between the Lord and me; I cannot choose the colors. He worketh steadily. Oftimes He weaveth sorrow and I in foolish pride, Forget He sees the upper and I the under side. Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly, Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why, The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand, As the threads of gold and silver, in the pattern He has planned."*