



LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE COMMENTARY





LIFE
APPLICATION[®]
Bible Commentary

JAMES



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Life Application Bible Commentary: James

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2 PETER:

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NEW TESTAMENT

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The church begins (Acts 1)	35 Paul's conversion (Acts 9)	46 Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13)	58 Paul arrested (Acts 21)
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between 60–65

55–65

about 60

about 63–65

about 61

about 62

about 61

about 64

about 66–67

about 64

about 61

HEBREWS: probably before 70

about 62–64

about 67

about 65

JOHN: probably 80–85

1 JOHN: between 85–90

2 JOHN: about 90

3 JOHN: about 90

REVELATION: about 95

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68
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80

79 *Mt. Vesuvius erupts in Italy*

About 75
John begins ministry in Ephesus

75
Rome begins construction of Colosseum

90

100

About 98
John's death at Ephesus

FOREWORD

The Life Application Bible Commentary series provides verse-by-verse explanation, background, and application for every verse in the New Testament. In addition, it gives personal help, teaching notes, and sermon ideas that will address needs, answer questions, and provide insight for applying God's Word to life today. The content is highlighted so that particular verses and phrases are easy to find.

Each volume contains three sections: introduction, commentary, and reference. The introduction includes an overview of the book, the book's historical context, a time line, cultural background information, major themes, an overview map, and an explanation about the author and audience.

The commentary section includes running commentary on the Bible text with reference to several modern versions, especially the New International Version and the New Revised Standard Version, accompanied by life applications interspersed throughout. Additional elements include charts, diagrams, maps, and illustrations. There are also insightful quotes from church leaders and theologians such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, A. W. Tozer, and C. S. Lewis. These features are designed to help you quickly grasp the biblical information and be prepared to communicate it to others.

The reference section includes a bibliography of other resources, short articles on specific topics, and an index.

INTRODUCTION

In this epistle James addresses practical issues that are as current as this morning's newspaper, and yet his challenges are not dated. The timeless truth that James presents is that Christians must put their faith into action. The faith that Christians claim must be demonstrated in all the situations and circumstances of life—at work, at home, in the neighborhood, in church. Trials and hardships are not to be seen as hindrances to faith, but as opportunities to exercise healthy faith. Knowing God's Word is not enough. That knowledge must be applied to our everyday lives. Real faith is the application of God's truth to ourselves.

AUTHOR

James, son of Joseph and half brother of Jesus, also known as "James the Just."

What would it have been like to have Jesus in the family? Would Mary and Joseph wonder about their parental responsibilities? Would younger brothers and sisters be jealous, resentful, or awestruck? Would these children have seen anything special about their eldest sibling? Because there is so little information in Scripture about Jesus' early years, we can only speculate about what it would be like to have Jesus as a son or as an older brother. But such was the experience of James, the author of this book that bears his name.

We know very little about the relationship between James and Jesus. We do know, however, that the townsfolk who saw Jesus as a boy and young man rejected his adult claim to be the Messiah and were amazed at his wisdom and miraculous powers (Matthew 13:53-58). Evidently Jesus had kept a low profile in Nazareth. These skeptical neighbors included James in their description of Jesus' family: "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (Matthew 13:55-56 NIV; see also Mark 6:1-6).

At one point in Jesus' ministry, his "family" tried to stop him

and “restrain him” (Mark 3:21 NRSV); presumably James was one of the family members who claimed that Jesus was “out of his mind.”

Certainly Mary and Joseph knew who Jesus was. After all, they had heard the angels predict his miraculous conception (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:38-56), and they had been present at his birth (Luke 2:1-7). In fact, “Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19 NRSV). They also had seen the boy Jesus grow and mature, with profound wisdom beyond his years (Luke 2:40, 49-52). Surely Mary and Joseph would have explained Jesus’ true identity to the rest of the family. But James and the others (including Jude, the author of the book of Jude) remained unconvinced. John explains, “For even His brothers did not believe in Him” (John 7:5 NKJV).

Yet, just a few years after that incident, James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17). We don’t know how James attained that important position (Clement of Alexandria wrote that he was chosen for the office by Peter and John), but clearly he was the leader. In fact, when controversy over Gentile believers threatened to divide the church, Barnabas and Paul met with the elders and apostles in Jerusalem and submitted to their authority with James as the moderator, spokesman, and announcer of the final decision (Acts 15:1-21).

Later, just before Paul’s arrest, Paul brought money that he had collected for the church in Jerusalem on his third missionary journey to James and the rest of the elders and “reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry” (Acts 21:19 NIV).

That *this* James is the James mentioned earlier as Jesus’ brother is confirmed by Paul in Galatians 1:18-19: “Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother” (NIV). Later Paul adds, “James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me” (Galatians 2:9 NIV). And he mentions that “certain people came from James” (Galatians 2:12 NRSV).

What changed James from a skeptical younger brother to a committed follower of Jesus and outspoken leader of the church? He saw his brother alive—he saw the risen Christ!

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul lists the eyewitnesses to the Resurrection: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and

VITAL STATISTICS

Purpose: To expose hypocritical practices and to teach right Christian behavior

Author: James, Jesus' brother, a leader in the Jerusalem church

To whom written: First-century Jewish Christians residing in Gentile communities outside Palestine, and to all Christians everywhere

Date written: Probably A.D. 49, prior to the Jerusalem council held in A.D. 50

Setting: This letter expresses James's concern for persecuted Christians who were once part of the Jerusalem church

Key verse: "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (2:18).

OUTLINE

1. Genuine religion (1:1-27)
2. Genuine faith (2:1-3:12)
3. Genuine wisdom (3:13-5:20)



Modern names and boundaries are shown in gray.

James addressed his letter “to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (1:1 NIV). After Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:55–8:2), persecution increased, and Christians in Jerusalem were scattered throughout the Roman world. There were thriving Jewish communities in Rome, Alexandria, Cyprus, and cities in Greece and Asia Minor.

Because these believers did not yet have the support of established Christian churches, James, as a concerned leader, wrote to encourage them in their faith during that difficult time.

James 1

GREETINGS / 1:1

How often do we open a letter without checking to see who sent it? Ancient letter writers signed their names right at the beginning, so readers immediately knew the source. Modern readers of the New Testament, however, frequently skip over the address. It strikes us as unimportant. Our oversight is a mistake. The first verses of New Testament books often tell us the writer's identity and how the writers perceived their roles. In James's case, these helpful insights prepare us for the entire letter. We treat letters with more respect when we understand who sent them and why.



THEMES IN JAMES 1

Chapter 1 of this letter functions like an overture to a great piece of music. Themes are introduced to which the writer will return later in the letter. There are four main themes in the first chapter.

1. Joyful living requires self-control and contentment. Even in trials, joy should be our chosen response. Joy allows us to endure the test until it has accomplished its purpose. So, contentment leads to self-control, which clears the way for further contentment. Understanding the purposes of trials and the importance of joy will require wisdom, which comes from God. Are you content?
 2. Wisdom combines what we know with what we must do. God is our source of wisdom. He is willing to give complete wisdom to all those who ask him in faith. God's wisdom is not just a certain way of knowing or thinking. Like faith, it is practical and active. Have you asked for it?
 3. Hypocrisy occurs whenever belief and action are separated. For the Christian, hypocrisy is unacceptable. God's wisdom leads us away from hypocrisy and toward a life of hearing and doing God's commands. Are you listening to and doing what God has said?
 4. Christians must live their faith, not just talk about it. Real Christianity is ethics at the very core. Are you doing what you say you believe?
-

1:1 James. James is mentioned by name only a few times elsewhere in the New Testament (Matthew 13:53-55; Acts 1:12-14; 15:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Galatians 1:19; 2:7-9). But as the leader of the Jerusalem church, he was known on a first-name basis by the rapidly expanding Christian world. By simply using his first name, James manages to convey both humility and authority as he signs his letter. He could have identified himself as “brother of Jesus” or “leader of the Jerusalem church,” but the only addition to his name is the title of servant. Real authority doesn’t need to promote itself. It was often said that Jesus spoke with unusual authority (Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:22, 27). The quality of Jesus’ message had the ring of truth. James’s name must have conveyed that same kind of authority. He felt no need to identify himself as Jesus’ brother. It was not that role that gave James his authority anyway. His authority came from recognizing and confessing that Jesus, his brother, was also his Lord.

There is no city, no tribe, whether Greek or barbarian, in which Jewish law and Jewish customs have not taken root. *Josephus*

The effectiveness of our spiritual authority will always depend on the source of that authority. Religious education, titles, power, accomplishments, reputation, and self-image are short-lived and ineffective substitutes for a vital and obedient relationship with Jesus Christ. When we know Christ as Lord and obey him, we find his authority sufficient. He will be reflected in what we say and do.

Servant of God. The Greek word *doulos* (slave, servant) refers to a position of complete obedience, utter humility, and unshakable loyalty. Obedience was the work, humility was the position, and loyalty was the relationship that a master expected from a slave. Many of the first followers of Christ were, in fact, slaves. But among Christians, the idea of being a slave of Christ became not a position of humiliation, but a place of honor. There can be no greater tribute to a believer than to be known as God’s obedient, humble, and loyal servant. When we struggle to display any one of those qualities, we will tend to be weak in the others also. If Jesus actually is our Lord, our actions must be obedient to him, our attitude must be humble before him, and our life must be loyal to him.

Lord Jesus Christ. The three names that make up this title refer to the unique character of Jesus. He is the heavenly, exalted *Lord* who will one day return in glory to this world. He is *Jesus*, God

come to earth as a human being. He is *Christ*, the anointed one who fulfilled God's purposes by dying for us.



JESUS AS LORD

The identification of Jesus Christ as Lord was a radical statement in James's time. To the Jews it was blasphemous because no human could be called "Lord," and to the Romans it was treason against the authority of the emperor. To everyone who claimed it, it was a sign of giving Christ control over life, career, and ultimate destiny. Thousands of believers eventually lost their lives in horrible ways because they would not take back their statement: "Jesus is Lord."

Today there are few places in the world where claiming Jesus as Lord is openly forbidden. This may be because the world has become a better place. But it is more likely that the world has simply discovered that today's believers don't quite mean it as seriously and completely when they say "Jesus is Lord" as the early believers did. Perhaps the biggest difference is that early Christians backed up what they said with their very lives, while today "Jesus is Lord" is merely a cliché, a slogan, or a bumper sticker. The unspoken question of the entire letter of James is: To what degree will you be a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

The twelve tribes. The original twelve tribes of Israel no longer existed. Deportation of the ten northern tribes had effectively destroyed their identity. All that was left of that part of Israel were the mixed-race Samaritans who were despised by the Jews. By the time of this letter the term *the twelve tribes* had come to describe the regathered and renewed Israel that God would create in the last days (Ezekiel 47:13; Matthew 19:28; Revelation 7:4-8; 21:12). That regathering has been made possible by Jesus the Messiah.

Scattered.^{NRSV} The phrase "scattered among the nations" translates the Greek word *diaspora*, a technical term referring to Jews who had left Palestine by force or by choice. The deportation of Jews to foreign lands had been practiced since the days of the Assyrians over six hundred years before Christ. But many Jews had also emigrated to other lands in the quest for wealth and opportunity. This network of Jewish communities scattered throughout the Roman Empire became the stepping stone for the spread of the gospel. The book of Acts describes the missionary pattern of Paul and others. In almost every town they visited, the

presence of a Jewish synagogue gave them an open forum from which to communicate the Good News. What history records as the splintering of the nation of Israel was used by God to facilitate the spread of his Word.

Following the resurrection of Christ and the early successes of the young church in Jerusalem, the believers were severely persecuted. They were forced to escape to distant places. Taking their faith with them, they began to carry out the commission Christ had given his disciples in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (NKJV).

The sense of accountability to the church in Jerusalem remained strong until the destruction of the city in A.D. 70. Paul's missionary journeys included reports to the apostles there. Early conflicts within the church were discussed and settled in Jerusalem (Acts 15). This letter from James indicates that there may have been regular channels of communication between groups of believers.

Greetings. As if to acknowledge the foreign environment of the believers to whom he is writing, James uses a typical Greek expression for his greeting. The term he uses, *chairein*, conveys a sense of joy or happiness. James will not delay in moving to the pressing matters which have motivated his letter. This same greeting (Acts 15:23) is used in the first circular letter written to believers outside Jerusalem after the first special council, recorded in Acts 15. James helped write that letter also.

ENDURING TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS / 1:2-18

James wrote to believers facing difficult times. Their troubles ranged from personal trials to disabling doubts; from persecution for following Christ to the lure of respectability in their community and the dangers of spiritual pride. James wrote to encourage his brothers and sisters in their faith.

James's approach illustrates the variety of forms that encouragement can take. At times, James confronts. In other places, he gently encourages. He uses hyperbole (extreme illustration) in a way that reminds us of his half brother, Jesus. Sparks and forest fires, rudders and large ships create mental pictures like Jesus created with his needles and camels. James even uses humor as a tool to encourage. He is clearly someone who practices the truth of Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (NIV). He begins his letter looking directly at trials and daring to spur his fellow

believers with a challenge: “Meet the very worst that life presents you with joy.”

1:2 Consider it pure joy . . . whenever you face trials.^{NIV} How can a person consider trials a reason for joy? This is a remarkable command—we are to choose to be joyful in situations where joy would naturally be our last response. When certain circumstances make us angry and we want to blame the Lord, James directs us to the healthier alternative—joy. When trials come, “don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends” (Phillips). Those who trust in God ought to exhibit a dramatically different, positive response to the difficult events of life.

Our attitude is to be one of *pure joy* (genuine rejoicing). This is not joyful anticipation *for* trials. Instead, it is joy *during* trials. The joy is based on confidence in the outcome of the trial. It is the startling realization that trials represent the possibility of growth. In contrast, most people are happy when they escape trials. But James encourages us to consider it pure joy in the very face of trials. The response he is describing may include a variety of feelings, but it is not simply based on emotions. James is not encouraging believers to pretend to be happy. Rejoicing goes beyond happiness. Happiness centers on earthly circumstances and how well things are going here. Joy is God-oriented rather than event-oriented because it centers on God and his presence in our experience.



JOY

Joy is a deep sense of well-being that may at the same time embrace sorrow, tears, laughter, anger, pain. Joy is more a decision than a feeling. It is choosing to live above feelings but not deny them. It is not intense happiness, although choosing joy sometimes produces happiness. Joy is a particularly Christian response to life since it depends on faith in God’s sovereignty. It is quiet and grateful, and it inwardly delights in the goodness of God. Joy can be understood in the context of the two other main responses to life:

1. *Drifting*. Some float in the ebb and flow of life’s experiences, hoping one moment and despairing the next. This response leaves the person entirely at the mercy of the events of life.
2. *Pretending*. Some pretend to be happy, determined to put up a good front, no matter what the circumstances. In comparison with these two, joy is more honest. It admits to hurts. It recognizes suffering and willingly participates in it. Joy is a contentment that comes from realizing that nothing can “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

Consider means “chalk it up” or “regard it as.” Count it pure joy because your experience of trial is evidence that you will grow. Don’t let pain or struggle take away the joy of new growth, new insight, new depth, or new dependency. Focus on the future benefits of your difficult time.

My brothers. By using this term repeatedly, James emphasizes Christian solidarity with all who read his letter. It reminds us that the lessons in this book are for us. We rarely have to face trials alone. Believers always have Christ with them; they also have one another. When we attempt to manage pain, loneliness, failure, and other trials alone, we are not using the resources that God has made available through other believers. We are here to help each other. We are not to go it alone!

Whenever you face trials. *Whenever* doesn’t allow much room for doubt. We are urged to be joyful not *if* we face trials, but *whenever*. To *face* trials is more literally expressed as to “fall into” trials. These are the unavoidable difficulties of life. Falling into trials is like falling among robbers, as did the traveler in Luke 10:30. Trials, problems, situations can be joy-robbers if we lack the proper attitude. Later in the chapter (1:13-15), James deals more directly with temptations that are self-inflicted. But there will be times when, no matter where we turn, we encounter trials.

Trials of many kinds. Where do these trials come from? They can be hardships from without or temptations from within. They come when we are least prepared and when we are most certain they could never come. A trial may be a hard situation that tests a person’s faith such as persecution, a difficult moral choice, or a tragedy. Life’s trail is marked with such trials. Enduring one trial is not enough. God’s purpose in allowing this process is to develop complete maturity in us.

Considering your trials to be joy comes from seeing life with God’s perspective in mind. We may not be able to understand the specific reasons for God’s allowing certain experiences to crush us or wear us down, but we can be confident that his plan is for our good. What may look hopeless or impossible to us never looks that way to God!

- 1:3 The testing of your faith produces endurance.**^{NRSV} *Dokimion* is the Greek word translated *testing*; it means “approved after testing.” Although we tend to think of testing as a way to prove what we don’t know or don’t have, testing ought to be seen as a positive opportunity to prove what we have learned. *Testing* is an

important term because it is positive rather than negative. This is the exact term used in 1 Peter 1:6-7 for “proved genuine” and means that the trial is God’s attempt to prove our faith genuine. It is a test that has a positive purpose. The person being tested should become stronger and purer through the testing. In this case, the trials do not determine whether or not believers have faith; rather, the trials strengthen believers by adding perseverance to the faith that is already present.

Endurance is faith stretched out; it involves trusting God for a long duration. In the context of the rest of the New Testament, it is important to see that James is not questioning the faith of his readers—he assumes that they trust in Christ. He is not convincing people to believe; he is encouraging believers to remain faithful to the end. James knows that their faith is real, but it lacks maturity.

We cannot really know our own depth until we see how we react under pressure. Diamonds are coal, subjected to intense pressure over a period of time. Without pressure, coal remains coal. The testing of your faith is the combined pressure that life brings to bear on you. Perseverance is the intended outcome of this testing. Other words that could be used for this outcome include “endurance,” “steadfastness,” “fortitude,” and “staying power.” The word *endurance* has a particular connection with this diamondlike quality created by testing, since the Latin root of this word means “to harden.” Perseverance is not a passive submission to circumstances—it is a strong and active response to the difficult events of life. It is not passive endurance, but the quality of standing on your feet as you face the storms. It is not simply the attitude of withstanding trials, but the ability to turn them into glory, to overcome them.



THE PRACTICE FIELD OF FAITH

It is not just being tested that is good for us but passing the test. The testing is not just to see if you made the team, but to prepare you for higher service. It is like being proven in practice so you will be prepared for tougher competition.

Produces. This word was commonly used in agriculture to indicate the harvest or yield. Testing of faith produces a harvest, or the final product, perseverance. The results are gradual. There is an end in sight, but arriving there takes time.

When the writer of Hebrews portrayed the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11), the outstanding characteristic of the Old Testament

men and women of faith was their endurance. They lived on a promise. They acted in faith. “Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised” (Hebrews 11:39 NRSV). They stayed true to God even when they faced one of the most difficult hardships of all—not seeing the fulfillment of what had been promised to them. Elsewhere in the New Testament, perseverance is also noted as one of the essential parts of the believer’s life (see Romans 2:7; 5:3-5; 8:24-25; 2 Corinthians 6:3-7; 2 Peter 1:2-9).

What makes trials so difficult to endure? It is not our nature to endure. When it comes to trials, we would rather escape, explain, or exit the difficulty. In fact, we will tend to do almost anything to avoid enduring a trial.



REACTIONS TO TRIALS

- *Escape*—Our first line of defense is to avoid, deny, or escape. We don’t want to face trials; we would sooner keep our back to them. But James is not writing here about avoidable trials. These are not difficulties to look for so we can practice endurance. These are trials and temptations that come looking for us.

Escape is certainly a valid strategy when it comes to those temptations and trials that we willfully walk right into by our habits or wrong choices. These are temptations that Paul urges us to “flee from” (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Timothy 6:3-11). The list includes envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and sexual immorality. Peter reminds us that the problems caused by our disobedience need to be handled differently: “But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God” (1 Peter 2:20).

James gives us a plan for the worst-case scenario. It is James’s answer to one of our questions: “When we are following Christ and find ourselves facing trials of many kinds, what do we do when there seems no way to escape?”

- *Explain*—When we face trials, we tend to ask, “Why is this happening to me?” If only we could understand God’s reasons, it would be much easier to endure whatever we are suffering. If we can explain, we can endure. But insisting on specific answers actually weakens our endurance. James does not encourage us to expect understanding. He urges us to get on with our service with joyful endurance, rather than attempt to explain every event that God allows into our life. What do we do when we face trials of many kinds and cannot explain them?
- *Exit*—Once a trial is upon us, we want to get beyond it as quickly as possible. Any shortcut offered is tempting. But quick solutions to trials often involve compromise in areas that we should not negotiate. The temptation to revert to an

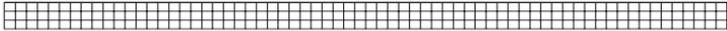
old pattern, or indulge a habit, has not been joyfully endured if our resistance has only lasted a few minutes. Trials should not be allowed to outlast us; we are to outlast trials. Unfortunately, we are very much like the people who claim they are serious about training for long-distance races, but only succeed in running around the block once. A taste of hardship is no trial.

Even the commanded response of joy in trials will disappoint us if we expect that joy will eliminate the need for endurance. Our joy must itself develop endurance. At this point, our best example is Jesus, “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2 NIV). James does not hesitate to encourage us in joyful endurance when our question is “What do we do when we face trials and there is no quick exit?”

1:4 Let endurance have its full effect.^{NRSV} The word *perseverance* in Greek (*hupomone*) suggests “steadfastness under trial.” What faithful perseverance generates is a whole person, recognized by three significant characteristics:

1. **Mature**^{NRSV}—seasoned, experienced, well-developed, fit for the tasks God sent us into the world to do. Maturity in this sense is not related to age. It is a quality developed by how much we have learned from the trials we have experienced. Someone has defined *experience* as the ability to recognize a mistake when we make it again. Maturity is the ability to recognize a mistake before we make it again. It is a trained ability to learn from each previous experience. But maturity takes time.
- By the way in which we meet every experience in life we are either fitting or unfitting ourselves for the task which God meant us to do. *William Barclay*
2. **Complete**—fully trained. The weaknesses and imperfections are being removed from our character; we are gaining victory over old sins; we are demonstrating a sense of competence about life. This completeness relates to the breadth of our experience. We have passed through **trials of many kinds**. To be complete means that we have become mature in many areas of life. God does not want cheap substitutes, but thoroughly developed Christians.
 3. **Not lacking anything**^{NIV}—the basic life skills are there, ready to be used; the obvious weaknesses or blind spots of the past have been corrected; more and more clearly we mirror Christ himself! We will not be lacking anything when we are mature

and complete in all the essential areas of life. Although this last quality is stated in the negative, it describes a security or contentment that comes from knowing that God has what we need, when we need it. Believing in God’s faithfulness, we have everything we need.



TESTED FAITH IS STRONG FAITH

Tested faith brings about a depth of character	Romans 5:3-5
Tested faith enables us to comfort and encourage others	Corinthians 1:3-5
Tested faith increases dependence on God for wisdom	James 1:5; 3:17-18
Tested faith encourages us to lead a productive and effective life	2 Peter 1:5-9
Tested faith helps us to identify with Christ	Matthew 4:1-11 Hebrews 5:7-10
Tested faith allows us to focus on our future hope in Christ	Romans 8:18-24

Scripture does not promise us perfection in this life. So to be mature and complete is not sinless perfection. These terms describe a person who is fully committed to obeying God’s commands. Perfection, as the Bible defines it for believers, is a right relationship with God expressed in a life of obedience. The work of perseverance is never done in this life, but there must be substantial progress. The writer of Hebrews is insistent: “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God” (Hebrews 6:1 NIV).

Where there is testing, there are failures along the way. It is possible to experience trials and *not* learn from them or develop perseverance. Growth is not guaranteed. But James fully expects believers to respond to trials with joy because they understand that the process is producing a deeper, more certain faith. He would expect no less from us.

1:5 If James 1:2-4 describes the benefits of responding correctly to trials, this verse draws attention to our hopelessness without

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