

PRESSURE POINTS: Enduring Life's Difficulties & Subtle Dangers

Andy Deane · 9/1/2024 · James 1:1-18

Moments of intense pressure in our lives, reveal the current state of our character and belief in God, much like how pressure points in the body can reveal underlying issues.

HOW CAN DISCIPLES ENDURE TRIALS & TEMPTATION?

With surprising joy & effective perseverance

James 1:1-4, 1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1. We can have real joy in really difficult moments.
2. This joy is possible no matter what we're going through.
3. It helps to remember that trials test our faith.
4. And when faith & trials combine it produces perseverance.
5. We don't want to miss out on anything of the character growth that God wants to give us.

With humble prayers leading to divine insight

James 1:5-8, 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

1. We may not lack wisdom if we already know the storyline of Scripture.
2. But if we do lack we should definitely ask questions like these:
 - What character traits is God developing in me through this trial?
 - How can I find peace and joy in God, despite my circumstances?
 - What promises from Scripture can I hold onto during this time?
 - What does it mean to walk by faith, not by sight, in this situation?
 - How can I use this experience to encourage or help others in the future?
 - How can I reflect Christ more in my response to this situation?
3. He promises us that wisdom will gladly be given to us.
4. Don't be unstable and think that God is distant, uncaring, or powerless. Instead, believe and trust Him!

With a proper perspective on what truly matters

James 1:9-12a, 9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 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 will fade away even while they go about their business. 12a Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life

1. We must elevate spiritual blessings above material ones in our mind.
2. If you're poorer, remember your rich eternal state in Christ.
3. If you're richer, don't forget your fragile physical state on earth.
4. No matter your earthly state now, focus on your eternal state in Jesus Christ.

With eyes open to temptation's slippery slope

James 1:12b-18, 12b...that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

1. The best way to fight temptation is growing a greater love for Christ.

"The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one...The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself?" — Thomas Chalmers

2. It's helpful to know the source of our temptations (it's not God, and it is our evil desires from within).

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." — C.S. Lewis

3. It's terrifying to know the endgame of temptation and sin...death!

4. A barrier to temptation is remembering God's goodness:

- It's delusion to think we create our blessing.
- All that's truly good for us is a gift from God our Father.
- When we're tempted, let's remember how good God's been to us!
- His greatest gift is our new birth in Christ!

THIS WEEK:

As we reflect on James 1, we see that the pressures of life are not without purpose. God allows trials and temptations not to break us, but to build us—to reveal where our faith needs strengthening and to draw us closer to Him. Each of these pressure points, whether they come in the form of trials, temptations, or life's uncertainties, serves as a refining fire, shaping us into the mature, complete disciples that God desires us to be.

When it comes to our faith in God:

- If we've been faking it — repent of it.
- If we're struggling — pray to God.
- If we're in a good season — help someone.