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WEEK ONE – ENDURING TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

Reading: James 1:1-18

Background: Although most scholars believe this book was written by James, the brother of Jesus, there is no concrete evidence to support this. However, there is much that gives credence to this belief. Of all the New Testament epistles, the book of James contains the most similarities to the teachings of Jesus. Whilst Paul and others were bringing new ideas and revelations, James is stressing the importance of living out the teaching of the Gospels. He was not a believer during the lifetime of Jesus, [John 7:3-5](#), but according to Acts, became a leader in the early days of the church.

[1 Corinthians 15:7](#) tell us that after Jesus was seen by Peter and the other disciples, he was seen by over five hundred men at once, many of whom were still alive. However, he was then seen by James, and by all the apostles. So, a post-resurrection appearance seems to have been the vital evidence that persuaded James to believe Jesus was indeed, the Son of God.

- Each one of us will have had different experiences and it is good to share these with one another. How did you become a believer in Jesus? What was the turning point for you?

Following his brief salutation, James jumps straight into a subject that causes concern for many people, that of trials and temptations.

- How, according to verse 2, should we respond to troubles?
- Why is it necessary to go through these experiences?
- Read 2 Corinthians 11:23b-27. Philippians 3:13-14.
- Does this help to put our trials into perspective?

Why do verses 6-7 of this first chapter talk about wisdom?

- Do we suffer from doubts and unbelief?
- How often do we ask God for wisdom? ([James 1:5](#)) The song we sing says: *“God I look to You, you’re where my help comes from, give me wisdom, You know just what to do.”*

- Why is it important to have wisdom?

Verses 12-18 deals with the difficult topic of temptations. However long you have been on your Christian journey, there will always be temptations. Jesus himself said: *“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* ([John 16:33](#)).

In [Luke 4:1-13](#), we read how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness during a forty-day period of fasting. Long periods of fasting can lead to weakness both in body and spirit, but Jesus was able to withstand all the temptations of Satan. Even though he was the Son of God, Jesus was also human but at no time did he succumb to Satan, or his own physical needs and verse 13 tells us that Satan left him until another opportunity came around.

One writer says: *“When God brings us into a difficult situation, it is for the purpose to grow our faith. We call this a **trial**. When the devil brings us into a difficult situation, it is for the purpose to demolish our faith. We call this a **temptation**.”* We need the wisdom of God to understand how to deal with these difficult times in our lives.

Andre Crouch, a well-known gospel singer, wrote a song entitled *“Through it all”*, which says that God only allows trials to make us strong and that through it all we learn to trust him and depend on his word.

- How did Jesus respond to the temptations of Satan?
- What can we learn from this?

We are all tempted in different ways. Never dismiss those who fall into temptation. We have different areas of weakness and Satan knows how to use those against us.



Prayer:

Father strengthen us in our faith that we may stand strong in times of trial.