

## CLINGING TO HOPE

## STUDY ONE

## When Troubles Come and Stay

*James 1:2–12*

*A trial is a faith test through which endurance has a chance to grow. James has the audacity to say, “Let it grow. Learn from the trial. As a result, maturity develops.”*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**ROUBLE usually strikes when we least expect it. It appears out of the blue, like a cloudburst on a summer day that whips up a furious windstorm and sends us scurrying for cover. A sickness, an auto accident, a job loss, an expensive repair bill. Who hasn't felt the downpour from sudden and unexpected squalls like these?

Most of life's troubles come and go, and the skies soon clear. But some of life's storms come and stay, and they wreak lasting damage—like Hurricane Harvey.

In 2017, this monster, Category 4 hurricane lashed the Gulf Coast of Texas for four dreadful days. The storm dropped 40 inches of rain in some places and flooded vast regions. Lives were lost and whole communities were destroyed. When people were able to return to their homes, they faced months of sifting through soggy belongings and digging through mud and muck as they tried to rebuild.

What do we do when our storm settles in and the consequences stretch for months, even years? A cancer diagnosis. The unexpected loss of a loved one. Domestic violence. A company-shattering lawsuit. Family conflicts that never seem to resolve.



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## When Troubles Come and Stay

*James 1:2–12*

During life's storms, Scripture parts the clouds to reveal a rainbow of hope—God's enduring presence. God does not leave His children to weather times of trouble alone. At just the right moment, He enters our lives to give us courage, strength, guidance and . . . sometimes . . . relief.

What is God's perspective of trials? How does He come alongside His people? How can we find hope in Him? Let's turn to the book of James to find some answers.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Word, invite the Holy Spirit to illumine your heart with His truth. You may wish to pray like this:

*Father, speak to me through the passage of Scripture I study today. Help me understand the truths it contains. I open my ears to hear Your instructions. I open my eyes to see Your hand at work in my life. Lead me in Your path. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

*Searching the Scriptures* is a four-step Bible study method. In the observation phase, we look at what the biblical passage says. The next phase is interpretation, in which we seek to understand the meaning the author intended. Correlation draws on similar passages to understand our passage within the broader biblical context. Finally, application answers the practical question, "How can I put into action the principles I learned?"



#### *Searching the Scriptures* Tip

For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck Swindoll on this method, consult the Insight for Living Ministries online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



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### Observation: The Basics about Troubles

To observe is simply to pay close attention to the words on the page. Take your time as you read. Notice the action words. Look for commands, statements of truth, contrasts and comparisons, figures of speech, and cause-and-effect. Careful observation is the key to accurate understanding.

### The Truth about Troubles—James 1:2–4

Read *James 1:2–4*. How did James address his readers? What does this address indicate about his relationship with them?

In 1:1, James addressed his letter to “Jewish believers scattered abroad.” They were Jewish Christians who had fled to Gentile territory because of persecution in Jerusalem. On the one hand, the Jews hated them for being Christian, but on the other hand, the Gentiles hated them for being Jewish. Hostility stalked them at every turn.

James specifically wrote, “*when* troubles of any kind come your way” (James 1:2, emphasis added). What was he implying?



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What purposes for troubles did James describe in *James 1:3–4*?

### How We Respond—James 1:5–12

Usually, our first response to trouble is to problem-solve. We lay out options, seek counsel, and jump into action. But what did James tell his readers to do first and how in *1:5–8*?

What encouragement did James offer his impoverished readers, who were the most vulnerable, according to *1:9*?



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What warning did he give his wealthy readers, who might be tempted to trust in their power and riches, according to *James 1:10–11*?

Finally, what ultimate hope did James offer in *1:12*?

*As I look back over the years, I have learned the value of the lessons I've learned through pain—sometimes coming from failures of my own, sometimes from someone else. I matured through those situations. They were all purposeful. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Interpretation: Consider, Know, Ask, and Endure**

In the interpretation phase, we seek to understand the meaning of the passage, so we can formulate principles. Principles are universal and theological truths about God, people, and life. All people can live by such principles regardless of one's culture or circumstances. Let's take a closer look at the meaning of four key words in *James 1:2–5*: *consider*, *know*, *ask*, and *endure*.



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### Consider Trials as Opportunities

Instead of fearing or running from trouble, James commanded us to receive it as “an opportunity for great joy” (James 1:2). He wasn’t telling us to laugh at trouble. That would be a denial of reality and an inappropriate response to tragedy. So, what did James mean?

When we experience trials and troubles, we can move from a negative to a positive mind-set by focusing on what we know to be true, according to Scripture.

### Know the Good That Trials Produce

We don’t rejoice in the trial itself but in knowing that God produces good through trials. What golden qualities does the testing of our faith produce, according to *James 1:3–4*? What did he mean by the phrase, “perfect and complete, needing nothing” (1:4)?

*Testing deepens our faith, increases our endurance, enhances our character, and builds our maturity. You can’t beat that combination of benefits. All of it comes on the platform of a trial we would have neither chosen nor expected. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Ask God for His Perspective

Frankly, it's not in our nature to see the good in adversity. We need divine insight, so James urged us, "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you" (James 1:5). To what does *wisdom* refer in this context? Why is it important we pray with faith "in God alone" and not have "divided loyalty" (1:6)?

### Endure Troubles in Faith

In his book, *Clinging to Hope*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll defines the Greek word for *endure*, which appears three times in the passage.

The term comes from two Greek words, *hypo*, meaning "under," and *meno*, meaning "to abide" or "to remain." It implies persevering under extreme difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

What gives us the strength to persevere? Our hope that God blesses "those who patiently endure testing and temptation" and will someday give "the crown of life" to those who endure (James 1:12). What does "the crown of life" mean? For help with the answer, consult your Bible resources, such as Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. An excellent online resource is *Constable's Notes* at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).

*When we handle trials God's way rather than in the flesh, there is a sense of satisfaction from the blessings of God. Our character is being cultivated, and the benefits will be ours long-term. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Correlation: The Promise of Crowns

In correlation, we look for supportive passages to enhance our understanding. Look up the passages in Scripture that describe five crowns, or future rewards that await believers, and write down the name of each crown.

*1 Corinthians 9:25–27:* \_\_\_\_\_

*1 Thessalonians 2:19* \_\_\_\_\_

*2 Timothy 4:8:* \_\_\_\_\_

*James 1:12:* \_\_\_\_\_

*1 Peter 5:3–4:* \_\_\_\_\_

What blessings await those who love the Lord! In light of what you've learned in this study, how should we view our trials? Write down an overarching principle, weaving together the concepts of *consider*, *know*, *ask*, and *endure*. This principle can guide you the next time you encounter troubles that come and stay.

*God knows your trial, and He is deliberately leading you through it. I urge you to let it run its course. Seek His mind as you ask for wisdom and know that He is at work cultivating a depth of character that you would otherwise miss. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





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### Application: Next Steps to Handling Troubles

What troubles are you currently enduring?

How can you apply the principle you wrote about God's plan for handling trials based on James 1:2–12?

What hope can you cling to today?



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Many of the severe trials we face involve physical infirmity. So, in the next two studies, we focus exclusively on the subject of healing—which is our most basic hope. We all hope God will heal us when we suffer, and, as we will discover, God’s Word has precious truths to teach about God’s restorative care.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for not abandoning us in our trials but for walking with us as our Good Shepherd. You comfort, protect, and strengthen us as we depend on You. In the end, You guide us to the place of our final blessing—the reward of our forever home with You. Today, I contentedly rely on Your plan for my life, whatever that may be and wherever You may lead. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Clinging to Hope: What Scripture Says about Weathering Times of Trouble, Chaos, and Calamity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2022), 16.

