THE BENEFIT OF WEAKNESS

Humanity, with its natural tilt toward illusory self-sufficiency, will go out of its way to hide weakness and struggle. People rejoice over such experiences only in the context of clear accomplishment: sleep deprivation for the sake of a job promotion or exhausted muscles for the sake of a personal record marathon. James had a better accomplishment in mind, though: the growth of character. When faith is tested in trials, weakness and struggle are often exposed. According to James, this is a good thing.

James is so sold on the value of this experience that he encourages the brethren to “count it all joy when [they] fall into various trials” (James 1:2, emphasis supplied). Don’t just let it happen, he says. Enjoy it. This joy occurs with the understanding that “the testing of your faith produces patience” (v. 3). Pain with a purpose, like fatigued muscles for a marathon, becomes bearable, even enjoyable.

James continues, advising that when someone lacks wisdom—when they see something as beyond their ability to comprehend, figure out, or grapple with—instead of despairing, questioning their calling, or self-censuring for their lack, they should ask God for wisdom, knowing that He gives it liberally to all who ask (v. 5). This lack or weakness in wisdom should be seen as an invitation to come near to God and draw from His abundance of grace and gifts. All weaknesses, struggles, and lacking should be treated the same way.
Write out James 1:1–8 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out James 1:2–5. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/ phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in James 1:1–8. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How can you allow your faith to be tested instead of becoming discouraged?

How does faith or lack thereof affect someone’s entire life?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam01-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying all of James 1:1–8? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Describe a balanced view of trials in your own life and in your own words.

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam01-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the background of the letter to the Hebrews?

James 3:13, 17  
1 Corinthians 1:30  
Romans 5:3–5  
1 Peter 4:12–19  
Romans 8:18  
1 Peter 1:6–9

What other verses come to mind in connection with James 1:1–8?

Review your memorized verse from James 1:1–8.
Meditate on James 1:1–8 again and look for where Jesus is.

What is He saying to you through these texts?

How can you more intentionally share your experience with Jesus today?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam01-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are personal applications you are convicted of in how you view and respond to trials?

What are practical applications of Christ-like empathy you can share with those in your spheres of influence?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/jam01-7
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

When is a time that you felt especially weak, and God saw you through? Share.

What is a difficult experience you endured and can now see how good came from it? Share.

What can be said to those who have not seen any good?

How can you ensure that you respond to afflictions in a Christ-like way rather than a worldly way?

Why do you think James focused on receiving wisdom in the main passage this week? Why not courage or strength?

Why is faith necessary to receive the promises of God?

What is the difference between having faith in God’s promises and “supposing” He will give?

How does patience “work in us”? Why that attribute specifically?