

WEEK 2, A STUDY OF JAMES
COUNT IT ALL JOY!!

James 1:1b-2 "Greetings, My brethren, count (consider) it all joy when you fall into various trials."

We have all known giants in the lineup of the faithful who have lived exactly as James exhorts us to live in the tough times of life. Most of us have watched friends, family, and acquaintances go through unimaginable heartache with dignity, grace, faith, and YES---- joy. Perhaps you are one of those spiritual giants. We could probably fill a book with lists of those we've known who experienced tragedy beyond comprehension and yet truly lived the reality of joy in the circumstances. As crazy as the command is, it is possible, no; it is reality, to count it all joy when we encounter hard times. If it were not possible, then God would not have instructed James to write it.

1. Is there anyone in your life who has had terrible tragedy yet walked through it with true faith and joy? Have you experienced this seemingly crazy phenomenon in your life?

If so, would you share it on paper? _____

It would be safe to say that none of us longs for the opportunity to prove that we could walk through trials and "count it all joy." Not one of us would say, "Oh boy! Bring me a big heaping platter of heartache!" No, most would say, "Not me, Lord. I can't handle that." In fact, many of us would rather believe that we are somehow immune to trouble. We would rather think that we as followers of Christ we will live trouble-free lives of joy and bliss. Let's look in God's word to see the truth.

Read the following passages:

1. John 16:33
2. 2 Timothy 2:3
3. 2 Timothy 3:12
4. Psalm 34:19
5. Isaiah 43:1-2
6. Psalm 3:1-8
7. Psalm 13

These are but a few of the many, many passages that tell of the trials that man has suffered and will suffer. No one is exempt. It is a fact of life—all because of the fall of man. But with these troubles God gives great hope.

2. Read Isaiah 43:1-2 again. In your own words, write what God promises when we are in the midst of terrible times. Are you comforted by the fact that God will protect you in hard times?

He promises to be with us in the fire, the flood, the storm, whatever it is. He is THERE! He understands. He knows our every thought and pain.

3. Do you believe He expects you and me to hide our feelings and fake joy in order to obey what James 1:2 says for us to do? _____

In Psalm 142, David, the man after God's own heart, cries out to God loudly. He tells God his troubles. And it's okay. Read Psalm 142 and write verses 5-7. _____

David's heart turns from despair to hope.

4. Do you believe this exhibits joy in the circumstance, even though David "unloaded" on God? Why or why not? _____

The ultimate example of God allowing us to cry out to Him and tell him what is on our hearts and minds is Jesus in the Garden, the night He was led to His trial. He cried out as He prayed through tears and He sweat drops of blood, "Father if it be Your will, let this cup pass from Me." This is Jesus the Father's own Son; the One who knew His destiny from the foundations of the earth and was glad and willing to lay His life down in obedience to His Father. But in the middle of the trial, He cried out for a change. Then He went right back to submission to the plan, trusting in God that He knows best. "Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours." We are in GREAT company,

girls! He showed us that He understands and it is okay to tell it all to the Father.

A well known young pastor of the Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, was recently diagnosed with a very aggressive form of brain cancer. Matt Chandler is 35 years old, a husband, and daddy to 3 small children. God is using him not only in the metroplex, but all over the world. He has been called a "Rising star of Evangelical Christianity". God is using him mightily to spread the gospel to the world. So why would He allow this young giant of a godly man to suffer such pain and sorrow and possibly death before his time? Matt believes His Savior knows what is best. In the wait, he fights because he believes it is what God has called him to do. And yes, he has low times; sad times; hard times. But he says, "It is ok to not be ok----just don't stay there." Like David, it's okay to express your doubts and questions and fears----just don't stay there. Eventually we must reach out to God and allow Him to pull it together for us.

5. Read Isaiah 40: 27-31 What happens when we wait on the Lord?

There is purpose in our suffering. Surely, for those who trust God and His promises, there is joy in our sufferings. Sweet sisters, I pray that you and I can say as Job did, "Though He slay me, yet I will praise Him." Truly He does "work all things together for good for those who love the Lord, for those who are the called, according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

"Counting it all joy" is facing a trial knowing that our loving God is working it out for our good; not that all things are good, but that He works good out of them. Can you trust Him with your everything? Are you willing to ask Him to help you count it all joy, no matter the situation? He will, you know. That is why He says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-29

Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning! Psalm 30:5b