

**Read: James 1:2-8, 12**

## We Trust Jesus to Lead Us to Heaven

### **James 1:2-3, 12**

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

“You can do it! Push! Push!” The coach kept encouraging his football team as the players ran up and down the field. They were exhausted! They had been running sprints for five minutes, and that was after a full practice! Some of them felt like they were going to fall over and wouldn’t make it. Somehow, they all finished their hard work.

A few weeks later, the team finally realized that their “mean coach” who tested their strength was actually a loving and wise coach. They were playing their toughest opponent of the year. At the end of the game when the other team was getting tired, their team had the strength to finish the game and win. You see, by testing them, their coach was actually strengthening them. Because they were stronger, they were able to win the big game.

Most people don’t like to be tested. Whether you are seven or seventeen, kids don’t like tests in school. Parents don’t like testing times at work that push them to stress out and work harder. And no one likes it when life is really tough and tests the strength of your faith.

However, James tells us something very strange today. He reminds us that we can celebrate when we face tough times and our faith is tested. Now why would we do that? Why would some enjoy being sick or be happy when school gets really tough or when there are all kinds of problems because of the Coronavirus?

James gives us two answers today. First, like an athlete that gets stronger by working out, Christians grow stronger in their faith when they are tested. You learn to rely on God more when life is tough. You learn to turn to the Bible more, pray more, and trust God and his promises. This is how your faith muscles grow big and strong during difficult times.

Secondly, James reminds us that we have a championship to win. As we pass the tests of faith that strengthen us, we will finally receive the ultimate trophy—the crown of life, which is eternal life in heaven. But good news! Jesus already won the trophy for us at the cross! He defeated our opponent the devil, and he gladly passes on the victory to you and to me. The trophy of heaven is already won and is waiting for you right now!

He knows how to use those difficult times to draw us closer to him. Soon enough, with his help we will pass those tests and receive that crown of life in heaven. No matter how big the test, rejoice that a loving and wise God is working for your good!

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for Younger Children**

- What is something that is really tough for you in your life right now?
- How do you know that Jesus is strong enough to help you when your life is hard?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Why can God be considered loving even when he allows us to suffer in life?
- Explain in your own words what “the crown of life” is.

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- One of the main reasons people visit a church for the first time is because something sad or bad happened in their lives. Why do you think that is the case?
- When something bad happens in someone else’s life how can you encourage and help them?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, when life is difficult and challenging, give me strength to pass the tests of faith as you lead me on to life in heaven with you. Amen.

### **Hymn: CW 379:1,4 – Amazing Grace**

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise Than when we’d first begun.