



How to have a

James

Faith that Works



Devotional – Wk1



I need a faith that works

What to do when darkness comes

Read: James 1:1-18

"Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because...the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Need proof that God can bring something good from enduring, abiding, and pressing forward through challenges? Look no further than the butterfly. The transformation from caterpillar to butterfly is a long, dark, painful process. The caterpillar spins its cocoon then dissolves into a gooey mess in the protective shell of its chrysalis so its cells can be reconfigured. The caterpillar must die to its old self, so previously dormant DNA can be activated. Then the butterfly — a whole new creation — grows strong in its struggle to spring forth into new life. The transformation caterpillars go through physically is a lot like what happens to us spiritually. Jesus takes our spiritual, gooey mess and transforms us into a new creation.

The difference between us and the caterpillar is that while the caterpillar transforms once, we are transformed over and over, day after day as we follow Jesus. When problems come or the unexpected happens, the true nature of our hearts is exposed. Our flaws and sins are laid bare, whether we struggle with pride, envy, gossip, or maybe even a lack of faith. We're humbled by the experience, and we recognize once again how much we need Jesus.

As we allow the "cocoon" of God's presence and His Word shape and mould us, we'll find that we emerge from our troubles stronger and more confident in His goodness than we ever thought possible.

That's why James 1:2-3 says, "Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because...the testing of your faith produces perseverance." As dark and scary as it might feel during this time of trial, testing, and transformation, it's also an opportunity to discover our strengths and gifts, and to persevere.

Reflection: Are you experiencing trials of your own right now? What is Jesus teaching you about yourself? How has this season brought you closer to Jesus?



I need a faith that works

The pathway to maturity

READ: James 1:4

"Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

People like winning races far more than running them. We all want to finish the race so we can win the prize for all of our hard work. If we were honest with ourselves, wouldn't we love to fast forward to the end to skip any challenges along the way? That would be fabulous! We would all love to be able to say, "Hey, I ran that marathon," and put that badge of honour "42.2" sticker on the back of our cars.

James is telling us not to jump the gun in life. How many times have you set a goal and believed you were more than ready to achieve it, only to fall short and miss the mark? You worked hard, but you just couldn't finish. It didn't happen the way you planned. Perhaps you aren't ready to cross the finish line yet because God is still working on you exactly where you are.

We can get so focused on the future that we lose sight of what matters today. Crossing that finish line means so much more after you have persevered. Put in the work of training for the race instead of just walking a few steps to the finish line. I would encourage you, like James did in this letter, to "let perseverance finish its work." Today may be a small piece of the bigger picture for you. You might still be at the starting line and unable to see beyond the first few steps of your journey. That's okay! Just start and stick with it. God will radically change you and sustain you during the long road ahead. Some days we may feel hopeless. On those days, God asks us to focus on Him so He can give us exactly what we need for the day. Embrace the fact that perseverance is changing you radically, even when you can't see it. God is equipping you with the understanding you need to take on any situation. Your faith in God will help you persevere.

Reflection: What do you want to achieve with the help of God? Pray that He gives you the energy and guidance to persevere, while also focusing on what you learn along the way.



I need a faith that works

Lord, give me wisdom!

READ: James 1:5

"If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5).

When do we need wisdom the most? Usually, it's when we face the unexpected. When an unpredicted trial comes our way, we need help to overcome the change of plans. James, the half-brother of Jesus, offers us a solution.

He says, "If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5).

What do you do when you need wisdom? Ask God for it. God is always there. He is always accessible. But, when challenges come your way, do you seek God first? If we are honest with ourselves, we often ask google for answers before asking God for guidance. Both are accessible, but only One is perfect. Have you ever had a common ailment like the hiccups? If you're like me, you might start to google your symptoms immediately. One page leads to another, until the next thing you know, you are reading about a rare disease that's often fatal. Your heart starts pounding as you convince yourself the worst-case scenario is unfolding. Our google rabbit-holes are often wrong though. Sure, you get instant gratification, but you rarely get wise answers. More often than not, we just discover another reason to worry. If you want wisdom, you must go to the source. Instead of searching google, we can seek God. One leads to worry. The other leads to wisdom. Our first course of action in times of uncertainty should be to pray and ask God for his wisdom. We will find that his answers sustain us for years to come and ultimately give us the peace we need to prosper. Whenever you need guidance, ask God.

Reflection: Think of a time when you could have gone to God for wisdom, but you didn't. How could godly wisdom have changed the outcome of that situation?