

Discussion Guide

questions to help start or continue conversations about faith

Discussion Guides accompany [the weekly message](#).

Picture of Peace

Though I am not an artist, I love art. In one art gallery, I viewed a painting titled, "Peace." From a distance, it appeared to be anything but peaceful. The painting depicted a stormy ocean scene. Crashing waves, wind, spray, dark clouds, and lightning all being viewed from a desolate beach.

My first reaction was one of wonder. How could this painting represent peace? Upon closer inspection, I noticed a rock formation painted near the beach containing a bird's nest. In the nest, safe from the storm, were the mother and her newborn babies. Though the storm was all around, they were dry, protected, and covered from the storm and its effects. The painting was worth a thousand words. A true picture of peace. A peace that is not determined by the circumstances or surrounding conditions. (from Perfect Peace, by Daniel Westlund)

When the troubles and storms of life surround you, is your reaction to them a picture of peace?

Passage: Read James 1:1-5

Observation (look at the text) & Interpretation (understand what it means):

v.1 How does James describe himself? Different Bible translations use the terms "slave," "bond-servant," and "servant." What do these words mean in our relationship to God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

v.2 What are we instructed to do when troubles come? What kind of troubles should be viewed as an opportunity for joy?

- Read Philippians 4:4-7
- What faith actions should we take to help us in practicing seeing troubles as an opportunity for joy? What promise does God give when we bring Him every request?

v.3 What does James state we know about troubles? How does our endurance (perseverance) grow?

v.4 What does James instruct us to do regarding endurance? How do we let it grow? What relationship do you see between the promise of Philippians 4:7 and the promise of James 1:4?

v. 5 What does James instruct for those that need wisdom? What is the promise when we ask?

Application (apply the Word of God to life):

v.1 Consider your own relationship with God. Who is God to you? Do you belong to God? This week in your quiet time with the Lord, ask Him to search your heart and reveal anything to you that prevents you from belonging to the LORD. Lay down whatever it is that is between you and the LORD so that you might fully belong to Him.

v.2-4 What troubles are you facing right now? Do you see them as an opportunity for growing in faith and endurance (perseverance)? Talk to your small group or someone you trust about the troubles you are facing. Ask them to pray for you, that you will see these troubles as an opportunity to grow in the Lord.

Read Philippians 4:4-7 again and bring everything to the Lord. Tell Jesus you love Him and trust Him in the midst of the troubles. Sometimes in the troubles, Jesus gives us peace by taking the troubles away. But, more often than not, Jesus gives us Himself and the overwhelming peace of God as He carries us through the troubles. If you have asked the Lord to take your trouble away, and He has not, do not doubt, but rather understand and know that this current trouble is an opportunity for great joy. It is an opportunity to experience and know God and the Lord Jesus Christ in a new and deeper way.

v. 5 Do you need wisdom? Ask our generous God for wisdom, do not doubt (v.6) and He will give you the wisdom you need for the trouble or circumstance before you.

