



Paradox
Truth that Breaks the Rules

Joy in Trials
James 1:2-12

This Fall we'll be looking at paradoxes that Jesus proclaims—statements that seem absurd or self-contradicting, but when investigated prove to be true. Our pastors will try their best to make clear the complicated paradoxes, and we'll be able to answer our questions and process through them in small groups!

SERMON SUMMARY

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

Trials in life are like pop quizzes. You can't prepare for trials, but they show where you're at in your relationship God in the moment.

If we are going to have joy in trials, we need to have:

- a. A **joyful** attitude
 - i. Matthew 5:11-12, Romans 5:3-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7
- b. An **understanding** mind
 - a. Faith is always **tested**
 - i. Trials have a purpose. They can show us where our strengths and weaknesses are. Trials can be multi-faceted/various kinds.
 - b. **Testing** works for us
 - i. To show us where we're at spiritually. They are intended specifically for you.
 - c. Trials help us **mature**
- c. A **surrendered** will
- d. A **believing** heart
 - i. Don't have a solution? Pray and believe.
 - ii. Ask God for wisdom; He gives it generously and without criticizing
- e. A **long-range** view

DISCUSSION

Reminders for small group leaders:

- We want everyone to interact with God's Word. Please have Bibles available for students who don't have one. We have a limited amount of Bibles available at church, so remind your people to bring theirs if they have one. **Be sure to open up your Bibles together during small group!**
 - Set aside a time to **pray** for each other during every POD. Try not to rush through this time as it's good to have people pray for each other.
 - Regularly **recap** how your POD is doing with your co-leaders. Are you meeting your goals? How can you help your people grow in relationship with God and with each other? Is there anyone in your POD who needs encouragement, prayer, or a meeting with one of you this week?
 - The teaching happened on Sunday at church. **The purpose of small groups is to ask two questions:** 1) *What is God saying to me in His Word?*, 2) *What is He asking me to do in response?* Your role is to help everyone answer these two questions so that God can do His work of transforming hearts and lives.
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RECAP with your co-leader/REFLECT by yourself

- *What stood out to you/encouraged you/challenged you, etc from the message?*
- *What is the learning point and/or action point you want the people in your small group to leave with?*
- *How would you summarize the sermon in one or two sentences?*

QUESTIONS

Choose (if any) questions that would be good for your group to discuss, or make up your own!

Getting to know you

- What are typical ways that people respond to trials? (*ex. blame others, isolate themselves, complain, curse God, trust God, rely on others for support, pray, etc*)
- Do you know anyone who's had joy in the midst of their trial? How did they impact you?

Into the Bible/Application

- **Read James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7, and Romans 5:3-5.** What reasons do the authors give for having joy in the midst of trials?
 - *It produces steadfastness/perseverance/endurance, character, and hope*
 - *Our faith will be perfected, tested to see if it's genuine*
 - *Jesus would be praised, glorified, and honored*
- **Read Hebrews 12:1-3.** Why do you think Jesus could look at the cross with joy? Because of His long-term view that He had, what did He know was going to be accomplished by walking through the excruciating trial of the cross?
 - *A dad may persevere through a difficult job and hard boss because he knows God has called him to this role and his family is relying on the compensation he receives. A*

grandmother may persevere through the heartache of watching her husband decline physically and mentally because she knows he will soon see Jesus and be with Him forever. A student suffering from depression may persevere because he knows that even though these thoughts may never go away, Jesus will always remain in the midst of it and be a strong God to lean on. (You can think of your own hypothetical examples)

- For Jesus-followers, the reason why we're able to persevere is because we know what the distant future holds: that a day is coming when we'll see Jesus face to face and we won't have any more trials. Through these trials, He is perfecting our faith and making us more into someone who looks like Jesus, in character and in heart. **These are all reasons for joy!**
 - We may never know the reasons why God allowed these trials into our lives, but we can rest in the sovereignty, goodness, and love of God, and trust the fact that He holds and knows all the details of our lives in His hands. He is worthy of our trust; there is a bigger picture only He can see.
 - **Look at verses 1 and 2.** What does it look like to "look to Jesus" in the midst of being weighed down by sin or trials?
- When you go through trials, do you always try to find the reason why it may be happening to you? Or what issue in your life is God trying to get you to realize or surrender to Him? But isn't it true that we cannot fully comprehend the reasons why God allows everything to happen? Does God owe you an answer for why each trial occurs in your life? Think about Job's story in the Bible. God took away a lot of things from his life and did not tell him why. What if the point of trials isn't to know all (know the why, etc), but to know Him?
 - What would it look like if we focused less on "Why?" and more on "Who" we need to worship, surrender to, or have faith in?
 - We can just tell ourselves to have joy during trials. How do we actually develop that attitude in our hearts?
 - Are there any positive changes in the way you view God or life that have come because of trials? Explain. (*ex. you've found others to share in your suffering who have encouraged you, you rely on the hope you have because of Jesus, etc*)
 - How would you explain why **you** as a Jesus-follower can have joy during trials to a friend who isn't a Christian? What reasons would you give?
 - If you're currently going through a trial, how can you worship and persevere and have joy in your trial?
 - How can you as a small group encourage those currently going through trials to have joy and lean on Jesus?

PRAY

Pray for perseverance and reliance on Jesus during trials; for a joyful attitude instead of a complaining one

Pray for understanding that the long-term view of what God is doing in your heart is accomplishing something good (that you become more like Jesus)

Pray that when others look at the way you respond to trial, they'll see that it's worth it to still worship God and follow Jesus; that'll see the greatness of God through your trial

ANNOUNCEMENTS

College students

Epic this Thursday will be at MU13 at 7:30pm. We'll continue our series on *Misconceptions of Christianity* with hearing from Julia Paz, a local pediatrician. She'll specifically talk about how her faith has a place in the workplace, especially during difficulties such as when a baby is lost at birth.

There is still space at **Fall Retreat!** Sign up at osuepic.com before this Friday (IT'S STILL \$30 for freshmen/transfers, and now \$70 for everyone else). This week you'll get an email about ride assignments and a packing list.

Men

A men's **camping trip** will be October 19-21 in Astoria. Cost is \$40. If you would like to attend, please email our church office at andrea@grantavebc.org.

All church

Fall Festival at Grant will be on Sunday, October 28 from 4-6pm. This is an event for families with young children! **We need candy donations and volunteers.** If you're interested in volunteering with face painting, games, food, or other activities, email Pastor Bryan at bryan@grantavebc.org. Please drop off candy donations the office by October 24.

If you want to receive the **weekly email newsletter with church announcements/news**, visit <http://www.grantavebc.org/news--events.html> to sign up!