

KEEPING GOING 1 - lessons from James

1. PERSEVERANCE - James 1.2-12

START

What have been the things (both big and small) which have proved most challenging for you in the past year?

This passage has some real encouragements about the way God can help us as we face life's challenges.

STUDY

Read James 1.2-12

1. When James speaks of all kinds of trials (verse 2) what sorts of things might he have been thinking of? What are the things which feel like trials to us?
2. How can trials encourage us to trust God more (verses 3-4)? What can be the outcome of the perseverance of which James speaks? Can you think of examples from your own experience (or those you know) of difficult circumstances leading to a deepening of faith or transformation of outlook and character?
3. When we are facing challenges and needing wisdom how does James encourage us to respond in verses 5-8? How have you found turning to God in prayer has helped you deal with issues? Why does doubt pose challenges when we look to God for help?
4. What encouragement is given in verse 9 to those who are poor? What are the contrasting challenges in verses 10-11 for those who are rich? What should be our attitudes to poverty and wealth? How does having a clear understanding of our status as children of God help us have a right perspective on life?

How should rich and poor relate to each other and help each other? How can we respond to the needs faced by our neighbours and community in the current crisis – not only poverty but illness, isolation, lack of transport etc. ?

5. How is perseverance rewarded according to verse 12? How can this promise help us to have joy in the face of trials?

SUM UP

What are the key encouragements you have discovered from this passage which will help you to keep going as you face what lies ahead?

KEEPING GOING 2 - lessons from James

2. Trusting - James 4.6-10 & 13-17

START

In what situations have you really needed advice? How do you tend to respond to advice you are given?

This passage has some really good advice about letting God be part of our lives in changing times.

STUDY

Read James 4.6-10.

1. What does verse 6 teach us about living lives which are open to God?
2. How can verse 7-10 encourage us
 - in giving God his rightful place in our lives?
 - when facing temptation?
 - in dealing with our sin?
 - when facing difficult times?

How can the promises in these verses help us keep going as we face challenges?

Read James 4.13-16.

3. What are the motivations of the people described in these verses? What's wrong with this sort of planning? How should we be living and thinking about the future instead? How have the events we have faced recently shown the wisdom of the advice given here?

Read James 4.17.

4. How does this verse encourage us to make use of our time, gifts and resources - making time for others for instance?

SUM UP

How do the verses we have looked at today help us address the ever-changing situations we currently face?

KEEPING GOING 3 - lessons from James

3. PATIENCE & PRAYER - James 5.7-18

START

What things have required extra patience this past year? How have you coped with waiting in queues, waiting for announcements, waiting for things to change etc.?

This passage has lessons about patience in the face of challenges and about prayer in all the circumstances we face – particularly the difficult ones.

STUDY

Read James 5.7-12

1. As Christians we are living in the times between Jesus' first and second comings. All has been changed by Jesus' victory but until his return we still live in an imperfect world. In what ways might patience be required as we live our lives in the present?

2. James gives three examples of patience. Think in turn about
the farmer,
the prophets,
Job.

How would you describe their challenges? How did they keep going? How was their patience rewarded? How do their examples encourage us in the situations we face?

3. In his letter James often speaks about how we use words – there are two examples in this passage..

How might difficult circumstances lead to us grumbling (verse 9)? How can we learn not to grumble in the face of our current situation?

Verse 12 challenges us in how we make and keep promises – why is it important for us to be people of our word? What is the impact of not doing so? How can the way we keep our promises be important to others?

Read James 5.13-18

4. How do these verses show different ways of praying in differing circumstances? What might it mean for us to pray in these sorts of ways in our varying circumstances? How can Elijah's example encourage us?

SUM UP

How do patience and prayer help us to keep trusting God? How can our relationship with him be the sustaining factor as we face difficult times?