Three Observations about Life in a Fallen World:

1. Trials are inevitable.

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.”

1 Peter 4:12 (NIV)

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33 (NKJV)

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted; and evil persons and impostors will keep on going from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves.”

2 Timothy 3:12-13 (GN)

2. Trials tend to “make us” or “break us.”

3. Victims fail to move beyond asking “why” and remain stuck in their pain.
A Word from God to Those Whose World is “Falling Apart”

James 1:1-4 (NASB)

Survivors ask three important “what” questions that allow them to grow through their pain rather than be crushed by it

➢ What can I control when my world falls apart?

**Answer:** Your attitude. James 1:2

- “consider” – evaluate, calculate = choice

- “all joy” = an attitude

- “trials” – surrounded by (see Luke 10:30)
What must I do to make it through today?

Answer: **Endure**  

- “knowing” – by experience = perspective

- “testing” – to approve, to purify, to demonstrate as genuine

- “endurance” – *hupo-meno* = staying power

What hope do I have for tomorrow?

Answer: God will take the **worst** and use it for my **best**  

- “let perseverance” – allow, cooperate with God’s work so that you will become . . .

- “perfect” - mature, ripe, full-grown

- “complete” – full, all parts being well-rounded and developed
How God Uses Adversity to Mature Us:

1. We are forced to **depend** on God at a new level. Left to ourselves, we tend to be self-sufficient, proud, and insensitive to God.

2. We are **weaned** from the temporal, the urgent, and the worldly affairs of life.

3. Trials allow us to **witness** first hand the reality and power of God. Our need becomes the vehicle of God’s grace; our problems the object of His power.

4. They serve as an awesome **testimony** to the unbelieving world. How we endure hardship shows the world how real God is.

5. We become sensitive, caring and **compassionate** people. Those who have been hurt deeply tend to love deeply.

Application/Discussion Questions:

1. Share a negative experience in your past that (although difficult) has had positive results in your life.

2. Although very normal, why is it important to get beyond “asking why?”

3. What is an area in your life right now that qualifies as a trial, or "world breaker?"

4. Take a moment and walk through the three “what” questions that God gives us in James 1:2-4.

5. Discuss how you can put this truth into practice in your current situations. Close with a time of upholding each other in prayer.
Introduction: A Brief Review

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings. 2Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:1-4 (NASB)

• The Principle: Don’t Ask “Why,” Ask “What”

• Three “What” Questions Survivors Ask:

  1. What can I control when my world falls apart?

  2. What must I do to make it through today?

  3. What hope do I have for tomorrow?
The Problem: Sometimes we get “stuck” in our pain.

The Solution: God promises help for those who are “stuck.”

5But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8 (NASB)

- God’s Offer = Supernatural wisdom
- Our Responsibility = To ask
- God’s Attitude = Open and gentle
The Condition: We receive God’s wisdom only when we “ask in faith, without any doubting.”

- To “ask in faith” means . . . trusting to the point that you have the confidence in God’s character and word to the point of acting on His promises.

- “Without any doubting” means . . . divided loyalty. When you show me, I’m telling you in advance, I will do whatever you say.

- The “blank check” illustration

Conclusion: Four Things You Must Do to Get Unstuck

1. Admit you’re stuck.

2. Admit you can’t do it on your own.

3. Ask God for supernatural wisdom.

4. Be willing to do whatever God’s wisdom demands of you.
Application/Discussion Questions:

1. According to Scripture, what is “wisdom?” How does this differ from our conventional thinking and use of the term?

2. What attitude permeates this passage with regard to God’s sympathy and understanding of our “getting stuck” in adversity?

3. Discuss the one condition necessary to receive this supernatural gift of wisdom to grow through the pain in our trials.

4. What step would you need to take to receive the wisdom God promises to give you in your present situation?
A Definition:

Discouragement (-ment) n. (1) to deprive of courage, hope, or confidence; dishearten (2) to advise or persuade (a person) to refrain (3) to prevent or try to prevent by disapproving or raising objections or obstacles

A Question:

Where are you most prone to struggle with discouragement?

A Truth:

Discouragement is the dragon that torpedoes God’s plans for our lives; just before we receive God’s highest and best, many of us throw in the towel.
Part 1: God’s Will in Adversity = Joyful Endurance

\[2\text{Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.} \quad 3\text{And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.}\]

James 1:2-4 (NASB)

Part 2: God’s Promise in The Process = Supernatural Wisdom

\[5\text{But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.} \quad 6\text{But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.} \quad 7\text{For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.}\]

James 1:5-8 (NASB)

Part 3: God’s Prescription for Perseverance = Divine Perspective

\[9\text{But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position;} \quad 10\text{and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.} \quad 11\text{For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.} \quad 12\text{Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.}\]

James 1:9-12 (NASB)
Hanging Tough in Tough Times Demand We…

- **Get God’s Perspective on our Circumstances**  
  \( \text{James 1:9-11} \)
  
  **How?** By looking at our circumstances, through the eyes of faith.

- **Get God’s Perspective on our Future**  
  \( \text{James 1:12a} \)
  
  **How?** By looking at our future, through the lens of hope.

- **Get God’s Perspective on our Motivation**  
  \( \text{James 1:12b} \)
  
  **How?** By looking at our motivation, through the eyes of love.
Summary/Review:
You Can Slay the Dragon of Discouragement!

➢ Re-evaluate your circumstances.

The Test: Is my faith in things that are perishable or things that are permanent?

➢ Re-evaluate your focus.

The Test: Is my hope determined by the size of my problems or the certainty of God’s promises?

➢ Re-evaluate your motivation.

The Test: Is the primary motivation of my heart to love Christ or simply get relief?

Application/Discussion Questions:

1. What currently (or potentially) discourages you the most right now? Write out simply and clearly in one sentence your answer to the above question (right now).

2. Share with someone your answer to question number one if you are comfortable (and it’s appropriate) to do so.

3. Discuss the power of perspective as it relates to your situation. Walk through the three points made in this passage and talk about how they shed light on the specific challenges you are facing.

4. Pray for someone you know who is having a “broken world” experience.
Introduction: Ever wonder why really good people sometimes make really bad choices?

- Good People - Weak Moments

- Trials vs. Temptations

- Thesis - Under pressure, we are tempted to abandon God’s character-building program of endurance and opt for “short cuts” that promise immediate relief, but deliver devastating consequences. (How does it happen?)

- Deception - The lies we believe that destroy our lives
Three Lies That Destroy Our Lives:

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

James 1:13-18 (NASB)

Deception #1

We are deceived about the source of our sin.  

- The Lie = “I’m not responsible for my sin. It’s not my fault.”

- The Truth = 1) God tempts no one. 2) The problem is not our external circumstances, but our internal desires.

- Application =
Deception #2

We are deceived about the consequences of our sin. James 1:15-16

- **The Lie** = “I can handle this! It’s not hurting me or anyone else.”

- **The Truth** = Sin is not simply an act; it is the result of a process.

- **Application** =

Deception #3

We are deceived concerning the nature and character of God. James 1:17-18

- **The Lie** = “I’ve got to ‘party’ and have my ‘good times’ now; I’ll get serious with God later.”

- **The Truth** = God is good and His will always has my highest and best interest in mind.

- **Application** =
Rebuilding Your Broken World
(0) Overcoming Temptation: How to Deal With Desires That Destroy

God’s Promise for You:

James 1:13-18

13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)

Some “Ways” of Escape Include:

1. Your conscience – heed it immediately.

2. Scripture

Psalm 119:9-11

3. Prayer

Matthew 6:13, 26:41

4. Flight

2 Timothy 2:22

5. Pre-decisions and Planning

Romans 13:14

Application/Discussion Questions:

1. Define temptation. How does it differ from a trial?

2. Where are you vulnerable? What “short cuts” are you most prone to believe?

3. Discuss the cycle of sin [desire (lust), deception, design, disobedience, death] outlined in vs. 15-16. How do you see this cycle at work? At what point must we address sin if we are to overcome temptation? Why?

4. What provisions have you made to protect yourself from temptations?

5. Have you fallen? Do you need to ask God’s forgiveness and help for a fresh start today? Have you taken advantage of Christ’s offer of a spiritual “birth” that brings life?