

How Can We Rejoice in Trials?

[James 1:2-4](#)

James, Day 2

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- James 1:2-4, ESV

Have you ever had an overly chipper Christian shower you with religious platitudes when you were really hurting? How did it feel? Didn't you just wish they would be quiet and leave you alone? One such platitude that well-meaning Christians can throw around in times of suffering is made up of the first four words of James 1:2: "Count it all joy!"

You lost your job. *Count it all joy!*

Your wife is diagnosed with cancer. *Count it all joy!*

Your teenage driver totals your car. *Count it all joy!*

Not exactly the most helpful phrase to hear when you're hurting, huh? So, is this what James is doing in James 1:2? Is this just the Bible equivalent of "Don't worry, be happy!"? No. What James is saying in James 1:2 is much more profound and revolutionary than a throw-away platitude about having a good attitude.

The word James uses that's translated as "count" is a word of command and rule. It can mean to make a judgment or issue a command. James says to take the trials we face and essentially issue a verdict about their nature and purpose. We are to examine these trials by the rule of faith and make an assessment, a judgment: These trials are really good things and in them we can, by faith, find reason to rejoice.

Why? Because they're fun? No. Because they're making us rely on God more, which is making us more stable and steadfast, and that is making us more complete, making us what we're supposed to be.

As believers, we are not supposed to be the helpless victims of our external circumstances. We are not supposed to be happy only when we get lucky and get nice things, and we're not supposed to be dejected and despairing when things don't go our way. The more we rely on ourselves, the more we live exactly like this, and we are unstable and unfruitful.

If we will live by faith, we will take command of our assessment of things. We will not just react emotionally but judge faithfully and always make the verdict that God is good and that He is in control of everything, for His glory and for our ultimate, eternal good. To live this way is not to be glib or trite, it is to be stable and steady in the face of trials because of a willingness to submit to God and assess our situation in the light of His power and goodness.

It reminds me of taking my children to get vaccinations when they were little. My kids hated the needles and the pain. They squirmed and cried and looked at me like I was a monster for making them submit to such ill treatment. But I knew the pain was for their protection. I knew the trial was making their immunity more complete. I never asked my children to enjoy the needles. That would have been mean. But I did ask them to trust me, and I did reassure them that I loved them. Will we trust God and His love, just as I asked my children to trust me and my love?