

CONSIDER IT PURE JOY...

...whenever you face trials

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

James 1:2-4 (The Message)

- What kinds of hardships have you had to face?
- Did you find them to be a gift – a joy?
- How could a trial be a gift?

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

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

God is constantly trying to teach us how dependent we are on Him, that we are held completely in His hands, reliant on His care alone. We need to exhibit that we won't try to take a step on our own. We must stand on God's strength, not our own.

- How have you learned to rely on God through what you've suffered?
- What makes faith easier to learn through trials than through an easy life?

These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

1 Peter 1:7 NLT

*See, I have refined you, though not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction*

Isaiah 48:10 NIV

- In what ways do you feel God has helped you survive your trials?
- How has God refined you through your trials? Do you feel you're a better person for having suffered?
- Would you consider it "pure joy" to suffer trials?

We will close with the way we started:

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James 1:2-4 (The Message)

What a Great God we have who will use even our hardships to make us better people.