## FAITH TO FACE TRIALS WITH JOY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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How have the trials that you have experienced brought you closer to, or pushed you further away from God? How have trials affected your
    faith?
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    When you read James 1:2-4, it seems like suffering is a major way in which God produces maturity and perseverance in us. Why do you
    think trials refine us so well?
    Think through the themes, hardship, perseverance, and wisdom. Jot down some meditation points to share with the group from the follow-
    ing passages. What does God want us to know and do in the midst of trials?
    Q James 1:1-5
    Q Romans 5:1-5
    Q 1 Peter 1:3-9
    In the midst of difficulty why is it so important to focus on God instead of the trial? Write down some names of God that provide comfort in
    trials, or perhaps some encouraging verses to share with your group.
    Q Names of God:
    Q Encouraging verses:
    🤹 Think about a few of the most difficult trials you have faced. Do you think you responded well or poorly? Why?
    🗱 What thoughts or beliefs dominated your mind and your emotions in each circumstance?
    Are we supposed to deny our feelings when we "count it all joy" in the midst of trials (James 1:2)? Is it sin to feel sorrow and grief in a trial? If
    not, how do these feelings fit in with God's call for joy? Look at the questions below to help guide you in your thoughts about joy.
      How is joy distinct from happiness (see 2Cor. 6:10; 7:4-6)
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Notice that joy in (James 1:2) is linked with faith in (James 1:3). What must we choose to believe if we are going to consider trials occasions for joy?

Pefine "joy" in your own words.

I think it is important for us to think through our personal top trials, and then think about what "counting it all joy" would practically look like. Read the following example and then think through your own circumstance.

In 1967 Joni Eareckson Tada jumped into the Chesapeake Bay. Having misjudged the depth of the water Tada emerged forever changed. She would from this point forward be a quadriplegic, living her entire life in a wheelchair. Tada has written extensively of her experiences. She has been an inspiration to many. She is a picture of our text in James 1:2-4. She models joy in the midst of suffering. Furthermore, she shows that God often has a good purpose in our suffering. On one occasion Joni discussed having her wheelchair in heaven. She said: "I hope I can take my wheelchair to heaven with me, I know that's not biblically correct, but if I were able, I would have my wheelchair up in heaven right next to me when God gives me my brand new, glorified body. And I will then turn to Jesus and say, 'Lord, do you see that wheelchair right there? Well, you were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble, because that wheelchair was a lot of trouble! But Jesus the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. So thank you for what you did in my life through that wheelchair. And now,' I always say jokingly, 'you can send that wheelchair to hell, if you want.'"

🗱 So what would "count it all joy" look like for you in the midst of your trial?

endured by Jesus (John 16:33), Paul (Romans 8:17), or Peter (1Peter 4:12).

**God is using the trials of your life for His purpose.** He is not sitting in heaven saying, "*I didn't want that to happen, but now that it has happened, let's see how we can make the best of a bad situation!*" Scripture is clear that God is sovereign over everything, from the rain and snow that fall (Job 37:6-13), to seemingly random events (the lot, Prov. 16:33), to the events of nations (Ps. 22:28; Acts 14:16; 17:26). On the personal level, He ordained all of the days of our lives before we were ever born (Ps. 139:16). He fashions our hearts (Ps. 33:14-15) and orders our steps (Ps. 37:23; Prov. 16:9; 20:24). How does the sovereignty of God in suffering provide a sense of comfort and hope?

## PRAYER REQUESTS

Some people subscribe to the idea that, "the best are blessed." How does that jive with the suffering

Are there other members in your group, or friends or family that are suffering right now? How can you encourage them this week? What can you do specifically to bless them? In your group talk about some of the trials you are going through. What trials trouble you most? Maybe a few people could share one of their top trials in life right now. Perhaps you could take time to pray for each other, for wisdom and endurance in the midst of difficulty. When our sins come to the surface and our guilt is exposed, God's intention is not for us t=o spiral into self-despair or depression. Instead, he wants us to repent and receive his gracious gift of forgiveness. Perhaps you need to take some time to repent. Maybe you need to dedicate some time to praising God for his forgiveness.