



The Gift of Trials—Part 1
From sermon 12.6.20

Read *James 1:2 & 1 Peter 1:6*

Review from Sunday's sermon: This season of gift buying and giving should lead the Christian to praise God for His greatest gift—Jesus Christ. But, that is not the only gift He's given us. As much as we may dislike trials, tribulations, and problems in life, they may very well be a gift from God. That is why the Holy Spirit has both James and Peter (and Paul) tell us to rejoice in our trials. This Christmas series will reveal four ways God uses trials in our lives. The Christmas characters demonstrate each.

1. Most find passages like James 1 impossible, because they can't see how to find joy in trials. What is the historic misconception about biblical joy? Most confuse joy with happiness. Happiness is a feeling. It comes and goes with the situations, conditions, and seasons of life. Happiness is relative—each person has their own triggers. Joy is a choice. It doesn't mean being fake and denying feelings, it just has to do with perspective, with hope, with godly patience, and with who God is...not circumstances.

See also *Philippians 4:4-13*

2. From Sunday—The first way trials can be blessings is that they lay the necessary conditions for a Miracle. The only way to see a Miracle is to first face/live the Impossible. See *Luke 18:27*

3. From the accounts in the Gospels, what were some of the impossible situations surrounding the first Christmas? Various Answers. But, include: Man being redeemed by a man, the announcing visit by angels, the Virgin Birth, Joseph not divorcing Mary, the young couple ending up in Bethlehem at just the right time.

4. Just as joy is misunderstood, often so are miracles. What truths about the nature of miracles were pointed out on Sunday? Discuss each.

- Miracles are rare. God is not bound to change any situation. He may just choose to change the faithful person in the trial.
- When He does a miracle, it may not be the way we'd choose. He cannot compromise either His nature or His purpose. See also *Isaiah 55:8-9 & 2 Corinthians 12:7-9*
- Miracles are not always visible.
- Miracles are not always in our timing.

5. What do we mean when we say: "the gift of trials is a matter of perspective"? The person going through the trial may only see pain, failure, unfairness, hurt. But, looking back, they or others (even disconnected from the trial) may view it as a blessing. [examples: _____]

See also *Genesis 50:20*

5a. What trial have you faced (even impossible ones) where God did the miraculous and you would have missed it without the hardship first? Various personal answers

6. What was the greatest trial and tribulation of all-time, that resulted in your blessing and mine? The life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. See *Hebrews 2:9-10*