I. **INTRO:**

A. Amy Carmichael, in *Candles in the Dark*, The best training is to learn to accept everything as it comes, as from Him whom our soul loves. The tests are always unexpected things, **not great things** that can be written up, **but the common little rubs of life**, silly little nothings, things you are ashamed of minding (at all). Yet they can knock a strong man over and lay him very low.

B. In ch1 an important distinction is drawn between: **Trials** which may have positive effects; & **Temptations** which is enticement to evil w/in the human heart.

C. **James is** the ½ brother of Jesus; was a devout Jew; a leader in the Jerusalem Church; known as “Camel Knees” because of his prayer life.

1. You can call him **James the Challenger**: as there are 54 Imperatives or commands in just 108 vs. - Wow!

D. James gives plenty of practical advice on Christian living! *(Christian Living for Dummies!)*

1. It’s the N.T.’s book of Proverbs. You’ll hear bits of the Sermon on the Mnt. And you’ll see many *O.T. word pictures & references*.

2. **James refers to:** Abraham, Isaac, Rahab, Job, Elijah; & alludes to 21 OT books

E. It’s main point: “True Faith, is a Faith that Works!”

1. If we truly practice our faith it will be seen in: **How we Face Trials (ch.1)**;
    How we Treat People (ch.2); What we Say (ch.3);
    How we Deal w/Sin in our Lives (ch.4); How we Pray (ch.5).

2. **Or, it can be organized around faith’s response to life:** (Swindoll)
   When Faith is **stretched**, it doesn’t **break**! (ch.1)
   When Faith is **pressed**, it doesn’t **fail**! (ch.2)
   When Faith is **expressed**, it doesn’t **explode**! (ch.3,4)
   When Faith is **distressed**, it doesn’t **panic**! (ch.5)

F. It deals w/the crucial relationship between **faith & active works**!

1. It’s balancing **right belief w/right behavior**. [Practical religion]

2. Christianity must not only be **believed**, it must be **lived**!

3. The type of Christianity that has “no experience of a changed life”, is no Christianity at all!

4. The proof of real faith is a changed life!

G. “The true seed of **saving** faith is verified by the tangible fruit of **serving** faith.”

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1 J.Ronald Blue, the Bible Knowledge Commentary. Pg.816.
II. **TRIALS: Not “if” but “when”!**

A. **INTRO!**

B. When we were young we were full of bruises & scrapes on our knees; when we grow older they simply move inside!

1. Unfaithful marriage partner, crippling accident, sudden death of someone close.

2. We may have traded climbing trees for climbing the corporate ladder...but it still hurts when we fall!
   
   a) Job said, Man who is born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble. (14:1)
   
   b) David said, Many are the afflictions of the righteous. (Ps.34:19)
   
   c) Paul, We are hard-pressed on every side...perplexed...persecuted...struck down.
   
   (1) If you were tracing Paul’s journeys in the 1st century, it would be like tracking the path of a wounded deer running from a hunter, leaving one bloody trail after another.

3. The Jewish Believers(12 tribes) were literally bruised with adversity.
   
   a) They were being hunted under the persecution instigated by the Roman emperor Claudius. Treated w/hostility by the Gentiles. And, by fellow Jews who hated them for being Christians.
   
   b) So James goes to work re-setting fractured feelings, disjointed depressions, re-aligning attitudes, & binding bruised spirits w/the Great Physicians truths about troubles!

C. **TRUTH ABOUT TROUBLES?**

D. Story: Sergeant Kenneth E. Neu was stationed in the U.S. Airborne unit in Germany, where the parachute drop zone was located next to a Mercedes-Benz test track. One windy day, a gust of wind blew his parachute over the track. Knowing how hard a landing on asphalt can be, he braced himself, landed and checked for broken bones. Amazingly, he was fine. Suddenly the wind inflated Neu’s parachute and started dragging him down the track. He hit the chute’s canopy release and looked up just in time to see a car speeding toward him. Acting quickly, he grabbed his chute and ran to the edge of the track. Out of breath but uninjured, he thought, “How lucky can I be?” Relieved, he turned, stepped into a gopher hole and twisted his ankle.

E. Troubles in a Christian’s life...Why do they exist?

1. They are a form of punishment from God?

2. They go away once you reach a certain level of maturity?

2 Charles Swindoll: James; pg.16.
3. There really is **no such thing** as adversity. They are a figment of our imagination, like the boogeyman.
   a) **Nope**, let’s hear what James has to say.

F. **They are Inevitable!**
   1. Note not “if” but “when”.
   2. Peter says, Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which **is** to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; (1 Pet.4:12)

G. **What kind of trials await us?**
   1. They will be **various**. [ποικίλος poy·kee·los] Where we get the term **polka-dot**.
      a) We can expect our lives to be **spotted & spattered** w/trials of all **sizes & shapes**.

H. **They are Purposeful!**
   1. Experiences that come our way are not accidents.
   2. **We have a loving Heavenly Father who** controls the affairs of this world.
   3. **We have a loving Heavenly Father who** has a purpose behind each event.
   4. Stop viewing troubles as simply **bothersome offenses** & start seeing them as **tests**.
   5. God is not interested in watching our faith get torpedoed by trials!
      a) We must understand **testing**!
         (1) It comes form a Greek word **dokimos**, which means **approval**!
         (2) It’s a word found on the **underside** of many ancient pieces of pottery unearthed by archeologists in the Near East.
            (a) This mark meant that the piece had gone through the furnace w/o cracking; it had been approved!
            (b) God’s desire is to help the clay vessels created in His image to mature in the furnace of trials w/o a crack!
   6. **God’s initial purpose?** Endurance (**patience**) - Lit. “to abide under”.
      a) **Dokimos** is applied only to those who **persevere**, or **abide under**, the tests He sends
   7. Nietzsche said, “He who has a **why** to live can bear with almost any **how**.”
      a) James gave us our **why** (purpose).
      b) Now we can do more than just **bear them** but can choose to **grow** through them!!!
I. Mature \textit{(perfect)} & Complete!

1. **Maturity** is developed only in the \textit{laboratory of life.}
   a) \textbf{Joseph}: 13 years of testing, to raise up the Prince of Egypt.
   b) \textbf{Peter}: spent 3 years in the school of testing to be changed from sand to rock!
   c) \textbf{Paul}: went through many testings, & each one helped to mature his character.

J. Trials can strip away everything \textbf{but} our attitude toward them. [\textbf{3 attitudes:}]

1. 1\textit{st}, Joy - \textbf{not} deny the pain \& sorrow you feel in a trial; \textbf{not} think positive; \textbf{not} the shallow advice to grin \& bear it; \textbf{not} don’t worry be happy!
   a) He does not say that trial \textbf{is} all joy, but that we are to consider it an opportunity for great joy (NLT).

2. 2\textit{nd}, Knowing (3) - knowing they’re designed by God for \textbf{good}, not evil.

3. 3\textit{rd}, Let (4) - meaning \textbf{cooperate}. Give in to the testing. Allow it to do its job in your life!

K. WHAT IF YOU DON’T \textbf{SEE} HIS PURPOSE? (5-8)

L. Ever flunk any trials? We \textbf{flunk} trials because of: wrong responses; resistant attitudes; \& because of temper tantrums demanding instant relief.

1. This only advances our immaturity \& misery.

2. Why do we have these attitudes because we \textbf{lack} wisdom \& lack faith.

M. Lack \textbf{Wisdom!} \textit{Ask of God}

1. When tests come, especially pop-quizzes, James says immediately pray for help.

2. This is not prayer for wisdom \textit{in general}, but for the ability to view a test from God’s perspective.

N. Lack \textbf{Faith!} \textit{Ask in faith w/no doubting}

1. James is not referring to \textit{saving faith}, nor to a \textit{general kind of trust}. He’s advocating a \textit{sustaining faith} that involves complete abandonment to God \& His purposes in our trials.

2. Opposite: \textbf{double-minded man}. Someone who wants his or her own will \textbf{and} God’s at the same time.
   a) It’s the \textbf{little field mice} that run out into the street, stops goes back, stops goes back the other way, then your car passes right over him.

   b) I can kill a fly every time: The key is coming at it from both directions at once. The fly’s \textit{central-nervous-system circuitry} is geared to avoid approaching movement in only 1 part of its visual field at a time. 2 simultaneously approaching threats render the fly immobile, for its central nervous system now cannot compute at which angle to take off.\textsuperscript{3} [maybe Satan knows we’re wired the same way?]

\textsuperscript{3} [Fly-neuroscience. Dr. Edward Gray of England’s University College, London]
O. **ARE TRIALS JUST FOR THE RICH, OR POOR?** (9-11)

P. Trials benefit both groups.

1. **Trials remind the poor** they are *rich in the Lord* & therefore can lose nothing.
2. **Trials remind the rich** they dare not *live for riches* or *trust in* them.

Q. *Mary Kimbrough* composed this poem based in *Job 13:15*, which underscores the wisdom of trusting God through trial:

1. Though He slay me, I will trust Him,  
   Said the sainted Job of old;  
   Though He try me in the furnace,  
   I shall then come forth as gold.

   Though the ‘worms of deep affliction’  
   Cause this body to decay,  
   In my flesh I shall behold Him -  
   My Redeemer - some glad day.

   Though He slay me - can I say it  
   When I feel the searing fire,  
   When my fondest dreams lie shattered -  
   Gone my hope and fond desire?

   Though He slay me, I will trust Him,  
   For He knows just how to mold,  
   How to melt and shape my spirit -  
   I shall then come forth as gold!

Imagine a **mayfly** spending the entire day weighing itself down w/*treasures*, which must be dropped at sundown when it is no more.