



Links Players

Joyful Trials

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4, NASB)

James appeals to us to be joyful in everything we encounter. Really? This joy is counterintuitive to our nature, isn't it?

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The best lessons occur when we endure hardship, if we allow them to be times of learning.

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Let's look back at a few examples on the PGA tour of trials and endurance. Jordan Spieth was the number one player in the world at the age of 21 and tumbled to 92nd in the world rankings by January of last year. Yet, through perseverance, he found a result that put him back on top as a winner this year, and his game is stronger than ever. Justin Thomas had a seven-stroke deficit in the last round of the PGA Championship and won the tournament after shanking a shot in that same round.

James doesn't say "if" you face trials; he says "when" you face them. And he states that there will be a great result—you will become perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. You're not required to put on a happy face always, but "consider it pure joy" means to keep a positive outlook as you travel through life. The best lessons occur when we endure hardship, if we allow them to be times of learning.

During interviews with these players, they will often recommend staying patient or being in the moment. Justin's caddie, Jim "Bones" MacKay, helped Justin stay in the moment, be positive, and recognize that things were flowing in the right direction for him. The result was a playoff victory and his second major championship.

As a follower of Christ, we only lack that which God has not intended for us. His word promises us in Romans 8:28 that "...God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (NASB 1995). Note, we are not called for "our purpose."

At the age of 30, I was far from Christ as I pursued my goals for success. Prestige, recognition, and selfishness defined me. Second or third in line were family, friends, and God.

The idea that God was superintending my life was not even on my radar, and I never considered that I should seek his guidance. The only way God got my attention was when I was diagnosed with advanced testicular cancer.

At the time, I did not know what endurance the trial that I was facing would require. What I did realize was that I needed to pray and ask for strength from God. You see, I was baptized as a baby but never really understood living as a Christ follower. After two surgeries, three months of chemotherapy, and two more years of testing, I was 100% cancer-free and 100% filled with the joy that only God can provide.

Whether it is a negative health diagnosis, family issue, job loss, or death of a loved one, know that, though these trials will not always feel joyful, you can endure all things with Jesus. Philippians 4:13 reads, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (NASB 1995)

Sometimes God will cause things to happen for a purpose we may never understand. He is sovereign, so I trust him as the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of my life.

Prayer: Father, I pray for endurance, faith, and joy as part of getting to know you and trusting your plans. Thank you, Jesus, for enduring the cross on my behalf.

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