Lesson 9  August 2, 2020

FAITH AND WISDOM

Lesson Scripture: James 1:1-11
Focus Scripture: James 1:1-11

Key Verse: If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. James 1:5 (NRSV)

JAMES 1:1-11 (NRSV)

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.
2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,
3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance;
4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.
5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.
6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;
7, 8 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.
9 Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up,
10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field.
11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

JAMES 1:1-11 (KJV)

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.
2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.
5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.
8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.
9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:
10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.
11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.
**KEY TERMS**

- **Joy** – Favor, grace.
- **Lowly** – Humble.
- **Trial** – Test or temptation.
- **Produce** – Accomplish.
- **Endurance** – Steadfastness
- **Complete** – Whole.
- **Lacking (vs. 4)** – Lagging, being inferior.
- **Generously** – Holding nothing back; opposite of grudgingly.
- **Double-minded** – Split in decision making.
- **Doubting** – Not having trust or confidence.

**INTRODUCTION**

“The world and our lives unfold like a literary plot in which there are stops, starts, setbacks, and temporary transformations, which make life meaningful.” Dr. Edward P. Wimberly, *No Shame in Wesley’s Gospel: A Twenty-First Century Pastoral Theology*

Life is filled with ups and down. There will be moments of great joy, but there will also be days of great sorrow. When trials come, we are not to be afraid nor discouraged. James tells us we are to be glad. *Even rejoice*, because trials are God’s way of making us whole, making sure that we reach our highest potential, so we will be inferior to no one and no situation. But, in order to do so, we need the wisdom which God gives freely to all who are decisive and do not waver.

**TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**

To fully understand this passage, we must first understand the writer behind it. Though James was a common name during these times, the James who wrote this book was someone who was close to Jesus and followed Jesus’ teachings very closely. This James was a humble man, considering himself a servant of God, “who willingly live(d) under Christ’s authority as his devoted follower” (BibleHub dictionary). James considered Jesus his Lord. This man was James, the brother of Jesus, but he never
James could have easily gone around and boasted about being Jesus’ brother. He could have tried to operate and do ministry like Jesus. Instead, he chose humility. He chose to identify as a follower rather than a relative. He chose to glean and learn from Jesus, allowing Jesus to be his Savior and Lord. James chose the lowest status which did not prevent him from experiencing affliction. If anything, his desire to follow Jesus meant doing things in untraditional ways, and there were those who were not in agreement who punished him for it.

James confirms that trials are inevitable. This means that it is crucial to seek God’s wisdom in order to endure life’s trials. Tides can and often will turn; but, the faithful are called to seek God’s wisdom and hold firm to the faith that God is with us even in the midst of trials and tribulations.

SANKOFA

“Faith is born out of suffering, and suffering is faith’s most powerful contradiction. This is the Christian dilemma.”

Matriarch Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer experienced great tragedy and suffering over the course of her life. From unknowingly being sterilized to being badly beaten, she faced affliction no human being should ever have to face. But, in spite of all she endured, Mrs. Hamer never let her troubles stop her from fighting for justice for herself and others.

Through the use of spirituals, she led various groups on the journey of reclaiming their God-given rights. She begged the question during her 1964 Democratic National Convention testimony, “Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings in America?” She used her abuse to fuel her passion and fire, going on to become co-founder and vice-chair...
of the Freedom Democratic Party. Her experience became her voice and made space for her work.

How would you have responded if you were there with Mrs. Hamer? Would you join the fight knowing you would be persecuted? Would you resist and endure suffering?

**CASE STUDY**

What is endurance?

*The Cambridge Dictionary* defines endurance as “the ability to continue doing something for a long time” or “the ability to keep doing something difficult, unpleasant, or painful for a long time.” *Merrill-Webster* defines endurance as “the ability to withstand hardship or adversity; especially, the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity.”

As black people living in America and throughout the world, we have experienced and continue to experience threats, trauma, and trials. The burden we carry from the cruelty inflicted on us still affects us years after it all has “ended.”

But, we are resilient.

Artists Jefferson Pinder and Sherman Fleming use the human body to show the ways in which endurance and resilience shows up in us despite grueling conditions. Through a series of contortions and awkward positioning, the body conveys the stamina and duration necessary “to remain self-possessed and authentic within the social and institutionalized construct of racism and sexism.”

Take a moment to visit their sites and discuss what their work teaches us about endurance.

http://www.jeffersonpinder.com/
http://www.washingtonart.net/

**LIFE APPLICATION**

Endurance is not meant to convey being absent from some degrees of difficulty. Trials are going to come. James did not say “if” or “perhaps.” He said “when” meaning trials are inevitable. If we have
built up our endurance, we will be able to fully withstand the storm we are facing wholly and with maturity. We will not be inferior in any way, and we will stand strong and firm. Endurance strengthens our heart, eases our mind, and helps stabilize our mental health. Therefore, it is not produced overnight. Endurance is a skill acquired through an elongated process of stress and strain, and it requires wisdom. Without wisdom, we lack “the ability to make good judgments based on what (we) have learned from (our) experience, or the knowledge and understanding that gives (us) this ability” (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

Dr. Tudor Bompa, a sports scientist, is credited with developing the periodization method of endurance training. In his method, there are four building blocks – preparation, base, build, and race. Each block is necessary for stabilizing the heart, to keep it steady during periods of high stress; regulating breathing, to keep air flow consistent and steady; building muscles, for strength and agility; and stretching of muscles to keep the body loose, to prevent tension.

Using Dr. Bompa’s model, identify ways to build your spiritual endurance.

**QUESTIONS**

1. James warns against anger, is there a proper role or function of anger in the life of the believer? Why? How?
2. Why is it important to have endurance?
3. Why is endurance necessary in the life of the believer?
4. In what ways would you resist and/or endure suffering?
CLOSING DEVOTIONS

“Endurance is trudging on a little bit longer
It is not giving up—but getting stronger.
Endurance is growing taller
When you want to grow smaller,
It is believing in you

Prayer: Dear God, give us the wisdom and the strength to endure and thrive in the midst of trials and suffering. Show us when to listen and when to speak, when to sit and when to stand up, when to wait and when to move. In Jesus’ name. AMEN.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

July 27 – August 2

Monday Colossians 1:24-29 (Suffering on Behalf of the Church)
Tuesday Titus 3:3-7 (Saved by God’s Mercy)
Thursday Romans 5:1-5 (Rejoice in Your Sufferings)
Friday Romans 5:6-11 (God’s Loving Actions Toward Sinners)
Saturday Isaiah 40:1-8 (Grass Withers but God’s Word Stands)
Sunday James 1:1-11 (Wisdom Overcomes Trials and Temptations)