

# How Disciples Meet Trouble

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Date: 18 January 2026

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, we're going to turn to God's word now. I'm going to ask our ministry apprentice, Jemima Allen,<sup>1</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. We're starting together today in a new series on the letter of James.

And a lot of people, if you read on the letter of James, oftentimes people will say that it's the New Testament Proverbs, that it's aphoristic, so it's got different topics one after another.

So even in our reading today, James talks about suffering, then he talks about wisdom, then he talks about doubting. But now scholars and commentators, and I think rightly so, they see that it's far less the style of Proverbs and far more a coherent vision with a coherent background, one big idea that James is trying to communicate to his listeners.

[ 1 : 4 6 ] And so to see that, you've got to ask the question, who is James writing to? And we read right there in the first verse that he's writing to the twelve tribes in the dispersion.

So who are these folks? The dispersion, I think, with lots of commentators and scholars recently, that the dispersion is referring there to what happened in the earliest moments in the church.

Think about the book of Acts, Acts chapter 8, where Stephen was stoned to death, and then the next thing we read is the church was scattered, dispersed. And so primarily he is writing to Jewish Christians from Jerusalem that have been dispersed all over the Roman Empire because of early persecutions.

And not only them, but then we read, it's the twelve tribes of the dispersion. So why twelve tribes? And one of the keys to know is that the name James in Greek has a Hebrew name equivalent to it, and that's the name Jacob.

So a Jewish person would read the name James and think Jacob. And you might remember from the Old Testament, from Genesis, Jacob is Israel, and Israel had twelve sons.

[ 2 : 5 5 ] And so he writes here, not as James in our minds, but think more as Jacob, Israel, writing to the twelve tribes of the dispersion. So this is one of the early apostles, Father Israel, Father Jacob, writing to the whole church.

So this is not just to people who were scattered by the persecutions, but to the new covenant church. So the twelve tribes of Israel find their fulfillment in all believers, Jews and Gentiles, in the new covenant.

And so he's writing to the whole church, but very specifically to people that were scattered because of persecution in the first century all over the Roman Empire. And the book has this coherent argument, if you will, this vision.

And the vision is effectively for James to answer the question, how does a follower of Jesus live holistically as a disciple in the midst of being scattered all across the world?

So the church is not all together. We're not yet in the new Jerusalem. So really similar to the book of Daniel that we've just looked at, the church is, we are scattered all across the world, all empires.

[ 4 : 01 ] And how do we live as followers of Jesus consistently, coherently? And he's going to address different issues that that brings, especially when faith is being tested constantly in all of those contexts.

So you're going to find, as we work through this book, that this letter is very plain spoken. It's very hard hitting. James cuts through appearances.

And this letter will change your life. It really will, if you will let it. And it will shake you up from your soul outward. And so let's let it this semester.

And let's see today the first thing he wants to tell us about, about what it means to be a disciple all across the world. And he's going to teach us first, the nature of a disciple. Second, the reality of trouble.

Third, the good trouble can bring. And lastly, the pathway to see it that way. All right, so first, let's think about the very first verse, the nature of a disciple.

[ 4 : 58 ] That's what he teaches us first. Now, we said who he's writing it to, but who is he? Who is this James? And very probably, by tradition and by all the evidence, this is James, the biological brother of Jesus Christ, James the Just.

He's technically the half-brother of Jesus. And he was the most prominent pastor in Jerusalem in the book of Acts. And he presided even over the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, which was a really big deal.

The first great church council. But notice in verse one, how he introduces himself. He doesn't point to any of that. Instead, he says, servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when he says servant of God, that sounds very polite, but the Greek word is the word slave. So he says, slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then for Jesus' name, he attaches a title, Lord. And the readers that are scattered all across the Roman Empire would know that the word Lord is a very particular word.

[ 6 : 03 ] It's a Greek word, kyrgios. And when, before Jesus came, some folks translated the Old Testament into Greek, every single time the name of God, Yahweh, was used, they chose to translate that as kyrgios, the word Lord you read in the New Testament.

And so when you see Lord Jesus Christ, that is Jacob, James saying Yahweh Jesus Christ. And that would be an absolute astonishment for a Jew in the first century who did not believe at all that God could become a human being.

And so he's saying Yahweh, the creator of the world, Jesus Christ, when he says this. Now, the second reason that's so shocking is because James is his biological brother, the brother of Jesus himself.

Now, imagine the person you grew up with if you have, if you're a person in this room who has siblings, maybe a brother, in fact, or a sister. You grew up with them, bunk beds, messy rooms, drooling on the pillow, nothing glamorous about it, no pretense.

You can't hide anything from your siblings. Nothing. And you know that when you were maybe in high school and people would come along and praise your sibling and they would say, oh, your brother, your sister, they're so sweet.

[ 7 : 25 ] They're so kind. They're so generous. They're such a great young man, young woman. You would have that inner eye roll or that outward eye roll. And you're thinking, oh, yeah, yeah, you don't live with them.

And you know that nobody knows you like your brother or sister knows you and you cannot hide your vices. Not at all. And that's what makes this an absolute shock that the brother of Jesus Christ who shared toys, who undoubtedly slept in the same bedroom, who undoubtedly lived life together holistically in every way, would say, I am his slave.

He is my brother who I played with. As a little boy, I see him and I will consider you that's the creator of the universe. And you've got to be taken back by that today as we begin this letter.

And we know, even more than that, we know that James did not always follow Jesus. So John chapter 7 verse 5 says, the biological brothers of Jesus Christ did not believe in him.

John tells us that explicitly. So what happened to him? You can imagine James as a 15-year-old struggling with this idea that Mary has been teaching him that your brother is God incarnate.

[ 8 : 47 ] And he was a skeptic, as he would be, especially as a teenager. And then all of a sudden here, he's saying, this is my master. I am his disciple.

What happened? And at least this, in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 7, Paul tells us that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he appeared specifically to James.

Can you imagine? So Paul lists all the people that Jesus appeared to, but Paul goes out of his way to reserve one clause for one specific person, and that's James, his brother.

Jesus Christ, the resurrected Savior, showing up and meeting one-on-one with his own brother that he grew up with. And James' life went from skeptic to servant, right in that moment.

Now that's a disciple. That's how you become a disciple. You look at the cross, you look at the resurrection, and you move from skeptic to servant. And that's exactly what happens here in James' life. This is, you know, we're reading his testimony in verse 1.

[ 9 : 43 ] And we learn what a disciple really is. A disciple is a servant, a slave of the Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and one who says, I want to follow him, I want to be with him, relationally, not just follow his teachings, but I want to follow him.

And one who wants to become like him, and one who says, I'm his servant, I want to go and do as he goes, as he tells me, where he tells me to go, and what he sends me to do. That's a disciple.

We're learning right here the nature of a disciple. And it's striking that James didn't say, hello, hey, my name is James. I am the pillar of the church.

That's what Paul called James, pillar of the church. And he doesn't say, I am the top pastor in Jerusalem. You know, my books sell the most in Jerusalem when I write books.

No, he says, slave of the Lord Jesus. That's all I want to be known as. That's the nature of a disciple. And you've got to ask yourself as we begin this series, is that me?

[ 10 : 50 ] Do I want to be with him and become like him and go where he tells me to go and do what he tells me to do and say, I am servant. That's what I want to be known as. Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yahweh, Jesus Christ. Now, secondly, the very first thing that then James wants us to learn about how to be disciples is how to face trouble.

So the first thing he teaches us here in verse two is the reality of trouble. Now, it's interesting that, you know, it's not, he doesn't turn and say, okay, here's the manual for discipleship and talk about the details of theology or how to gather as a church, a church government, when you're scattered all across the Roman Empire.

The first thing he wants to say is talk to you about how you suffer and how you face suffering. And so you can see right there in verse two, he says, count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds.

Now, the word that he uses for meeting trials is only found one other place in the Bible connected to suffering, and that's in Luke 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

[ 11 : 58 ] And so it's a word for walking. So it could be translated like, count it various, count it all joy, I should say, my brothers and sisters, when you walk upon, when you walk up on trials and suffering.

Now, press pause there for just a moment. And I'll try to mention a few things along the way that will help us to all read James together as we go. And one of them is this, scholars will come and say, the book of James, the letter of James is not Christ-centric.

It's not Christ-centered. It's theocentric. It's just God-centered. Why? Because he only mentions Jesus two times in the whole letter. So the one we just saw and then one other time later.

But the reason they're so wrong about that is because what he's doing is he's constantly teaching you Jesus' teaching. So he's drip-feeding the words of Jesus all throughout. So when he uses this Greek verb for walking upon suffering, that's only used one other place, and that's in Luke 10, when Jesus said that a man once walked up upon suffering, trial, a robber in the Good Samaritan parable.

In a moment, he's going to say, suffering can make you perfect. That's probably a quote from Matthew 5, 48, where Jesus says, you must become perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. So he's drip-feeding Jesus' teaching all throughout.

[ 13 : 13 ] And so in this instance, he says, you're going to fall upon trouble. And what is he trying to tell us? He's trying to tell us here that even as a disciple of Jesus Christ, who says, I'm willing to take up my cross and follow Jesus, you don't go looking for trouble.

Trouble finds you. Trials find you. Suffering finds you. You don't have to go looking for it. He's saying that Christians are not masochistic. No, no. But trouble is coming.

Trials are coming. Suffering is coming. It's inevitable for every single human being. So he's talking to us here about the inevitable reality that suffering is absolutely going to come into our lives.

It's a guarantee. Suffering, as all of you know better than me, does not make appointments. It finds you on ordinary roads. It comes upon you. And he says here that it's suffering of various kinds, meaning there's big suffering, life-shattering suffering that some of you are walking through right now that's going to come for all of us at some point.

And then there's small suffering that's every single day, little annoyances. And he's saying, I'm talking about all of it. I'm talking about every bit, every kind of suffering there can be. It's going to find you. Now, I think we all have an internal monologue going on in our souls.

[ 14 : 30 ] Maybe we've made it explicit. Maybe it's only been implicit. But the internal monologue is something like this. We say to ourselves, when I can get fill-in-the-blank, life will be better.

When I can finally get a relationship, life will be better and easier. When I can finally get rid of this relationship, life will be better.

Life will be easier. When I get a job better, when I get rid of this job that I hate, life will be better. And we could say about a thousand things. When I retire, life will be so much better.

When I finish my degree at university, life will finally get easier. And I think what happens, actually, and as we age and get older every decade, we learn this more and more, that living for the horizon only seems to prove over and over again that we encounter different types of hard.

We get the thing we want, what we said life would be. It will be better when. And then the when comes, and it can be a beautiful thing, but it also brings just a different type of hard, a different set of trials and suffering.

[ 15 : 39 ] Every road we walk down, it still meets us, no matter what, even if we think it was the greatest thing we could imagine. There's a wonderful book by the author Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*.

And in McCarthy's book, *The Road*, it's a post-apocalyptic landscape, probably from nuclear war in the southern United States. And it is a raw, bleak, dark book.

So you should go read it. And in it, it's about walking through this land of ash in Tennessee. And the whole book is focused on the fierce love between this one father and this one son.

They're all each other have. And they're pushing a shopping cart through these old busted up roads. And there's this refrain, I mean, just trying to survive, just trying to hold on to something.

And there's this refrain that the father always tells the son. And it's a metaphor, a theme throughout the whole book. And he tells the son, son, you must learn to carry the fire. And in it, in the book, fire is a metaphor for purpose, for a sense of a reason.

[ 16 : 47 ] In other words, it's a metaphor for saying, does my suffering have any purpose at all? And he's telling his son, you've got to carry the fire. Don't let the fire go out. In your heart, you have to realize that there is some light, some reason, some hope, some purpose in the midst of this horrible thing you're walking through.

And James is telling you today that Christians have a reason to learn to carry the fire. That you can have, you can face suffering and suffering cannot extinguish your purpose.

And in fact, suffering even more can give you a purpose. What is it? You see, the question of this book really is not if trouble is coming, but who are you going to become when it does?

That's the question that he's posing to us. So thirdly, what's the purpose? James tells us here that there is good in trouble, good in suffering for a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And he tells us that, especially in verse 2, he says, count it all joy, brothers and sisters, when you face trials and tribulations. Now, is that toxic positivity, you know, the kind of positivity that some of us display and others get frustrated by?

[ 17 : 59 ] No, he is not saying there, feel good about your suffering because the word count is an accounting verb. It's a command of thinking.

It's a cognitive verb. And so he's saying, think about it as joy. He's saying, mind, Christian mind, tell your Christian heart that it is joy because you don't feel that way.

Count it joy. Let your mind tell your heart that it is. In other words, it's when you say, heart, you talk to your heart and you say, heart, look at the ledger of this event in your life in red drying ink, this suffering, and you've got to transfer it merely from the column of misery to the column of joy.

You've got to write it and say, this is joy to me. And the question becomes, in this cognitive reframe, how could you say that? How could he possibly tell us to do something that?

And the answer is in verse three when he says, suffering, test your faith and can lead to steadfastness. So here's how. He says, for a disciple of Jesus, you can take suffering and you can account it as joy.

[ 19 : 13 ] Your mind can tell your heart, put it in the column of joy. How? Because it is an opportunity to test your faith so that your faith might grow and deepen. In other words, he's saying, suffering for the believer has a fire to it, a purpose, and it's that you might change.

And the way he puts it is that you might become complete, perfect, lacking in nothing. And the idea here of perfect is not sinlessness. That's not what he means.

It's the word *telos*, which means that you would reach your full purpose in this life. Same way that the Old Testament uses the word blameless. Job was blameless. Jonah was blameless.

It's not sinlessness. No, no. It's complete, whole, that God is taking the chisel of suffering and hammering away at you to form you into something.

In other words, he's telling us what the purpose of discipleship is, of being a disciple of Jesus in your suffering. It's to become mature. It's to grow. It's that every single event and annoyance and bit of suffering in your life can be approached in a way where you treat it as an opportunity to mature, to become, what is a disciple?

[ 20 : 22 ] One who says, I will follow him. I want to be with him so that I can become like him. And this is telling us that suffering is the pathway to becoming like him.

Now, the word he uses, steadfastness, it can make you into a person who perseveres. It's a gymnasium term in the Greek, Greco-Roman context.

It's an athletic term. So you can produce steadfastness over time. So Paul takes you into this metaphor of the gym and working out. And you go to the gym, you think about what it takes to reach your goals, what it takes to grow.

And what it takes is resistance, right? You've got to pick something up that is heavier than you want it to be. And what happens when you do that? When you go to the gym and you pick up that barbell, you pick up those dumbbells and they're heavier than you want, than your body likes, you feel pain.

You don't feel good. You feel pain. But then it actually tears your muscles. And then your muscles grow back stronger. And you see, he takes that metaphor to say that is exactly what happens for the believer who approaches their suffering with the mindset of theology, who counts it all joy, who lets the mind say to the heart, see it the way God is telling you to see it.

[ 21 : 37 ] It's resistance. It's strength building. It's maturing. It's making you complete. Not sinlessness, but well-rounded, mature, virtuous. Think about it.

How in the world can we become humble like Jesus is humble? How in the world can we become compassionate like Jesus is compassionate? You cannot go read a book about humility and then be a humble person.

You can't read a book about compassion and become a compassionate person. No, not at all. He's saying that the only way to become humble like James, like Jesus, like his elder brother is to actually walk through the crucible of suffering and to have the dross smelted away, to have your heart chiseled away, to truly put on the humility of Christ.

And that's why Paul tells us over and over again we must complete or put on the sufferings of Christ in our life in order to become like him. And you all know those who, those people who have especially walked through certain types of grief are the best counselors to those walking through that type of grief.

Those people who have faced addiction in their life are the absolute best counselors to come and walk alongside those of you who are walking through addiction. Grace grows best in winter as it's often said.

[ 23 : 05 ] Grace grows best in winter. It's the only way to truly put on the compassion of Jesus, the humility of Jesus. How about the freedom from idols? How can you be free from idols in your life unless you've actually had to have them ripped away from you in suffering?

And Paul is telling, James is telling us here that we need, we need the scars to become like the one who was scarred for us. There's a moment in Paul's letters where he says it almost identically in Paul's own language.

Listen to the mouth of Paul here from the book of Corinthians. He says, the God of all comfort comforts us in all our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

He said, God brings you comfort in your affliction so you can turn around and give that away to others. How else do you become perfect, well-rounded, complete, lacking in nothing? See, I think one of the most important takeaways at the beginning of this book is to see that the goal of the Christian life is not comfort but maturity and that suffering is the pathway.

Now fourth, finally, the path. How do we really take this into our hearts and our lives today? Of course, this is not automatic. So even for Christians, this is not automatic.

[ 24 : 29 ] We can face suffering, trials and tribulations that are going to meet us on the road and they'll do one of two things for us. They'll either make us, grow us, or they'll break us.

And it depends on how we face them. So let me give you a few things as we conclude, just very practical to do to take up this vision that James is giving us. The first thing is we need a biblical vision for facing suffering.

We've been talking about it and it really is framed up in that line, count it all joy. So we've got to take that vision into our hearts and lives. And the reason we want to reiterate that is because the commentators, the sociologists, the philosophers, they all tell us the same thing and that's that we're always being surrounded by a cultural consciousness that does the exact opposite of that.

So in the contemporary world, many authors have pointed this out. We do, as modern Western people, we do not suffer well. We are collectively the worst sufferers in human history.

We expect to be comfortable. We expect to have life easy. We talk about rights and rights all the time give us a framework of entitlement. And so suffering comes as the biggest surprise to modern Western people.

[ 25 : 41 ] And so Jamie Smith says that in the modern consumerist mindset, the question everyone is asking in their soul is, how do I change the world around me to fit my desires?

How do I engineer my environment for maximum comfort? That's the modern question in our hearts. We're trained for that question. But the biblical question is exactly the opposite.

It's how do I conform my heart to what God wants for me? So not how do I engineer my environment to maximize my comforts, but how do I engage in my environment to have my heart change to desire what God wants me to desire?

See, really, the prayer of James is this. I hope this doesn't sound too tricky, but it's to say, Lord, help me to want what I should want.

Teach me in my suffering to want what you want me to want. And that's the call, the real call of maturity, to be shaped by our suffering holistically. Now secondly, what can we do about that?

[ 26 : 44 ] How can we take that up? Verse 5 tells us, here's how you do it. You've got to ask for wisdom from God. So he tells you outright, ask for this vision.

Now this is where some commentators and scholars will talk about the disjointed nature of James. You see, James goes from telling you who he is to telling you about suffering, and now he's turning to a different topic, wisdom.

But not at all. Instead, what is he telling us? This is the same topic, the same idea. He's saying, before suffering ever comes, you've got to ask for wisdom. And what is this wisdom?

It's the wisdom to see your suffering the way God is telling you to see it. It's the wisdom saying, Lord, help me to count my suffering joy today before it ever even comes into my life.

So he's saying, you've got to pray and you've got to ask for it, and it's got to be something that you're doing before suffering actually ever comes. It's a vision to say, only the Lord knows the secret plan.

[ 27 : 46 ] Only the Lord knows why he's putting us through the trial, the suffering that we've come upon on this road. But I know, Lord, give me the wisdom to believe that I am growing because of this. That somehow, some way, you are going to mature me in the midst of this.

Ask for that. Ask before it ever comes. Third of four things here to conclude. But then he gives you a condition, and that's in verses six to eight. And the condition is, don't be a doubter, don't be double-minded.

Now, the Greek text very literally says, don't be double-souled. So it's not a mind term, but a soul term. Don't be double-hearted is what the text says. And he's telling us there, these are parallels.

Doubting and double-mindedness. Is he telling you that means if you have doubts, then there's no way you're a follower of Jesus. There's no way you're a disciple of Jesus. And not at all.

He's talking here in the context. Think about the context. There's Christians who have been scattered by persecution all over the Roman Empire, and they're being confronted wherever they are and saying, do you really believe in Jesus?

[ 28 : 51 ] And many of them are defecting. Many of them are saying no. In other words, he's saying you can't have it both ways. That when the persecution and the trial comes, you'll say, Jesus isn't making my life comfortable in this situation, so I'll deny even knowing him, the path of Peter before he returned to Christ.

And he's saying you can't have it both ways. Be single-minded. That no matter what suffering comes, and even if it's going to bring you great suffering, you say, I'm single-minded, single-souled for Jesus Christ.

There's a letter from a man, a Roman governor named Pliny the Younger. It was written in the year, about 112 A.D., something like that. And Pliny, this governor, he writes to the emperor of the time of the Roman Empire, Trajan, and he talks about exactly this, single-minded Christians and double-minded Christians.

And this is what he wrote to Trajan. He said, he describes capturing believers, interrogating them, and then he says, even under the threat of death, many of them would not deny Jesus Christ.

I asked them whether they were Christians, and if they confessed, I told them that I would give them a second try and a third try. And if they continued to confess knowing Jesus, I threatened them with further punishments.

[ 30 : 14 ] Those who persisted, I then ordered publicly executed. I did not doubt that whatever it was that they admitted, their stubbornness and their inflexible obstinacy deserved to be punished.

Now, Pliny and the Romans of the first century and many others looked out at the single-minded Christian that said, confessing Christ is causing great suffering in my life. And he said, that is obstinacy.

That is crazy. And he gave them a second chance and a third chance. But the Christian said, that's single-mindedness. That's single-souledness. That even if following Jesus makes my life harder, I will not deny him.



I won't be double-minded. I won't be double-souled in the bottom of my soul. My soul belongs to Jesus Christ. Now, lastly, how could we become people like that?

How could we face suffering like that and be able to be single-souled, single-minded, to have a vision for suffering that that's grand? History tells us that James, the author of this letter, was murdered in the 60s.

[ 31 : 20 ] So he was very probably beaten and then taken to the top of the temple in Jerusalem where he was a pastor and thrown off the top of the temple. And the history tells us that he faced the same thing that we read about with Pliny, the question after question, and then he refused to deny worship of his elder brother, Jesus Christ, and he was murdered for it.

How could you, we think, I don't think I could do that. How can anybody ever face that kind of suffering that the first century Christians, that James is writing to, was facing?

And the answer is simple, and the answer is back to what's underneath this letter, and that's that James, Jacob, never took his eye off his elder brother. He looked to his elder brother throughout the whole of his ministry, the whole of his Christian life.

Now Jesus, Jesus was literally older than James, truly elder, biologically, by age. But of course, you know that Jesus Christ was also James' elder brother in another way.

And remember that the book of James gives you drip feeds for you the teaching of Jesus all throughout. And you'll remember in Luke 15, the prodigal son story, where there was a younger brother and an elder brother, and the younger brother went into the far country and squandered everything.

[ 32 : 45 ] He hated his own father, but in the story, you start to get the picture that the elder brother doesn't love his little brother. And you long for the elder brother to go out into the far country and get his little brother and bring him home.

You long for that in the story, and he never does. And the story ends with an elder brother basically just wanting material possessions and hating his family. And we don't know all that happened to James, but what we do know is that Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 15, 7, the elder brother came to his little brother.

The resurrected Jesus, he came to him. You know, I think what James realized in that moment is that Jesus Christ, the true and better elder brother, came into the far country of this life. And he came, he came to be crushed for our iniquities, to suffer to the uttermost, to walk through every trial you will ever walk through and know that when you face suffering and trial, it is not the final word.

You can say, brothers and sisters, as James puts it, Jesus Christ is also my elder brother. And that means that every single thing I walk through in this life, I know that he has walked before me.

You know, he faced the cross so I can face my cross. He faced the cross and even more, what happened when he was on the cross, it says that the joy was set before him.

[ 34 : 12 ] What did he do? He counted it all joy, brothers and sisters. When he faced the cross, you were his joy. So you can say, because I was his joy when he faced the cross, I can face my suffering and count it in the ledger of joy for him.

You see, the gospel gives you every reason, the true elder brother gives you every reason to say today that God is a master craftsman chiseling away at me and it's the power of the gospel that I can endure, that I can face the trials in my life.

When you walk through the valley, you're not alone, you've got your elder brother and that means he is there to be with you and to grow you so you can be with him and become like him and that's the call of a disciple.

Let us pray. Father, we want to become like him, our true and better elder brother and so we think and thank you for this word that's really hard to receive that we have to face suffering with a mind that says we can change, we can grow, we can become mature, complete, lacking in nothing so Lord, reset our vision, help us to want what you want, teach us how to desire in ways that we do not today and so we repent before you of our bad desires, Lord, we don't want the things that you call us to desire so change us as we work through this epistle we pray, oh Lord, we thank you for your word and as we sing we ask that the Holy Spirit would do a great work in our lives and we pray that in Jesus' name, Amen.