



ONE

What comes to mind when you think about struggles and difficulties? Do you think in negative or positive terms? Why do you think you view struggles in that way?

Work through James 1:2 using the **PRONOUNCE IT** Bible study method by reading the verse several times

emphasizing a different word each time. Take note of the meanings of each word. Consider using a thesaurus for additional reference. What word(s) stand out to you?

Why? What universal truths are stated in this verse?

Which ones in this verse are hard to accept? **WRITE** a prayer confessing any struggle you have accepting the truth about how all of us will struggle in various ways. Some we bring upon ourselves and others are put upon us. Ask God to reveal any false beliefs we've developed which have led us to believe we shouldn't struggle and life shouldn't be so difficult.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

¹³But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12-13 NIV

TWO

Continue with the **PRONOUNCE IT** Bible study method as you work through James 1:3-4, making notes in your journal as you consider various words. From this passage, which word(s) mean the most to you?

Why? Look back at your notes from Day One.

What meaning do today's verses bring to verse 1?

What's the joy of struggling well in these verses?

STRUGGLING WELL MAKES ME WHOLE

We know this must be true, because we're surrounded by evidence of its truth. Seeds must die in order to produce fruit; birds must work the wings before they can fly; athletes must train before they can succeed.

Most of us would like to bypass the struggling and move straight to becoming whole. But here's the reality: It's the struggle (learning to allow it to do its work) which makes us whole.

READ through James 1:2-4 again.

According to these verses, how do we struggle well?

PERSEVERANCE: Steady persistence in a course of action, especially in spite of difficulties or discouragement; continuing to the end.

Perseverance implies a resolute and unyielding holding on in spite of difficulties.

WRITE your thoughts as you consider what perseverance and/or struggling well look like in a difficult situation you're currently facing.

PRAY: Father, help me push past the notion that a perfect life means I won't have to struggle, suffer, and face hardship. Help me understand that I **WILL** struggle, suffer, and face hardship. Give me discernment to know that these difficulties aren't signs of Your absence but opportunities to grow toward wholeness in You.

THREE

READ James 1:2-4. What work or **FRUIT** does perseverance produce?

READ Galatians 5:22-23. Part of becoming **PERFECT** (mature, complete, whole) is the presence of the fruit (results) of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions.

These fruits are evident as we struggle well. We become people who think, feel, and act more like Jesus. What are the implications if we don't struggle well? If perseverance doesn't finish its work? We can become resentful, bitter, isolated. Our faith gets weak and we lose hope. We become someone who thinks, feels, and acts less like Jesus. Have you witnessed the results of not struggling well in your own life or the life of someone close to you?

PRAY: Father, take my heart/attitude toward suffering and difficulty and transform it. Help me struggle well, and not waste the experience by becoming hardened and wounded, but to rise up and become whole.

FOUR

READ James 5:7-11.

Perseverance is more than closing our eyes and hoping it will be over soon.

Perseverance implies a resolute and unyielding holding on in spite of difficulties.

READ Job 23:8-12.

Underline words/phrases which speak of perseverance and struggling well.

Through all the pain and suffering that Job endured, what/whom did he hold on to? Even though Job couldn't see God in his circumstances, he was confident of God's presence and purpose... Job didn't have to see God to know He was there. **THINK** about a time when you couldn't see God in your struggles but knew He was there.

What did you learn from that experience?

But now, this is what the Lord says, he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Isaiah 43:1-3a NIV

Take time to **THANK** God for His presence and purpose amidst every circumstance you face.