



**HATFIELD  
CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH**

## **LIFE GROUP GUIDELINE TERM 3 WEEK 8**

**21 September 2017**

### **Count it all joy**

‘My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,  
knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.’

James 1:2-3 (NKJV)

#### **Icebreaker**

Have you heard the tongue-in-cheek phrase ‘first world problems’? These can be described as minor problems or inconveniences (like your Wi-Fi not working, or having too many dirty dishes to fit into the dishwasher) as opposed to real and severe problems such as hunger, unemployment, or illness. In a light-hearted way, share with one another the ‘first world problems’ you have heard about or have been guilty of complaining about.

#### **Introduction**

When we are faced with tough times, our default response is usually to ask the question ‘why’. Tough times challenge our faith on the deepest levels. Fortunately, the Bible does not bypass suffering but tackles it directly. Job, the oldest recorded book of the Bible, handles suffering as its main theme. The book of James goes as far as to urge us to count the difficult times as ‘all joy’! This seems impossible unless we have an eternal perspective, continue praying and engaging with God, and keep persevering despite the difficulties. In this way, trials grow our faith so that we ‘may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing’ (James 1:4 NKJV). Put differently, tough times mature us so that we can fulfil the purpose for which God has created us.

#### **Discussion**

Read James 1:2-8.

- What stands out to you from this portion of Scripture? What do you learn about God, people, and life? What do you think the Lord is highlighting to you through it? Share with one another.

- Can you remember what the word ‘count’ or ‘consider’ means? How does this change your understanding of the word?

*This means that we should compare and weigh up the facts and then make a judgement. It is fact, and not feeling, based.*

- Watch the following ‘life is short’ sermon illustration and then discuss it together. What long-term decisions have you made based on short-term realities? Is God challenging you on anything specific around this? Share with one another.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=86dsfBbZfWs&feature=youtu.be>

- Tough times tend to stir up intense emotions in us. Where do we go to with these? Some people say we should vent our emotions while others tell us to suppress them. The Bible (and especially the Psalms) teaches us to pray our emotions. God is not intimidated by how we feel. When tough times hit, do you tend to run to or from God? How honest are you with God? When you come to God, what do you seek most – personal breakthrough in your challenge or God himself?
- Has there been a difficult time in your life that you have come through? How was your faith strengthened? Has your faith grown to the point where you have been able to encourage someone else’s faith? Share with one another.

### **Prayer**

- Are there some who feel they have been living with too short-term a view and who need to be reminded of the eternal perspective? Repent and rejoice for eternity awaits us and the problems of this life are only temporal. Spend some time telling your problems how big your God is.
- Pray for those who feel that are running from, not to, God in their tough times.
- Pray for those who are weary and struggling to persevere through their difficulties.
- Ask God for opportunities to encourage others in your families and places of work and study this week. Is there someone specific you should encourage this week? Spend some time waiting on God and write down what He says.

### **Challenge**

Read some of the Psalms in the week ahead and take note of the Psalmist’s honesty and love for God.