TURNING TRIALS INTO TRIUMPH

Without warning, something can happen that will change your life forever.

- A loved one is disabled by an accident or illness.
- A promising career is cut short by an injury.
- A child is born disabled or sick, or dies.
- A marriage crumbles; children choose not to follow Christ.
- A fire, flood, or earthquake destroys your home or business.
- A loved one is killed in battle, by terrorists, a gang, or by thieves.

How do you react? Do you fall apart? Do you become bitter? Do you question God?

Life is filled with trials and sufferings because we live in a world that has been corrupted by sin. Each of us will experience some measure of agony during our lifetime. Its form and duration will vary, but it will come. At times, you may feel overpowered by seeming tidal waves of adversity. You may find yourself flailing in an ocean of pain, anguish, or despair. In the midst of such difficulties, your mind may scream questions like, “Why did this happen to me?” or “God, where are You?”

It is often during times of suffering that we learn to refocus our lives on God. David confessed in Psalm 119:71, “The suffering You sent was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to Your principles.”

On the other hand, Oxford scholar and author C.S. Lewis said, “**God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.**”

Our lesson series, “Turning Trials Into Triumph” reminds us that God has a purpose for every difficulty we encounter. Although this purpose is seldom obvious at the time, we must always remember that God does not want to destroy us through adversity. Rather, He wants to shape us for His glory and to conform us to the image of Christ. He does not send suffering to crush us; He wants us to triumph through suffering.
NOTHING IS WRONG WITH YOU  
James 1:1-3

ICE BREAKER/ACTIVITY:
It was said that there are only three kinds of people in this world today: 1) those in the middle of a trial; 2) those just coming out of a trial, 3) and people who are about to go into a trial. Where do you fit in the three categories today?

INTO THE LESSON:

Read James 1:1-2. The Book of James was written by a brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3). It is a book written to all Christians. A book on “Practical Christianity,” with down-to-earth [practical; realistic; sensible] topics and discussions.

I. NOT “IF” BUT “WHEN”
Trials and Temptations come to all. This is not a sign that something is wrong with you. Read 1 Peter 4:12. And how do we know? Because Jesus, too, encountered trials and temptations of all kinds (Hebrews 4:15).

A Christian should expect trials, oppressions, misunderstanding and rejection. If anybody tries to teach that the Christian life is all sunlight and roses, they’re teaching from an empty head and from a closed Bible.

The Bible doesn’t say you may face trials/temptations, it says you will. Job was a blameless upright man who feared God and turned away from evil, yet, in one day Job lost everything from family, to finances, to fortune, to fitness, to friends. Daniel was a man totally committed to God, who prayed three times a day to the Lord. All he got for his praying was a free trip to the lion’s den. Joseph was a man of unquestioned integrity, decency, loyalty, and purity, who was thrown into prison for a crime he didn’t commit, without even a trial. Paul, the greatest Christian (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

II. UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE
A trial is a test sent by God. The temptation is a test sent by Satan. Trials are given (or allowed) by God to help us learn how to be steadfast. Temptations are given by Satan to cause us to stumble. Now God, with His test is aiming at your maturity; Satan, with his test, is aiming at your misery. Satan intends to hurt us; but God wants to help us.

Temptation is an enticement, an allurement, an inducement to commit sin. These come from Satan, not from God.

WRAP UP: Now to be tempted or tried, is not a sin in itself. Nothing is wrong with you! Jesus was tempted, but He did not sin. Be tempted and tried, but do not fall into sin. As we meet together, what can we do as a group to become a safe and encouraging channel for each other? PRAYER. Pray for each other that no one may fall into sin after facing trials and temptations.
MULTI-COLORED TRIALS
James 1:2-3

ICE BREAKER/ACTIVITY:

It was said that there are only three kinds of people in this world today: 1) those in the middle of a trial; 2) those just coming out of a trial, 3) and people who are about to go into a trial. Where do you fit in the three categories today?

INTO THE LESSON:

I. WHENEVER YOU FACE TRIALS

Trials and temptations of many kinds (divers in KJV) come to all. James affirms this fact. Many kinds or divers were the words used to translate the Greek word poikilois. This Greek word literally means “polka-dot,” i.e., life is “dotted” with many trials. The word also means multi-colored, and multi-sized, indicating that trials/temptations come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. They may be affliction, sorrow, sickness, physical trials, financial trials, psychological trials, spiritual trials.

II. YOUR FAITH DEVELOPS PERSEVERANCE

You may think because you come to church every Sunday, sing praises, give tithes and offerings, take notes, and walk piously, that your faith is strong. But only trouble will tell. You see, faith not only must stand the test of time, it must stand the test of trouble.

Someone said, “You can tell how great a Christian is by what it takes to stop him.” On the other hand, Proverbs 24:10 says, “If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!” Or we could paraphrase it this way, “If your faith fails you when trouble comes, your faith is weak.”

The word “testing” (Greek, dokimazo) refers to the refining of Gold. Gold is sent through scorching fire. But it has nothing to fear from the fire, because the fire simply burns off all the impurities and all the dross.

“The testing of your faith develops perseverance.” This is somewhat like a test in school. Some pass and some fail. The purpose of a test, however, is two-fold: 1) It reveals the “strength” of your knowledge; and 2) It measures the “weakness” of your knowledge. And if you are an earnest and dedicated student, you will do everything to turn your weakness into strength.

WRAP UP: Always remember, God allows trials/temptations to come into our life to develop us, not to destroy us; to help us and not to harm us. PRAYER. Pray for each other that as one goes through trials and temptations in their life, they may go through it victoriously.
“ENJOY” YOUR TRIALS
James 1:1-3

ICE BREAKER/ACTIVITY: “What If?”

INTO THE LESSON:

I. CONSIDER (James 1:2)

To “count it” is a word that literally means to lead, or look ahead. We are to “look forward” to what will be accomplished when we have overcome! Christ looked ahead of the cross and saw the lives that will be changed, the homes that will be saved, the good work that will be done in His name, and how all this will glorify the Father.

II. ENJOY (James 1:2)

James was not a sadist who delighted in being hurt. He was not saying you ought to enjoy trials, or that trials are here for a joy. He knew “no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful” (Hebrews 12:11).

This does not mean to “grin and bear it”, but to become an “overcomer.” James is not talking about relishing pain and sorrow – “Christ, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2) Christ did not relish the cross. But He looked to its end, its accomplishment!

III. ENDURE (James 1:3)

James says that all trials can be understood to be the “testing of our faith.” The word “testing” does not mean that God has us go through trials to examine our faith and see if it is of passing grade. Testing here is the word used for testing metals, where you test in order to remove impurities so that the metal is stronger and has more integrity. Impurities such as impatience, anxiety, intolerance, etc. can be lessened or removed from our life through testing. As a result, we learn to be more patient, persevering and faithful to God. Something good will always come out of trials, troubles and sufferings. Look forward to it.

WRAP UP: When we go through trials, we can exercise our patience and trust in God. And in that way we can find Him trustworthy. In turn, we are able to trust Him with more of our lives. PRAYER. Pray for each other that as we go through trials, temptations, troubles and sufferings in life, we may learn important lessons from it.
LOOK UP! LOOK UP!
Psalm 121:1-8

ICE BREAKER/ACTIVITY: “Name that song.”

INTO THE LESSON:

I. LOOK UP TO GOD FOR HELP (Psalm 121:1, 2)

Psalm 121 is a song that Israelites would often sing while making their yearly pilgrimage to worship in the temple in Jerusalem. For many, this was a long and treacherous trip. There were dangers that awaited them on many fronts. They were many things that could go wrong, many bad things that could happen. They had reason to fear. So, they would sing this song. Consequently, they are reminded of three important truths.

People everywhere, young or old, are looking for help. There is hardly a day that goes by that you don’t see or hear of someone asking or looking for help. The good news is that God wants to help each and every one of us. When in need or whatever you need, pray to God for help! Read God’s promise in Psalm 34:17, 19.

II. LOOK UP TO GOD FOR DIRECTION/GUIDANCE (Psalm 121:3-6)

Have you ever slipped and fell? No one wants to slip and fall. But even if we are careful, still it happens. It happens to all, young or old. But it’s OK. Why? After a few days, your bump and/or bruises may heal. After that, parang walang nangyari.

But there is a kind of slipping and falling that we should avoid and can avoid with God’s help. What is it? It’s slipping and falling into sin. Read the warnings in Proverbs 1:10 and 1 Corinthians 15:33. Read also 1 Corinthians 10:13.

How can we avoid falling into sin? Look up to God/Holy Spirit for guidance. Another way is to avoid bad company. This is why we have this CARE group.

III. LOOK UP TO GOD FOR PROTECTION (Psalm 121:7-8)

Where do people today find security and protection against all harm? From high walls, barbed wires, CCTV, security guard or bodyguard, firearms, etc. From financial security, achievement of personal goals, etc. Are these enough?

Only God and our Savior Jesus Christ can really protect us from all harm. For this reason, we need to have a personal relationship to Jesus.

WRAP UP: Psalm 121 was written to remind the Israelites as to how God helps, guides and protects His people in times of trials and troubles. The trials and troubles we face may not be the same as the ones encountered by the Israelites. But no matter what, the promises of Psalm 121 is also for us. LOOK UP! LOOK UP! Bawal ang sad. If we do, God will help us, guide us and protect us. PRAYER.