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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | By **Martha Rodman** on March 20, 2025 |   *M*y *brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of you faith produces patience. James 1*:2-3 NKJV.  During our small group meeting last night, we read the above scripture. Once again, I realized something important. I have not yet learned to "count" it joy when I meet a trial or trouble. As I mentioned it, one of our other members suggested when we post a prayer request or struggle, we would use the code words "count joy"!  I am not sure if James wants us to rejoice instantly or when we have time to evaluate the test. As I looked up the word "count" it means to judge, consider or have the rule over. It is our choice which category to place the various trials we face in. As I thought about these choices, I thought about a spreadsheet. What kinds of things do I put in the joy/faith category? The birth of a new grand baby? Watching my children grow in the Lord? Hearing an answered prayer? It is easy to place these in the "fair" category!  Most of us, if we want to admit it have a "fair" or "unfair" category. It is quite a normal human trait. Consider Cain's response to God's question, "Where is Abel?" "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain felt God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, and did not think the rejection of his sacrifice fair. Unfortunately, he thought it was so unfair that he killed his brother. (You can read the story in Genesis 4). So my friends, what types of trials and tests have you experienced that may be in the "unfair" category? Are there unresolved tribulations in your soul, that you still 'feel unfair'?  Loss of a job? Cheated on by your spouse? Or maybe you cheated because your spouse was 'unfair'? How about struggling with children's sicknesses or diagnosis? Financial issues? James tries to help us focus on the joy that can come from these tests. I believe he is doing this because he experienced it firsthand! Apparently, according to John 7:5, his biological 1/2 brothers did not believe in him. But after the resurrection, he believed. We find him in the upper room with his mother and other brothers, according to Acts 1:14. He eventually became the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and you know that must not have been easy!  According to the NKJV we are to count the trials of our faith as joy. The NLT tells us:*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.*Once again, it seems like it is our choice how we perceive these trials. The Message Bible is even clearer: *Consider it a sheer gift, friends when tests and challenges come at you from all sides.* Wow, this takes a mind shift for sure. So where do you put the trials you are currently facing? In the fair or the unfair section? Would it make a difference if you could see how He could be working it all out for good for you?  Most teachers give tests after they have taught the material. They believe their students are ready to do well on it. I believe the Lord, as our Teacher does the same. *When your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. James 1:3-4.* Maybe the question is, do you trust the Teacher? Or your ability to learn?  Most of us try to avoid all trials and tests. We want comfort and stability. Again, it is very natural when unexpected trials show up to feel like this is UNFAIR! But, I have to admit most of the God inspiring lessons in my life came from difficult trials. These trials were God changing for me. I am not talking about dealing with the effects of sin or giving in to temptation. There are lessons to be learned from that. I am talking about learning to stand in the face of the trials of our faith. Learning to live life as a widow was one of the most challenging tests of my faith. I hated to even use the word "widow". Some trials and tribulations we can squirm around, but not this one. I had two choices. I could live life in the "unfair" zone. Or I could trust our fair God. I decided to see what He would do with this season of my life. My emotions, at times, really want to live in the "unfair" zone. But I have learned that my Savior is trustworthy. The length of time my tests and trials end up in the "unfair" category depends on the issue. How about you?  We must understand that everything that happens to us may not be good or easy by itself. When we put it in His hands, He works it all out for our good. This is why we can move our tests from 'unfair' to 'fair', as we watch Him work out those tests and trials for our good. That good will include, the patience and endurance that James tells us about. These attributes will help us grow in Him and His ways.  *Father, I thank you for helping us trust you even when the tests and tribulations seem unfair to us. According to our understanding, they may not always make sense. We choose to trust you. We rely on you to help us not get stuck in any emotional feelings of "unfairness". We trust your ability to work all things together for our good and your kingdom. In Jesus' Name, amen.* |