

## DISCUSS

- In your experience, why do tests and trials often surprise us in life? Can you think of other passages of scripture that talk about going through trials?
- Even though the Holy Spirit is not directly mentioned by James, what role do you think the Spirit plays (and how) in moving a believer from frustration / despair to joy when going through difficulty or disappointment?
- If God already knows us, what is the purpose of a test?
- Instead of asking for deliverance in the face of a trial, James says to ask for wisdom. Why wisdom?
- Discuss the connection James makes between being single minded in believing God and receiving from God.
- James says the reward of testing is to one day receive a 'crown of life.' What do you think that is?

## APPLY

- Do you know a believer, or have you, who exhibits joy in the midst of a significant trial or time of suffering?
- What is their secret? How can you be like them?
- In verses 9-10, James tells us not to equate earthly wealth with being in a high position with God. What are some practical ways to keep money in perspective in a culture that measures success with material wealth?

## GROUP PRAYER FOCUS

- Share trials you are going through and specifically ask for wisdom as to how God would have you respond.
- Ask God for fresh perspective on wealth and the pursuit of material riches - pray for a shift in focus.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you joy, especially over areas of life that have gotten you down.

# Making FAITH + WORK

Book of James

# 1

Week 1: Happy vs Holy

Key Text: James 1:1-12

## OPEN

We are beginning the fall by turning to the Book of James, what some call the 'Proverbs of the New Testament,' because it is filled with practical wisdom for godly living. James was the half-brother of Jesus, not to be confused with the other James' who were disciples. At first a skeptic, James encountered the resurrected Jesus and went on to be a pillar of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15). Originally speaking to Jewish believers, James wrote to share the importance of putting faith to work in action, providing insight for true godly living. He begins by speaking about God's overall goal for your life, which is to make you a mature and a holy reflection of him through the testing of your faith, a goal of God's that should give us joy.

## REFLECT

- Who was James?
  - Despite his status as a half-brother to Jesus, how does he insist on identifying himself in verse 1?
  - We first meet James in Jn. 7:5 where it says he did not believe...until Jesus later appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:7).
  - What must have it been like to grow up with Jesus?
- In this week's text, verses 3-4, James gives a 3-fold progression where one thing leads to the next in God's goal for your life. What are the three things he mentions?