



Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

No pain, no gain

Wow. This past year has been difficult—even horrible—for us as individuals, as a country and as the human race. It's okay, and even healthy, to admit this. It's reality.

Maybe you wish 2020 was just a bad dream and that you'll wake up to find out it never even happened. But the reality is that it did happen.

The events of this past year make it clear that you can't avoid pain in life. In a sinful world, pain will find you.

Again, it's okay, and even healthy, to admit this. But eventually, you have to go further than just acknowledging the pain. You have to have a strategy to deal with the pain in a healthy way.

James tells us that we first have to address how we *think* about pain.

It's a lie that pain is only bad—a lie we believe. That's why we're shocked when James says, "consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials." How can something that hurts bring joy?

He's telling us we can have joy because there's actually purpose in pain. He's telling us that pain, in this life, is actually *necessary* for our spiritual growth.

It hurts when you lift weights and your muscles become sore. But that's the only way your muscles will get bigger and stronger.

It's the same for our faith. God uses the pain in our lives as an opportunity for us to rely less and less on our own power and more and more on his love and power—making our faith bigger and stronger. As you walk through life with God's promises, you will see him give you a deep sense of confidence, maturity and peace—even while you're in pain.

And, an even more comforting truth is that Jesus looked at the pain he was about to suffer on the cross with joy. He knew through his pain he would gain salvation for the entire world and ensure we would live with him forever in heaven—pain free.

It was worth it. You were worth it.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for all I've gained through your pain. Change the way I view pain in my life. Let me realize that you have a purpose to my pain, even if I don't always see it. Amen.