

This year at STP, we are really diving into God's Word, using our Bibles regularly during our devotional times. We are on a bit of a Bible adventure, using James as our springboard to take us through scripture. Our goal? To learn more about how we are to live. I hope that you will take the time to read the scriptures that we talk about each week and encourage your student to hide God's Word in their heart. Maybe scripture memory can be a new family challenge!

The book of James is found toward the end of the New Testament and is a letter that is attributed to James, the brother of Jesus. While it is written in letter format, it reads more like a series of sermons. James was accomplished at sharing his point and giving examples that make the text come alive with imagery. Some scholars say that it is the book of wisdom for the New Testament. In the current climate, we really need a good dose of wisdom, so now is the perfect time to give James a closer look!

This week, we began with the first few verses of James and talked about the phrase "counting it all joy" and what that means. We all know that as Christians, we will face trials in our lives, and it is not always easy to be joyful through difficult circumstances. However, being filled with joy is a theme that shows up over and over in scripture. Read: 1 Peter 1:6-7, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

James says that our trials will produce steadfastness. When we think about something being steadfast, we think of words like constant, unwavering, rock solid. If something is steadfast it should be grounded. But grounded in what? So, I began thinking of steadfast as an adjective, and decided to find what it might modify within scripture and guess what I found? Steadfast is often paired with the noun "love", specifically referring to the love of God. Read: Psalm 51:1, Lamentations 3:22-24

God's love is steadfast! Constant, unwavering, rock solid. It is paramount that we recognize the great, unfailing love that God has for us! It is so essential that Jesus talked about it with His disciples at the Last Supper. He shares so much with them that evening, including the key to having joy. Read: John 15:9-11

How do we count it all as joy? By remaining (abiding) in God's love. When we recognize His great love for us through the gift of Jesus Christ as our Savior, then our joy is complete! There is nothing more that we need. With God's love, we can walk by faith, no matter what trials come our way. We lean back into the loving arms of God, and move forward inch by inch, moment by moment, allowing His love to carry us. His love never fails!

Psalm 117 has exactly what we need to remember if things are hard. This is your chapter to memorize this week. It is a short, but powerful reminder of how to count it all joy!

Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!