



## **New Creation**

### **Dec 10: Created to Persevere**

**Series Summary:** As a believer in Jesus, all who have professed Christ should know you are saved by faith in Him, with a confidence of eternal security. Yet, for many, there still lies a tension between what is read about their faith in the scriptures compared to what they see play out in their habits and day-to-day living. It's possible that many still struggle with a disconnect between their understanding of the Gospel in faith and its practical application. To fully understand the difference the Gospel has the potential to make in every area of our lives.

**Big Idea:** We as Christians are not exempt from struggling in this life. Jesus actually tells us to expect struggles. However, we have what we need as new creations in order to persevere and fight through a challenging life.

#### **Schedule:**

- Video Teaching
- Small Group
- KB's Catering

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## VIDEO TEACHING

**Lead in:** Today we are wrapping up our New Creation series with an aspect of being a new creation that may be easy to forget. We are created to persevere.

Perhaps you know all too well what it means to struggle with something, really anything in life. It could be something along the lines of a school subject that you're not great at...fighting to get playing time on your team...it could be something deep, like loss of a loved one. Jesus actually tells us to expect struggles in this life, but we should also anticipate the desire to persevere.

## DEFINING PERSEVERANCE

**Dictionary Definition:** continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty or with little or no prospect of success.

**The definition of spiritual endurance (from Logos software)** (or “steadfast endurance”): the power to withstand hardship or stress.

This isn't just simply a nice sounding sentiment, this is an encouragement and expectation for believers.

There is a difference between “struggling” and “giving up”.

- Struggling means you continue to push through and continue on, even if that means limping along.
- Giving up means that no effort will be made going forward. We've quit.
- Perseverance cannot be found in giving up, but it can be found in limping along if that's what it comes to.

**Transition:** But what does the Bible specifically say about perseverance in regards to Christians? Because if we're being truthful, then we'll openly admit that struggles and trials aren't enjoyable. However...

## PURPOSE OF PERSEVERANCE

**James 1:2-4** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

I think people rarely think the way James thinks here. Why would I ever consider a trial or struggle as a joy of mine? James gives the answer- it produces steadfastness (perseverance).

**Example:** An athlete in the weightroom is struggling to get one last rep in on bench press. The coach or teammate is yelling at them that they have one more rep in them.

The same concept is seen here in our faith.

- For the athlete, there is strength in weakness. The fatigue shows that strength will be gained in the coming days.
- For the Christian, when we think “this is too hard, I can’t go on”, Jesus says “yes you can because I’ve got you”.

Our steadfastness isn’t found in our self-help, but is found in our reliance and trust in Christ. This is where vs 4 is so important- **4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

Our perseverance is crucial to our spiritual maturity. Us relying on Jesus’s strength, and trusting in His provision is where we realize that we lack nothing when we are fully submitted in Jesus.

- If we try to find our strength elsewhere (friends, dating, sports, acceptance, money, etc) then those things are going to fail us at some point. They’re going to lead us to a dead end because they were never meant to be enough for us.

When we realize that Jesus truly is enough for us to carry on in each day and each situation, then the faster we are to go back to Him. And the faster we are to go back to Him and stay rooted in Him, then the faster and easier we fortify our hearts and minds.

- We now understand that a difficult life is able to be lived out...not because we are great, but because our God is.

Transition to small group: We’ve defined perseverance, and have begun to unpack why perseverance is a blessing. I now want to continue in conversation as to how to apply perseverance in our daily walks of faith.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**Get Them Talking:** James 1 states that hardships should be considered a joy. Be honest, have you ever thought about a difficult situation that way? If you have, please share how you lived in that way.

**READ JOHN 16:33 TOGETHER AS A GROUP**

**John 16:33** “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

**Leader Note/Context:** This entirety of chapter 16 is about Jesus giving “parting words” to his disciples because he knows that he is about to be crucified, and that the disciples will be scattered out into the world where they will face persecution for their faith. Jesus is encouraging the disciples to be strong in their faith even in the midst of trials, struggles, and persecution for their faith.

**Leader Note/Lead-in to next question:** Jesus gives a lot of negative details in the verses prior that may have initially discouraged his disciples–

- Vs 2: “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.”
- “Vs 6: Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things.”
- Vs 7: “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away.”
- From vs 2-22, Jesus is essentially telling them- “You’re going to face backlash for following me, and I’m also going to die soon and you’re going to mourn because of it”.

**Why would Jesus tell his disciples a lot of negative sounding details, and then end it in verse 33 with “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace”?**

**Leader Note:** Part of this is Jesus telling his disciples what to expect when the new Church is ushered in after Jesus’s Gospel is complete (death→ resurrection→ascension→Holy Spirit comes to indwell in all believers). The other part is the good news of why Jesus has to die and the benefit of what happens after. This being that Jesus dying and raising again brings eternal life for all believers, and his ascension marks the beginning to the Holy Spirit (God) being with all believers; whether through good or bad, or comfort or perseverance.

- The peace that Jesus is referring to is that the Holy Spirit, aka God, is with us at all times no matter what life may throw at us. This knowledge and understanding should bring us peace even in the midst of perseverance.
- In the disciples’ case, they can withstand the worst of persecution and heartbreak because God is literally with them, even if God feels “absent” in the worst of pain.

**Why is the word “WILL” so important in regards to what Jesus told his disciples? (“In this world you will have trouble.”)**

**Note:** Facing troubles, regardless of how big they may be, are going to happen no matter what. It's not a matter of if, but when. There's a follow up importance of Jesus where he says to "take heart" - in other words to hold strong and persevere. Why? Because Jesus has the sufficient strength. He has overcome the brokenness the world dishes out to us.

## READ ROMANS 5 TOGETHER AS A GROUP

**In what ways does perseverance produce character? What type of character is being mentioned here?**

**Leader Note:** This type of character is referring to the spiritual maturity that James 1 also refers to. Perseverance should stem from us leaning on Jesus and walking all the more closer with him, which in-of-itself leads us to be more like Jesus. This also benefits us by having us focus more on Christ rather than our problems, emotions, or pity parties (not to say that we can't work through those things).

**How does our spiritual maturity/character lead to hope in Jesus?**

**What does it look like to put our hope in our circumstances rather than actually placing our hope in Jesus?**

**Leader Note:** This may sound harsh through text, but those who place their hope in circumstances or other people don't know how to push forward when things go wrong. Obviously people can have emotional reactions to things, and work through a difficult "season of life"...but people also tend to create pity parties and victim cards and stay stuck in those mindsets. These pity parties and victim cards don't lead to perseverance; more times than not they leave us staying in the past instead of trying to push forward. When we live this way, it's easy for us to be molded by those circumstances rather than being molded by Christ.

**The way James 1 talks about perseverance makes it sound like a prize or trophy. Do you think it's necessary to think of perseverance in this way? Why or why not?**

**Note:** I would argue that it is necessary to think of perseverance like it's a prize. Scripture makes it clear that we are not to mope around this life while throwing constant pity parties.

- Are we going to hurt in this life? Yes. Are we going to struggle in this life? Yes. However, there is a blessing tied to those who fight and push when things get tough. (**James 1:3-4** because you know that the testing of your faith produces

perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.)

**Final Thought:** There are going to be difficult moments in life where we are going to have to battle and push forward. When we let perseverance finish its work (no matter how long it may take), we come to understand that we lack nothing because Jesus is truly all that we need.