

Questions to Discuss:

What are some potholes you've experienced lately or are experiencing now?

In what ways could those trials produce spiritual endurance in you?

Why do you think it's so tempting to pursue spiritual maturity quickly?

When something is going wrong, what is your natural response?
How do you manifest that response?

What are some ways your thinking needs to change so that you can receive trials with joy?

Potholes Have a Purpose, Too!

James 1:1-4

James doesn't waste any time; after a single word of salutation—"Greetings"—he dives right in. His first topic: trials. Instantly, his word choice jumps out; he does not say, "**if** you meet trials"; he says, "**when** you meet trials". The question he's about to address is not "**Will** I be forced to deal with potholes on my spiritual journey?" The question is "What will I do **when** I encounter them?"

The initial reason for potholes—endurance. We can be certain that potholes will develop endurance in us. By nature of what endurance is, there must be something strenuous. A runner does not learn to endure the difficulty of mile 26 if he never gets off the couch. A believer who never experiences a challenge to their faith will not develop spiritual fortitude.

The effective result of potholes—maturity. Endurance is not the ultimate goal; maturity is. However, maturity does not come instantly; it is developed over a period of time. What do we need to patiently press forward to maturity? Endurance. James's logical progression is: trials produce endurance, and endurance is necessary for maturity.

The appropriate response to potholes—joy. A proper understanding of why we encounter potholes is the key to having a right attitude in the midst of trials. We naturally gravitate to the path of least resistance, but doing so makes us spiritually anemic. Our desire should be greater maturity; if it is, then trials will not be seen as enemies, but greeted as friends.