

SERMON IN A SENTENCE

Recognize that in spite of life's circumstances, God is shaping you into your best God-created self, so keep your focus and attention aligned with His purposes.

THIS WEEK'S BIBLICAL BASIC

Joy: Regardless of circumstances, I have inner contentment and purpose in life. *John 15:11, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*

Questions for Your Journal

Use these following questions to evaluate what you learned from **Sunday's sermon**.

Summary:

- The main thing the speaker wants me to do, be, and/or feel as a result of this message.

Application to My Life:

- What did God say to me through this message?
 - How does my life measure up to this word?
 - What action(s) will I take to bring my life in line with this word?
 - What truth do I need to study further?
-

Give Up the Hamster Wheel Perspective!

Hamsters must be the most physically fit rodents on earth. Rather than letting them sit around stuffing their jaws with little pellets of food, their owners supply them with an appropriately-named exercise machine: the hamster wheel. You know what it looks like, and if you've ever had a hamster, you know what it sounds like at 3 A.M! If you allow yourself to think about the hamster running endlessly in the wheel, it can almost make you sad for them. They exert so much energy, but never actually get anywhere. It's almost cruel. Maybe you can relate.

Our hurried lives are often punctuated by setbacks, frustrations, and, to use James' word, trials. While you're in the middle of a trial, it seems like you're powerless to get out of it. No matter how hard you push or how fast you run, you just can't get out. As they say on the Internet, "The struggle is real." What's worse, it's not always apparent what we did to deserve the trial we're facing, and it can feel like God has abandoned us to go it alone. Thankfully, God knew that we would fall into this "Hamster Wheel Perspective," and in James 1:1-18 we're told two things that get us out of the hamster wheel and back on the Risen Way. First, there is a purpose to our trials (Jas. 1:2-4), and second, we'll be rewarded for our perseverance through them (Jas. 1:12).

There seems to be little purpose to the hamster's ceaseless running. Clearly, he's going nowhere and fast. Not so for the believer! God has begun a work in us and He promises to complete it (Phil. 1:6). He has stretched a path in front of us, and though it may prove difficult at times, His purpose is for us to reach our goal and to finish our race. Life is not a hamster wheel. Each trial has a purpose as God shapes us and molds us into the image of His Son, Jesus (Rom. 8:29).

In addition to never actually going anywhere, the hamster doesn't win anything for running in his wheel. It's a mindless exercise in futility. But believers are promised a wonderful reward for their perseverance. James refers to it as "the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (Jas. 1:12), and Paul calls it a competitor's "prize" (2 Tim. 2:5). Both argue that it is motivation for our perseverance. So when you find yourself facing an obstacle, give up the hamster wheel perspective that keeps you from seeing its point. Remember that God is at work to change you and make you more like Jesus, and that He promises you a great reward for your faithfulness to Him through it.

Encounter

Take a few minutes to read James 1:1-18 in a couple of different translations. Make a note of any differences in wording or phrasing.

Reflect

James, Peter, and Paul each link trials and joy (Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; Rom. 5:1-5). Read these passages and think back to Sunday's sermon. **Why should believers rejoice in the midst of trials?**

James encourages poor Christians to "rejoice in their exaltation" and rich Christians in their "humiliation" (Jas. 1:9-10). **How do trials help us gain perspective on who we are and what we have?**

James seems to distinguish between trials and temptations (see Jas. 1:13–18). Look up both words in the Bible. **What is the difference between them?**

James emphasizes the purpose or goal of our life in Christ (i.e., our perfection or completeness [Jas. 1:4]). In 1:18, he also gives the source or beginning. Read James 1:18 and summarize James' statement on our birth.

Examine

Based on 2 Timothy 3:16 (*"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"*), this series of questions is intended to help you figure out what you should do or believe in response to this text.

Reflect on the passage and answer the following questions.

(This passage may not have a clear answer for each question. Just use them to prompt your thinking.)

1. What does this passage tell me to believe?

(How does it teach me?)

2. What does this passage tell me not to believe?

(How does it reprove me?)

3. How does this passage tell me not to live?

(How does it correct me?)

4. How does this passage tell me to live?

(How does it train me in righteousness?)

Embrace

After spending significant time with this passage, you've probably learned a lot and heard God speak to you through His Word. Look back at your responses to the previous questions and ask God to show you how you can respond to this text this week.

Write down some ideas for how you can respond to the truth of God's Word.

About The Map

The Map exists to help you consistently reflect on Scripture as you pursue maturity in Christ. When you devote yourself to reading God's Word, and meditate on what you read, you're allowing Him to shape your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.



Disciple-Making Guide

Kids Kindergarten through 6th grade receive Adventure Tokens for for discipleship activities completed during the week. They can spend them at the Adventure Store on the last Sunday of the month.

Big Picture Questions for Unit 19: "God the Son"

Preschool: Question: *What makes Jesus different?*
Answer: *Jesus is God's One and Only Son.*

Kids (1-6 grade): Question: *What makes Jesus different?*
Answer: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

This Week's Family Reading Plan

for Preschoolers: *The Conquest of Jericho**

Day 1: *2 Chronicles 29:1-19*

Day 2: *2 Chronicles 29:20-36*

Day 3: *2 Chronicles 30:1-12*

Day 4: *2 Chronicles 30:13-27*

Day 5: *2 Chronicles 31:1-21*

*Preschool readings are taken from *The Big Picture Interactive Bible Stories for Toddlers, Old Testament* (B&H Publishing Group), available at Amazon.com & LifeWay Christian Store.

Key Passage for Unit 19: "God the Son"

Preschoolers: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
(1 Timothy 1:15)

Kids (1-6 grade): This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15)

Northway's Family Ministry uses *The Gospel Project* to help preschoolers, kids, and students grow in their knowledge of Scripture and of Jesus Christ, about whom it was all written (Luke 24:44-49).



Adventure Token Coupon

Fill this out and bring it to Bible Study for your tokens!

I worked on learning my big picture question and key passage _____.

I read my Bible at home _____.

Child's Name _____.

Parent's Signature _____.

34 BIBLICALBASICS

11 MARKERS

A Dedicated Disciple...

1. has **Trusted Christ** as the Leader & Forgiver of their lives.
2. has publicly identified their life with Christ through **Biblical Baptism**.
3. is cultivating the Spirit-controlled life through daily repentance, consistent prayer, reading/meditating on Scripture, and other **Spiritual Practices**.
4. is faithfully attending weekly **Corporate Worship** gatherings.
5. is devoted to **Generous Living**, faithfully giving of their time, talent, treasures, tithes & offerings.
6. is building a **God-Centered Home** by practicing Family Discipleship through regular prayer, bible reading, serving, hospitality & participating in church life.
7. is a member of a **Small Group**, sharing & caring in deep fellowship with God's people.
8. is regularly engaging in **Relational Evangelism**, sharing their faith with others and inviting them to Corporate Worship gatherings.
9. lives a life that is increasingly characterized by the selfless, sacrificial, **Servant Lifestyle** modeled by Christ.
10. serves through giftedness within the church on **Ministry Teams**.
11. is involved in **Serving Outside** the church, such as short term mission trips, local service projects, compassion/justice initiatives, etc.

Northway Church of The Woodlands

8200 Northway Dr.
The Woodlands, TX 77382
www.NorthwayChurch.org

10 COREBELIEFS

1. **Salvation by Grace** - Eph. 2:8-9
2. **Identity in Christ** - John 1:12
3. **Personal God** - Psalm 121:1-2
4. **Trinity** - 2 Corinthians 13:14
5. **Authority of The Bible** - 2 Tim 3:16-17
6. **Humanity** - John 3:16
7. **Eternity** - John 14:1-4
8. **The Church** - Eph. 4:15-16
9. **Compassion** - Psalm 82:3-4
10. **Stewardship** - 1 Tim. 6:17-19

13 COREVIRTUES

1. **God-Centered Thinking** - Matt. 6:33
2. **Integrity/Holiness** - Psalm 119:1
3. **Faithfulness** - Proverbs 3:3-4
4. **Self-Control** - Titus 2:11-13
5. **Joy** - John 15:11
6. **Peace** - Philippians 4:6-7
7. **Hope** - Hebrews 6:19-20
8. **Love** - 1 John 4:10-12
9. **Patience** - Proverbs 14:29
10. **Gentleness** - Philippians 4:5
11. **Kindness/Goodness** - 1 Thessalonians 5:15
12. **Humility** - Philippians 2:3-4
13. **Gratitude** - 1 Thessalonians 5:18



Developing Dedicated Disciples Who Make a Difference in the World!