

**Pastor/Teacher Commentary**  
*Handling Stress Before It Handles You*  
James 1:1-12

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Stress is Defined.**

According to Webster, Stress is "pressure, intense strain; to bind tight, to subject oneself to eternal forces. (p13) of O. S. Hawkins Book entitled *High Calling High Anxiety*.

The pressures to serve our LORD in the ministry are especially intense and is a breeding ground for stress.

### **The effects of stress.**

Stress has been linked to our health situation.

High blood pressure, heart attacks, depression, diabetes, and even cancer.

Just mentioning the word "stress" some of us get stressed out.

I think we can all agree, "stress is not our friend --- it is our foe.

I believe there are authors that have tried to offer spiritual encouragement to us who are under stress.

Books like *Stress Fractures; Living Life On The Fault Line* are a couple that come to mind.

When we learn to see stress as a warning signal and deal with it, stress can become one of life's greatest assets (p14)

Stress is often God's way of telling us that life is out of balance.

This is the first step for making stress to work for us rather than work against us.

If we learn how we can harness the stressful energy and take control, then stress can be our friend.

## **The cause of stress**

Stress is usually caused by overloading our ability.  
Stress happens when we are pushed to our limits.

The course needed most for ministers and their families is "How to live life in a fishbowl."

As ministers, many of us are forced to live our life under full view and scrutiny of many of those around us.

We are expected to almost be some sort of superhero.

Both **ministers** and **their families** are living their life under stress.

Our **children** are under stress.

Adults think the kids have it made these days. No bills to pay. They have a roof over their head. They have a bed to sleep in each night. They have clothes to wear. They have food to eat.

But think for a moment. Our children are living in an unhealthy environment. Dysfunctional homes, blended families, victims of divorce parents, sibling rivalry.

Our **teenagers** are struggling with their life as well.

They are constantly confronted with glamor shot and air brush touch ups, complexion, latest fads in what they wear. They struggle to fit in they are under constant peer pressure. They get their self-esteem from being liked on campus. Then there are their struggles with their own family.

These days our children are stressed over whether they are going to be safe in our schools.

**Young adults** are under stress as well.

Their childhood, preteen, teenage and college days have been structured for them. Now they are out on their own, trying to find a job, a place to live, new friends, and 30 to 50 thousand dollars in school debt. They are waking up to bills they have to pay and jobs they have to go to.

**Parents** face stress every day.

Parents want to make sure that each child has what they need to succeed. They appreciate the school system educating their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic. But they know that life is more than simply book learning. Life lessons is just as important. Parents don't raise their children to be failures. They want them to succeed in life. Most parents are stressed out over raising their kids while they themselves are going through their own mid-life crises.

**Senior Adults** face stress in other ways.

They have worked hard all their life looking forward to those retirement years. For many it never comes. Their bank account is dwindling. And their health needs are increasing. Their stress level is high because they now realize they are just not able to do the things they once did. Senior adult parents stress over their adult children (of which many have moved back home), and their grandchildren.

Ministers who are already stressed, are called upon to make an impact on a society of families that are so stressed out as well.

Many of our ministers are running on fumes. Our "Duracell-bunny-batteries" are running pretty low. Yet they must make the meetings, the hospitals, the shut-ins, office hours for helping others deal with their stressed-out lives and have quality time with their own families.

So, the important question we need to ask is, "How are you dealing with stress in your life?"

Truth be told, we are not handling stress --- it is handling us!!!

In His book, *High calling High Anxiety*, Dr. Hawkins helps us in taking a hold of our stress and using it for our good.

If we will listen and learn what [James 1:1-12](#) teaches us, we can take stress and move it from foe to friend.

Before we start discussing how to turn stress from being a foe to making it a friend, we need to take a look at the Book Of James.

However, before we dive into these Scriptures, let's take some time and look at the servant James himself.

What do we know about James that wrote these 100 verses we know as the Book of James?

### **Date of the Writing**

It is believed that James wrote his manuscript between 48 and 50 A.D.

### **The Author of the Writing**

James was the half-brother to our LORD.

We know that Joseph and Mary had four additional sons: James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. Plus, they had sisters as well (Matthew 13:55) We also know that they did not believe in Him.

We are told in John 7:5, that James did not believe in Jesus being the promised Messiah.

His salvation happened sometime after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:7, ***Then Christ Jesus appeared to James, then to all the Apostles.***

Life changed for James after he had his one-on-one time with Christ Jesus.

We know that he stepped up and became the recognized leader of the Jerusalem church.

We know that James oversaw the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) when the land-slide decision was handed down that new believers did not need to become Jews before they became born-again believers.

We know that James was held in high esteem by both his peers and the enemies of the faith.

In Galatians 2:9. Paul referred to James as ***a pillar of the church.***

We know that James was a powerful prayer warrior.

His nickname was *camel knees*.

This was because of the calluses that evidently appeared on his knees from hours of daily prayer.

James was a man of importance, but you don't sense this when you begin to read his writings.

There were things he could brag about.

- 1). Leader of the Jerusalem church.
- 2). Half brother to the LORD Jesus.

Many today are "Name Droppers"

It is not so much as to what you know but who you know that gets you the position.

**NOTE** – Dr. Thom Rainer has written 27 books at this time of this study. He tells about his first book experience. The publishing company advised him to get a well known and respected person to write the forward of your book if you want it to sell. So, his first book he asked Dr. Billy Graham if he would write the forward for his book. Dr. Graham agreed and told Dr. Rainer to write it and send it to him, he would review and edit it and sign it.

Name dropping or who you know can get you before an audience.

James could have easily done this, but he chose not to.

Notice how he begins his writing – how he addresses himself – ***a bond servant***

NLT – "a slave of God"

AMP – "a bond servant"

CSB – "a servant of God"

NKJV – "a bondservant of God"

James' opening wordage tells us a lot about him.

As a bond servant, it was out of his love and passion for God that motivated him to surrender his total being to the cause of Christ Jesus and share the Gospel message.

He no longer looked at Jesus as being his sibling – now he saw Him as his **SAVIOR**.

James steps down from his popularity and humbled himself as a **SERVANT**.

A ***bond-servant*** was one that was a slave owned by another person. As a slave, he had no freedom or life of his own.

He waited for the day when he had worked enough to gain his freedom.

A ***bond-servant*** was one that was a slave who had gained his freedom but because of how good he was treated chose to remain with the master and serve him.

James chose the word ***bond-servant*** to describe his role and his own relationship with God and the LORD Jesus Christ.

James had the correct opinion of himself.

He saw himself as one that had been purchased with a price for his eternal life.

He was privileged to surrender his life and serves to his Master.

### **Who was the readers?**

James tells us in his opening verses.

This letter is addressed to ***the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad***.

The Greek word for ***scattered abroad*** is *diaspora*.

We get our English word "dispersed or dispersion" from it.

The idea is "one as he goes scattering seeds."

It means to spread around.

We see the Gospel was scattered around after the death of Stephen (Acts 8) when Jewish persecution broke out and forced Christians to flee throughout the Roman world.

Persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem and all except the Apostles were scattering seeds of the Gospel in the world.

How we look at things is different from where we are standing.

If we are in the midst of the battle, we only see the things around us. We see persecution as being bad.

If we can look back on the situation, we can approach it from a different view, a different perspective.

From where God sits, he permitted this attack on the Jerusalem church for a purpose.

Had these Christians not been scattered throughout the world, they would have stayed in Jerusalem in their comfort zone and no Gospel seeds would have been scattered throughout the world.

As a result of this dispersion, this generation carried the Gospel message through the known world.

James was writing to the Christian Jews that had to flee for their life into a Gentile world.

These people were forced to leave their homes, jobs, the things they had worked hard for.

They had to pull up roots and take their family where it would be safe. They also took their new faith with them

Even though James is addressing his letter to the scattered tribes – God is addressing this letter to you and I today.

Behind the hand of James is the hand of God penning His words of encouragement, exhortation, and education to each of us.

2 Peter 1:21, ***Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

God has preserved His Word to strengthen our faith even when we feel persecuted.

James tells us a little more about the people he is writing to.

The people of God who are facing all kinds of ***virous trials***.

These trials added **stress** to their life.

Welcome to one of the main reasons of James writing this letter!

The people of God were under so much stress and James was writing to tell them God was the stress buster.

James was writing to us who are struggling with how to live our life of stress as we seek to live out what we believe.

In order to handle stress, we need to know certain things about stress.  
Stress is caused by many different things.

Some are stressed over how to keep their marriage together.

Some are stressed over their "best-never-seems-to-be-enough" mentality.

Some are stressed over their uncertain future.

Some are stressed at their jobs or maybe losing their job.

Some are stressed over relationships with spouse, children, family, friends, co-workers.

No matter what the stress you are struggling with, God has a word for you on how to handle the stress trials your are being forced to endure.

God uses James to give His insights on how we can turn our stress from foe to friend.

In the following Bible Studies, we will see what Dr. Hawkins (book *High Calling High Anxiety*), identifies five ways we can look at stress in order to turn our foe into friend. We want to listen to what he says and then determine how to make a personal application for the stress in our lives.

How we respond to stress is the beginning of dealing with stress in our lives.

The following are the studies we will look at from James 1:1-12

FIRST – Stress is **PREDICTABLE**.

SECOND – Stress is **PROBLEMATIC**.

THIRD – Stress is **PARADOXICAL**.

FOURTH – Stress is **PURPOSEFUL**.

FIFTH – Stress is **PROFITABLE**.

Then we will look at what we can take from this study and apply to our life of handling stress before it handles us.

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James 1:1-2  
**Stress is Predictable**