

## Consider It All Joy?

**“What?** How can I do that? You just don’t know what I am going through!” Is that our response to the following Scripture when we are in the midst of a crisis or traumatic event in life? James 1:2-4 reads, *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* I so wish I could remember this lifelong lesson (radically applied nearly 29 years ago) every time a new difficult situation flies into my life.

Why is it so hard to walk in such a valuable truth, fully recognizing that God’s sovereignty reigns?

The first time this Scripture came alive to me was in the fall of 1981. I was teaching a Bible study that would become Community Bible Study the next year. We were studying Romans, and I was learning a great deal as I taught. Isn’t that the way it always is? The teacher gleans so much more than the student because of all the preparation required.

Our diabetic daughter had just begun her senior year in high school. Her older brother was away in college and her younger brother was president of his freshman class in the same high school. She had been hospitalized (not unusual for her as a diabetic) and I received a message to meet my husband at the hospital after the Bible study was over. Our pediatrician asked us to join him in a consultation room where he shared with us that our 16-year-old daughter was pregnant. My first spoken response at his news was Romans 8:28, *“We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* Of course, later the full reality set in and I felt as if I had been socked in the stomach and could hardly breathe. That feeling of grief would not leave until early the next morning.

When I woke up and walked downstairs to have my quiet time with the Lord and my open Bible, I was still reeling from what I had heard the day before. After I was fully awake, the life changing circumstances of it all hit me once again. I was weeping before the Lord and thinking about all of the possible complications and difficulties our daughter would walk through as a teenage diabetic mother. I also thought about whether I should stop teaching the Bible study because of this, and just concentrate on helping her through this traumatic time. So many thoughts! So many questions!! So much pain in my heart!! So many tears!!

That is the time when the God of All Comfort reminded me of James 1:2-4. I couldn’t believe He wanted me to “consider THIS all joy.” How could I? However, by faith, I prayed aloud the entire passage of James 1:2-4 and obeyed His urging. As I prayed He reminded me of another passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* Gradually, over the next hour of prayer, and while sitting before Him, my despair was exchanged for joy and peace. I physically felt as though He was hugging me and patting my back as a form of comfort just as we would when a child comes crying to us. Today, I look back on that time as a period of His supernatural comfort and extreme closeness to our Lord.

Oh yes, it was hard from that point on, but never again did I feel that despair and fear. The peace and joy I experienced that morning—after I followed the Lord's urging to praise Him by faith—only increased. I became a grandmother at the ripe old age of 39. Our grandson was named Christopher (*Christ-bearer*), and his birth did, indeed, serve as that to me personally.

Our God reigns over everything that comes, filtered through His fingers of love, into our lives. Will you, will I, let this truth guide our responses to the hard things of life? Will we by faith "*consider or count it all joy?*" Will we trust Him and persevere so that we may become mature and complete, not lacking anything?

I obviously needed this reminder today as He awakened me with all of this on my heart to share with you. "Please, Lord, let it sink into the depths of our hearts!"