

# Spiritual Stability

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James 1:2–8 (NKJV) *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.<sup>4</sup> But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.<sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.<sup>7</sup> For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;<sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*

The Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is facing a great challenge. Satan is doing everything he can to destabilize the Church. The Church in America has experienced instability and has been weakened in its ability to overcome the challenges it faces. Much of the responsibility for the Church’s spiritual instability rests at the feet of its leaders who have been involved in moral indiscretion, financial schemes, divorce, and false doctrine. In addition, the Church has been destabilized through the spiritual instability of its members as manifested in their marriages, families, finances, jobs, and secret lives.

By definition the word “unstable” means: 1) not steady in action or movement : irregular (an *unstable* pulse), 2) wavering in purpose or intent : vacillating, 3) lacking steadiness : apt to move, sway, or fall (an *unstable* tower), 4) liable to change or alteration (an *unstable* economy) (*unstable* weather), 5) readily changing (as by decomposing) in chemical or physical composition or in biological activity, 6) characterized by lack of emotional control.” (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 11<sup>th</sup> Edition) Another word for “unstable” is “inconstant.” An unstable person is inconsistent.

Spiritual instability threatens the survival of everyone involved in that instability. Illustrations of instability include things like, “unstable footing,” “unstable foundations,” “unstable root system,” “unstable weather patterns,” “unstable economy,” “unstable financial condition,” “unstable chemical substance,” “unstable home situation,” “unstable marriage,” “unstable mind,” “unstable emotions,” “unstable health,” “unstable government,” “unstable leaders,” and “unstable people.” The apostle Peter pointed to spiritual instability as being the root cause behind destructive false doctrines: *“as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and **unstable** people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”* (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV)

Stability matters in life. In fact, a life of instability brings great unwanted consequences such as vulnerability, hesitation, insecurity, disappointment, dissatisfaction, frustration, and disqualification. Those who excel at home, work, church, and in life are those who have pursued stability.

Jesus said He would build His Church. (Matthew 16:18) Jesus will not build His church with unstable material. We are His material. As believers, each of us is a living stone that He is using to build His spiritual house or temple called the Church. Just as the stability of a natural building depends upon the stability of the materials used, so it is that the spiritual stability of the church depends upon the spiritual stability of its members. Each of us expects the Church we attend to be stable. That is a good and right expectation. However, as members of the Church, we must ask ourselves a few questions such as, “If every other member of the Church was as consistent as I am in attending, serving, giving, and reaching out to new people, would the church I attend be stable?” You see, the stability of each member contributes to the overall stability of the Church. For instance, if members are unstable in

their faith, the church will be unstable in its mission. If members are unstable in their attendance, the church will be unstable in its progress. If members are unstable in tithing and giving, the church will be unstable in fulfilling its commitments. If members are unstable in their personal lives, the church will be unstable in its witness to the community. If leaders are unstable in their duties, the church will be unstable in its ministry. If volunteers are unstable in their commitment, the ministries in which they serve will be unstable and ineffective. If members are unstable in their love during difficult times, the relationships in the church will be unstable at all times.

Spiritual stability is revealed in the storms of life. James 1:2-3 (NKJV) says, *“count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”* Proverbs 24:10 (NKJV) *“If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”* Jesus warned us that tribulations will come. (John 16:33) Tribulations come as a direct result of our fallen world. The “world” is the system of fallen man caused by sin, inspired by Satan, and fueled by the flesh. In order to remain stable during difficult times we must prepare our heart and mind ahead of time.

James gives us five principles on how to remain stable during difficult trials. First we are to count it all joy when we experience various trials. Joy is a spiritual rather than natural response. Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness depends upon favorable “happenings” or circumstances. Joy is grounded in a stable relationship with Jesus Christ. The joy of the Lord is our strength during the difficult days. (Nehemiah 8:10)

Second, in order to remain stable we must hold on to our faith. We must remember that the trial comes as a test of our *faith*. It is the testing of our FAITH—not the testing of US—that produces the spiritual fruit of patience in our lives. Testing challenges what we believe about God and the integrity of His promises. Satan is after our faith. If we let go of our faith, we let go of everything—including our victory. (1 John 5:4) Rather than allowing the test to steal our faith, God intends the test to produce patience in our lives. Patience makes our faith stable. Patience prevents us from reacting to circumstances in unstable ways.

Third, let patience have her perfect work in your heart. In other words, wait on God’s victory and don’t give up! Don’t quit in the middle of the test! The work of patience is that we might be “perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Fourth, ask God to give you His wisdom. Trials present great challenges that require the wisdom of God. We are to ask God for the wisdom we need to pass the test.

Fifth, ask for God’s wisdom in faith with no doubting. God requires that we believe and do not doubt that He will give us the wisdom that we ask of Him. Why are we to ask without doubting? It is because doubt creates instability. A person who doubts is double-minded, like wave of the sea driven this way and that way by the wind. Doubt prevents us from receiving the wisdom we need during the trial.

We need not be casualties of instability. Neither should we be causes of instability. Through faith and patience in times of testing we will be stable and through stability the church and our lives will not only survive but thrive.

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