Devotional on “Facing Trials” from the book of James

As I began my devotional time this morning, I was drawn to the book of James. This book is quite “prickly” and convicting to say the least; but I decided to dive in and see what God had for me during this time of great concern and uncertainty due to both the pending Corona virus outbreak and social unrest plaguing our entire nation.

I started reading in Chapter 1 verses 2-4, which says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” Wow! I knew I was in for something big when I read this. In context James was giving this surprising advice to persecuted Jewish believers who were scattered among pagan peoples. He was advising them that trials should be faced with an attitude of joy, and not taken as a punishment or curse. I had to stop and ask myself, am I allowing trials in my life to prompt rejoicing or am I allowing them to cause grumbling and discontent? Weeeelllll…I would have to honestly answer my self-imposed question by saying, I find myself teetering back and forth.

When I am at the grocery store frantically looking for that one item that everyone else seems to need as well, I move into panic mode; but when I return home, I realize that all of that anxiety was just caused by my surroundings and emotions run astray! It is at that point that I Philippians 4:8 my thoughts. Have you ever heard of that? It is kinda like running a virus check on our thoughts. Lately I have had to do this quite often during the day. Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

I believe this unprecedented turn of events is a call for us, as sisters in Christ, to be the salt and light in a dimly lit world that is running rampant with fear and hopelessness. We are exhorted by James to not only cope with our trials and tribulations, but to rise above them with the joy of the Lord shining through us. It is important to notice that James did not say to be joyous *for* the trials but *in* the trials. Most people would count it all joy when they escape the trials, James calls us as believers to count it all joy while in the trials. I want you ladies to know that you are not alone in this time of crisis. The Lord promises to be with us at all times (e.g., Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:10; Deut. 31:6; Matthew 28:20), and we have each other as a church family, ready to lend a helping hand or to simply offer encouragement. There are very scary things that are happening in our world today; but together we can persevere so we will be “mature and complete, not lacking anything.”