

How To Be More Perfect Than The Perfectionist

James 1:4

James 1:2-4 (ESV) ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴**And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

Introduction: Jesus calls us to be perfect! (Mt 5:48)

Type	Category	Definition	Result
Personal	Motivational, Obsessive	the personal expectation of not having weaknesses or flaws	Guilt
Cultural	Sociological	the cultural expectation of being and living right by measuring up to societal norms	Shame
Sinless	Theological	the eradication/removal of the sin nature which falsely assumes the believer cannot sin	Lie (1 Jn 1:8)
Christian	Transformational	the ongoing process of God shaping believers through endurance producing trials to become more like Christ	Maturity

- 1. Perfection Is God's _____, Not Ours – And let**
- 2. Perfection Is The _____ Of Building Endurance – steadfastness have its full effect,**
- 3. Perfection Is _____ In Christlikeness – that you may be perfect**
- 4. Perfection Provides A Well-_____ Spiritual Life – and complete, lacking in nothing.**
 - Our Faith In God Is Supplemented (2 Pet 1:5-8)
 - Our Character Is Matured (Rom 5:3-4)
 - Our Comfort Is Shared (2 Cor 1:3-4)

Conclusion:

- Don't quit during your trials – the endurance is in the process of strengthening.
- Don't compare yourself to anyone or anything who isn't Jesus – measure up to Christ alone.
- Being well-seasoned in our faith takes multi-angles to develop our character, our faith, our understanding and our growth. Don't look at one aspect of failure, but multiple applications of growth.

Discussion:

- Name some things that take a lot of time to make or prepare? How does that compare to Christian maturity?
- Why do we prefer to quit when our trials get too hard? Why do we think our alternatives are better than God's path?
- How might we struggle with perfectionism with our own personal expectations for ourselves or with society's/church's/peers'/parents' expectations? How can we shift our standard of measurement to Christ?
- What multiple and varied lessons have we learned from a single trial in our experience? What multiple and varied lessons are we learning from our current trial?
- What areas of our Christian life would you like to see strengthened in the near future?

How To Be More Perfect Than The Perfectionist

James 1:4

James 1:2-4 (ESV) ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴**And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

Introduction: Jesus calls us to be perfect! (Mt 5:48)

Type	Category	Definition	Result
Personal	Motivational, Obsessive	the personal expectation of not having weaknesses or flaws	Guilt
Cultural	Sociological	the cultural expectation of being and living right by measuring up to societal norms	Shame
Sinless	Theological	the eradication/removal of the sin nature which falsely assumes the believer cannot sin	Lie (1 Jn 1:8)
Christian	Transformational	the ongoing process of God shaping believers through endurance producing trials to become more like Christ	Maturity

1. **Perfection Is God's Work, Not Ours** – *And let*
2. **Perfection Is The Result Of Building Endurance** – *steadfastness have its full effect,*
3. **Perfection Is Maturity In Christlikeness** – *that you may be perfect*
4. **Perfection Provides A Well-Rounded Spiritual Life** – *and complete, lacking in nothing.*
 - a. Our Faith In God Is Supplemented (2 Pet 1:5-8)
 - b. Our Character Is Matured (Rom 5:3-4)
 - c. Our Comfort Is Shared (2 Cor 1:3-4)

Conclusion:

- Don't quit during your trials – the endurance is in the process of strengthening.
- Don't compare yourself to anyone or anything who isn't Jesus – measure up to Christ alone.
- Being well-seasoned in our faith takes multi-angles to develop our character, our faith, our understanding and our growth. Don't look at one aspect of failure, but multiple applications of growth.

Discussion:

- Name some things that take a lot of time to make or prepare? How does that compare to Christian maturity?
- Why do we prefer to quit when our trials get too hard? Why do we think our alternatives are better than God's path?
- How might we struggle with perfectionism with our own personal expectations for ourselves or with society's/church's/peers'/parents' expectations? How can we shift our standard of measurement to Christ?
- What multiple and varied lessons have we learned from a single trial in our experience? What multiple and varied lessons are we learning from our current trial?
- What areas of our Christian life would you like to see strengthened in the near future?

How To Be More Perfect Than The Perfectionist

James 1:4

James 1:2-4 (ESV) ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴**And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

James 1:4 (Message) So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

James 1:4 (NLT) So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Also:

James 1:4 (NASB) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing

James 1:4 (NIV) Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:4 (NKJV) But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing

Introduction:

1. Jesus calls us to be perfect!

Matthew 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

2. Yet instead of God being the standard – we set our own standard or conform to society's standard. The we end up a prisoner of someone else's expectations.

- Amanda Jenkins writes: "... I am addicted. Like most perfectionists, I want everything in my life to be beautiful. I want my home to look fabulous, my car to sparkle, and my love handles to disappear. I want my closets to be organized, my children to be well behaved and happy (usually in that order), and my editor to find zero mistakes. I want people to think I have everything under control, and I want to actually have everything under control."

Jenkins, Amanda. Confessions of a Raging Perfectionist: Learning to Be Free . Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

"My problem, I've recently realized, is the significance I attach to the list—that if I lose five pounds and spend twenty minutes reading my Bible, I'll be a better, more spiritual, more loving, more lovable person. When I fail to live up to my own expectations, I feel inadequate. Or more specifically (and as my stats frequently read), overweight, lazy, disorganized, and unworthy of the approval I seek." (ibid)

- The problem happens when we flip God’s script. Our pride prefers to work from the **outside – in**. God works from our **inside – out**.
- The Gospel of Christ is the only thing that can perfect us.
- God will help us live out the Gospel in our life.

3. In trying to think through our struggle with perfectionism, I’ve categorized it in 4 categories.

Type	Category	Definition	Result
Personal	Motivational, Obsessive	the personal expectation of not having weaknesses or flaws	Guilt
Cultural	Sociological	the cultural expectation of being and living right by measuring up to societal norms	Shame
Sinless	Theological	the eradication/removal of the sin nature which falsely assumes the believer cannot sin	Lie (1 Jn 1:8)
Christian	Transformational	the ongoing process of God shaping believers through endurance producing trials to become more like Christ	Maturity

Types Of Perfectionism

- **Personal Perfectionism** (self-motivational, obsessive) the personal expectation of not having weaknesses or flaws – Result: Guilt
- **Cultural Perfectionism** (sociological) – the cultural expectation of being and living right by measuring up to societal norms – Result: Shame
- **Sinless Perfectionism** (theological) – the eradication/removal of the sin nature which falsely assumes the believer cannot sin – Result: Lie
- **Christian Perfection** (transformational - sanctification) – the ongoing process of God shaping believers through endurance producing trials to become more like Christ – Result: Maturity

- We chase perfection in Christ, but it’s really about getting better.

Ie/ “The 49ers defense is chasing perfection—here’s how team says it can actually get better” by Jacob Hutchinson, Posted on October 11, 2019
<http://www.knbr.com/2019/10/11/the-49ers-defense-is-chasing-perfection-heres-how-team-says-it-can-actually-get-better/>

- *“Perfectionism is a counterfeit for Christian perfection, holiness, sanctification, or the Spirit-filled life. Instead of making us holy persons and integrated personalities—that is, whole persons in Christ—perfectionism leaves us spiritual Pharisees and emotional neurotics.”* Seamands, David A.. Healing for Damaged Emotions (David Seamands Series) (p. 77). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

Symptoms Of Perfectionism:

1. *Tyranny of the oughts. Its chief characteristic is a constant, overall feeling of never doing well enough or being good enough.... The three favorite phrases of the perfectionist are "could have," "should have," "would have."*

2. *Self-depreciation.... If you are never quite good enough, you feel a continuous sense of self-depreciation.*

3. *Anxiety. The oughts and self-depreciation produce an oversensitive conscience under a giant umbrella of guilt, anxiety, and condemnation.*

4. *Legalism. The oversensitive conscience and comprehensive guilt of the perfectionist are usually accompanied by a great scrupulosity and legalism which rigidly overemphasize externals, do's and don'ts, rules and regulations.*

5. *Anger. ... A resentment against the oughts, against the Christian faith, against other Christians, against himself, but saddest of all, against God.*

6. *Denial. Too often, though, the anger is not faced but denied. Because anger is considered a terrible sin, it is pushed down. And the whole mixture of bad theology, legalism, and salvation by performance becomes a frozen Niagara.*

Seamands, David A.. Healing for Damaged Emotions (David Seamands Series) (p. 79-82). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

- **The Cure: Grace:** the unearned, undeserved, unrepayable gift of God
- Seamands: "... grace is the face God wears when He meets our imperfection, sin, weakness, and failure. Grace is what God is and what God does when He meets the sinful and undeserving. Grace is a pure gift, free for the taking. The healing of perfectionism does not begin with some initial experience of grace in salvation or sanctification, and then move into a life lived by effort and perfect performance. The healing of perfectionism takes place in day-by-day believing, living, and realizing this grace relationship with a loving, caring heavenly Father." (Seamands, p. 84)

Review:

1. **Trials Provide Opportunities For Joy** – ^{2a} *Count it all joy,*
2. **Trials Are To Be Expected For Believers As A Call To Discipleship** – ^{2b} *my brothers,*
3. **Trials Seem Overwhelming But Serve God's Purpose** – ^{2c} *when you meet trials*
4. **Trials Come In Various Ways To Round Us Out** – ^{2d} *of various kinds,*
5. **Trials Will Test The Resolve Of Our Faith** – ^{3a} *for you know that the testing of your faith*
6. **Trials Produce Toughness And Endurance** – ^{3b} *produces steadfastness.*

Proposition: Today, we will examine 4 realities of God's process of perfecting and maturing us.

1. Perfection Is God's Work, Not Ours – *And let*

- Hiebert: "The word 'let' in our English rendering must not be taken as merely denoting permission (there is no word for it in the Greek), since it is the only way we have of giving expression to the Greek imperative in the *third* person. It is a **command**, intent on putting his readers on guard against the danger mentioned – allowing the chain of results to be interrupted." (*The Epistle Of James*, Moody, 1979, p. 76)
- Warren Wiersbe: "God cannot build our character without our cooperation. If we resist Him, then He chastens us into submission. But if we submit to Him, then He can accomplish His work. He is not satisfied with a halfway job. God wants a perfect work; He wants a finished product that is mature and complete." (*Bible Exposition Commentary*, James 1:4, Logos)
- Our perfectionism is trying to control what we should be allowing God to control
- Set aside pride for God's glory
- Set aside personal achievement for God's work in our lives
- Set aside Easy Street for the Road Less Traveled
- Set aside the need for the approval of others for God's approval
- Set aside self-control for God's Lordship
- This is when the Perfection process God has for us is better than our battle with becoming perfect in the eyes of self and others first.

2. Perfection Is The Result Of Building Endurance – *steadfastness have its full effect*,

- **Steadfastness**/endurance = *Hypomonē* = endurance, fortitude, toughness
 - Literally: "to remain/abide under"
 - Endurance is faith extended or stretched in time
 - The Latin term for this word implies hardening, like a diamond
- **Have** = *exete*
 - Blomberg & Kamell: The present imperative "let have" (ἐχέτω) calls "for the continuation of an action in progress." (Craig L. Blomberg, Mariam J. Kamell, *James: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Zondervan, 2008, 1:4 Logos)
- **Full**/perfect = *teleios*
 - Strong's #G5046 "**brought to its end, finished; lacking nothing necessary to completeness**"
 - Perfect state when Christ returns 1 Cor 13:10
 - Full grown, maturity
 - John MacArthur: "*teleios* ... does not connote moral or spiritual perfection, or sinlessness, but rather refers to that which is **fully developed**." (*James: The MacArthur NT Commentary*, Moody, 1998, p. 32)

- Ie/ Sometimes the doctor will treat cancer with surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy and cell therapy. It's a long, varied and difficult course. But we need to go through it if the oncologist believes it's our best chance. We have to get the full effect.
- There is an **end goal**.
- If we want to be in shape **physically** – it's diet and exercise. Not just one without the other. (e.g. I swim, but I get so hungry after I swim that I counteract my exercise)
- If we want to be in good **spiritual** shape – it's spiritual disciplines plus being perfected by building endurance through hardship.
- There is an end goal for:
 - Spring Training – the World Series
 - Chemo & Radiation – the eradication of cancer
 - Running wind sprints – get in game shape
 - Eating healthy – detox and good health
 - Expense, moving out, setting up temporary location – a new building
 - **Trials – endurance that produces a more mature faith**
- **Effect/result = *ergon***
 - There are times we want to stop our trials, but it doesn't accomplish what needs to be done.
 - We quit before the full effect
 - Ie/ You want to be a doctor, but want to quit anatomy because it's so hard
 - Ie/ You want to be a lawyer, but you're too impatient to read the fine print of documents
 - Ie/ You want to be a concert pianist, but you don't want to practice Hanon
 - Ie/ I marinated Korean short ribs for 2 days (1 day would have been enough, but not 1 hour). You can't rush marination.
 - Ie/ Who doesn't love soup broth made by boiling a pork bone for 22 hours? I love Tonkatsu (pork bone broth) broth with my ramen.
 - Ie/ Or you keep opening the oven waiting for the soufflé to rise – let the process happen!
 - Ie/ An athlete in the gym has to routinely work out strength and stamina. Short cuts don't work.
 - Ie/ A child was observing a **butterfly** emerge from the **cocoon**. Noticing that it was struggling, the child assisted this painful transformation by snipping the cocoon open for this emerging butterfly. But as the beautiful butterfly emerged, instead of flying, it fell helplessly to the ground. The child's parent explained that by trying to provide help, the child actually hurt the butterfly. **The butterfly needed to**

struggle in the chrysalis to develop the blood flow and strength in the wings.

- Our suffering is meant to strengthen us. To evade the lessons of suffering is to remove the opportunity to grow strong.
- R. Kent Hughes: "It is commonly taught that trials bring maturity, but it is not so. Rather, fortitude and perseverance in times of testings produce maturity. In troubled times we must practice spiritual toughness. As we endure 'trials of many kinds' – economic stress, disappointments, criticisms, domestic pressures, persecution for our faith, illnesses – the multiple facets of our being are touched with grace." (*James: Faith That Works*, Preaching the Word, Crossway, p. 21)
- Ie/ If we remove every irritation out of this life – we would have no **pearls**. Pearls are a result of irritation that happens in an oyster. Our irritations are making us into a gem.

3. Perfection Is Maturity In Christlikeness – that you may be perfect

- **Perfect** = *teleios* – mature, without defect, seasoned, experienced, developed
- Donald Sunukjian: "Mature: that means **fully grown, fully developed, fully godly**—at the end of the process in **full strength.**" (*Invitation To James*)
- Homer Kent: "The term does not imply absolute perfection (cf. 3:2), but rather the **ethical character of the mature believer**. It denotes that which has attained its **proper goal.**" (p. 77)
- Douglas Moo: "In Greek moral philosophy, this word usually had the meaning 'perfect.' But in the OT and in Jewish literature, *telios* is colored by its Hebrew background and comes to mean '**complete**' or '**mature.**'" (*The Letter Of James*, Pillar NT Commentary, Eerdmans, 2000, p. 56)
 - Douglas Moo: "The Christian who has attained 'completeness' will also be 'perfect' in character. James, we must remember, is **presenting this as the ultimate goal of faith's testing; he is not claiming that believers will attain the goal.** But we should not 'lower the bar' on the expectation James sets for us. Nothing less than complete moral integrity will ultimately satisfy the God who is himself holy and righteous, completely set apart from sin." (p. 56)
- Jim Samra: "However, the sense here is being mature in this life, not a state of sinless perfection possible only when Christ returns. One can be mature and still need to grow, as Paul says of himself in Philippians 3:13–15 (using *teleios*)." (*James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude*, Teach the Text Commentary Series, Baker Books, 2016, p.
- A couple of days ago, the NBA required players to measure their real height with their shoes off
 - Draymond Green gets introduced as 6'7", but is really 6'5"

- Zion Williams was 6'7" in college and is really 6'6" and Kyrie Irving is an inch shorter
 - <https://www.nbcsports.com/bayarea/warriors/warriors-draymond-green-still-adjusting-new-nba-height-rules>
 - But you can't these guys don't measure up to the stat sheet because they do so much on the court – they're well rounded defensively, offensively, knowledge of the game
- My mom was a teacher at Visitation Valley Elementary School in SF and she brought home this Scholastic wall poster measuring chart of 7'7" former Warriors basketball player Manute Bol. It was a 6' poster, so he was shrunk, but for a kid trying to measure up to the 2nd tallest NBA player of all time (fractions of an inch shorter than Georghe Muresan).
- **Q:** Are we feeling spiritually short?
 - **Q:** Who are we measuring up to?
- Sometimes at church, we measure ourselves against **legalistic standards** imposed by the church, but not the Bible.
 - Some church members and leaders can take pride in what they do and don't do and impose this as a basis for righteousness on other believers
 - **Do we look down at others who do or don't ...**
 - Drink alcohol in moderation?
 - Dress formally for church?
 - Wear body piercings or tattoos?
 - Play Lotto?
 - Hold every minor doctrinal distinctive of a favorite pastor, popular church or seminary?
 - Live a perfect Christian life?
 - The **older generation** looks at the **younger generation** and says "we would have never done that"! But if the young generation actually looked at the older generation and see what we were doing in the 60's and 70's – they would be saying the same thing about us!

4. **Perfection Provides A Well-Rounded Spiritual Life** – *and complete, lacking in nothing.*

- In our battle with perfectionism, we have to measure up in so many ways
 - Keeping up with the Joneses and the Chens
 - Car we drive
 - Remodeled home
 - Job title
 - Degrees earned
 - Salary
 - SAT scores
 - College acceptances

- **Complete** = *holoklēros* = "that which retains all that was allotted to it" (Hiebert, p. 77)
 - Gr. *Holos* = whole, complete (Hiebert, p. 77)
 - Our English word "hologram" comes from the prefix of this word – a 360 degree total view
 - 360 degree camera app is cool
 - Gr. *Kleros* = lot, portion received by lot
 - Ie/ School cafeteria gives you one scoop of mashed potatoes and one scoop of mixed vegetables with your chicken tenders – that's your portion, your lot
 - Sometimes the starch and veggies are better than the protein
 - But **holokleros** means the whole meal is good and sound
 - Strong G3648: "complete, **sound in every part**" (*holos*, "whole," *kleros*, "a lot," i.e., with all that has fallen by lot), is used ethically in [1Th 5:23](#), indicating that every grace present in Christ should be manifested in the believer; so [Jam 1:4](#)
 - Donald Sunukjian: "**Complete: that means not lacking anything, having all the parts of godliness in place, with every area of life developed into Christlikeness, and not being deficient in any quality, not lacking in any grace or godly character.**" (*Invitation To James*)
 - Homer Kent: "something that is whole, having all its parts, undamaged" (*Faith That Works*, Baker, 1986, p. 38)
- "lacking" = *leipō*
- "nothing" = *mēdeis*
 - If we don't use varied ingredients that stew in marination for an extended time, the flavor is not complete. We end up saying "it needs more salt," "it needs more intensity" or "it needs more time."

a. Our Faith In God Is Supplemented (2 Pet 1:5-8)

2 Peter 1:5-8 ⁵For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith** with **virtue**, and virtue with **knowledge**, ⁶and knowledge with **self-control**, and self-control with **steadfastness**, and steadfastness with **godliness**, ⁷and godliness with **brotherly affection**, and brotherly affection with **love**. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

b. Our Character Is Matured (Rom 5:3-4)

Romans 5:3-4 ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

c. Our Comfort Is Shared (2 Cor 1:3-4)

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Conclusion:

1. Don't quit during your trials – the endurance is in the process of strengthening.
2. Don't compare yourself to anyone or anything who isn't Jesus – measure up to Christ alone.
3. Being well-seasoned in our faith takes multi-angles to develop our character, our faith, our understanding and our growth. Don't look at one aspect of failure, but multiple applications of growth.

Discussion:

1. Name some things that take a lot of time to make or prepare? How does that compare to Christian maturity?
2. Why do we prefer to quit when our trials get too hard? Why do we think our alternatives are better than God's path?
3. How might we struggle with perfectionism with our own personal expectations for ourselves or with society's/church's/peers'/parents' expectations? How can we shift our standard of measurement to Christ?
4. What multiple and varied lessons have we learned from a single trial in our experience? What multiple and varied lessons are we learning from our current trial?
5. What areas of our Christian life would you like to see strengthened in the near future?