

We're Going On A Bear Hunt.

We're going on a bear hunt.
We're going to catch a big one.
What a beautiful day!
We're not scared.
Uh-uh!
Grass!
Long wavy grass.
We can't go over it.
We can't go under it.
Oh no!
We've got to go through it!
Swishy swashy! Swishy swashy! Swishy swashy!

We're going on a bear hunt.
We're going to catch a big one.
What a beautiful day!
We're not scared.
Uh-uh!
A river!
A deep cold river.
We can't go over it.
We can't go under it.
Oh no!
We've got to go through it!
Splash splosh! Splash splosh! Splash splosh!

We're going on a bear hunt.
We're going to catch a big one.
What a beautiful day!
We're not scared.
Uh-uh!

A forest!
A big dark forest.
We can't go over it.
We can't go under it.
Oh no!
We've got to go through it!

Jesus could not save the world by going around it.

He had to go through it.

James 1:2 (NRSV) — 2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face **trials** of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,

Test Anxiety

We're all going through something right now. Other people we're praying for and helping around the world are going through even worse. And we will see again today that the Bible doesn't gloss over that or try to avoid it because YES we all have to go *through* things that we'd rather go *round*.

Notice he says “whenever”, not “if”. It's not a maybe.

It's also plural. I can't say after one test, “Oh great, that's all over with, now I can go back to the easy life.”

We hear bad news.

Can't get over it, can't go round it. Got to go through it.

James 1:3 (NRSV) —the testing of your faith produces **endurance**;

Perseverance: *Hupermone* – staying power.

Literally the word means staying under – and not cracking, not running away.

Trials test your faith and strengthen our staying power.

Muscles grow under the weight. Astronauts muscles don't grow in space they atrophy because there's no gravity, no resistance. But James says the testing, the pressure we are under produces perseverance and *if* we let it do its work—that leads to maturity.

James 1:3 (The Message) — **3** You know that **under pressure**, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors.

Under Pressure Song by David Bowie and Queen

Pressure, pushing down on me
Pressing down on you, no man ask for
Under pressure, that burns a building down
Splits a family in two
Puts people on streets

Where is your release valve?

When you are down, exhausted, overwhelmed would you rather go alone or have someone going ahead of you putting things back in a good and better place?

" When you (not "if") pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you" (Isa. 43:2).

Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan: these troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters, are no sign that God has forsaken you; but are sent to test you, to see whether you will call to mind **those times in the past** when you have received his goodness, in your distresses."

James 1:12–18 (NRSV) — 12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

*We can't go **over** it
We can't go **under** it
Oh NO!
We've got to go **through** it ...*

In his book *A Sweet and Bitter Providence*, John Piper offers these thoughts about God's providence:

Life is not a straight line leading from one blessing to the next and then finally to heaven. Life is a winding and troubled road. Switchback after switchback. And the point of biblical stories like Joseph and Job and Esther and Ruth is to help us feel in our bones (not just know in our heads) that God is for us in all these strange turns. God is not just showing up after the trouble and cleaning it up. He is plotting the course and managing the troubles with far-reaching purposes for our good and for the glory of Jesus Christ.

*We can't go **over** it*
*We can't go **under** it*
Oh NO!
*We've got to go **through** it ...*

James is Jesus' half-brother, younger brother, fathered by Joseph. He didn't believe in Jesus' claims to be God, to be the Messiah.

James 1:2–7 (NRSV) — 2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; **4** and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. **5** If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. **6** But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;

James 1:12–18 (NRSV) — 12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. **13** No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. **14** But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; **15** then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. **16** Do not be deceived, my beloved. **17** Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. **18** In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.