

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 1

James 1:1-18

James 1:1-18

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To discuss with the children the importance of seeking God's help and wisdom when under going trials.

Key Verses

James 1:1-18—Main Teaching Passage

Romans 8:29

John 16:33

Memory Verse - John 16:33

"In this world you will have trouble; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Proverbs 13:21.

Ask the students to imagine that you are a judge, one of the students on your left and right are both lawyers, another students has been accused of a crime and the rest of the students are the jury. Ask them what is happening, what situation are we playing out, the answer being a trial.

Ask the students if they know where the name trial comes from. Tell them a trial is a difficult situation that you have to endure to prove yourself. In this case, a legal trial is a difficult situation where the defendant has to prove himself innocent. In the Bible, a trial is a difficult situation that tests our faith in God. Remind them about Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness. This was a trial that Jesus faced.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

The book of James is unlike the epistles of Paul, and in many respects more closely resembles the wisdom books of the Old Testament such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Just as in Proverbs, wisdom is something that is given from God, and it helps us to work through the practical issues of life.

James begins his letter by encouraging us to change our mindset about the trials that we will inevitably face in life. Rather than grumbling or complaining, James tells us to take joy in trials, because the testing of our faith strengthens and grows us, helping us to become more and more like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

We are then instructed that if we lack wisdom in facing these trials, God has promised that we can go to Him freely and ask, and He will gladly give wisdom to us (1:5).

After briefly reminding us not to worry about economic trials since both the rich and poor will both end up the same way, James promises blessings to those who endure trials and remain steadfast, not giving in to temptation. This section finishes with James sharing with us a difficult truth, that trials are given to us from God, and they are both “good” and “perfect.”

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK

Have you ever wondered why sad, difficult and stressful things happen? Why would God, who is always good, all the time, allow difficult and troubling things to occur in our lives? James, the brother of Jesus, starts out his letter by helping us to answer to some of those questions. He tells us in the first eighteen verses of the book that trials (the difficult, sad, and worrying things that happen in our lives) are not only *good* for us, but they are also put in our lives by God.

James tells us that when we experience these things, our faith is tested. This means that whenever we go through a trial, we have a choice to make: are we going to trust God in the midst of this storm, or are we going to let whatever this trial is overwhelm us. If we trust God, our faith is strengthened. The next time we go through a trial or a difficult problem, we can remember how God helped us the last time, and we can more easily put our faith in God again and again.

LOOK (Continued)

If we begin to doubt, if we start to ask ourselves, “Where is God, why isn’t he helping me?” verse 5-8 show us what to do. We are told that we should go to God and ask Him to give us wisdom. He promises to give liberally (that means He will give generously, and won’t hold back anything we need) and that He won’t find fault in us for asking. God will never get upset with you for telling Him that you are struggling and that you need His help. In fact, that is exactly what He wants you to do. When we are struggling and don’t know what to do, we should turn to God in prayer, and ask for His help.

In the last few verses of our study today, James finishes up by telling us that “every good and perfect gift is from above” (1:17). Here James is telling us that the difficult times in our lives are actually good for us, helping us to grow and become stronger. Have you ever seen an athlete in the Olympics? The reason that they can run so fast or jump so high is because they have struggled and strained, they have trained and practiced, so that when they get to the big event, they can do their absolute best. Struggles and trials are our opportunity to train and grow. They challenge us, but if we seek the Lord in them, and stay steadfast in our faith, they will grow us stronger and help us to become more like Jesus.

Lastly we should remember that Jesus said, “In this life you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus promised us that trouble would come into our lives, but He also promised us that He would help us overcome those things and that ultimately He has already overcome our greatest problem, death, by taking our place so that we might live forever in a place where there are no more trials, worries, tears, or problems.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize John 16:33.

Leave some time at the end of class for prayer requests. As the children ask for prayer, ask them how God can help them with whatever situation they are praying for.

Pray: Pray for God’s wisdom to be given generously to the children. Ask the Lord for strength to stand steadfast in the midst of trials.

Parent Question: Why should we take joy when we face trials of every kind?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on James 1:1-18 by David Guzik

A Living Faith in Trials and Temptations

A. Trials and wisdom.

1. ([Jas 1:1](#)) Greetings from James.

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

a. **James:** There are several men named **James** mentioned in the New Testament, but reliable tradition assigns this book to the one called *James the Just* - the half-brother of Jesus ([Matthew 13:55](#)), and brother of Jude ([Jude 1](#)), who led the church in Jerusalem ([Acts 15:13](#)).

i. Other men named **James** include:

- James, brother of John and son of Zebedee, the first apostle martyred, also known as James the Less ([Matthew 10:2](#), [Mark 15:40](#), [Acts 12:2](#)).

- James the son of Alphaeus, another of the twelve disciples ([Matthew 10:3](#)).

- James, the father of the "other" apostle Judas ([Luke 6:16](#)).

ii. An early history of the church says that James was such a man of prayer that his knees had large, thick calluses, making them look like the knees of a camel. It also says that James was martyred in Jerusalem by being pushed from a high point of the temple. Yet the fall did not kill him and on the ground he was beaten to death as he prayed for his attackers.

b. **A bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ:** Knowing that this James was the half-brother of Jesus makes his self-introduction all the more significant. He does not proclaim himself "the brother of Jesus", but only **a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Jesus was not only James' brother; more importantly, Jesus was his **Lord**.

i. **Bondservant** is an important word. It translates the ancient Greek word *doulos*: "A slave, a bondservant, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another ... Among the Greeks, with their strong sense of personal freedom, the term carried a degrading connotation." (Hiebert)

ii. **Lord** is an important word. It translates the ancient Greek word *kurios*. It means that James considered Jesus *God*. "Hellenistic Jews used *Kurios* as a name for God; the non-use of the article gains in significance when it is remembered that *o Kurios*, 'Dominus,' was a title given to the early Roman Emperors in order to express their deity." (Oesterley in *Expositor's*)

c. **To the twelve tribes:** What James means by the reference to **the twelve tribes** is difficult to understand. Is James writing a letter just to Christians from a Jewish background, or to all Christians? Certainly, this letter applies to all Christians. Probably, James wrote his letter before Gentiles were brought into the church, or before Gentile Christians emerged in any significant number.

i. **The twelve tribes** is a Jewish figure of speech that sometimes referred to the Jewish people as a whole ([Matthew 19:28](#); [Acts 26:7](#)).

ii. **Which are scattered abroad:** At this time, the Jewish people were scattered all over the world. There were Christian communities among almost every Jewish community throughout the world. Regarding the extent of the dispersion, Josephus wrote: "There is no city, no tribe, whether Greek or barbarian, in which Jewish law and Jewish customs have not taken root." (Cited in Barclay)

iii. Since this was written for the body of Christians as it existed at that time, this is a letter for us today. Some people have thought that the book of James isn't important for Christians, and some have quoted Martin Luther's famous estimation of James as "a letter full of straw." But Luther's remark should be understood in its context. His intention was to observe that there was little or nothing in James preaching the gospel of justification by faith alone. In another place he wrote of the book of James, "I think highly of the epistle of James, and regard it as valuable ... It does not expound human doctrines, but lays much emphasis on God's law." (Cited in Barclay)

iv. Martin Luther knew and taught exactly what the book of James teaches. The following is from his preface to Romans regarding saving faith: *O it is a living, busy active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good things incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done this, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.* (cited in Moo)

v. In many ways, we listen to the book of James because it echoes the teaching of Jesus. There are at least fifteen allusions to the Sermon on the Mount in James. A man who knew the teaching of Jesus and took it seriously wrote this letter.

d. **Greetings:** The salutation **Greetings** was the customary Greek way of opening a letter. Paul never used it; he preferred to salute his readers with the words *grace and peace*. But here, James uses this more customary salutation.

2. ([Jas 1:2-4](#)) Patient endurance in trials.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

a. **Count it all joy when you fall into various trials:** James regards trials as inevitable. He says **when**, not *if you fall into various trials*. At the same time, trials are occasions for **joy**, not discouraged resignation. We can **count it all joy** in the midst of trials, because they are used to produce **patience**.

i. **Patience** is the ancient Greek word *hupomone*. This word does not describe a passive waiting, but an *active endurance*. It isn't so much the quality that helps you sit quietly in the doctor's waiting room as it is the quality that helps you finish a marathon.

ii. The ancient Greek word *hupomone* comes from *hupo* (under) and *meno* (to stay, abide, remain). At its root, it means *to remain under*. It has the picture of someone under a heavy load and resolutely staying there instead of trying to escape. The philosopher Philo called *hupomone* "the queen of virtues." (Cited in Hiebert) The

Greek commentator Oesterley said this word **patience** described "the frame of mind which endures."

b. **Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience:** Faith is *tested* through trials, not *produced* by trials. Trials reveal what faith we do have, not because God doesn't know how much faith we have, but to make our faith evident to ourselves and those around us.

i. If trials do not produce faith, what does? [Romans 10:17](#) tells us: *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Faith is built in us as we hear and understand and trust in God's word.

c. **Produces patience:** Trials don't produce faith, but when trials are received with faith, it **produces patience**. But **patience** is not inevitably produced in times of trial. If difficulties are received in unbelief and grumbling, trials can produce bitterness and discouragement. This is why James exhorts us to **count it all joy**. Counting **it all joy** is faith's response to a time of trial.

i. "It is occasionally asserted that James asks his readers to *enjoy* their trials ... He did not say that they must *feel* it all joy, or that trials *are* all joy." (Hiebert)

d. **But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing:** The work of patient endurance comes slowly, and must be allowed to have full bloom. Patient endurance is a mark of the person who is **perfect and complete, lacking nothing**.

3. ([Jas 1:5-8](#)) How to receive the wisdom you need from God.

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. 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. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

a. **If any of you lacks wisdom:** Trials are a necessary season to seek **wisdom** from God. We often didn't know we needed **wisdom** until our trial. Once in a time of trial, we need to know if a particular trial is something God wants us to eliminate by faith or persevere in by faith. This requires **wisdom**.

i. In trials, we need **wisdom** a lot more than we need *knowledge*. Knowledge is raw information, but **wisdom** knows how to use it. Someone has said that knowledge is the ability to take things apart, but wisdom is the ability to put things together.

b. **Let him ask of God:** To receive wisdom, we simply **ask of God** - who gives wisdom generously (**liberally**), and without despising our request (**without reproach**).

i. **Without reproach:** "This is added, lest any one should fear to come too often to God ... for he is ready ever to add new blessings to former ones, without any end or limitation." (Calvin) Knowing God's generosity, that He never despises or resents us for asking for wisdom, should encourage us to ask Him often. We need to understand that He is the God of the open hand, not the god of the clenched fist.

ii. When we want wisdom, the place to begin is in the Bible. The place to end is in the Bible. True wisdom will always be consistent with God's word.

c. **But let him ask in faith:** Our request for wisdom must be made like any other request - **in faith**, without doubting God's ability or desire to give us His wisdom.

i. This shows the kind of heart we need in seeking God's wisdom from the Scriptures: a heart that believes God's word, and believes it speaks to us today.

d. **With no doubting ... let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord:** The one who doubts and lacks faith should not expect to receive **anything from the Lord**. This lack of faith and trust in God also shows that we have no foundation, being **unstable in all our ways**.

e. **A double-minded man, unstable in all his ways:** To ask God, but to ask Him in a doubting way, shows that we are **double-minded**. If we had no faith, we would never ask at all. If we had no unbelief, we would have **no doubting**. To be in the middle ground between faith and unbelief is to be **double-minded**.

i. The man who came to Jesus and said *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief* ([Mark 9:24](#)) was not **double-minded**. He wanted to believe, and declared his belief. His faith was weak, but it wasn't tinged with a **double-minded** doubt.

4. ([Jas 1:9-11](#)) Encouragement for those affected by trials.

Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

a. **Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation:** As much as it is appropriate for the **lowly** to rejoice when they are lifted up by God, so it is appropriate (but far more difficult) for the high (**the rich**) to rejoice when they are brought to **humiliation** by trials.

i. "As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ the two are equals." (Hiebert, citing Lenski)

b. **Because as a flower of the field he will pass away:** Trials serve to remind the rich and the high that though they are comfortable in this life, it is still only this life, which fades as the grass grows brown and the flowers fade away.

i. In the land of Israel, there are a variety of beautiful flowers that spring to life when the rains come, but they last for only a short time before withering away. On the scale of eternity, this is how quickly **the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits**.

ii. The riches of this world will certainly **fade away** - but James says that the **rich man also will fade away**. If we put our life and our identity into things that **fade away**, we will **fade away** also. How much better to put our life and our identity into things that will never fade! If a man is only rich in this world, when he dies, he leaves his riches. But if a man is rich before God, when he dies he goes to his riches!

B. Living for the Lord in times of temptation.

1. ([Jas 1:12](#)) A blessing for those who endure temptation.

Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

a. **Blessed is the man:** This sounds like one of Jesus' Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5-7](#)). In those great statements of blessing, Jesus wasn't finished telling us how we can be **blessed**. Here, we learn we can be **blessed** as we endure **temptation**.

b. **Who endures temptation: Temptation** is one of the *various trials* ([James 1:2](#)) we face. As we persevere through temptation, we are **approved**, and will be rewarded as the work of God in us is evident through our resistance of temptation.

c. **The crown of life which the Lord has promised** reminds us that it really is worth it to endure under the temptations we face. Our steadfastness will be rewarded as we demonstrate our love for Jesus (**to those who love Him**) by resisting temptation.

2. ([Jas 1:13-16](#)) How temptation comes.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

a. **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"**: Temptation does not come from God. Though He allows it, He Himself does not entice us to evil, though God may test our faith without a solicitation to evil (**nor does He Himself tempt anyone**).

i. James knew that most people have an evil tendency to blame God when they find themselves in trials. But by His very nature, God is *unable* to either be tempted (in the sense we are tempted, as James will explain), nor can **He Himself tempt anyone**.

ii. We should remember that the pagan gods of ancient times were well acquainted with evil, and sinned often themselves. But the true God, the God of the Bible **cannot be tempted by evil**.

b. **Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed**: God doesn't tempt us. Instead, temptation comes when we are **drawn away** by our own fleshly **desires** and **enticed** - with the world and the devil providing the enticement.

i. Satan certainly tempts us. But the only reason temptation has a hook in us is because of our own fallen nature, which corrupts our God-given **desires**. We often give Satan too much credit for his tempting powers, and fail to recognize that we are **drawn away by our own desires**.

ii. Some who like to emphasize the sovereignty of God say that God is responsible for all things. But God is never the one responsible for man's sin and damnation. "When Scripture ascribes blindness or hardness of heart to God, it does not assign to him the beginning of the blindness, nor does it make him the author of sin, so as to ascribe to him the blame." (Calvin) Calvin also wrote, "Scripture asserts that the reprobate are delivered up to depraved lusts; but is it because the Lord depraves or corrupts their hearts? By no means; for their hearts are subjected to depraved lusts, because they are already corrupt and vicious." God is never the one responsible for the sin or damnation of any man.

c. **When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin**: Springing forth from corrupt **desire** is **sin**. Springing forth from **sin** is **death**. This progression to death is an inevitable result that Satan always tries to hide from us, but we should never be deceived about.

i. Satan's great strategy in temptation is to convince us that the pursuit of our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us. If we remembered that Satan only comes *to steal, and to kill, and to destroy* ([John 10:10](#)), then we would resist the deceptions of temptation more easily.

3. ([Jas 1:17-18](#)) God's goodness stands in contrast to the temptations we face.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

a. **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above:** From our own fallen natures and from those who would entice us, we expect no true goodness. But **every good and every perfect gift** comes from God the Father in heaven.

i. Of course, the ultimate goodness of any gift must be measured on an eternal scale. Something that may seem to be only good (such as winning a lottery) may in fact be turned to our destruction.

b. **With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning:** God's goodness is constant. There is **no variation** with Him. Instead of shadows, God is **the Father of lights**. In the ancient Greek grammar, James actually wrote "**the Father of *the* lights.**" The specific **lights** are the celestial bodies that light up the sky, both day and night. The sun, moon, and stars never "turn off," even when we can't see them. Even so, there is never a **shadow** with God.

i. This means that God never changes. Among modern theologians, there are some that are taken with something called *process theology*, which says that God is "maturing" and "growing" and "in process" Himself. But the Bible says that **there is no variation or shadow of turning** with God.

c. **Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures:** We can see God's goodness in our salvation, as He initiated our salvation **of His own will**, and **brought us forth** to spiritual life by His **word of truth**, that we might be to His glory as **firstfruits** of His harvest.

i. James may be speaking of his own generation of believers when he calls them firstfruits. Some have speculated on this even more, saying that James has in mind a wider redemption among unknown creatures of God, of which we are the firstfruits of that wider redemption.