



LESSON 5 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Helps Us through Hard Things

SCRIPTURE: [James 1](#)

WORD OF WONDER: [1 Corinthians 13:13 \(NIrV\)](#)

Ever been tempted to quit when something got too challenging? What was the source of that temptation? Why is resisting that particular temptation so hard?

Our enemy knows where we're vulnerable. I remember a time in my life when I faced discouragement at every turn, and I felt as though the season of difficult things was never going to end. I wanted to give in and give up. I wanted to quit.

[James 1](#) might be the most famous passage that addresses facing temptations and trials. But it's also famous for reminding us we have the option to choose our mindset when facing those challenges. Take a few moments now to read [James 1](#).

God provides a source of strength and endurance to help us get past the temptations. According to James, that source is joy.

When I've chosen joy, I've gained strength I didn't know I had and the perseverance to keep pushing through and beyond.

What are you facing in your life that feels too hard and the temptation is to give up or take an easier way out? What truths about God's love and power make it possible for you to choose joy right now?

God is ready to meet you, equip you, empower you, and fill you with all wisdom and understanding so you can have the perseverance to stand the tests and trials. He will help you through.

—**Tom Bump**

Children's Ministry Leader, Author, and Coach

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

James, the brother of Jesus, is barely mentioned in the Gospels. He doesn't seem to have placed any faith in Jesus until after His resurrection. According to [1 Corinthians 15:7](#), Christ appeared to James, who afterward became a leader in the early church.

WHAT?

James sounds quite a lot like his brother Jesus, who taught in parables and short sayings. James even uses the same phrasing as the Beatitudes: "Blessed is the person who ..." ([James 1:12](#)). His letter is often compared to wisdom literature.

WHERE?

James was based in Jerusalem, where he led Jewish Christians until his martyrdom. James writes to the scattered 12 tribes of Israel ([James 1:1](#)). His reference to the scattering, or diaspora, could mean the collective people of God in all places.

WHEN?

James was executed at the direction of the high priest in Jerusalem around the year AD 62. His letter doesn't have a firm date, but it appears to respond in some way to Paul, perhaps in the AD 40s or 50s.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

James reminds followers of Christ to live in a sensible way, making peace with others. He modeled the role of peacemaker when he gave a hand in fellowship with Paul and Barnabas, accepting their ministry to Gentiles, even while he ministered to Jews ([Galatians 2:9](#)).



Curiosity

LESSON 5 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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Curiosity Activity: Feelings Race

We're going to have a feelings race! When we feel happy or excited, we might run fast! Let's run to the other side of the room as fast as we can! Encourage the kids to run to the other side of the room.

When we feel sad, we might move slowly. Let's walk slowly to the other side of the room.

When we feel mad, we might stomp! Let's stomp our feet as we walk to the other side of the room.

When we feel afraid, we might tiptoe! Let's tiptoe to the other side of the room.

No matter how we feel, God is with us, and He always helps us.

Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD HELPS US THROUGH HARD THINGS.**

Encourage the kids to do the following motions while you repeat the Wonder Truth. Older toddlers can say the words with you as they do the motions.

GOD—*Point up.*

HELPS US—*Point at self.*

THROUGH HARD THINGS.—*Make fists like you're frustrated.*



10:45 Service

Belief

LESSON 5 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Guide kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

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Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words:
God, You never promised our lives would always be easy, but You do promise to always be with us whenever our lives get hard. You love us, and You will always be with us! Thank You for helping us when we go through hard things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God's Big Story

Pull out the Bible

Ask: What is this? *The Bible*

Ask: Why is it important? *Because it is God's word. Everything in it is true. It really happened.*

TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Read James 1: 2-4; 13; 17-18 and/or the summary below.

If you use the summary, you can also use the letters included in your Belief bag.

² My brothers and sisters, you will face all kinds of trouble. When you do, think of it as pure joy. ³ Your faith will be tested. You know that when this happens it will produce in you the strength to continue. ⁴ And you must allow this strength to finish its work. Then you will be all you should be. You will have everything you need.

¹³ When a person is tempted, they shouldn't say, "God is tempting me." God can't be tempted by evil. And he doesn't tempt anyone.

¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from God. This kind of gift comes down from the Father who created the heavenly lights. These lights create shadows that move. But the Father does not change like these shadows. ¹⁸ God chose to give us new birth through the message of truth. He wanted us to be the first harvest of his new creation.

Summary:

A man named James, who was a brother of Jesus, wrote a message that encourages those following Jesus to keep going when life is hard. We have some letters from James that will help us understand that message. Let's pretend we're living in the early church days and see what James has to say to us.

10:45 Service

#1: Dear Friends,

As people who follow Jesus, you might face all kinds of trouble. But when you do, you should think of it as pure joy! When hard things happen, they help you to be stronger. As followers of Jesus, we might all face trouble and hard times, but these hard things help us to trust God. Love, James

#2: Dear Friends,

Sometimes we're tempted to do wrong things, which means we want to do wrong things. But we shouldn't blame God when we are tempted. God never tempts anyone. Instead, God will be with us when we want to do wrong things, and He will give us the courage to do the right thing. Love, James

#3: Dear Friends,

Blessed (or happy) are the people who keep going even when times are hard. After they have come through hard times, they will receive a crown of life. The Lord has promised it to those who love Him. Toys and things here on earth will soon go away, but people who love God will have something that will never go away—life with Him forever! When you go through trouble, you become like the winners of a race who receive crowns on their heads from God. He loves you! Love, James

#4: Dear Friends,

Do you like to receive gifts? I do! Every good and perfect gift is from God! Remember that God made the heavens and the earth. God only gives good gifts. Anything we face that is bad or wrong is not from God. God wants us to share His love with everyone else on earth. That's why we can always remember that God helps us through hard things. Love, James

So even though we may go through hard times, God still loves us. It's good to remember that God helps us through hard things.

Word of Wonder

WORD OF WONDER

**The three most important things to have
are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of
them is love.**

—1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIRV)

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **What are the three most important things we should have?** (*faith, hope, and love*)
- **Which is the greatest of them?** (*love*)



Faith

LESSON 5 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

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Craft: Crowns of Life

SUPPLIES: white cardstock (1 sheet per kid), scissors (prep only), jewel stickers (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Crown of Life Sheet](#) (1 per kid)

Ahead of time, print the [Crown of Life Sheet](#) on white cardstock. You'll need one for each kid. Cut out the crowns and then cut "jewels" out of various colors of cardstock, three per kid. Each jewel should be the shape and size of the ovals on the Crown of Life Sheet. You can also use jewel stickers. Cut out leaf shapes for each kid using green cardstock (or gather real or artificial leaves for the kids to use).



James tells us that followers of Jesus who persevere through hard things and troubles will receive the crown of life. We learned that the crown symbolizes life itself! A long time ago, runners received beautiful crowns made of leaves when they won races. Today, we'll make crowns to help us remember times when God has been with us and given us strength as we faced hard times. When we place our hope in God and go through difficult times, we become like winners of a race who receive crowns on our heads—the crown of life!

Set out craft supplies at tables and invite kids to sit. Give each kid a [Crown of Life Sheet](#) and allow them to decorate their crowns using the jewels and leaves you prepared earlier.

When kids are finished with their crowns and have cleaned up their spaces, invite them to gather together. Encourage them to wear their crowns!

LESSON 5 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

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Closing Game: Snake Race

Let's pretend to be snakes! Let me see your best snake impression! Encourage kids to lie down on their stomachs and slither along. **We're going to have a snake race. We're going to pretend we are snakes, and we are going to race from one side of the room to the other.**

Split your group in half and have each half go to opposite sides of the room. Then tell them to all slither to the opposite wall at the same time.

If you run into another snake along the way, one of you will have to stand up on your tiptoes and fingertips and create a bridge for the other snake to crawl under. Allow kids to race back and forth as time allows.

Sometimes you ran into obstacles along the way, but your obstacle became a bridge to help you safely cross the path! Sometimes we run into obstacles or hard things in our race of life, but God uses those obstacles to help us run our best race and become stronger!

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for helping us through hard times.

God, thank You for always being with us in this race of life. Thank You for loving us always and helping us when times get hard. Thank You for always being with us in everything we face. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: Even though you may face hard times in your life, may you always remember that God loves you and is with you through anything and everything you may ever face. He loves you and will help you run your race of life. God helps us through hard times.