



MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE
Real faith doesn't fall apart under pressure. It is revealed by it and refined through it.	James 1:1-12
<p style="text-align: center;">Students will understand that hard things are not signs that God is mad or absent, but opportunities for their faith to grow stronger. They will be encouraged to respond to everyday frustrations and pressures with trust instead of panic or complaint.</p>	
<p>Teaching Script / Guide</p>	

**HOOK – ILLUSTRATION/GAME:**

- I want to give you... let's call it a hypothetical situation... Let's say (hypothetically, of course) there's a group project and you look only to realize that it's due sooner than you realized.
  - A few weeks ago... y'all were chilling. You thought "We have PLENTY of time" But now that the deadline is getting closer, you start getting nervous.
    - You start calling and texting your partners to see if they've done their part.... And much like you, they haven't even started...
  - This is where pressure hits:
    - One person didn't do their part
    - Another one is panicking
    - Everyone is texting like crazy...
  - How do you respond to that pressure?
    - Some people step up
    - Some people shut down
    - Some people blame everyone else...
  - You know what pressure tends to do?
    - Pressure reveals what's already inside of us.
- What if that's not only true for school? What if that's true of our faith also?
  - Forget the group project for a second... let's just talk about you?
    - What's your default response when life gets hard?
      - Avoid?
      - Numb out?
      - Get angry?
      - Shut down?
      - Overwork?
      - Overthink?
    - See, pressure exposes what we really believe.
    - It exposes whether our faith is sturdy or circumstantial

**TENSION:**

- Deep down, for many of us, it's easy to think: If I follow God, my life should be easy.

- But when...
  - Anxiety hits
  - Relationships fall apart
  - Plans don't go as planned
  - Or the future feels uncertain
- Many of us start to question God.
- That's because pressure doesn't just test your emotions. It tests your theology (what you believe about God)
- Here's the question that hard times challenge us all with: Do you believe God is good even when life isn't?

#### SCRIPTURE:

- **This week, we are starting a series where we will be walking through the entire book of James together!**
    - In your small group time today, your leaders will explain a bit of what's going on in the book of James – who he is, who he's writing to, and why he's saying what he's saying.
    - But what we've been talking about... that's where James starts: How do we make sense of God when hard times inevitably come upon us?
  - **READ or INVITE A STUDENT TO READ JAMES 1:1-12**
    - We're not going to cover all of this today, but each week someone will read more of this letter and by the end of the Summer, we would have read all of the book of James together as a group!
    - We're going to walk through this passage and highlight some of the shocking things James is saying.
  - **James 1:2**
    - It's important to know that James is writing to believer who are displaced, discouraged, and under pressure.
    - His word to them is to look at their circumstances and "count it all joy".
      - He's not saying, "Act like this isn't bad" or "get over it"
      - He's challenging them to change their perspective in light of the Gospel.
      - Because of Jesus, bad times aren't the end of the story. He actually uses those times to shape us.
  - **James 1:3-4**
    - James reassures all of us, God isn't trying to crush you. He's trying to mature you.
      - Without pressure, faith stays shallow.
    - James' point is that hard times do two things if we let them:
      - Reveals
      - And Strengthens our faith
    - Translation: Difficult times can either push you further away from God, or they can drive you closer to Him. Look at why that's the path James recommends.
  - **James 1:5-8**
    - James encourages us: If you run to God, you're headed to the right place because He will supply you with the wisdom needed to
      - See what God is doing
      - What He's forming in you
      - How to respond
  - **James 1:9-11**
    - **He even goes as far as saying that those who are going through difficult times can see it as a blessing from God!**
      - **How is that different from what you believe about God and difficulties?**
  - **James 1:12**
    - Finally, he reaches his crescendo. This is what James has been working towards this whole time:
      - There is something on the other side of endurance.
        - Not just relief
        - Not just "I survived."
      - But formation and reward.
        - We become more like Jesus and we receive the crown of life.
      - There's a formation happening in you that comfort could never produce.
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#### TRUTH:

- Pressure is a revealer and a refiner.
  - It reveals what you trust
  - It refines who you're becoming
- If your faith only survives when life is easy, it isn't rooted yet.
- But when you endure with trust, your faith becomes durable.

#### APPLICATION/SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION SET UP:

- **Ask:**
  - What's something hard you're facing right now?
  - Is there an area of life where you feel like God is absent?
  - Have you been complaining about it to others, or running to God with it?
  - What is this pressure revealing about what you actually trust?
- **Challenge:**
  - This week, when something frustrating happens, pause and pray:
    - Instead of only praying for an escape, pray for endurance and wisdom.
    - Instead of asking God to remove it immediately, ask Him to shape you through it.
    - Pray, "God, help me grow closer to You through this."

#### INVITATION/CLOSE:

- Some of you feel like you're being crushed.
  - Here's the gospel reminder: God doesn't waste suffering.
  - The same God who brought resurrection out of the cross can bring maturity out of your trial. Your pressure is not pointless.
  - Invite them to surrender their current trial and trust God's formation process.
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