



MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE
Real faith grows stronger under pressure.	James 1:1-12
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>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.</b></p>	
Teaching Script / Guide	

#### HOOK – ILLUSTRATION/GAME:

- Start off with a game where you have a bunch of sponges that have been soaked in random liquids (soda, chocolate milk, water, etc.)
- Invite a student up and have them squeeze and taste what comes out of the sponges.
  - Use this to transition into your message. You can say something like...
- For most of these, there's no way to tell what they were soaked in until they were squeezed right?
  - We are the same way.
  - When life gets difficult – or when we get squeezed – that's the time when we really start to realize what we're made of.
- How many of you know that at times, life squeezes us?
  - Let me ask it this way... how many of us feel some sort of pressure in life?
    - Tests
    - Friend drama
    - Parents
    - Sports
    - Divorce
    - Mental health struggles
    - Questions about faith that you just can't seem to find the answers to
  - All of these things reveal something to us about ourselves and our faith (where we put our trust and where we find our security).

#### TENSION:

- When hard things happen we're tempted to think:
  - "This isn't fair"
  - "God must not care"
  - "Why is this happening to me?"
- We often think that pressure means something is wrong
  - But what if pressure doesn't mean something is wrong... but rather an opportunity to grow in our faith/trust?

#### 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 I'm going to start us off where James starts off.
- **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**
  - James says our response to hard times should be to "count it all joy."
    - That doesn't mean "be happy about bad things."
    - It means trust that God can use hard things to help you become more like Jesus.
    - How does that happen? James says it comes through perseverance.
- **James 1:3-4**
  - Perseverance means not quitting... and this isn't just about quitting your sports team or giving up on a homework assignment... James is talking about not giving up on your trust in God.
    - Just like muscles grow when they're pushed, faith grows when it's stretched.
    - But God doesn't want you to just grit your teeth and push through hard times... that doesn't build faith in God, it only builds fatigue within us.... James teaches us in the next section how to overcome this
- **James 1:5**
  - James says that instead of asking God, "Why me?" we should ask God for wisdom.
    - The question we can run to God with in hard times is, "God, what are You teaching me?"
      - What are you teaching me about myself?
      - What can I learn about You?
      - What are you teaching me about the world around me?

#### TRUTH:

- Pressure has the potential to destroy your faith, but with God it also has the potential to truly test it and strengthen it.
  - What it requires of us is to run to God instead of away from Him in difficult times.
  - It's important to remember in these times that God isn't trying to hurt you, He's calling you toward Him to learn, to grow, and to find peace in Him (because He's the only One who can truly bring you peace in the midst of a storm/trial.)

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

- **Ask:**
  - What's something hard you're facing right now?
  - Have you been complaining about it to others, or running to God with it?
- **Challenge:**
  - This week, when something frustrating happens, pause and pray:
    - "God, help me grow closer to You through this."

#### INVITATION/CLOSE:

- Some of you feel stressed or overwhelmed. That doesn't make you weak... but it is an opportunity to grow.
  - God is forming something within you that only pressure can produce.
  - As we close, if you have something specific you need prayer for, we'd love to pray with you...
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