



ELEMENTARY LARGE GROUP

LESSON 5 PERSEVERANCE

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Helps Us through Difficult Thing

SCRIPTURE: James 1

GOD'S BIG STORY: James, an early church leader, encourages the church to keep going when life is difficult because God will help them persevere.

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

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: What's the hardest thing you've ever done?
- SMALL GROUP
- Interactive Game: Pterodactyl
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Responding in Worship
- Blessing Your Kids



INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Helps Us through Difficult Thing

SCRIPTURE: James 1

WORD OF WONDER: 1 Corinthians 13:13

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).

Large Group

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Helps Us through Difficult Thing

SCRIPTURE: James 1

WORD OF WONDER: 1 Corinthians 13:13

As kids arrive...

Around 20 minutes before service begins, display series theme loop.
Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Be sure to move to their level and introduce yourself to any new friends. Welcome kids by name and greet them with enthusiasm. Be extra intentional about hearing and responding to what they say.

SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP

Welcome Question

Consider using a:30 or 2:00 Countdown to let leaders and kids know it's almost time to begin!

At Your Start Time...

SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION

At your service start time, call attention to the Welcome Question on the screen and invite Small Group Leaders to begin:

"What's the hardest thing you've ever done?"



SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

"Welcome to RBKids! My name is ____ and I will be leading our worship time with you in just a little while. Today we are learning about James, the brother of Jesus and today's Wonder Truth says,

GOD HELPS US THROUGH DIFFICULT THINGS. We're going to read the story and talk about it in our small groups first. See you in a few!"



Small Group

While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! I have a little game for us first today!"

Interactive Game: Pterodactyl

SLIDE: PTERODACTYL

Make It Inclusive!

Some kids might be nonverbal or have speech delays. Instead of saying "pterodactyl," have them make a funny face/sound to get their neighbor to laugh. Or give them a simplified word or phrase to say, such as "dinosaur" or "chicken."



Ask kids to stand or sit in a circle. The object of this game is to never show your teeth (no smiling, laughing, etc.). One by one, kids will turn to their neighbors on their right and, without showing their teeth, say, "Pterodactyl." The goal is to say it in a funny or surprising way, causing their neighbor to smile and show their teeth. If they do, that player is out of the game. But be careful! If the speaker laughs and shows her teeth, she's out too! Join the kids in playing, and play until only one person is left. If your group is large, divide into smaller groups of 8–10 and have each group sit in a circle to play the game together. If possible, assign a volunteer to each small group.

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Was it difficult to keep from laughing? Allow kids to answer.

It was difficult for me! That game never fails to make me laugh, even if it means I'm out of the game! Even though what we just played was pretty silly, it can remind us that sometimes we have to keep going when life is difficult. We call that perseverance. James, an early church leader, wrote about how life wouldn't always be easy. But James knew that followers of Jesus can be encouraged when they experience tough times because, as today's Wonder Truth says, GOD HELPS US THROUGH DIFFICULT THINGS.



Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

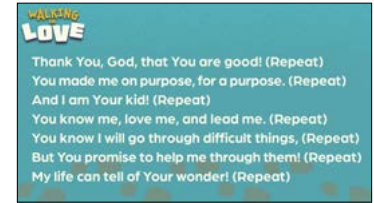
And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You know I will go through difficult things, (Kids repeat.)

But You promise to help me through them! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation.

****Use your own words!!! The prayer below is a sample, but please say a prayer from your own heart as you model prayer for the kids.**

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'll always be with us! Thank You for helping us to through difficult things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Worship

Consider sharing some about the songs you are going to sing. What they mean, why we sing them, why they are meaningful and important to you!

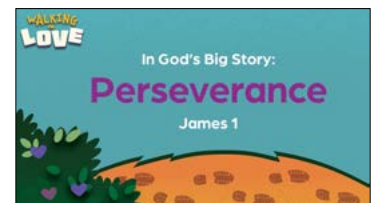
"We're going to stand and sing together! One way that we show love to God is to worship through song! So stand up, sing loud, and join in the motions with us. God loves to hear us sing praises to Him! These songs are very special because we got to sing them for Adventure Week VBS! Everyone stand up and dance and sing with your whole heart!"

WORSHIP VIDEOS: BREAKER ROCK BEACH, PRAISE

God's Big Story

SLIDE: TITLE

Tell kids that today's part of God's big story comes directly from the Bible. It's true and useful to us in our everyday lives, and it's found in the book of James in the New Testament. Invite kids to open their Bibles to James 1.



"Let's watch part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Then we'll experience more of the story!"

LESSON 5 PERSEVERANCE EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Apostle Paul costume, Bible, instant camera or digital camera (optional), DIY time machine or streamers (optional)

Walking in Love Experience It! Script Background:

During the Walking in Love Series, the Apostle Paul takes a break from his missionary work in the first century and walks forward in time to share God's message with the kids in your church! (Join kids in suspending disbelief and welcoming this enthusiastic time traveler!) The Walking In Love Experience It! Scripts have been designed independently of each other but can also be used as a cohesive unit. If choosing to utilize more than one Experience It! Script during the Walking in Love Series, try to have the same dynamic volunteer act out the part of Paul each week. (If this isn't possible, then have the volunteers playing the part of Paul wear the same costume.) This will help keep kids engaged while creating anticipation and excitement from week to week.

- Consider of these directions for Paul's costume: 1. First century-inspired clothing, such as a simple tunic with a rope tied around waist. 2. Silly, mismatched outfit, such as a Hawaiian shirt, hat, and scarf.
- To create the illusion that Paul has taken a walk forward in time from the first century, and appeared on your ministry stage consider creating a time machine or dressing up a doorway with streamers for Paul to enter through.
- Two opening options are written into today's Experience It! Script. If your church used the Experience It! Script in a previous Walking in Love lesson, choose Option 1. If today's is the first Walking in Love Experience It! Script you plan to use, select Option 2.

In this Experience It! Script, Paul comes to share the encouragement that his brother in Christ, James, shared with first-century Christians. While doing so, Paul gets an idea as to how the modern-day kids in your church can encourage James to keep up his faith. (Of course, this will require kids to use their imaginations!) As part of the script, Paul will ask kids to strike poses at various points in the story. Paul can pretend to take their pictures or use a digital camera to take real pictures. Paul will then pretend to take these pictures back to the first century to show James how much the church has grown over the past 2,000 years!

Opening: (Use if you utilized the Experience It! Script in the previous Walking in Love lesson.) *Apostle Paul enters stage right, stumbling as if he has tumbled through time and landed in your church. Paul looks around and smiles with excitement to see a room full of kids who have come to hear God's Word! Paul should have a camera in hand or around his neck.*

PAUL: Hello! It's great to be back with you today in (pause) what year is it again? Pause for kids to answer. That's right! It gets a little confusing sometimes when you take a walk through time. If we didn't meet last week, my name is Paul. Many people refer to me as the Apostle Paul because I am a Jesus follower and missionary. I dedicated my life to Jesus and helped the early church get started, and today I'm visiting you from the first century.

If Paul is in a silly costume, say: I want to apologize for my clothes. I had no idea how I should dress here in the 21st century. How did I do? Do you think I'll blend in dressed like this? Pause for kids to respond.

Begin Lesson 5 Script:

PAUL: God chose the followers of Jesus to be the hope of the world, to show the glory and majesty of King Jesus through transforming, life-changing love. God made the followers of Jesus into a community called the church. The church is to be filled with faith, hope, and love until the day that Jesus appears on earth again. You are what the church looks like today in the 21st century. Take a look around. *Look around and give kids a couple moments to do the same. The church is pretty incredible, isn't it?*

Today I'm going to tell you about another early church leader back in the first century. His name is James. Here's a fun fact about James—he's the brother of Jesus! And he wrote a message that encouraged those following Jesus to persevere, or to keep going when life is difficult.

Pause, as though thinking. I have an idea! Let's do a little something to encourage James just like he encourages other Christians. Would you be willing to help me encourage James? Pause for kids to respond.

Fabulous! Here's what we'll do. At different points in God's big story today, I'll ask you to strike a pose. Then I'll use this camera *(point to camera)* **to take photographs of you. James will be so excited if I bring back photographs of all you amazing kids who love God here in the 21st century. OK, let's practice once. Everyone strike a silly pose.** *Allow time for kids to pose. Take a pretend or real picture of the kids. If the group is large, take multiple pictures so everyone is included.*

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. We know the actor playing Paul won't actually take pictures back to James in the first century. However, most young kids can't easily decipher what's make believe and what's real. Take a moment to explain that while Paul and James were very real people, they lived a very long time ago. The person playing the part of Paul is just pretending; he won't actually go back in time to show their pictures to James.

OK, let's begin. Like I said, James knew life until Jesus returns wouldn't always be easy. So James wrote a letter of encouragement. Listen to what James said. *Open a Bible to James 1 so kids can see that what you're reading comes directly from the Bible. Begin reading verse 2 in slow and somber tone: "My brothers and sisters, you will face all kinds of trouble." Change tone to one of excitement: "When you do, think of it as pure joy."*

Leader Tip: It is important to understand what James means by trouble in James 1:2. The Greek word translated trouble here, *peirasmos*, can mean "trial," or it can mean "temptation." James uses the term ambiguously to begin with, but by verse 13 he appears to be thinking specifically about temptation.

Did you hear that? When we go through obstacles and difficulties, we don't need to be sad. We can treat it as something good, or as James calls it, "pure joy!" Let's take a photograph. What does pure joy look like for you? At the count of three, strike a super joyful pose. *Count to three and pretend to take several pictures of kids.*

OK, let's read what else James wrote. Again, open your Bible to James 1 as you read: **"Your faith will be tested. You know that when this happens it will produce in you the strength to continue"** (James 1:3). Look up from Bible. **Followers of Jesus will face trouble. Trouble comes from many places: temptation to do wrong, difficulties in life, or mistreatment by people who don't love Jesus.**

When that happens, rather than dwelling on painful and difficult experiences, we can look at our circumstances as a test and a way of increasing our faith. James says to think about what the trial is doing to you—making you a person even stronger in faith who relies even more upon God.

Wow, trials will actually make our faith stronger. Who knew? How about in our next photograph we strike a pose to show James just how strong kids are in the 21st century? Maybe you want to flex your muscles, pose like a ballerina, or pretend you're running far or fast. At the count of three, **strike your strong pose.** *Count to three and take several pictures of kids.*

Great job! Did you know that sometimes we're tempted to do wrong things? When this happens, James says we shouldn't blame God, for God cannot be tempted, and He never tempts anyone.

Instead, God will be with us when we're tempted, giving us the courage to do the right thing.

Listen to what James writes. Open Bible to James 1:12: **"Blessed is the person who keeps on going when times are hard. After they have come through hard times, this person will receive a crown. The crown is life itself. The Lord has promised it to those who love him."** Things like wealth and power are soon going to be gone. Poof! But people who place their hope in God have honor that can't be taken away. When they go through trials, they become like the winners of a race who receive crowns on their heads. The crown symbolizes life itself, the life that God gives to those who love Him with their whole heart.

Has anyone here ever won a race? Pause for kids to respond. Actually, everyone here is a winner because James said that when we go through difficult things, we become like the winners of a race—and we've all gone through difficult things!

For our next photograph, let's pretend we just crossed the finished line of a really difficult race. Maybe you want to raise your arms up in a victory pose, maybe you want to take a picture with a few friends because your race was a relay race, or maybe you're so exhausted from running that you're lying on the ground. Either way, **strike a post-race pose that I can take back to encourage James.** *Count to three and take several pictures of kids.*

Open Bible to James 1:17–18 as you continue: **Finally, James says, "Every good and perfect gift is from God. ... God chose to give us new birth through the message of truth. He wanted us to be the first harvest of his new creation."** James wants the followers of Jesus to remember that God is the Creator who made the heavens and the earth in the first place. God gives only good gifts. Anything we face that's evil or wrong isn't from God. We know God is making the world new, restoring creation so no darkness is left. James looks at the followers of Jesus and calls them the "first harvest," which means God was just getting started 2,000 years ago! God's new creation starts through His holy people, the church. That's why we can be certain that God helps us through difficult things.

Thank you for letting me visit you during your Walking in Love series. This is farewell for now ... God's grace and peace to you always! Exit stage.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Pose the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

"Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD HELPS US THROUGH DIFFICULT THINGS**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in action in the story?"

Allow kids to answer freely.



James ministered mostly to Jews, while Paul and Barnabas ministered to Gentiles, or non-Jews. Jews and Gentiles didn't get along sometimes, even in the church. But James modeled something different. James showed what it looks like to live as a peacemaker by showing everyone that he accepted Paul and Barnabas' ministry to Gentiles (Galatians 2:9)."

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.



***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. There ARE motions to this video for AWWBS, kids may do the motions if they know them, or just worship and reflect.

WORSHIP VIDEO: NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

Blessing Your Kids

Speak a blessing over your kids as you dismiss.

**Use your own words! Use the example below as a guide.

Blessing: May you remember always—in good times and hard times—that God is walking with you. And may God show you His love and help you persevere when things are the most difficult.