

## GROWING FAITH

(15–20 minutes, easy setup)

Use this outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this passage with learners.

Encourage learners to take notes on their copies of the Learner Worksheet as you teach.

The underlined words in the Master Teacher Outline correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

**Introduction:** When a child is born, doctors record the newborn's weight and length to establish a baseline by which to evaluate future growth. If the baby hasn't grown by the time of the first checkup, the doctor will have cause for concern. What if that process were applied to the spiritual development of believers? Would there be cause for concern after six months or six years? James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote one of the most practical books of the Bible. In it, we find some tips for living the Christian life.

### 1. Trials test the sincerity of our faith and build perseverance (James 1:2-4, 12).

- Believers can face the trials of life with joy because God uses them for a purpose (vv. 2-3).
- Perseverance through the trials of life produces spiritual maturity (v. 4).
- Believers who remain faithful in trials receive the blessing of the crown of life (v. 12).

**Illustration:** People often use the expression “no pain, no gain” to describe the things they are willing to suffer to achieve a desired end result. At the same time, people want to choose and limit their pain rather than allowing others to inflict that pain upon them without boundaries. Ask: **When we set limits for what we're willing to endure in this life, how much can we learn about our faith? About God?**

### 2. God allows trials to mature our faith, but never tempts us to do evil (James 1:13-15).

- God is holy, so He is not tempted by evil nor does He tempt people to sin (v. 13).
- People sin when they take their focus away from God and give in to their sinful desires (v. 14).
- Being tempted is the first step toward sin, and sin always has consequences in our lives (v. 15).
- **The Holy Spirit is God and Empower** and is given to us to help us conquer temptation.

**Illustration:** We live in a world in which people like to describe themselves as victims. In doing so, they try to minimize personal liability for the decisions they make. Popular thinking, however, is seldom biblical thinking. The Bible teaches that temptation is the result of being distracted from God's purpose for our lives. When we turn away from God, we turn toward sin. **How do you protect yourself against the many sources of temptation that you face each day?**

### 3. God remains good even in the midst of our difficulties (James 1:16-17).

- Believers can be deceived when they fail to understand the difference between the world's ways and God's ways (v. 16).
- Everything good that happens in our lives can be traced back to God. He is the only source of goodness and love (v. 17).

**Illustration:** As children grow, they learn to recognize the goodness of the people who love them. The same should be true in the lives of growing believers. We should recognize God because of His consistent love for us. **Why is it hard for some people to acknowledge God's love for them?**

**Conclusion:** Once we experience salvation, our relationship with God should grow. It grows as we spend time with Him and read His Word. It grows as we experience life in community with other believers. As our faith grows, we are able to remain steadfastly committed to God in the face of testing and temptation, even developing the ability to take joy in those trials because we know God is using them for our good. As we trust God to guide us through each test or temptation, we develop a mature faith and will one day receive the blessing of the crown of life—eternal life spent with God in heaven.