

GROWING FAITH

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: The metaphor of the “Get Out of Jail Free” card comes from the board game *Monopoly*. It does just what it says. When players receive a “Get Out of Jail Free” card, they hold it until misfortune lands them in the space marked “Jail.” They can then use the card to be released immediately. Some Christians treat faith in the same way—as if it was a one-time gift to be used when needed. Yet God desires for our faith to be a consistently growing and active part of our lives.

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

Biblical Background: James probably shocked his readers when he encouraged them to “count it all joy” when they faced the trials of life (v. 2). Because James had discovered the benefits of holding fast to his faith during times of testing and temptation, he knew those times produced perseverance or steadfastness (v. 3). By clinging firmly to faith during the trials of life, James said that believers would develop a “perfect and complete”—meaning strong and mature—faith (v. 4). The person with this unshakeable faith would receive “the crown of life” that God promises to those who love Him (v. 12).

Illustration: A farmer doesn’t plant the seeds of a garden and then leave them alone. The new plants must be tended in order to produce a crop. If the farmer neglects the plants, weeds will take over, and insects and drought can kill the crops. But if the farmer tends the plants through these trials, the garden will produce fresh crops all season long. The same is true of our faith. When we tend to it during the trials that we endure, our faith will grow stronger as a result.

Application: Every day we are faced with trials and temptations that test our commitment to Christ. When we persevere—clinging steadfastly to our faith—in those trials and temptations, our faith will grow stronger and we will become more like Christ.

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

Description: James reminded his readers that God is not evil and is not tempted by evil; therefore, God does not tempt His children to do evil things (v. 13). James indicated that trials and struggles become temptation when one’s own sinful nature surrenders to and/or pursues evil desires (v. 14). When these desires go unchecked, they give way to evil actions (sin) and ultimately lead to death (v. 15).

Illustration: “Spontaneous generation” was the long-held theory that living creatures emerged from inanimate objects: Pile up grain in your leaky storehouse, and in a few weeks, you’ll have mice. If a river floods its banks and becomes mud, frogs will come to life from the mud. It made sense to people at the time. But just because it makes sense doesn’t make it true. It’s ridiculous to think that grain could turn into rodents. It’s similar with the origin of sin and death. It might seem right to say that if God created all things, He also causes sin. But sin cannot come from a good God anymore than frogs are born from mud. Evil is birthed only out of our own sinful desires.

Application: Trials can serve as a test of faith in the sense that genuine faith emerges from the struggle, but God never tests His children in a way that would tempt them to engage in evil. Because **The Holy Spirit is God and Empowerer**, we can trust His power and guidance to overcome temptation rather than blaming God for them.

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

Biblical Background: James warned his readers to not allow themselves to be deceived (v. 16). Following his statement that God is not the author of temptation, James emphasized that God is the source of every good and perfect gift (v. 17a). God is not the instigator of sin and death, but of faith and life. God is good, and that truth will never change—no matter what happens in our circumstances (v. 17b). Because God is good, even trials can be considered a good gift from Him because they help His children to become more like Christ.

Illustration: Why don't good coaches let their teams practice however they want? Coaches know that teamwork, skill, discipline, and unity come from an organized and intentional approach to practicing. Although players don't enjoy the rigors of complicated drills or difficult practices, coaches use them to strengthen each team member and help the team achieve its goals. We can choose to see God in a similar way. God knows what is best for His children. He knows what will help them become more like Him. Even though we may not enjoy the difficult process, we can trust that God is good and is working to bring about the best for us.

Application: Because God is the giver of all good things, we can trust Him to look after us and help us persevere through any trial or temptation that comes our way.

Conclusion: When we respond to life's trials and temptations with firm commitment to our faith, God will use those times to strengthen us and bring us to spiritual maturity.