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# Sunday School Lesson

TOPIC:

## “Count it All Joy”

James 1:1-12

**VERSE DISCOVERY: James 1:12 (KJV, Public Domain)**

### Prepare

- James is the main character in this lesson. Do a quick background check on this brother of our Lord Jesus Christ who didn't believe until after His resurrection (John 7:3-5; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:7).
- Ask, *What do you think it was like growing up with Jesus as your older brother? What could have been some good things about it? What do you think were some challenges about it?* Tell them, in the end, Jesus' brother James became a great leader in the early church and encouraged people to remain in joy even during the most difficult of circumstances.
- **Happy or Sad Activity:** Print out one happy face and one sad face (you can just do one set for the teacher or multiple sets so that each student can have their own). Attach the faces to craft sticks. Prepare a list of things that might make one happy or sad (finding money, losing a tooth, receiving an unexpected gift, losing a puppy, etc.). Ask the class, using the faces, to show how each thing listed would make them feel, and why? Then ask, *Is it possible to feel joy even in sad times?* (Give them space to answer.)

Use this as a lead into the lesson. Say, *James wrote to people during a very hard time in life and one of the things he did was encouraged them to count it all joy.* This concept is difficult for some adults to grasp, let alone children. Let them know a Christian's joy is never based on the goodness of their circumstances. Rather, their joy is based on the goodness of God, who will give us the wisdom we need to make it through hard times.

### Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 7-14

Counting it all joy is not always the easiest thing to do, but in the devotional, *WHAT TO DO WITH DAYS WHEN THINGS AREN'T GOING RIGHT*, I share with you not only words that encourage you when dealing with difficult days and what to do with them, but toward the end, I highlight three different inspirational verses to hold on to when adversity peeks its head in your life and I start you out with three prayers to help you center your thoughts on God and His plan for your life in the midst of any hurt and confusion you may face.

*“What to do with this day when things aren’t clicking, and time keeps ticking? When things refuse to fall into the designated places you had for them? When it feels like it’s completely squashed before it starts? So many plans lay up ahead but the weight and the feeling and the pressure of it all leaves one with a sense of unaccomplishment and unfulfillment. Taking a look outside and it seems to be that everyone else is getting on with this day and doing but the fight in here, right now, and the press that comes with it, it just doesn’t seem to want to work out. All the gears for all the mechanics of this day are present, in place, and spinning, but they are just not grabbing correctly to move what we are trying to accomplish forward successfully.*

*What to do with this day when there seems to be conflict and strain with one another? When relationships don’t hug the way you want them to hug or love the way you want to be loved? When misunderstandings, assuming, and yes, even one’s own personal views on a matter put barriers between the spirit of fellowship and love. When hurts cause one’s steps to move ever so fragile as if on eggshells, fearing the disappointment and disapproval of someone else?*

*What to do with this day when rogue feelings break away from the pack you had planned for the day and invade and try to rob you of the potential joy that lay up ahead in the hours to come? Thieves of insecurity. Thieves of shame. Thieves of feeling woefully torn. These thieves come with many hideous and damaging names. The day was brand new and fresh at the start, but that didn’t stop these unwanted parasitic nuisances from latching on and tainting it with the feelings of mess-ups, adversity, pain, and disappointments from your yesterdays.*

*So, what to do with these kinds of days when our plans, or people, or feelings just don’t want to cooperate with the vision you had set for it?*

*Give it to God! That one answer tells us how to deal with it, the proper response to it, and what to do with the rest of it. This is not some Christian rhetoric or cliché. It is a solid truth that we can stand on and base our faith on. We give it God.*

*The very real truth is that at any given time on any given day we will all or have all experienced one or many of the daily upsets listed above (and sometimes even more than these). It is all a part of life; a part that can really throw us off kilter if we don’t process it right and deal with it in the right way.*

*Therefore, when everything is going absolutely bonkers, sometimes without rhyme or reason; when nothing within our power or control is working, we give it all to Him who has all power and control. Not as a mythical genie creature whose bottle we rub to have things or people turn out the way we want them to. But, as releasing it to His majesty and sovereign will. It’s saying, “I trust you, God.” Whether this day turns out how I configured it or not, my plans, my people, my times, my heart, my feelings – they are all in Your hands.*

*God is not only the Creator of all the universe and the Author of all mankind, but He is concerned about your daily needs for each individual day as well. All the areas that need filling, all the upsets that need dealing with, all the plans that need to be taken care of, and all the worries that bog us down – He’s concerned about it all.*

*But as we release the day to Him we must also realize His best answer for us may be to not move everything or anything into the places where we see fit. Sometimes, His best answer for what we are going through with this day to let us learn from it, experience it and still maintain trust in Him. That no matter how it goes forward, no matter what we feel in the process, no matter who we are dealing with and how we are dealing with them – He still sees it all, knows it all, and has it all in His loving and powerful hands.*

*So, when days like this come, we give it to God, step back, and just trust Him.*

*Here are some verses and prayers to hold in your heart when the days just aren’t going right for you:*

**Proverbs 3:5-6** *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*

*Father God, I acknowledge that I don’t know everything about this day, my future, or even how to properly respond to it all. I pray for Your leading to show me the right path to walk that my life might be pleasing in Your sight. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.*

**Jeremiah 29:11** *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”*

*Father God, the end of all things may be vague to me or even remain a mystery. Help my heart to hold on to the very real fact that you knew me from the beginning and you know how my story ends; that if I am in Your hands, then I am in Your plan. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.*

**Psalms 126:6** *“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”*

*Father God, my tears and confusion for the day, You see it all. Help me to know that it is not all in vain. Let my confidence be in You and Your love for me above all else, knowing that for every sadness, there will be joy. That when You restore, for every sorrow that was sown there will be reaping of happiness and peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.” (©WordForLifeSays.com).*

## Activities

- Take a stroll through nature during this week. If the weather is good or bad, find reasons to give God the praise for what you are observing. Use the **Blank Adult Journal Page** to jot down reasons to find joy in EVERYTHING you are seeing and/or experiencing. When we are in adverse times, it's hard to look at things with a different perspective other than that which we are witnessing. This little exercise helps us to translate what we are seeing in nature to what we are experiencing in our own lives. For the **Kids Journal Page (blank)**, if they can't stroll through nature, have them think of a bad weather situation. Write something good that can come out of the bad weather situation. Tell them, no matter whether the weather is good or bad, God is still good, and because He is still good and in control, we have a reason to find joy through it all.
- An alternate **Journal** activity for both is to fill in the blank "\_\_\_\_\_ is hard, but I can find joy because..." and use the supplied journal pages to complete your thoughts.
- Instead of a journal page, younger students can draw a picture of a bad weather day in the **Draw the Scene** section and jot down reasons to still find joy.
- **Frown Upside Down Craft:** Make your own frowning face that can be turned upside down to make a smiling face. If you don't know how to do this, search the internet for great examples. Use this as a supplement to the lesson *Count it All Joy*.
- Alternate activity sheets are available for those who just want to work with printed materials such as **Word Search, Crossword, and more.**

## Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," (James 1:2).***
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 15)
- Do an internet search for a Bible review game or activity to conclude the lesson.

## Life

Proactively combat negativity this week. Romans 8:28 tells us, "All things work together for good to them that love God." Every time an adverse occurrence happens, mentally and



verbally combat it. Write this verse from Romans down and other verses like it to encourage your own faith and to count it all joy no matter what you face.

TOPIC:

## “Count it All Joy”

James 1:1-12

### VERSE DISCOVERY: James 1:1-12 (KJV, Public Domain)

*What do you do when life doesn't seem to want to play fair? When all the boxes don't check off in all the right places and everything seems out of whack – what do you do?*

*For some, remaining optimistic during trials is harder than others. Firstly, every trial that every individual person deals with is not the same. Some things that may be troubling to one, but in reality, is only a minor inconvenience and annoyance, to others, they may be battling tooth and nail to keep their head above the water of the adversity they are facing.*

*Then, we have each person's natural dispositions on how they specifically handle tumultuous events. Where one sees the dark clouds others can readily point out the silver lining.*

*For those whom James was addressing in his letter, he knew they were being hounded by real troubles and not just a matter of inconvenience. He knew of the hardships and oppression they were experiencing. Yet, through it all, he wanted these believers to focus on the positive fruit all the things they were experiencing in their life could produce.*

### LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK

**James 1:1-4** “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

This “James”, who addresses himself as “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” is supposed by many to be the actual brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. While Jesus was going about fulfilling His earthly ministry, his brothers were not part of those who supported that ministry (see John 7:3-5). As a matter of fact, it is supposed that it wasn't until after he had seen

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the risen Lord for himself, that James, the natural, half-brother of Jesus Christ, believed and became a follower and a leader in the early church (1 Corinthians 15:7; Acts 1:14).

Which is why he is writing this letter **“to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.”** As a leader of the early church (Galatians 2:9; Acts 15:13-22), his care for members of the body of Christ is evident in the time and care he takes to write to them about their personal growth in the Lord, the discipline of the faith, conducting personal behaviors pleasing to the Lord, and yes, remaining hopeful in the midst of it all.

In this section of Scripture, James didn’t downplay the suffering some were experiencing. Rather, he encouraged them to remain focused on what truly matters. Therefore, he begins this letter by admonishing them to **“count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”**

**“Count it all joy”** – when you really think about that statement, it’s naturally a very difficult thing to do. It’s very similar to the Apostle Paul’s teaching to which he says, “In every thing give thanks...” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Those words **“all”** and **“every thing”** can encompass a great many circumstances. Circumstances that wouldn’t need encouragement to remain joyful and thankful if they weren’t adverse. Nobody needs to be encouraged to be happy when they are already happy. It’s when things become hard and unbearable that leaders such as James try to cheer them on to see that silver lining in a dark cloud.

James goes on to say, **“Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,”** or, various trials. You know what, I have given birth to four different children and each labor experience was different. Some were scary, some were painful, some were eventful, while others were uneventful. No two were alike. Each one was different. During one, I thought I was going to lose that baby, and during one, my own health was compromised.

But life is like that. The degrees and variables surrounding each hardship are unique to that particular time, place, situation, and person. They all don’t come packed in the same neat packaging, for if they did, we could really prepare our actions and reactions to each case. Trials come looking and feeling many ways and sometimes it’s hard getting a grip on it all and adjusting one’s mindset to see the positive.

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But James didn't focus on the many things people see, feel, and experience now. He focused on the many things it would produce.

First, he said, **“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”** If you have ever exercised with resistance bands, you know how difficult it can be. You are using your own body's strength, be it little or big, to purposely add pressure and pull to an already hard work out.

The **“trying of our faith”** is working for us, for our good, even though it seems to be opposing us. That which is hard to deal with is actually teaching us in a way that an easy path, with no resistance, ever could. It is producing in us virtues and spiritual fruit (Romans 5:3-6) that really will have no way of growing in us if it were not for the adverse circumstances we become occasionally planted in.

Here, in James' teaching, he is showing them the flip side of what they are feeling. He's showing them that what they are going through, those things that feel like they are wearing their faith down, is actually producing **“patience”** in them. This patience is all about endurance. One will never know how to go through hardships and stand if they have never been given the opportunity to exercise that faith and endure.

We read about Bible characters and their stories, and we think, oh, put me in the lion's den, or let me at Goliath, or some other situation alike, and I know what to do because the Bible tells us what they did. When reading the lives in these stories, we must not become desensitized to the power and faith it took for an individual to keep remaining true to their faith despite a death threat or to face a monster of a man on the battlefield. Until we have our own Nebuchadnezzar to stand before with the resolve to refuse to bow and worship a false image, no matter how hot the situation was getting, we will never know what it's like to endure trials such as these that build our faith unless we go through it for ourselves.

**“But let patience have her perfect work.”** If you want to grow and produce things conducive to strong faith, then let that same patience work it out in you. Every Christian should strive for mature, tested, and tried fruit of these spiritual disciplines to be produced in their life.

Every day we should want to do better and to be better, but a lot of that will never come to be unless we work at letting **“patience have her perfect work.”** Then, will we grow, being **“perfect and entire, wanting nothing”** in the development of our Christian character, now being ripe fruit, fit for the Master's use.

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## ASK IN FAITH AND DON'T WAVER

**James 1:5-8** “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. **But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**”

“**Faith**” is a key factor in this opening of James’ letter. In the trying and in the producing, faith comes to the forefront of a must-have list.

“**Wisdom**” is needed in so many areas of life. Proper wisdom is needed all the more when facing opposition. Wisdom is one of the best tools one should have in their arsenal when navigating or combatting trying times.

Previously I wrote,

*“Strength and weapons are carnal devices that depend on fleshly know-how and might. Often these are the first resources that man runs to in times of difficulty and adversity. Wisdom is dependent upon God. ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction,’ Proverbs 1:7.*

*Would it not be more prudent in the days of trials to follow the path of wisdom whose Author is God?” (Wisdom is Better/Word for Life Says).*

James said, “**If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.**” It is very possible to be in the midst of contentions and not know what to do or how to respond. God has opened Himself up to us to receive what we need to succeed in this Christian journey. The Apostle Peter, one of Jesus’ original disciples, wrote, “According as his divine power hath given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness...” (2 Peter 1:3; emphasis mine) and that includes wisdom. God gives it to the one who asks, but when he or she asks, it must be done in “**faith.**”

Faith supports faith. The one here, who is in a trial and dealing with contentions because of their faith, are to ask in faith, of the Father, for the proper wisdom of how to continue forward in their faith while going through.

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Steadfast, believing faith is necessary for every aspect of our Christian walk. To **“waver”** in that is to sway in that belief and in the one who is the Author of that belief.

James gives the picture of this one being **“like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”** I love the ocean. I love the beach. When vacationing, it’s one of my favorite places to visit. One of the things I most enjoy while there is standing on the shoreline and watching the waves come in and go out. The ebb and flow of the waters are always moving, never still, and never steady.

While beautiful to look at in nature, in our Christian character that’s not what we’re looking for. We want to be rooted and grounded in what we believe and whom we believe – that He is able to answer our prayers and give us the wisdom we need. To shun that, through not asking in faith, is to shun the benefits one would have received otherwise.

James warns, **“For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”** Too many are living the faith they profess to have without living in complete faith and assurance in the **“Lord.”** It may be possible for people to live in compliance with regulations of the faith and have the spirit of faith missing.

This one has a divided mindset. James considers them to be a **“double minded man”** who is **“unstable in all his ways.”** If he or she can’t get off the fence here, before the very foundation of their faith, when praying and asking of God, other areas of life are guaranteed to be constantly shifting and fluctuating as well, being blown about in uncertainty.

But for the one, who in complete faith, is asking God for wisdom, God will give it **“liberally”** and **“it shall be given him.”** Wow! What a promise!

## ENDURE, THERE IS AN ETERNAL REWARD

**James 1:9-12** “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

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Rich or poor, it doesn't matter. Everyone will experience trials. And, everyone can be taught valuable lessons through those trials. All social classes and backgrounds can find joy during times of adversity.

How is that?

James explains it like this. For the poor, or him of **“low degree,”** such a one can **“rejoice in that he is exalted.”** This one's “right now status” does not determine their joy in life.

It is easy to see the ones without... without as much as others, without as many financial resources, without proper education, and anything else this world stores up as markers for success and happiness.

This one may think he is justified in being sullen, withdrawn, and living a pity-party lifestyle that no one wants to attend. Contrarily, James points out the opposite. Regardless of what he has or didn't have; no matter how others view his lowliness, or even how he views himself, James declares that joy and rejoicing should still be found in his heart because of the God whom he has placed his trust in, and not his haves and have nots.

In this, too, he can **“rejoice.”** When it's all said and done, when he parts from this world, it is God who will **“exalt”** him to the things he has never seen with human eyes or even imagined (compare 1 Corinthians 2:9). He may not have as much as another, but in his trials and temptations, he can still count it all joy!

When Jesus was teaching the Beatitudes, at the end of all those “blessed are” statements that would point out circumstances in which one wouldn't normally find joy in, Jesus speaks these words: “Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven,” (Matthew 5:12). His comments were spoken in relation to being persecuted, something James' readers are all too familiar with, yet, what He points out is that even in that hardship, Jesus Himself said, “Rejoice!”

And, He wasn't teaching anything contrary to what He Himself was not willing to do. Hebrews 12:2 tells us, “...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”

As those who are linked to Him in faith, James said every believer can count it all joy no matter their privileged or underprivileged status and life.

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And the “**rich**” are to remember, in humility, that though they may have a lot right now, their days are moving just as fast as anyone else’s in this lifespan each of us has been allotted. Life is a vapor, here today, gone tomorrow (James 4:14).

“**As the flower of the grass he shall pass away.**” Riches cannot increase his time or secure him a better end. He, too, must depend on the same salvation, the same saving grace, as one who may be without and lacking. The businesses, the homes, the money – nothing he has accumulated in this life will account for anything in eternity. Outside of Christ, low or high, rich or poor, we are all nothing.

So, when this one faces trials and temptations, he too can count it all joy for he is made keenly aware that his days and life here are very brief. That awareness brings him “**low**”; it centers and focuses him on what matters the most.

Both types of trials and temptations are a gift for they both, whether for the rich or poor, should keep us before the Lord in humility and dependence. Not a one has a reason to glory in his own flesh or circumstances. Before God, it’s the heart of the man that matters the most. Not what he has or doesn’t have.

James adds, “**Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.**” Counting it all joy is not because we have avoided temptations and trials from ever happening to us. Counting it all joy for the blessedness that is ours for enduring the times of testing they brought.

Even Jesus was tried, tested, and tempted. Hebrews reminds us again, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” (Hebrews 4:15).

Endure!

Let patience have her perfect work! Because in the end, when the trials and trying times are all over with, that one that was “**tried**” and endured with faith intact through it – that one “**shall receive the crown of life.**”

Now, that’s real success. That’s the real goal. That’s the real reason to be happy when troubles just won’t seem to let up.

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At one point or another, and many times in between, we are all going to be touched by the finger of adversity. But, as the Word of God declares, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved,” (Matthew 24:13).

Don’t lose your joy! There is a “**crown of life**” waiting for you with your name on it. We are going through and enduring because there is a prize laid up for us at the end of this race (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

Your running is not in vain. Your joy is not in vain. The “**Lord**” has “**promised**” this wonderful gift “**to them that love him.**”

it is spoken. It is written. It is ours if we remain in our holy joy and keep pushing for it and not giving up.

The opposite of the joy we are called to have is words like misery, sadness, and the like. When one keeps swimming in the pools of these waters, they will soon feel overcome by the displeasure found there, let go of their grip, and drown.

Life may not be perfect but maintaining your spiritual joy will keep you buoyant in the murkiest of waters.

So, count it all joy!

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**TOPIC:**

## “Count it All Joy”

**James 1:1-12**

**Please Answer the Review Questions Below**

1. **T or F.** Everything we deal with in life is going to be easy. (James 1:2)
2. “But let \_\_\_\_\_ have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing,” (James 1:4).  
**A. Holiness      B. Patience      C. Trials      D. Temptations**
3. Why do you think it’s good to ask God for wisdom when going through difficult times? (James 1:5)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you sometimes have wavering faith, feeling tossed like the seas? What can you do to feel steadier? (James 1:6)  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. James considered a \_\_\_\_\_ minded man to be unstable in all his ways. (James 1:8)  
**A. Career      B. Singled      C. Faithless      D. Double**
6. **T or F.** James was the half-brother of our Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The lesson reminds us, there is a **crown of life** laid up for those who **endure** (James 1:12). What part of that promise encourages you the most?  
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