

## Big Idea Study Sample

Passage: James 1:1-12 NLT	Step 1 Exegesis Exact words from your translation	Step 2. Hermeneutics Restate as timeless truths
The Big Idea...	Believers scattered (1)	How to live as a Christian in an unbelieving and hostile world.
1. ...supporting idea...	You know (2-4)	Understand God.
a. ...defining idea.	When	- That trials are inevitable.
b. ...defining idea.	So let it	- That trials are volitional.
c. ...defining idea.	Complete, needing nothing	- That trials are essential.
2. ...supporting idea...	Wisdom (5-8)	Involve God.
a...defining idea.	Ask God	- By requesting His guidance.
b...defining idea.	Be sure your faith is in God alone	- By relying upon Him alone.
3. ...supporting idea...	Poor...rich (9-11)	Learn from God.
a. ...defining idea.	Poor: God has honored	- That the poor believer is spiritually rich
b. ...defining idea.	Rich: God has humbled	- That the rich unbeliever is spiritually poor
4. ...supporting idea...	Love Him (12)	Love God.
a. ...defining idea...	Patiently endure	- By drawing close during hardship.
b. ...defining idea.	Receive the crown of life	- By celebrating with Him after the hardship.

**Step 3. Homiletics.** Combine Steps 1 and 2.

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### Step 3. Tie it all together.

#### Notes

1. This passage yielded four Supporting Ideas. Some passages yield more, some less.
2. Words highlighted in yellow are speaker notes. They would not be included in a handout.
3. Words underlined would be for a fill-in-the-blank presentation.
4. The “So let’s...” is a summary composed of the three defining points expounded upon the most during the presentation. They are reworded for freshness.

### How to Survive as a Christian in an unbelieving and hostile world.

James 1:1-12 NLT

- Believers scattered (vs.1)
- Christians exist in two states; gathered and scattered. We gather to worship and scatter to witness. The challenge is how to witness in an unbelieving and increasingly hostile world. We are becoming more polarized. Believers are being challenged by man to stay silent but commanded by God to speak out. The hostility of the crowd coerces us to remain tight lipped but the healing power of the gospel compels us to open our mouths. The following are four important truths to remember when following Christ becomes costly.

#### 1. Understand God.

- o “you know...” Vs. 3
  - o The word *know* is the operative term. James was telling them something they already knew. They just needed to be reminded. We need to understand how God works. We need to understand the basic principles of any hardship we experience because we are followers of Christ.
- a. That trials are inevitable. Vs. 2
- “...when...” Vs. 2
  - Explanation: Notice the term is “when” not “if.” Also, notice the phrase, “*comes your way*.” You don’t have to seek out trials, they will find you.

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- Illustration: The only way followers of Christ can avoid trials is by not living out their faith. Staying silent when the situation calls for the hope and love of the gospel. Remaining indifferent when a circumstance calls for expressing the grace and mercy of God. Live out and speak out for God and you'll get pushback. Jeremiah 38:1-6, Matthew 10:22
  - Application: What silences you?
- b. That trials are volitional. Vs. 4
- "So let it..." Vs. 4
  - Explanation: note the word "Let..." This assumes that completion of the trail us up to us. We can duck and run or stay the course and learn the lessons. Rick Warren says, "We're as spiritually mature as we choose to be" Immature Christians choose to drop the class called "maturity through hardship." They bail out. They end relationships, quit work, cease friendships. They are fair weather Christians. They're nominal, in name only.
  - Illustration; Snowbirds are those who chase the sun and warmer climates so they don't have to endure winter. Snowbird Christians avoid the hard winter climate of trails.
  - Application: Are you a snowbird Christian? Always moving away from the hard toward the easy.
- c. That trials are essential.
- "you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." Vs. 4
  - Explanation. The pathway of spiritual maturity includes trials and tribulations. Its's the only way. We've been told this. Philippians 1:29 NLT For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.
  - Illustration. Trees in windy areas are planted as saplings at 45° angles so they can grow straight and strong when encountering headwinds as they grow.
  - Application. What headwinds from your past have helped you grow spiritually strong today?
2. Involve God. Vs. 5-8
- "If you need wisdom..."
  - Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge. It's doing the right thing at the right time, the right way. Often during trails, this is confusing. Here are helpful tips.
- a. By requesting His guidance.

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- “Ask our generous God...” Vs. 5a
  - Explanation: Somethings are there for the asking. Wisdom is one of those things. God is eager to give abundant counsel and guidance if only we would ask...and wait for his answer. He won't chide us, even if the answer is obvious. He's eager to help his children navigate the treacherous waters of spiritual hardship.
  - Illustration: 1 Kings 3:8-12
  - Application: Do you need to ask God for guidance? Is it time to stop trying to be self-reliant and become God reliant?
- b. By relying upon Him alone.
- “But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone.” Vs. 6
  - Explanation. It's one thing to ask God for guidance and respond obediently. It's another to ask Him and not rely on anyone or anything else. God deserves full trust. That's one of the main purposes in our trails. Learning to let him lead, guide, protect and provide. It's calling living by faith.
  - Illustration. Hebrews 13:9
  - Application. Is there a Plan B in your strategy for dealing with your faith related troubles? If so, confess it and go back to Plan A, God alone.
3. Learn from God. Vs. 9-11
- a. That the financially poor believer is spiritually rich. Vs. 9
- Explanation. It's good to be reminded of our spiritual assets. Especially when the trails we encounter are financially costly. The believer is abundantly endowed with a spiritual resources. No amount of money can acquire those blessings, no amount of trial can remove them.
  - Illustration. Ephesians 1:3-14, Romans 8:38-39
  - Application. When's the last time you looked at and relied upon your spiritual bank account?
- b. That the financially wealthy unbeliever is spiritually poor. Vs.
- Explanation. Wealth is fleeting. Eternity is forever. Better to be in possession of what lasts forever than what is here today and gone tomorrow. Accomplishments fade quickly and don't help a person get to heaven. A legacy of spiritual offspring through disciple making lasts generations. The worst kind of financial wealth is that which

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blocks a person from understanding the depth of his spiritual poverty. The richest person in the world is only accumulating pavement. The streets of heaven are paved with gold. (Revelation 21:21).

- Illustration. Revelation 3:17-18.
- Application. When's the last time you looked at your spiritual bank account?

### 4. Love God. Vs. 12

- "...to those who love Him." Vs. 12
- Tucked away at end of this verse is the most important thing to remember during a trial. It's all about loving God. God is more interested in our love than anything else. The ultimate purpose of any hardship we endure is to deepen our love for God.
- a. By joyfully trusting in him here. Vs. 12
  - "God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation." Vs. 12a
  - Explanation. Here's the simple strategy for trials: love God while you wait them out. Deepen your relationship with your heavenly Father during the test.
  - Illustration. Hebrews 6:15. Scripture is full of examples of those who have patiently endured trials.
  - Application. Are you using this season of hardship to deepen your love and trust of God? Psalm 62:8
- b. So we can celebrate with Him there. Vs. 12
  - Afterward they will receive the crown of life. Vs. 12
  - Explanation. God will reward Christians who patiently endure trials by placing the crown of life on their head. They in turn will joyfully place it at his feet as an expression of thanks for enabling them to endure the trial.
  - Illustration. 2 Corinthians 5:10
  - Application. Are you looking forward to receiving your heavenly reward, only to place it at the feet of Jesus?

So let's...

1. Expect to encounter spiritual challenges if we live all out for Jesus. 1. a from above.
2. Resist the urge to develop a Plan B. From 2.b above.
3. Love God during the trial. 4. From above.