

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 11 - JAMES 5:7-20 - JULY 29-AUGUST 4

LEADER NOTES

Throughout his letter, James consistently reminds his readers that trials, temptations, and persecutions are sure to come in the life of a believer. Yet, even in the face of such opposition, we should not fear because the return of the Lord will soon be here. This simple truth should encourage us and push us to endurance. As we wait for the coming of the Lord, we should do so in the community of God, praying faithfully for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

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SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

CHRISTIANS WAIT PATIENTLY UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD.

James 5:7-20

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers,[a] until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), James 5:1-6.

STUDY NOTES

Throughout our study on the book of James, the author repeatedly warns against the folly of worldly wisdom. Scripture consistently describes that our finances reveal not only what our hearts are fixed upon, but also who is Lord over one's life. In James chapter five, the author strongly rebukes believers for their misuse of riches and financial gain for individual pleasure and selfish ambition. However, it should be noted that many interpreters see these rebukes on the rich as addressing non-believers rather than believers. Individuals holding this interpretation will point to the fact that nowhere does James refer to these people as "brothers" as elsewhere in his letter, as well as the fact that there is no call to repentance, as is the case in the preceding exhortation. No matter how you interpret who James is addressing, there are key principles which every believer should heed with great diligence.

Foolish Christians Keep What They Should Give

Earlier in his letter, James says "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." The rebuke of the rich in chapter five is the opposite of this. The individuals addressed were storing up earthly riches and possessions, hoarding them and unwilling to share with the believers in need. Scripture presents three types of wealth in the ancient world: grain, gold, and garments. Verses 2-3 reveal that these individuals were hoarding every type of wealth, storing these riches to the point where they were rotting, being corroded, and destroyed, yet the rich do not give to the poor. It's not riches itself which causes people to sin, but the posture and outworking of the heart.

Foolish Christians Make Bad Investments

Jesus says in Matthew 6, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." With this in the back of James's mind, it's as

if James emphasizes the simple fact that to live in the way the rich were living is to heap judgment and condemnation on your head. This is revealed in the use of the divine title of "Lord of Hosts" in verse 4. In so doing, James says that the outcries of those wronged and oppressed reach the ears of the one who commands Heaven's armies, the one who is in control of all riches, all power, and all glory. Thus, living a life of indulgence—with a lack of concern for the needy, the lost, or the will of God—proves their hearts allegiance and forfeits all of the riches promised to those who place faith in Christ.

We must be a people who are more concerned with the Kingdom of God, the mission of God, and the things of God rather than the pleasures, the worries, or the things of the world. When our hearts and minds idolize the fleeting riches of the world, we lose sight of the eternal riches found only in the crucified and risen Jesus. To live a life of authentic faith means we care for the outcasts, the marginalized, the lowest and poorest in society. Wise Christians make eternal investments.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *What stood out to you from this passage?*
- *Read v.8. What does this passage say is our hope in the midst of living in a lost and unjust world? Read v.9. What is the wrong way to wait for our vindication at the coming of the Lord?*
- *Why is community so essential in the Christian life? How do we see this played out in the passage?*
- *What does this passage tell us about prayer?*
- *Read v. 15. Do you think this guarantees bodily healing when we pray? (The word "save" in this passage refers to salvation, not physical healing.)*
- *Why do you think our prayers have "great power as it is working?"*
- *How and when does this passage prompt us to pray?*