

Within the Word

A Study of James 5

A Note from Kathy

James reminds us, if riches are merely accumulated they are of little value. Only when riches are put to work can they make a real difference in the world. It is not a sin to have riches, but it is a sin if your riches have you. As believers, we must guard against the desire to gather and keep for the sake of storing up wealth. This world is not our home; believers are simply traveling through, awaiting our Lord's return. We are to do all we can while we are here.

Observation

Read the chapter, at least twice, before beginning the study guide. This will give the Lord an opportunity to help you see the things He desires for you to know.

1. Once again we see warnings and comparisons in this chapter. Spend a few minutes considering verses 1-6. Who is James speaking to in these verses? If you are unsure, refer to James 1:1.
2. Who are "the people" about to experience misery? What is about to happen? What have these people been doing with what they have? According to verse 3, what are they revealing with their actions?
3. Sadly, the men and women mentioned in verse 4 have suffered at the hands of their employers. What was happening to them?
4. Who heard the cries and saw the suffering of the workers?
5. In verse 5, James compares the self-indulgence of the rich to what? A life of no restraints quickly becomes a life of no self-denial.
6. To what extent have these people manipulated things for their own personal gain?
7. Read verses 7-12. Who does James address in verse 7?
8. What is the scene James borrows from nature to help them understand the truth he is sharing?

9. List the three instructions believers are given in verses 8-9.

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10. James reminds them of those who came before and stand as an example of patience in suffering. Who does he choose as examples?

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11. What word is used in verses 10 and 11, that points to their faithfulness? How do these verses go hand-in-hand with James 1:2-4?

12. Verse 12 is very clear, a simple “yes” or “no” is sufficient. What activity is James warning against?

13. James lists 3 different situations that believers might experience. Below, write each situation and James’ instructions for handling them (vs. 5:13-16).

Situation	Instruction

14. Praying for one another is the best thing we can do for a friend. Sadly, praying is not always the first thing we think of when we think of helping. What is the key to truly effective prayers?

15. James reminds them of an example they would have been very familiar with, someone they would respect. Who does he name? How effective were this man’s prayers?

Application

1. James is writing this letter to believers. But, just like the church today, there are people who profess to be followers, and yet, do not respond like Jesus. Define materialistic below. These believers profess one thing and practice another. In what way do their actions reveal what their hearts truly love?

2. Some believe the definition of “rich” is having more than you need. I realize this may be a very simplistic definition, but, using this definition, would you consider yourself rich?
3. The problem James is addressing is the accumulating of more and more. What is this called?
4. Have you ever opened a closet or a drawer and found things you had not seen in many years? Now, you are faced with the decision of what do with it? Even as I type this, I am reminded of closets that I must clean out. There are items that I am not using that could meet someone else’s need. I just marked a day on the calendar for this task. Why not consider donating your unused items in your closets and drawers to a charity in your area?
5. The name for God used in verse 4 is Jehovah Sabaoth, which means the Lord of the armies. Spend a few minutes thinking about the fact that those being oppressed can cry out to the Lord of the armies, and He will hear their cry. How does knowing this comfort you? Do you believe knowing this will cause you to give greater care to the treatment of others?
6. In verse 6, the Lord renders a judgment against those who oppress the innocent. The word innocent in the Greek is *dikaïos*, meaning upright, righteous, those observing the divine law of God. Do we see this happening today? Write an example below.
7. Believers who desire to walk in obedience to God’s word are instructed to be patient, stand firm, and not grumble. What must be happening in order for us to display this type of obedience?
8. We know obedience to God is possible, because the prophets and righteous Job stand as examples for us. How did they face suffering? How do you handle suffering?

(I was not too pleased with myself last week when I felt I was suffering unjustly. I lashed out in my own defense. God was not pleased. I asked Him for His forgiveness, and I went back to the other person and asked for forgiveness. They both forgave me, but, unfortunately, I cannot take back those words. I realized I lack humility when I lash out in this way. It is my desire to be an example of patience and perseverance, in the face of suffering, as well as to commit myself to the care of Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of the armies.)

9. When we are in trouble, the Bible clearly instructs us to pray. When we are happy, the Bible tells us to sing His praises. When we are sick, the Bible says we should call together those who will pray with us and for us. We are to pray believing that God will hear us and answer our prayers. Do you recall the last circumstance that caused you to call together friends and loved ones to pray with you, or maybe a time when someone called you to pray with them? Briefly, describe the circumstance, not including names, just the situation.
10. Read Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:6-9. What must believers do to be effective and powerful in their prayers? When is the best time to do this?

Proverbs 28:13

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

1 John 1:6-9

⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

11. How has the Lord spoken to you through the book of James? What aspect of the character of God have you seen?