

JAMES CHAPTER 5

Faith That Endures, Prays, and Cares for Others

Main Theme

James 5 calls believers to live with an eternal perspective—trusting God rather than wealth, patiently enduring suffering, speaking with integrity, praying in every circumstance, and lovingly pursuing those who wander from the truth.

1. The Danger of Trusting in Wealth

James 5:1-6

James begins chapter 5 with some of the strongest language in the entire letter.

He warns wealthy people who have accumulated riches while mistreating others. The issue is not simply that these people possess wealth. Scripture contains many examples of people who had wealth and faithfully followed God.

The problem is **what they have done with it and where they have placed their trust.**

They have:

Hoarded wealth.

Withheld wages.

Lived selfishly.

Ignored injustice.

Used their power against others.

James reminds them that earthly riches are temporary.

Possessions deteriorate.

Money cannot save us.

Earthly success does not last forever.

And ultimately, every person will answer to God for how they lived and how they treated others.

Key Point

Money is a useful servant but a terrible master.

The question isn't simply:

"How much do I have?"

A better question is:

"What does the way I use what I have reveal about my heart?"

Questions for Discussion

Where am I tempted to find security—in God's provision or in what I possess?

How can I use what God has entrusted to me to bless others?

Does generosity characterize my life?

2. Be Patient—The Lord Is Coming

James 5:7–8

After addressing injustice, James turns toward the believers who are suffering because of it.

His message is:

Be patient.

But biblical patience doesn't mean pretending everything is okay.

James gives the picture of a farmer.

A farmer plants seed and then waits for rain and harvest.

He cannot force the crop to grow.

But while he waits, he trusts that something is happening beneath the soil.

There are seasons in our lives when God may appear quiet.

We pray.

We wait.

We wonder.

And sometimes we see very little happening.

But **waiting does not mean God is inactive.**

Key Point

Faith trusts God even when we cannot yet see the harvest.

James tells believers to:

"Establish your hearts." — James 5:8

In other words:

Stand firm.

Don't give up.

Don't allow circumstances to determine what you believe about God.

Discussion Question

Where in my life am I currently waiting on God?

And perhaps an even harder question:

Can I trust God while I wait—even if His answer looks different from the one I am hoping for?

3. Don't Turn Against Each Other While You Wait

James 5:9

James gives an interesting warning immediately after telling believers to be patient:

Don't grumble against one another.

Why?

Because suffering and waiting can make us irritable.

When life becomes difficult, sometimes the people closest to us receive the frustration created by circumstances they didn't cause.

James reminds believers that hardship should not cause God's people to turn against one another.

Key Point

Pressure often reveals what is happening inside our hearts.

Instead of allowing suffering to divide us, hardship should cause believers to support one another.

Question for Discussion

When I am stressed, disappointed, or hurting, how does it affect the way I treat the people around me?

4. Remember Those Who Endured

James 5:10–11

James points his readers toward the prophets who suffered while faithfully serving God.

Then he specifically mentions **Job**.

Job experienced tremendous suffering.

He questioned.

He grieved.

He struggled.

But he continued bringing those struggles before God.

James reminds us to look at the **outcome** of Job's story.

Through it all, God's character remained unchanged.

James describes the Lord as:

Compassionate and merciful.

That's important.

James doesn't say:

"Look at Job and you'll understand why everything happened."

Instead, he points us toward **who God is**.

Key Point

When suffering doesn't make sense, we may not receive an explanation.

But we still have something to hold onto:

The character of God.

God is compassionate.

God is merciful.

God is faithful.

God is sovereign.

Sometimes faith means saying:

"I don't understand what God is doing, but I know who God is."

Discussion Question

How does remembering God's character help me endure circumstances I don't understand?

5. Let Your "Yes" Be Yes

James 5:12

James then talks about our words.

He tells believers not to make elaborate oaths in order to convince people that they are telling the truth.

Instead:

Let your "yes" mean yes and your "no" mean no.

Our lives should be characterized by such integrity that people don't need additional promises to believe us.

Key Point

Integrity means my words can be trusted because my character consistently supports them.

Question for Discussion

Would the people closest to me describe me as someone whose word can be trusted?

6. Pray in Every Circumstance

James 5:13–16

Now James asks several questions.

Are you suffering?

Pray.

Are you cheerful?

Praise God.

Are you sick?

Call others to pray.

Have you sinned?

Confess and pray for one another.

Notice what James is teaching.

Whatever season we are in, our response should move us **toward God rather than away from Him.**

Pain should lead us to prayer.

Joy should lead us to praise.

Weakness should lead us toward Christian community.

Sin should lead us toward confession and restoration.

Key Point

Prayer isn't our last resort.

Prayer is the natural response of a life that depends upon God.

James also reminds us:

"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." — James 5:16

That doesn't mean prayer gives us control over God.

Prayer expresses our dependence upon Him.

Discussion Questions

Is prayer usually my first response or my last resort?

When something happens, do I immediately try to fix it myself—or do I first bring it before God?

What would change if prayer became my first response to both joy and suffering?

7. Elijah Was Just Like Us

James 5:17–18

James gives Elijah as an example of powerful prayer.

But notice something important.

He says Elijah was:

"A man with a nature like ours."

In other words, Elijah wasn't spiritually powerful because he was some extraordinary kind of human being.

He was human.

Just like us.

The power wasn't ultimately in Elijah.

The power was in the God Elijah prayed to.

That's encouraging because sometimes we think powerful prayer belongs to "super spiritual" Christians.

James reminds us that ordinary believers pray to an extraordinary God.

Key Point

The effectiveness of prayer depends more upon the God who hears us than upon the person doing the praying.

Question for Discussion

Do I truly believe God hears and responds when I pray?

8. When Someone Wanders

James 5:19-20

James ends his entire letter in an interesting way.

Not with a formal goodbye.

Not with a blessing.

But with a believer who has **wandered from the truth**.

And James says someone should go after them.

That tells us something beautiful about Christian community.

We don't simply say:

"Well, that's their decision."

We care.

We notice when someone disappears.

We pray.

We reach out.

We lovingly speak truth.

We pursue restoration.

Key Point

Biblical love doesn't simply notice when someone wanders—it lovingly pursues them.

This isn't about judging or controlling another person.

It is about caring enough about someone spiritually that we don't remain indifferent when we see them walking away from truth.

Discussion Question

Do I love the people around me enough to lovingly pursue them when I see them drifting away from God?

And on the other side:

Am I humble enough to allow another believer to lovingly correct me when I begin to wander?

THE BIG PICTURE OF JAMES 5

James 5 asks us to examine where we place our confidence when life becomes uncertain.

When money promises security:

Trust God.

When injustice happens:

Wait for God.

When suffering continues:

Remember God's character.

When pressure affects relationships:

Don't turn against one another.

When you speak:

Speak with integrity.

When you suffer:

Pray.

When you're joyful:

Praise.

When you're weak:

Ask others to pray.

When you sin:

Confess.

When someone wanders:

Lovingly pursue them.

Something Beautiful About the Entire Book of James

James began his letter talking about **trials**:

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." — James 1:2

And near the end, James returns to **endurance in suffering**.

In between, James has shown us what genuine faith looks like in everyday life.

Faith affects:

How we respond to trials.

How we treat people.

How we speak.

How we handle temptation.

How we respond to God's Word.

How we treat the poor.

How we use our tongues.

How we handle conflict.

How we make plans.

How we use money.

How we endure suffering.

How we pray.

James isn't teaching us that these things **earn salvation**.

He's showing us what happens when genuine faith begins changing the way we live.

A Question to Leave With the Group

After studying the entire book of James, perhaps the most important question isn't:

"What did I learn?"

It might be:

"What has changed in the way I live because of what I've learned?"

Because one of James's central messages has been:

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." — James 1:22

The goal isn't simply to finish studying James.

The goal is for James to change us.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word and for everything You have taught us through the book of James. Help us not simply hear Your Word but live it. Teach us to trust You when we are waiting, remain faithful when we are suffering, and remember Your character when we don't understand our circumstances.

Help us hold the things of this world loosely and place our security in You alone. Guard our words and make us people of integrity. Teach us to make prayer our first response rather than our last resort. Give us courage to confess our sins, humility to receive correction, and love that pursues those who are wandering.

Above all, help our lives demonstrate the faith we profess. May people see Jesus in the way we speak, love, serve, endure, give, forgive, and pray.

In Jesus' name, Amen.