



Reasons to Rejoice
BIBLE STUDY

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

THE BOOK OF JAMES



Where the Rubber Meets the Road: James Chapter 5

We've come to our final chapter in James. And wow, it's a doozy! How he begins makes you take a step back for a minute and say whoa! At first, it's difficult to see how this chapter relates to the rest. But, as you remember back in chapter 4, James pointed out that genuine faith produces humility, you can see, then, where he's coming from. Get ready to be challenged and encouraged. Ladies, this is where the rubber meets the road. (I love that, don't you??)

Before you begin, please read the second half of chapter 4 and right into chapter 5. This will help keep the flow going, the context in check, and his points relevant.

1. As you read Chapter 5, please write the key words on your Key Word Sheet. When you're done, look at all the words. Are there any repeated throughout the book, or in multiple chapters?
2. What is the theme (or themes) of this chapter?
3. Do you see any contrasts or comparison?

4. Describe the author's tone. Does it seem different than it was previously?

5. Do you see any commands or warnings? Any promises?

Who is James addressing in his fierce warning? Most commentators believe that he is aiming his words at the wealthy, nonbelieving people who were exploiting the poor, many of whom were in the church. He obviously was observing some serious issues. Perhaps these were the "rich folks" he was referring to in 1:10-11, and those who were showing favoritism and dragging the poor into courts in chapter two. Douglas J Moo wrote, "Specifically, James' targets were wealthy farmers who owned large tracts of land and were squeezing everyone and everything for profit. But though these persons were the calloused, unbelieving rich, the message is also meant to benefit the church. James understood that the natural human tendency to envy the rich, if sustained, would lead many Christians astray. Thus, this scathing warning to the ungodly rich is also meant to steel his people against such folly. In addition, James' terrifying description of the judgement awaiting these rich countrymen is meant to ensure the exploited poor that justice is coming, and they ought to bear their indignities with patience."

6. Why do you think humans have a "natural tendency to envy the rich"? (Referring to the quote above?)

7. Before we look at his warnings about being rich, let's talk about money. Read 1 Timothy 6:10, Luke 12:15, 34, Mark 4:19. Is money evil in itself? What do these verses suggest?

8. Read Mark 10:23-27. Is it a sin to be rich? Is it impossible for the rich to be saved? What point is Jesus making? (Hint: Can trusting in our riches get us into Heaven?) Read Proverbs 23:4-5, Psalm 62:10, and Proverbs 11:4

9. Let's talk about this question before we go any further. Do you have the tendency to trust in your riches rather than God? Does your security come from what you have? Do you have anxiety over money ... keeping it, growing it, and protecting it? What changes need to be made?

10. How does James say they got their wealth, in 5:4 and 6?

The tense of the word "kept back" in the original Greek indicates that the workers NEVER would get their salaries. (vs 4) Again, he's not saying they can't have money, but how they got it is the problem. They acquired it by illegal means and for illegal purposes. In those days, workers were hired and paid by the day. These rich men hired employees and promised to pay them a certain amount, but then wouldn't pay them. That's stealing. Also, in verse 6, James said the rich often controlled the court. The poor weren't able to get justice because the rich continued to exploit them.

11. The Bible is filled with verses that talk about exploiting and oppressing the poor and vulnerable. Can you find some and be ready to share them with the group?

12. How were the wealthy using their wealth, in verses 3-5?

13. Do you think saving is hoarding? What's the difference? (Read 2 Cor. 12:14)

14. Warren Wiersbe wrote, "Luxury is a waste, and waste is sin." He also wrote, "Luxury has a way of ruining character." What are your thoughts on this? What's the difference between enjoying what God has given you (1 Timothy 6:17) and living extravagantly and selfishly?

In verse 5, James says they have "fattened their hearts as in a day of slaughter." This picture depicts a life of unrestrained self-gratification. Swindoll wrote, "Eat, drink, be merry, get fat. And get slaughtered." To make his point, James uses this vivid picture of a farmer who raises pigs. When they are getting them ready for slaughter, they put the pig in a pen and keep shoveling the food in. They are eating themselves literally to death. This is what happens when we live a life of unrestrained self-gratification.

In chapter 4, James talked about the dangers of living our lives like we are in control, rather than recognizing He is our Lord. Now, James talks about the dangers of using our money as if it belongs to us, rather than recognizing that it belongs to God and should be used for His glory (Psalm 50:10).

15. James is still talking about humility in regards to how we manage our money. One scholar wrote, "It takes God-given wisdom and supernatural humility to be able to manage wealth and influence." Why does it take humility?

16. Discuss some negative effects that wealth can have on people's lives. How can "money" keep us from doing good at times?

17. How can, and should, we be using our finances and resources for the glory of God? How can we use our wealth in a godly manner? (1 Cor. 4:2)

James saw both a present judgement (3,5) and a future judgement before God (9), and His judgment will be righteous. There is a promise of divine retribution given here. First, hoarded riches reap terrible dividends, as in the decay of wealth and character (1-3). Next, riches provide no relief in eternity (3b- and 5b, Prov. 11:4) Third, God hears the cries of the exploited and sees the unjust acts of the unsaved (5:4b). Wiersbe wrote, "Note the witnesses that God will call on that day of judgement. First, the rich men's wealth will witness against them (5:3). Their rotten grain, rusted gold and silver, and moth-eaten garments will bear witness of the selfishness of their hearts. The wages they held back will also witness against them in court (5:4a). Money talks! These stolen salaries cry out to God for justice and judgement. God heard Abel's blood cry out from the ground (Gen. 4:10), and He hears this stolen money cry out too. The workers will also testify against them (5:4). There will be no opportunities for the rich to bribe the witnesses or the Judge. God hears the cries of His oppressed people, and He will judge righteously. The judgement is a serious thing! The lost will stand before Christ at the great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). The saved will stand before the judgement seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:9-10). God will not judge our sins because they have already been judged on the cross; but He will judge our works and our ministry. If we have been faithful in serving and glorifying Him, we will receive a reward, if we have been unfaithful, we shall lose our reward but not our salvation (1 Cor. 3:1-15)."

18. Do you see evidence today of the rich still exploiting or oppressing the poor? Can you share some examples? How does modern day slavery (Human Trafficking) relate to this section, especially regarding the labor aspect?
19. Read James 5:7-20. Who does James now draw his attention to? These verses directly relate to the previous six. After his warning to the exploiters, he gives advice to the believing victims on how to handle the situation they find themselves in. Summarize his exhortation. What four commands does he give? (Hint: two are positive and two are negative.) Do any of them refer to fighting back?
20. What illustrations does he give?
21. Why do you think he uses Job as an example? (Job 19:25)

Why does James talk about swearing? How does that have anything to do with this? The Greek word for “swear” means “to grasp something sacred firmly, for the purpose of what you’re saying or doing.” Believers shouldn’t have to do this, because our words should always be grounded in truth. And, in the middle of suffering and affliction, we can start to make oaths and promises we can’t keep. He simply reminds them to endure their trials with patience and humility.

22. Why do you think reminding them about the coming of the Lord (8) would encourage them? How does it encourage you?

23. How does James' advice encourage or challenge you, especially if you feel you have been victimized in some way?

24. Read verses 13-20. James now gives a few more signs or evidences of genuine faith. What are they?

Let's look at a few important things regarding these verses. (Oh, there is so much in this chapter!) I want to remind us ... sometimes, there is a direct relationship between personal sin and sickness. (Remember the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 and 12). And sometimes, there is no relationship between personal sin and sickness (John 9:2b-3). It is also not God's will that everyone will be healed (2 Timothy 4:20, Philippians 2:25-27, 1 Timothy 5:23, 2 Cor. 12:9b.)

25. Interesting point in verse 14. Whose responsibility is it to call the elders to pray? Who should take the initiative? Why?

26. What are some practical principles you can take from these verses?

27. Why do you think it's easier to confess our sins to the Lord rather than to one another? Can our friends "forgive" us? What's the purpose?

28. How have Christian friends encouraged you to persevere in times of trouble?

According to James, prayer is essential! (vs 16) The Greek word he uses for prayer means "specific prayer based on specific needs." It's the only time James uses this specific word. And he includes the words "much" and "effective or fervent."

29. Explore what it means to pray "effectively." Why does he use Elijah as an example of this?

30. How can you develop a more effective, fervent, and disciplined prayer life?

31. Read verses 19-20. Why do you think James wraps up his letter with this principle? Notice who he is addressing.

32. What should be our attitude towards our wandering brother? Also read Galatians 6:1.

33. How do people tend to view the wandering brother? With what attitude?

34. Read Matthew 7:1-5. What needs to be done first? In what spirit are we to go to our brother or sister? What part does humility play? (How is this different than judging?) What can happen if we approach them with the wrong attitude or motive?

35. How is doing this actually an act of love?

I love that James ends his book with another great evidence of a genuine faith producing a genuine love for others. In John 15:13, Jesus said “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” It’s a risk to reach out to others and care for their soul. James reminds us of how important it is to help guide those who have fallen into a pattern of sin back to the ways of Christ. Genuine faith cares about the spiritual life of others. It’s risky to approach our friends and those who have “drifted” from the truth, but if we love them, we will take that risk. Although James begins and ends his book with an exhortation to be patient, he isn’t talking about patiently watching someone walk off a cliff or take a wayward path. “Patience is not an excuse for passivity, and faith is not an excuse for inaction.” (I wish I remember who said that!)

It seems like we only scratched the surface in our study. There’s sooo much more to learn! I pray that you take time to dig deeper into each chapter and find answers to any questions you have. And I REALLY pray that we all will take his words to heart and examine our faith to see if it’s “genuine.”

36. What was your biggest “take away” from James chapter 5?

37. What impacted you the most from the Book of James as a whole?

Memory Verse of the Week: “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16

To end, I’m going to list some questions that Wiersbe asks at the end of his commentary on James. You aren’t going to answer them in your group, but I thought it would be helpful to give you the opportunity to ponder them as they span all five chapters. In your quiet time, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. See you soon, ladies! Happy pondering!

1. Am I becoming more and more patient in the testings of life?
2. Do I play with temptation or resist it from the start?
3. Do I find joy in obeying the Word of God, or do I merely study it and learn it?
4. Are there any prejudices that shackle me?
5. Am I able to control my tongue?
6. Am I a peacemaker rather than a troublemaker? Do people come to me for spiritual wisdom?
7. Am I a friend of God or a friend of the world?
8. Do I make plans without considering the will of God?
9. Am I selfish when it comes to money? Am I unfaithful in the paying of my bills?
10. Do I naturally depend on prayer when I find myself in some kind of trouble?
11. Am I the kind of person others seek for prayer support?
12. What is my attitude toward the wandering brother? Do I criticize or gossip, or do I seek to restore him in love?

James 5

- ___ 1. Go to now, ye _____ men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. A. prayed
- ___ 2. Your riches are corrupted, and your _____ are motheaten. B. killed
- ___ 3. Your gold and silver is _____; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. C. condemnation
- ___ 4. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your _____, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. D. slaughter
- ___ 5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of _____. E. cankered
- ___ 6. Ye have condemned and _____ the just; and he doth not resist you. F. rich
- ___ 7. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long _____ for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. G. shall
- ___ 8. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord _____ nigh. H. which
- ___ 9. Grudge not one against another, _____, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. I. sing
- ___ 10. Take, my brethren, the _____, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. J. fields
- ___ 11. Behold, we count them happy _____ endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. K. they
- ___ 12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into _____. L. brethren
- ___ 13. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him _____ psalms. M. prophets
- ___ 14. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, _____ him with oil in the name of the Lord: N. garments
- ___ 15. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, _____ shall be forgiven him. O. brought
- ___ 16. Confess your faults one to another, and _____ one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. P. anointing
- ___ 17. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he _____ earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. Q. truth
- ___ 18. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth _____ forth her fruit. R. pray
- ___ 19. Brethren, if any of you do err from the _____, and one convert him; S. patience
- ___ 20. Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way _____ save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. T. draweth