

THE BOOK OF JAMES

LEGIT

FAITH

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TRIALS/TEMPTATIONS

LONNIE JONES

James 1:12-18

Temptations or trials (same word in Greek) represent a series or at least a collection of opportunities. There are lots of articles and discussing making a distinction between the use of the words the translators have chosen to use but for our discussion we are going to use the same word/concept throughout. (Just for fun read the text and use temptation every time or trial every time but don't switch back and forth like the translators did).

Most of the time we don't look at temptation as anything but negative. We want to avoid it. We pray to not be lead into it. Yet it seems inevitable so when it happens we need to view it as an opportunity not as an obstacle.

- Opportunity for Joy
- Opportunity for Growth through the exercise of Endurance
- Opportunity to Identify what is lacking, missing or keeping us from maturity
- Opportunity for Prayer (ask God for what you need in order to be mature)
- Opportunity to analyze our Wants and Desires.

James identifies a "sin cycle". Understanding this cycle or pattern allows us to use the theory of a pattern interrupter to control temptation.

We are tempted by wants. Temptation comes not necessarily from what we want but simply THAT we want. When our wants are congruent with what God wants for us we are harder to tempt.

Our wants represent **internal** "hazards" that exist within our hearts and minds. Temptation is the opportunity to fulfill those wants and represents **external** "hazards". In climbing or flying all tragic incidents are described as an intersection of internal and external hazards. James describes just that: When there is an intersection between internal and external hazards the result is sin and sin when it is full grown brings forth death.

Questions:

- 1) Was there anything inherently wrong with Eve's desire to

be wise like God?

- 2) Once we identify a vulnerability to temptation (something is missing) what should we do?
- 3) Fill out the sequence for the Sin Cycle.
- 4) Fill out the sequence for the Temptation, Growth, Joy Cycle

HEARER/DOER SCOTT BAILEY

Imagine for just a minute, you finish out your high school days. You did well retaining the knowledge given to you in all of your classes so before graduation you receive a college scholarship. You then decide to use that scholarship and pursue a college degree. You decide on a degree of study and you look at the course of study and realize there will be a lot of hours spent sitting in a classroom with lecture after lecture. The lectures are tough and so were the test but you managed to graduate at the top of your class. Upon graduation you have several opportunities before you, the opportunities to apply the knowledge that you spent so many hours listening to and learning. It comes that time to seize an opportunity and you DO NOTHING. You think to yourself, I need more knowledge so you pursue a master's degree so here we are again sitting in the classroom, reading books, studying so that you gain more knowledge. You approach the day where you finish your course work and now you have your master's degree and with all the knowledge and all the opportunities ahead of you, you decide to DO NOTHING. You then decide to pursue more knowledge and again the long hours of listening to lectures and doing the course work you then arrive at your Doctoral Degree. Upon receiving your doctorate degree you take a look at all the opportunities ahead of you and you decide to DO NOTHING. I know this sounds silly and some of you might be thinking, "Well, what's wrong with gaining more knowledge?" I say there is nothing wrong with the pursuit of knowledge but there comes a time when that knowledge needs to be applied to a worthy opportunity. The late American author Napoleon Hill said it like this, "Knowledge has no value except that which can be gained from its application toward some worthy end." We, as Christians, have some of the greatest knowledge that this world can know. So I have a question for you. Do you see any similarities with the college student I just talked about and your Christian life? You sit in sermon after sermon, bible class after bible class, hearing heart pricking sermons. Congratulating the preacher on a wonderful job with the lesson only to retreat to your homes and jobs and never pass on the things that you have heard and learned. The book of James gives us a lot of life lessons and instructions. As we look in chapter one he starts the chapter trying to encourage us a little but then begins to call us more to action. He begins with a warning to us. I don't know if the word warning would really be accurate as much as

trying to give us some important thoughts.

In verses 18-19 we read the following,

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James is trying to help us into a selfless relationship with other people. He wants us to do as one commentary suggest that nature is trying to give us a little reminder when he says, **"But hath not nature taught us the same that the apostle here doth, by giving us two ears, and those open; and but one tongue, and that hedged in the teeth and lips?"**

He's trying to tell us that open ears and a closed mouth will help us more to be patient and loving with others in order to "produce the righteousness of God", in other words, so that we can look like Christ. We need to clean up our own lives in order to help others. Maybe the anger there is when people try to help us with the difficulties or struggles in our own lives. He says,

21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

The word of God can take a wicked life and make it beautiful if we receive it in the right way. You remember in John 4:14 when Jesus says to the woman at the well... **but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."**

That living water is the word of God but here's the thing. A lake can have the most beautiful spring water in the world flowing into its reservoir. But unless there are outlets, that beautiful water becomes stale and stagnant. The same thing can take place in our lives if we are not living the life of active obedience and allowing the Holy Spirit to overflow into our lives. What does this overflow look like? That's easy, just read

Galatians 5:22-24

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,



patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

These fruits can only be seen if we do as the next verse suggest.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

All those fruits of the spirit listed above are verbs, they require action. If we are only hearers of the word and not doers we set our selves of for deception. Hold up though, it's not enough to just hear what the word of God is telling us. What's the deception about? Who is being deceived? I have often heard about the comfort of the scriptures. Have you ever seen the list of scriptures called the "Worry Hotline"?

It looks something like this

Worry hotline ----- I Peter 5:7 – cast my cares on him

Fear Hotline ----- Isaiah 41:10 – trust he is with me...

Temptation hotline ----- I Corinthians 10:13 – look for the way out he provides

The list goes on but here's the thing. Every one of those scriptures still requires us to do something. We can't just sit and listen. We can't just sit and hope he has given us instructions. Interesting part is when James says, "deceiving yourselves". He is warning is that there is no comfort in scriptures that are not lived out. WE cannot take comfort in scriptures that teach us about Christ sacrifice if we are unwilling to sacrifice ourselves by being obedient to him. We cannot take comfort in scriptures about Christ love for us if we are unwilling to love other people. The word of God was meant to be a mirror not a magnifying glass. Look at what follows next.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer; he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. **24** For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

Looking in a mirror and remaining unchanged is EXACTLY like sitting in a pew, class room or even in our own home gaining more knowledge of the scriptures and never living it out. The word of God should change and enrich our lives. The next verse gives us the good stuff, the "nother" reason why we live out the word of God our lives.

25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

It says he will be blessed in “doing”. The same word blessed used here is the same one used in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, or blessed are the meek, and so on. Jesus wants our lives to be enriched and blessed and the best way to do that is by living out the word every single day.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think God gave us two ears and only one mouth?
2. How is the Word of God like a mirror?
3. How are we blessed by doing what the word says, instead of just hearing what the Word says?
4. What command(s) from God have you heard that you think God wants you to be doing?

JUDGMENT / MERCY

KYLE BUTT

- I. Don't judge others based on appearances
 - A. In James 2 the church judged others based on money
 - B. 2:5 explains that poor people are actually rich in faith
- II. We like to think we don't judge others
 - A. We elevate stars that we might see at church
 - B. We make decisions about others based on the brands they wear
 - C. We sometimes judge people by their skin color or other outward factor
- III. By judging according to appearances, we miss some of the greatest things
 - A. Jesus was poor and unattractive
 - B. Many of the strongest Christians in the church were/are poor
- IV. The solution to judgment is to love others as ourselves
 - A. We know we don't like to be judged on appearance or outward factors
 - B. Judgement is a sin that will keep God's mercy from us
- V. Mercy always defeats judgement
 - A. We all need mercy
 - B. By being fair and not judging others based on outward factors, we open our lives to God's mercy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss some other ways that you see people judging based on wrong factors
2. If mercy is not getting what we deserve, why do you think God put the ideas of judgement and mercy together in this chapter? Think about judgment being something that a person does not deserve either and make the comparison.
3. What point do you think James is trying to make by putting partiality/judgement in the same context as adultery and murder?
4. In your own words, what do you think it means that if a person is guilty of one part of the law he is guilty of all of it?
5. What is the difference between the judgement that is without mercy in James 2:13, and the partial, unfair judgement that the Christians in James 2:1-12 were guilty of?

FAITH / WORKS SCOTT UTTER

The best gifts create new gifts.

And what I love, is that I serve a God that shares a similar enthusiasm and passion for gifts. I know this because he has given me the greatest gift I could ever hope for or dream of with intent that I do something with it.

And you've been given that same gift—the saving power of the blood of Jesus—and you've literally been commissioned as a disciple of Jesus Christ to GO! and make more. It gets me pumped when I think about how every single one of us can make a difference with the gift we've received.

I'm reminded of a guy named Epaphras. Epaphras didn't know Jesus. He didn't know about the Gospel. He didn't know what this whole thing was about. But one day he happened to find himself in the city of Ephesus. I'm not exactly sure why he was there. But, for whatever reason, he was visiting Ephesus—and he just so happened to hear a man who called himself Paul talking about the gift he had received in Jesus Christ. And it changed his life. Soon after hearing about Jesus he went home to Colossae and immediately started sharing the gift he had been given. He shared it with his friends. He shared it with his family. He shared it with anyone that was willing to receive it.

And it is believed that with this *one gift* the church was formed in Colossae. This wasn't like the church in Philippi or the church in Ephesus. Paul didn't plant this church. In fact, when you read the book of Colossians you can plainly read that Paul, as he words it, never even met this church face-to-face.

But this church began because one man got his hands dirty—because he used the gift he had *received* to yield more gifts.

The gift of our Savior is the only gift that truly lasts forever.

I say all of this because, if you look at the book of James, chapter 2 talks about the danger of receiving the greatest gift of all time but not using it for it's original purpose.

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

You've been given a tremendous gift—but it isn't enough talk about it. We have to share it through works—through actually *doing* something.

I love the picture that James paints here in chapter 2. How silly would it look to see someone freezing on the street and say, "I'm praying for you, brother"?

Loving Jesus means getting our hands dirty.

Sharing the gift of Jesus Christ can look really different depending on what is done and who is doing it— and that's what I love about God's design for the church.

This concept always reminds me of the parable Jesus told in Matthew 25 about the master who left three of his servants with different amounts of money.

The first guy he left a lot of money. The second guy he left not as much money—but still a pretty good amount. And the last guy—he only left him a little bit of money. He said, "While I'm gone, go and do something with it."

Many of you know the story, but in case you don't: The first guy takes his money and he yields a profit for his master. The second guy does the same thing. The master is so happy and proud of the first two guys!

Then he looks at the third servant and says, "Ok, man...whatcha got for me?"

The third guy gets nervous, "Well the stock market fluctuates and that makes me nervous..I was thinking what if it crashes? I was worried about losing everything...So, I figured I'll just take the money you gave me and carefully hide it. SO that's what I did. So, here you go—here's your money. Exactly what you left me with."

And, basically, the master called the servant wicked and lazy and sent him away.

Some of us are 10 talent-people. Some of us are 3 talent-people. Some of us are 1 talent-people...but God DOES NOT MAKE "zero talent people".

If you are in Christ, there is an ACTION that accompanies the gift that you have received..

Let me encourage you to consider what you have that will help build onto the body of Christ. If you're really not sure, have a conversation with someone—talk to a friend, a youth minister, or anyone you trust—and figure out how you can use whatever means God has supplied you with to share the ultimate GIFT of Jesus Christ.

Every summer my youth group would join hundreds of others to pack meals that would ship to various missions all over the world. And even though we were wearing hairnets...and even though it was loud and crowded—I always saw Jesus on that gym floor.

It was a special time for me and for so many others—but what if we worked to make everyday *that* intentional and *that* special?

You see, when you're in love with Jesus you can't just sit there anymore. Every day becomes a mission. A deep relationship with Jesus means that your faith in him will be accompanied with works.

It will be uncomfortable. There will be haters. People are going to laugh at you. People are going to call you names. They might call you a "FREAK" or "HOLIER THAN THOU". That's what people did to Jesus—and that's what Jesus said people would do to us if we really love *him*.

When you actually LOVE Jesus, it's life changing. You can't sit there and mindlessly mouth the words to the same songs.

And I think the thing that messes me up is that to actually be in love with Jesus means that I do something about it. It means that when you give your life over to him you absolutely HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

So basically, here's what I'm trying to say: Action is as important as belief...because if you just go to church and say, "Yeah, I believe..." that's all that going to happen. Odds are...no one will be challenged...no one will have context for what you are believing.

James 2:18 & 19 really, honestly, scare me to death...because, if you keep reading, they say this:

"You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"

Even the demons (Satan's helpers)—they believe in Jesus, too. They know and understand with full certainty that there is a risen Savior—and *it doesn't really seem to help them much*.

I feel like I don't even have to explain this...because it's so



obviously clear. To have faith in Jesus...to love him requires action. If you love Jesus—and if you can make a decision every day to do something about it—amazing things will happen. If you can (with some sort of action) share the gift of the love of Jesus with full sincerity...it will travel on and on and on and on.

R E M E M B E R : Lives are changed for eternity ... Lives are changed FOREVER when we do something with the gift we have received.

QUESTIONS

1. *Why do you think we shy away from the “doing” part of Christianity?*
2. *Our individual gifts allow us to do so many great works. What are your gifts?*
3. *Who are the people God has placed in your life that can help keep you identify / implement your gifts?*

BLESSINGS / CURSES

JEREMY GARGIS

In many areas of our lives, we tend to justify our actions by pointing to those that are much worse than we are. "If you think about the way they sound, I'm doing pretty well." But, James offers a series of illustrations here to point out just how serious a problem we have! He knows that we won't face our issues with the tongue unless we realize the enormity of the problem.

1. To be one who gives blessings and not curses, we have to know that we are held accountable for what we say.
 - a. Not many are encouraged to be teachers (3:1).
 - i. Teachers receive a stricter judgment.
 - ii. However, we are admonished to teach (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:24; Tit. 2:3-4).
 - b. Allow it to sink in that we will be judged by our words.
 - i. We will be justified by our words (Matt. 12:36-37).
 - ii. We will be condemned by our words (Matt. 12:36-37).
2. To be one who gives blessings and not curses, we have to recognize that the tongue has great power, and can be used for good or evil.
 - a. The bit, and the rudder... (3:3-4)
 - i. If you can gain control of the direction of the horse's mouth, you control the direction of its entire body.
 - ii. If you leave the wheel of the ship that directs the rudder, you are left to be driven wherever the wind wishes.
 - b. The tongue has disproportionate power.
3. To be one who gives blessings and not curses, we have to come to the realization that the tongue is not humanly tamable, and that it is capable of evil.

- a. A fire... (3:5-6)
 - i. A small spark can in turn engulf an entire forest.
 - ii. Legend of the Chicago fire.
 - b. Wild animals... (3:7-8)
 - i. They have been tamed, and once tame, there is no longer a need to leave them on a chain.
 - ii. The tongue must always be kept in check. We cannot tame it to the extent that all restraint can be removed!
4. To be one who gives blessings and not curses, we must treat our hearts.
- a. The inconsistencies must go away! (3:9-12)
 - i. This isn't the first time that James discussed "doubleness" (James 1:7-8)
 - ii. When we speak against God's creation, we speak against God Himself!
 - b. Be given to blessings!
 - c. Run away from cursing!
 - d. Above all, don't do both!!! (Matt. 12:34)
 - e. What we really are on the inside will be made evident through our speech. (Matt. 15:18)

Discussion Questions

1. What should we say/how should we react when someone shares some juicy gossip with us?
2. Is it always a sin to criticize? When and how can we do it?
3. How would we feel if there were no disconnect between our thoughts and our words? Would we ever find ourselves embarrassed?

SELFISHNESS / SUBMISSION

RICK WHITTLE

Intro: Think about how many selfies you take in a week, even a day, and for some in an hour. We have become a selfie-obsessed culture.

- A. James in chapter 4 gives us some insight to the conflicts that we have in our relationships.
- B. James 4:2 "You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God."
- C. Jesus tells us that in order to follow Him one of the requirements is to "Deny Self."
- D. What He is pointing to is a fundamental change in our agenda.
- E. So James contends that our faith should be an active and dynamic part of our lives and that only happens when we learn to deny self
- F. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why is it hard for us to "Deny Self"?
- G. **KEY:** To have a faith that is legit we must learn to submit
- H. James will offer three things from the text that will help us to submit or surrender self:
- I. **THREE THINGS TO HELP US SUBMIT:**
 - 1. **RESIST SATAN – Verse 7**
 - A. Satan loves to get our attention off of God and on ourselves. We must resist him.
 - B. Satan wants to make it all about you. It is the same thing he did with Adam and Eve back in the garden.
 - C. James tells us to resist Satan. Instead of running from Satan we are to make him run from us.
 - D. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Is there a difference in running from Satan and resisting him? If so, what is that difference?
 - 2. **PURSUE GOD – Verse 8.**
 - A. We all pursue something. You are either pursuing God or your

own agenda.

- B. God wants to be near us but for that to happen we must commit ourselves to drawing near to Him.
- C. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How do we draw near to God? What does that really look like?

3. HUMBLE YOURSELF – Verse 10

- A. Humility is about removing the obstacles between us and God. We have to deny whatever stands between us and God.
- B. Sometime self-denial can be painful, unpopular, and radical. But it is necessary for our spiritual survival.
- C. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Share an experience of self-denial in your life and what that was like?

CONCLUSION:

- A. Read – Galatians 2:20
- B. To “Deny Self” means that we have to die to ourselves. You cannot have complete surrender without a death.
- C. **THOUGHT QUESTION** – How intentional are you in your pursuit of God? Have you crucified whatever keeps you from reaching Him?
- D. **CHALLENGE** – Every time this week you start to take a selfie instead of doing that say this prayer – “Lord, help me to deny myself so that I can pursue you more.”

TIME / MONEY

J.D. SCHWARTZ

"Time is of the essence."

I honestly have no idea what that is supposed to mean, except that time and how you use it is a BIG DEAL! In the crazy world we live in today, we are expected to keep up with school, homework, sports, family time, chores, relationships, church, personal time with God, and the list keeps going... and on top of that, these expectations usually involve deadlines.

We get overwhelmed and flustered; we never slow down; and sometimes, the deadlines go flying out the back door, because we forgot about them or ran out of time to get them done. Then, we try to figure out a moment when we can spend time with God, and that also gets put on the back-burner as we rush through our busy day...

So, what do we do? We WANT to get everything done the way it's supposed to be done; we WANT to live up to everyone's expectations; we WANT to spend time with God... BUT, we just can't seem to ever catch up!

Then, if it's not enough pressure to think about our precious time flying by, someone throws out the old "time is money". So, now we're pressured, not only by how we use our time, but how capable we are to turn time into wealth. Life becomes a rat-race to see who can finish 1st and richest. We never slow down; we never catch up; we run, run, run... until we run out of fuel. We collapse because of the weight of expectation and the fact that this lifestyle is unsustainable for long periods of time. We get emotionally and physically sick. We spiritually starve, because we haven't spent time with God. We've created lives that only seek to bring glory to ourselves.

Does this seem to describe your life at this moment? If not right now, have you ever experienced a period of craziness like this?

The AWESOME things about this situation that we often find ourselves in is that we have the ability to change it with God's wisdom and help.

Let's read **James 4:13 – 5:6**

What came to mind as we read through this passage? Did you feel like James was speaking directly at you? I know I did... But, why? Why would this passage speak to us? The fact is that most everyone in this world struggles with time management and a misplaced view of money and wealth.

Here are some simple truths we need to be mindful of in view of this passage:

Truth #1 – Time and wealth are gifts from God.

Truth #2 – If time and wealth are gifts from God, they should be used to glorify God.

Truth #1: Time and Wealth Are Gifts from God.

Did you notice James appeal against the arrogance and absurdity of thinking that we could actually plan our time without God? Did you notice the disgust he used to speak against those who have allowed wealth to enslave their hearts and lives and change their attitudes toward others?

You see, not one of us can control time. God is the sole Creator of time and its methods from start to finish. God is sovereign in His ability to predetermine and control time. But all too often, we approach our lives as though we are in control of what is or will be. As we do this, we load ourselves up with so much stuff, we can barely breath. Our calendars begin to control us with busy-ness, and we lose sight of the preciousness of this gift. In 4:14-15, James makes it very clear that not only can we not control time, but we cannot even determine our life-span. Only God has the power and ability to do that. In 5:1-6, talking about wealth, James is making it very clear that for us to think that wealth gives us the right to view life as only material in nature or to go further in abuse towards others is horrific. As a matter of fact, these thoughts of both time and money can be summed up as sinful and destructive (4:17, 5:3). These attitudes happen when we forget where our gifts come from.

On the other hand, if we remember that God, and God alone, has given us these gifts in life, then we will begin to shift our mindset and attitude from busy-ness, arrogance, and materialism towards that of peacefulness, humility, and gratitude.

Truth #2: If they are from God, they should be used to glorify God.

Did you notice what James said about time in 4:17... "to one who knows that right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin"? There's obviously a right way to go about managing our time. I believe that James is challenging us to make sure our time revolves around that which glorifies God. Concerning wealth, there is obviously a way to glorify God with what He has gifted to us. In 5:1-6, James is pretty down on oppressing others... But, the opposite of that would plainly be the idea of helping others.

Here's how you can glorify God with both time and money.

1. Be sure that God is a part of everything decision you make.

When you are scheduling your time and all the aspects of your day, be sure to allow God's presence in every plan you make. Don't just give God a "token" moment of 5-10 minutes at the start/end of your day. Make sure He is with you in everything.

When you are gifted with wealth and material possessions, be sure you allow God to help you decide the best use for them.

You'll be surprised at those things you choose or choose NOT to do when you ask the question, "Will this glorify God?"

You'll be more thoughtful in the ways you view and use your money, because you are seeking to honor Him.

In Colossians 3:4, Paul makes the assumption of all Christians that "Christ... is our life...". He certainly won't settle for 2nd or 3rd place – or worse. And, He doesn't even want 1st place as a trophy. He wants our lives, and He wants to be involved in everything we do!

2. Be sure to keep "IDOLS" at bay.

Often, we fill up our calendars with "things" that are mundane or vain in nature. We allow those things we enjoy to become those things we love. If we're not careful, these things begin to define us, because we give so much time and effort to them. Don't get me wrong... sports, games, school, vacations, etc. are all things we enjoy spending time doing. BUT, we must never allow them God's place in our lives.

We must make sure that our possessions don't become the desires of our hearts. It's great for us to work hard and achieve success, but it's NOT ok for these things to cloud our view of reality – spiritual verse physical – and what is most important.

Francis Chan, ""Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter." — Francis Chan, Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God

In others words our time and wealth must always be viewed in light of eternity.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:17, ""God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there."

At the end of the day, we have all been blessed with the same amount of time, and we have all been given some degree of wealth... The challenge we are face with is to make sure that we are striving to glorify God in both.

Additional Passages for Discussion:

Psalm 52

Matthew 13:22

Psalm 62:9-11

Ecclesiastes 9:12

Proverbs 11:4

Mark 13:33

Proverbs 22:4

Ephesians 5:15-17

Proverbs 28:22

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the greatest struggles we/you have with time?
2. What are some of the greatest struggles we/you have with wealth?
3. How should the realization of these, time and wealth, as gifts from God change the way we go about our days?
4. What are some practical things we can do to keep God near us in our day?

5. What are some practical things we can do to keep from replacing God with “idols”?

PATIENCE / PRAYER

DAVID SHANNON

Persevere like a Farmer, Prophet and Job

How would you illustrate patience? My fifth grade teacher regularly informed the class that we would "ruin the patience of Job." When you consider all Job endured, that was a pretty harsh criticism. Fifth graders may not be the only burden that can cause us to wear down. Remember the early Christians who were "scattered" (1:1) did so due to persecution. Would you remain faithful to God if you or someone in your family were harshly persecuted for being a Christian? Would you remain faithful even if you had to move from your home to another city in order to live? Once you arrived, would you begin to live the same life as a Christian or would you decide to stay quiet?



Why Persevere? "The Coming of the Lord" is the answer in verse 7 and 8. "The Judge is standing at the door" in verse 9. We must lift our eyes and look beyond this earth and see the eternal. When we see the Lord standing at the door, the wise will say "It is worth it to persevere!" So how is James going to illustrate those who wait?

The first phrase of verse 7 is a type of thesis for the rest of the book! It what the rest of the chapter is about; "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord."

James 5:7 The FARMER; *Waiting for fruit*

The Command: Be patient

The Motive: The coming of the Lord

The Example: The Farmer

The farmer waits for precious fruit. He says "precious" because it sustains life. Food is the livelihood of man. The farmer's fruit is too often taken for granted, but when really contemplated, it is precious. He says "waits" because all farmers must do it. Nothing in farmers work is produced overnight. Many crops produce only once a year. What if you received only one pay check a year? Would you appreciate the patience of a farmer more? What if there were multiple steps requiring hours of labor and often large investments throughout the year, but no "payoff" was received until harvest, would you be willing to wait?

The early and late rains remind the reader of how long the farmer must wait. These rains are several months apart. One comes shortly after the seed are planted and the later rains come just as the plant is maturing. This helps the crop significantly.

The Lesson: The Harvest was worth the wait!

Application in Verse 8-9:

"You must also be patient." We must be willing to wait for the great fruit that will be gathered in eternity. But we also are called to produce fruit on earth. Read about the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

"Establish your hearts." The word establish has to do with something that is set, firm, strong or resolute. James is commanding us to set or establish our heart because "the coming of the Lord is at hand" (vr9).

Notice Paul's prayer in First Thessalonians 3:10-13 for the brethren of Thessalonica to be established.

"Do not grumble against one another" (vr 10). It is easy for us to not only be impatient with God, but even with each other. Don't. The Judge is at the door. Perhaps this refers to brevity of time before we stand before the Judge as well as His watchfulness. He is right there at the door. Have you ever seen someone do something believing they were alone, only to find there was someone standing at the door?

James 5:10 The PROPHETS; Stand Faithful while Suffering at the Hands of Others

The Command: Learn from Examples of Prophets; "Take the Prophets"

The Example: The Prophets prophesied while suffering

James' brother Jesus taught the same lesson using the same illustration of the prophets (Matt 5:10-12).

It is hard to talk about a prophet who didn't suffer for the cause. Elijah suffered as a wanted man during the three year drought. Jeremiah was arrested as a traitor and thrown into a well. Jeremiah lived through the terrible siege of Jerusalem, but is remembered as "the weeping prophet." He wrote "Lamentations" which is a funeral song as a result of the destruction of Jerusalem. Daniel was thrown into a lion's den. John the Baptist was beheaded. To understand that most and possibly all prophets suffered, Stephen asked, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute" in Acts 7:52.

The Lesson: Persevere while suffering

James 5:11-12 JOB; Stand Faithful while Suffering at the Hands of Satan

The Command: Count those blessed who endure

The Example: Learn from the perseverance of Job

God's Action: In the end His compassion and mercy will be abundant

Consider Job. Read Job 1:1-3 trying to imagine this man's life. Satan thought that Job would not persevere if he lost his possessions (Job 1:11). So they were all taken away (1:13-19) including his children! Then Satan announced to God that Job would not suffer in his person and remain faithful (2:4-6). Job was struck with boils suffering to the point his wife urged him to "curse God and die" (2:9). His three friends and another late arrival should have encouraged Job, but instead they blamed him of horrible sin and wickedness (ch 4-36). Job 16:2 and 20 reveals Jobs pain toward his friends.

Jobs Endurance: Job listens to God beginning in chapter 38. He humbly replies in Job 42:2-3.

God's compassion and mercy are abundant in Job 42:10-17.

The Lesson: God's grace is always sufficient (2Cor 12:7-9). The story of Job shows us a full circle that we don't always see on earth, but the abundance of his compassion and mercy will always be completed in Heaven.

Concluding Application: *Don't just endure, but rejoice in trials (James 1:2-3). Why?* The exercise or testing of your faith is what "produces patience" (James 1:3). Notice that word "produces." Produce here means to fashion, shape, work (out), perform. You produce shoes at a shoe factory, buttons at a button factory, or cheesecake at a cheesecake factory. Where do you produce "perseverance" or "patience?" The trial factory! (hold on to that point)

How important is it for us to be a person who perseveres? Remember in James 5:7-9 that all three verses James speaks about the Lord coming again as the motive for persevering at the farmer, prophets or Job? In other words, if we can't finish, nothing else matters! God only rewards finishers. See just a few passages below:

- Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- Revelation 2:10b Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- First Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it... (27) But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.
- Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him,
"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Put the two together. Trials can give you the strength to persevere until the coming of the Lord! If trials give the opportunity for something so major, no wonder James says, "Rejoice." Learn to persevere through trials. Your soul's salvation is depending on it!