

Huddle Overview - James Study Week 7

Discipleship Definition:

Learning to love and follow Jesus—together—by His strength, in everyday life.

What are huddles at Foundations?

- Groups of 3-8 people (or 3-4 couples) that meet for one hour per week at a time and location of your choosing. Larger groups should plan for 75 minutes.
- Huddles last for 8 weeks. At the end of each 8-week session, you can stay with your group, add to your group or even change groups and topics.
- While gathering on Sunday is vital to spiritual growth, so is connecting with others to encourage one another, discussing what it means to follow Jesus and praying for one another. These practices are detailed in our **RHYTHMS** course (which is not necessary to take part in huddles, but highly recommended).

Our Mission at Foundations is to bring the extraordinary lifechanging message of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

- Huddles are one way we prepare to do this very thing, and we can't do that unless our lives are being transformed by Him.
- Hence, the goal of every session is that you will grow more like Jesus in some small way.
- In order to do this, we will focus on God's Word, encourage one another and commit to praying for one another.
- Each week, there are *individual rhythms* we encourage that will help you "love and follow Jesus."
- Similarly, there are *corporate rhythms* that help us in our spiritual formation.
- Consistent practice of these rhythms is part of the holistic development of disciples, and this booklet is designed to touch on that development.

Rhythms Overview

The individual rhythms (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Prayer: Talking to God and listening to Him via His Word, His Spirit-Filled people and His creation. If you don't know how to pray, a good place to start is the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5.

Abide in the Word: Reading the Bible and prayerfully asking God to show you who He is and what He wants for you. A good practice is to read with a pen in hand, and write your thoughts in a journal as He leads them.

Silence: Choosing to avoid speaking in order to listen to what He might want to say to us.

Solitude: Avoidance of interaction with others in order to be alone with Him. Silence enhances solitude. Have you intentionally gotten away to be alone (including technology/social media)?

Reflection (especially effective at the end of the day, maybe before sleep): Take some time in stillness to experience His presence. Tell God things you're thankful for. Make note of where you experienced Him today—or where you didn't. Note instances of loving your "neighbor" well—or failure to do so. Ask God for what He may want for you in the day tomorrow.

Other individual rhythms that will likely be practiced less frequently:

Fasting (food; if there's an area you are seeking specific guidance), giving joyfully (financially as an act of worship) and rest (setting aside time to enjoy your life and choosing to refrain from work).

The corporate rhythms (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Worship gathering: A time for our family to be together to participate corporately in the rhythms of worshipping together.

Participation in community: A time to engage in huddle, as well as other forms of being together as a church family (such as concerts, conferences/classes, events, etc.).

Lord's Supper: An opportunity for our family to reflect on the person and work of Jesus and to look forward in hope to His coming again.

Baptism: A one-time action of a declaration of faith in Christ. It is our hope that everyone be baptized, and that they also celebrate others who are being baptized.

Using your gifts to serve the Body: We have been given a gift to help the body of Christ come to maturity in faith, and we benefit by your presence.

Having a ministry of love for neighbors: We choose to exemplify the abundant life in order to fulfill our mission of bringing the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

Prayer, Day 1

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude, and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for others as an example (from Ephesians 1:15-22): You can use this to pray for yourself and for others. Tell God you love Him. Ask God for spiritual wisdom and that He would reveal Himself in ways you can know Him more. Pray that you know the hope of His calling you. Pray that you would know the riches of glory of the inheritance of the saints. Ask God that you would know the power He gives to those who believe. Praise Him for being the God who is above all rule and authority and has the name above all other names. Thank Him for being the head of the church.

Time in the Word, Day 1, Read James 5:1-2

Background and Insights on the Reading:

James proclaims the worthlessness of riches, not the worthlessness of the rich. Today's money will be worthless when Christ returns, so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will be worthwhile in God's eternal kingdom (b).

Most commentators agree that the wealthy landowners James singles out were non-Christians. Speaking to Christians in chapter 4, James called those still following the world's path to repentance and humility. He reminded those people to fully receive the grace of God. In this section, James offers none of that. He simply condemns these rich oppressors with the voice of an Old Testament prophet predicting their doom. So, these wealthy people were unbelievers who used their wealth to harm others. Importantly, it also included those who did not use their wealth to help others (James 4:17). Specifically, they used their wealth to oppress the poor Christians James has been addressing.

This raises a reasonable question: Is every wealthy person unrighteous and evil? Is James condemning the very possession of wealth? The answer is no, because that's not the teaching of this passage, nor the rest of Scripture. In James 1:10, he offers instruction to wealthy Christians about how to evaluate their lives. Paul does the same, even more clearly, in 1 Timothy 6:17. The condemnation here is not for wealth, itself, but for those whose wealth causes them to fall into the sins James will describe in upcoming verses (j).

Questions for Reflection:

- Why would the rich person be subject to miseries?
- How does the reality that all your material gain will eventually become rusted or moth-eaten change the way you view not only the material things in your life, but your attitude towards getting more?

Prayer, Day 2

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the Lord's Prayer as an outline for your own words to express...Tell God how thankful you are for the privilege of calling the King of Kings, "our Father," and that He listens and hears. God is worthy of honor and worship. We should acknowledge that things on earth are not what they are supposed to be, and that we should ask God for an awareness of His presence and strive to see what He wants this world to be. We should let others see His Kingdom by how we live. We should be thankful that He provides our basic needs. We should pray for forgiveness and forgive others. We should name our weaknesses and our temptations, and for the Spirit to strengthen us. We should close with praise.

Time in the Word, Day 2, Read James 5:3-4

Background and Insights on the Reading:

James continues his harsh condemnation of wealthy non-Christians who had been oppressing the poor. This includes abuse against the very Christians James is writing to. He warns these rich oppressors that their wealth is as good as gone, including their gold and silver. James's attention is on the day of God's judgment against these wealthy oppressors. The misuse of their gold and silver will testify against them, according to this symbolic description of corrosion. Instead of using their stockpiles of precious metals to help the poor, they just hoarded the money until it began to waste away. When God rules against them, their own flesh will be eaten away by fire in the same way the corrosion has eaten away their gold and silver.

Without doubt, this is a harsh and cutting pronouncement. James offers no grace from God for these unrepentant unbelievers. They will be condemned for their greed and selfishness. They are guilty of laying up earthly treasure for themselves in the last days instead of spending it to help those in need.

James echoes Jesus' own teaching: "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 treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21) (j).

Questions for Reflection:

- How did the rich people in this passage treat their workers?
- What should we, as Christians, take away from this? Scripture does not teach that possessing wealth is in itself a sin. Obviously, not all wealthy people oppress others, and many Christians in the world today possess great riches. Having said that, the Bible does warn against the trap of desiring to become rich (1 Timothy 6:9–10) and of trusting in riches once you possess them (1 Timothy 6:17–19).

Prayer, Day 3

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to simply pray using a Psalm...they are really great prayers! Find one that you resonate with, and pray it aloud. Simply read through a Psalm, such as Psalm 23 or 51. Pray aloud, even if in a whisper, slowly and with concentration on the words. Try to be attentive to the thoughts that come to mind and discern if those may be something God is trying to tell you.

Time in the Word, Day 3, Read James 5:5-6

Background and Insights on the Reading:

In a time of great need, these wealthy people had lived out lives of luxury and self-indulgence. They had used their wealth to provide for themselves the easiest, softest lives possible. In doing so, they had fattened themselves, or their hearts, for the day of slaughter. And they had done this while not only ignoring the plight of others, but while abusing them in order to become even richer. This supports the idea that James is not condemning wealth or all rich people. Rather, he is criticizing the sinful temptations that come with wealth: selfishness and greed (j).

Innocent ones/innocent men were defenseless persons, probably poor laborers. Poor people who could not pay their debts, were thrown in prison or forced to sell all their possessions. At times, they were even forced to sell their family members into slavery. With no opportunity to work off their debts, poor people often died of starvation. God called this murder. Hoarding money, exploiting employees, and living self-indulgently will not escape God's notice (b).

Questions for Reflection:

- What is luxurious living?

- What's the matter with living a luxurious life?

Additional resources - see appendix.

Prayer, Day 4

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the ACTS method as an outline (for your own words). **Adoration** - (a time of worship), don't be afraid of "artistic expressions" here, or to use Psalms or hymns or other forms of praise. **Confession** - we all fall short and miss the mark. Confession of sin helps us in our relationship to God. **Thanksgiving** - simply tell God what you're thankful for. **Supplication** - ask God for needs of the world, our country and leaders, our church, and anything and everything else. God wants to hear from you.

Time in the Word, Day 4, Read James 5:7-9

Background and Insights on the Reading:

With v. 7, James began his conclusion and returned to his central theme of endurance in trial. "Brethren" addresses the Christian readers again to encourage those who might be facing abuse from the unrighteous rich. In Israel, the early autumn and late spring rains were needed for a successful harvest. God's harvest of people is not yet complete. But James's point here seems to be that the steadfastness of these believers in the midst of hardship will result in great rewards (a).

In the same way, we must wait patiently for Christ's return. We cannot make Him come back any sooner. But while we wait, there is much work we can do to advance God's kingdom. Both the farmer and the Christian must live by faith, looking toward the future reward for their labors. Don't live as if Christ will never come. Work faithfully to build His kingdom – the *King* will come when the time is right (b).

Questions for Reflection:

- Be patient towards what? Until when?
- How can you strengthen your heart?
- Does the doctrine of Jesus' second coming and the imminency of his return have any effect on your daily life? How so?
- What illustration does James use to show his readers the meaning of patience? How would that illustration help them understand what he is exhorting them to do?

Additional resources - see appendix.

Prayer, Day 5

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the breath method. Simply read through a Psalm and breathe in as you read the first line, and then exhale on the second. Take deep, long, slow breaths. Good examples are Psalm 46 and 47, but almost every Psalm can be done this way. Try to focus on the ones that focus on God and/or resonate with where you are at the moment.

Time in the Word, Day 5, Read James 5:10-11

Background and Insights on the Reading:

James offers the example of the Old Testament prophets. These men delivered God's messages, which often included warnings of God's coming judgment. Many years could go by without those warnings coming to pass, and the prophets often suffered great persecution while they waited for God to keep His word. These men remained patient in their suffering, James insisted, trusting God to sustain them through it until the promise was kept, or the suffering was over. We should do the same.

Hidden in this encouragement is a truth that James's readers surely would not have missed: Many of the Jewish prophets died while waiting for the Lord's promise. Predictions of the Messiah, for example, were not fulfilled until centuries later. This is a key perspective, because James is not promising that God will necessarily deliver his readers and make all things right before they die. He is urging them to remain faithful, as the prophets did, all the way through this life and into the reward of eternity.

Job was a man who endured enormous suffering while refusing to renounce his faith in God. In the end, God rewarded him by restoring all he had lost and giving him much, much more. Suffering Christians in every era should follow Job's example of faithfulness to God in their physical and emotional suffering, and every believer in Jesus should also expect, ultimately, to receive from God far more than we have ever lost. This life is short by definition; God calls us to wait in patience and strength, trusting Him all of the way through it, no matter our circumstances.

The verse ends with a declaration about God's character: He is full of compassion, and He is merciful. God's character doesn't change. God's goodness is not greater when our circumstances are better, and lesser when we are suffering. He always has compassion for His people in our suffering, and He is always merciful to those in Christ, now and forever. We must remind ourselves of that truth when the suffering becomes long and difficult to bear (j).

Questions for Reflection:

- How does being reminded of the steadfastness of Job encourage you to stand fast as well?
- How does being reminded of the "purpose of the Lord," that is, "how the Lord is compassionate and merciful," encourage you to stand fast?

Prayer, Day 6: A Time for Reflection

- Traditional time of Examen. This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.
- Become aware of God's presence. Breathe and slow down. Ask God to make you aware of His presence and to bring to mind moments of your day to focus on.
- Review the day with gratitude. Walk through your day and give thanks for areas where you saw God "show up" and for His blessings.
- Pay attention to your emotions. The things you feel when you review often highlight areas where God wants you to focus and what he wants to teach you. Often this results in confession when you see your emotions out of line with walking in the Spirit.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray about it. Ask God to show you moments where you loved others well (or, conversely, He may bring to mind an area you didn't). Give thanks or ask forgiveness as warranted.
- Look toward tomorrow. Think through your day tomorrow and ask God what He may be calling you to do or be in the upcoming day.

Time in the Word, Day 6, Read James 5:12

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Always be honest so that others will believe your simple yes or no. By avoiding lies, half-truths, and omissions of the truth, you will become known as a trustworthy person (b).

James begins by saying "above all," indicating that this is a big deal. He then repeats, nearly word for word, Jesus' command about taking oaths as recorded in Matthew 5:34–37. When James writes that we must not "swear," he isn't talking about using coarse language. He is talking about a practice that was apparently common in this era: taking an oath to convince someone either that you were telling the truth or that you would keep a promise. We might think of saying to someone, "I swear on a stack of Bibles that I'm not lying." Jesus forbids Christians from doing this, and James confirmed that teaching. The issue appears to be about honesty. Truthfulness should be the absolute norm for those who trust in Christ. Our simple yes or no should be completely binding since deception is never an option for us. If an oath is required to convince someone of our honesty or intent to be faithful, it suggests we may not be known for telling the truth in other circumstances (j).

Questions for Reflection:

- Why do you think James mentions swearing here?
- How does ungodly oath-making reveal a heart that is not steadfast and established?

Additional resources - see appendix.

Huddle Meeting:

General Check-In (10 minutes)

Emotional Check-In (10 minutes)

- Using the SACHET wheel, describe how you're doing emotionally right now. You may want to write down some of these to pray for your huddle during the week.



Rhythms Check-In (10 minutes)

- Describe your experience with the individual rhythms this week.
- Describe your experience with the corporate rhythms this week.
- How can the huddle encourage you this week in these areas? Or.....How can you encourage the huddle this week in these areas?

Discussion for Growth (30 Minutes)

- Feel free to discuss any questions from the prior days' studies.
- Are there circumstances in your life under which you need to be patient? What are they? What truths help you to be patient under those trials?
- What is something you feel God truly taught you this week? What is one way you can put this into practice this week?

Appendix

References

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Time in the Word, Day 1, James 5:1-2, Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

James begins a new section of his letter in which he harshly condemns "you rich" people. He begins by warning them of misery headed their way. They should start weeping and wailing now in anticipation of it, he says. Jesus offered a similar warning to wealthy people in Luke 6:24–25: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry..." (j).

While believers are addressed in chapter 4 (note the uses of "brethren/brother," v. 4:11) and the assumption that they comprehend God’s sovereignty (4:15), here there is no clear indication James is addressing rich believers – though some of the actions of the rich in this passage could be true of more worldly believers (esp. v 5:4). As a group, the unbelieving rich live unrighteously, and carry out social injustices. Great miseries will come on these unjust rich unbelievers in the future day of the Lord (Isaiah 13:6; Ezekiel 30:2-3) (a).

Is being rich sin? – We know from other Scriptures that being rich in itself is not a sin. Sometimes God chooses to bless certain believers with great riches. Abraham, Job, Solomon and many others were wealthy. Money is neither good nor evil. It is neutral and can be used for good or evil. However, the desire to get rich will ensnare those who have it. Loving money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

We will see later in the passage that desire for more money can lead one into all kinds of sins including exploiting one’s employees and living a life of luxury. James describes the rich as greedy and selfish, loving their money and mistreating others. This is the problem. They were selfish to get more money and once they had it, they used it on themselves instead of to glorify God, satisfying their own passions (James 4:3).

The right view is that money is only a tool. It is a tool to provide for ourselves and our families. All that we have is given to us by God. Whatever we have, we should be content with. It is not sin to have a plan for the future, either our career or a financial plan or a retirement plan. But as we learned in James 4:13-17 about boasting about tomorrow, it is sin if God is not in the equation. It is sin if money itself is our goal. The rich people in verse one allowed the love of money to take over their lives and lead them into all kinds of evil. Because of their lust for money, they were going to face judgment from God in the form of “miseries” (c).

Related Scripture:

- 1 Timothy 6:6-10 – But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- James 4:17 - If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.
- 1 Timothy 6:17 - Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment
- Proverbs 23:4-5 – Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.
- Proverbs 28:11 – The rich are wise in their own eyes; one who is poor and discerning sees how deluded they are.
- Leviticus 19:13 – Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.
- Luke 6:24–25 - But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Time in the Word, Day 2, James 5:3-4, Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

Money is not the problem: Christian leaders need money to live and to support their families; missionaries need money to help them spread the gospel; churches need money to do their work effectively. It is the love of money that leads to evil (1 Timothy 6:10) and causes people to oppress others in order to get more. This is a warning to all Christians who are tempted to adopt worldly standards rather than God's standards (Romans 12:1-2) as well as an encouragement to all those who are oppressed by the rich. Also read Mathew 6:19-21 to see what Jesus says about riches (b).

Money is temporary (v. 2-3) – It is not lasting. There are no earthly materials or riches that will not fade away eventually. Everything you see is temporary. It cannot be taken with you into heaven. We've all

heard stories of people who lost their fortunes by theft, bad investments, or fire, etc. Even if you manage to get through your whole life and hold on to your money, you can't take it with you. What use would US Dollars be in heaven anyway?

Riches tend to make people self-reliant and prideful. If God gives them to you, thank Him and then generously use them for His service (c).

Related Scripture:

- Matthew 6:19-21 – Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Proverbs 30:8-9 – Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the bread that is my portion. Otherwise, I may have too much and deny You, saying, “Who is the LORD?” Or I may become poor and steal, profaning the name of my God.
- 2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.
- 1 Timothy 6:9-10 - Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19 - Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.
- Romans 12:1-2 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Time in the Word, Day 3, James 5:5-6, You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

The unbelieving rich are like animals that have fattened their hearts (through materialism), awaiting the slaughter. Armageddon will be a day of slaughter when Christ and His heavenly armies destroy the wicked (Revelation 19:11-21). The rich may have condemned and put to death (v. 6) poor believers by withholding their wages or by using the legal systems to falsely accuse the righteous believer, leading to his execution (a).

The sin of the rich – These people were mistreating their employees. They pushed them extremely hard, but did not give them a fair salary. They apparently promised certain wages or bonuses, but didn't deliver, unfairly withholding their wages. Making themselves rich on the backs of the overworked, they cared not about the suffering they inflicted on their employees. This problem exists all over the world. Many bosses care nothing about their employees. They make big promises and don't deliver. Sometimes they refuse to pay what has been fairly earned. The good news is that God knows and God will judge them for their greed.

The sin of luxurious living and wanton pleasure – What is luxurious living? Basically, it is living a lavish lifestyle far higher than what is needed. It is indulging oneself in the lust of the flesh by buying everything possible to satisfy one's wants. The problem is that God has given the money to you and you are a steward of it. Using it like that is a waste. Sadly, there are many wolves in sheep clothes who exploit the flock to satisfy their own earthly desires. A lavish lifestyle does not give glory to God. Instead, it is a bad testimony and repels people from the church.

Verse 5 says that the day of slaughter is coming. God is going to judge this kind of person, and not only the rich person that loves money, but anyone who loves money (c).

Time in the Word, Day 4, James 5:7-9, Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Be like those farmers, James writes. The harvest is close. The coming of the Lord is near. James tells his readers to strengthen or establish their hearts. His instruction for them is not to waver, when they're so close to receiving God's promise.

We cannot control the timing of the day of the Lord. However, James's instruction here makes it clear that we can control how we respond to the waiting. The reality of God's promise—His pledge to rescue us and make things right—gives us the ability to stand strong, even when our circumstances have not yet changed. In the meantime, conflict between them was evidence that they were not being strong in their waiting.

James warns his Christian readers not to grumble against each other, which shows a lack of trust in God. The fact that the day of the Lord will come soon means that the Judge is standing at the door. Don't risk His judgment by giving in to the pressure of your suffering and turning on each other.

This echoes what James wrote to these same believers about their fighting and quarreling in chapter 4. The temptation to go back and live according to the world's wisdom grows stronger with our suffering, and the result is always greater conflict between us (j).

Jesus is coming again – At that time He will judge all of those who exploit others and He will reward all of those who put their trust in Him and respond to these trials in the right way. He says to “strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord.”

How can we strengthen our hearts? We can turn to His Word. We can be encouraged in the fact that true treasure is stored up in heaven, that true blessing comes from God, that true happiness comes from our relationship to Him, that He loves us, and that He will hold all of these people accountable for their actions.

From God's perspective Jesus' second coming is near. The word often used in theology is "imminent." That means that it could happen at any time. The coming is certain, it is near. The entire church age is the last time period before Jesus' return. It was already near two thousand years ago. And it is certainly nearer today!

Do not grumble against one another – All of these injustices done to believers by the rich, might lead us to complain and grumble. James warns against this using two-fold logic.

The Judge is standing at the door, meaning He will hold these people accountable for their sins, and He will also judge us if we respond in the wrong way. It should be an encouragement to us that the Judge is coming soon, but this is only true if we are doing what is right. Some people think that Jesus' second coming is an irrelevant doctrine, something in the distant future with no relationship to today. To many, eschatology is a controversial topic with no bearing on day-to-day life. But this passage teaches us that is not true at all. Jesus' second coming motivates us to be patient and respond to trials with trust and perseverance. It has a direct impact on how we live. We do not know the day or the hour. So, we need to be ready all the time (c).

Time in the Word, Day 5, James 5:10-11, Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Believers need an example of how to endure suffering and how to respond in patience. Most of the OT prophets (Hebrews 11:32-38) suffered patiently as they spoke God's message. The outcome of the Lord's dealings with Job was that his suffering was removed and his family and possessions were restored (Job 42:10-17) (a).

Because Jesus' coming is near, we should also endure (11) – James says "we consider those blessed who remained steadfast." The one who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13). The opposite of enduring is giving up. We already learned about the test of trials in chapter 1. The concept here is similar. The good news for us is that no matter what difficulty we are in the middle of, God loves us. He is "compassionate and merciful" and has good plans for us.

Related Scripture:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
- Romans 8:18 – I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8 – For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

- Hebrews 10:25 – Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- Job 42:10-17 - After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. 11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver[a] and a gold ring. 12 The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. 13 And he also had seven sons and three daughters. 14 The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. 15 Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. 17 And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

Time in the Word, Day 6, James 5:12, Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

In trials, one might rashly take an oath, or swear by lesser things such as by heaven by earth to disguise the truth. Words by themselves must be truthful (your yes is to be yes). On the one hand, oaths themselves are not prohibited; on the other, a believer should not be forced to take an oath in order to tell the truth. Unrepentant deception will cause the believer to fall under God’s judgement (discipline) now, and bring disapproval at the judgement seat of Christ (a).

Do not swear (12) – James was discussing the coming judgment of the Lord and takes the opportunity to mention again one of his favorite topics, speech. He reminds his readers that all of our speech will be judged by God. Therefore, we must be careful not to swear. James has taught throughout the book that speech is a window to the heart, a test of our true character. As such, we should know that God is always listening and will hold us accountable for every word we speak. Proverbs 15:4 The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.

Our “yes” should be “yes” and our “no” should be “no.” That means we don’t need to have different levels of promises. Anytime we say we will do something, we should do it even if it hurts, and even if no one else is forcing you to keep it. If you make an agreement, but later find out it is unfavorable to you, do it anyway. You gave your word. That means we need to be careful before we make promises! This applies to even simple areas of life. Think before you speak and remember to consider God’s will before making a promise. As we learned in James 4:15, “you ought to say ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that’” (c).

Related Scripture:

- Matthew 5:34–37 - But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

