

Joyful Life Bible Studies

JAMES 5:12-20

Lesson 20

FIRST DAY: Review and Overview

1. Which of the three examples of *patience* in James 5:7-11, the *farmer*, the *prophets*, or *Job* ministers to you most powerfully today? Why?
 - a. Share a specific way James 5:7-11 has made a difference in your attitudes or reactions this week.
 - b. In what way does the Lord's return exercise influence over your life today?
2. Mark the paragraph divisions in this week's lesson as follows. After each write a short sentence that summarizes the contents of the paragraph:
 - a. James 5:12
 - b. James 5:13-18
 - c. James 5:19,20
3. You will want to return over and over again to these final verses of James, especially verses 13-18. The instruction on prayer contained in this passage is vital to our spiritual stability, patience, and progress. James began this letter by pressing us to *patience* as the key to spiritual maturity and *prayer* for the wisdom that would guide us to the crown promised in James 1:12. He closes his letter with the same emphasis - *patience* (5:7-11) and *prayer* (5:13-18). Using the following prayer as a guideline, begin this lesson by writing a prayer expressing your desires concerning your study this week.

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you,
and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will
in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto Him pleasing,
being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

-Colossians 1:9,10

SECOND DAY: Read James 5:12

1. By the opening words of James 5:12 *But above all things* we are clued into the importance of the instruction in this verse. What are we:
 - a. not to do
 - b. to do
 - c. why
2. Bible scholars differ on the specific meaning of James 5:12. Some believe the context of this verse is in reference to the preceding exhortations on *patience* and *the tongue*. How might a lack of *patience* (longsuffering) have caused those believers of the early church to speak vengeful oaths concerning the oppressors of James 5:1-6?
3. *Swear* in this verse does not mean to use vulgar or obscene language although it could be expanded to forbid that too. It is used to forbid the use of oaths to backup or validate a statement. In the time of James' writing it was a common practice for the Jews to swear oaths to make an agreement binding but often they used evasive swearing as a manipulative tactic so the oath wouldn't be binding or to impress the listener with the "truth" of what they were saying. Summarize what the following verses teach about this:
 - a. Exodus 20:7
 - b. Matthew 5:33-37
 - c. Matthew 23:16-22
4. James 5:12 is not an injunction against the requirement of taking an oath in a courtroom. It is to teach the believers to control their tongues and let their godly character be the guarantee of any statement they make. With this in mind define the meaning of *let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay*.
 - a. Why might a person feel the need to swear by something, for example, "on my Mother's honor"?
5. The last phrase of James 5:12, *lest ye fall into condemnation* (judgment) reminds us of James 5:9c - *the judge standeth before the door*. In what way does James 5:12 speak to you about flippancy in the use of God's name or any other oath to validate the "truth" of a statement?

Pastor Chuck says: *James is saying,
Don't swear you'll do it. Don't say by heaven, or by God, or any oath at all.
Just let your yes be a yes and let your no be a no.*

THIRD DAY: Read James 5:13-15

1. Concentrate on the intensely practical instruction of James 5:13,14a. Record it in the following chart. You may want to underline *let him* in your Bible. Especially note the condition and the responsibility of the believer:

a. Is any _____? let him _____

b. Is any _____? let him _____

c. Is any _____? let him _____

2. *Afflicted* more literally means to suffer misfortune, experience what is bad, but primarily here it means to *endure hardship; experience misfortune or calamity; trouble*. It does not here indicate physical suffering but mental or emotional heartache. Think about what you do when you are *afflicted*. What are some of the things a person is prone to do rather than pray?

a. What does James 5:13a tell us to do? Selah

(1.) What instruction did Jesus give in Luke 18:1b?

(2.) The tense of the verb *pray* indicates the afflicted one should persist in prayer - keep on praying. How does Philippians 4:6,7 relate to the instruction of James 5:13a?

Challenge: For an example of prayer in time of *trouble* read Psalms 142 and 143. Choose a few verses or phrases from these Psalms that especially minister to you in a time of *affliction*.

3. There are a number of Hebrew and Greek words that we categorize *affliction* in English. Each has a little different shade of meaning. They describe suffering, troubles, grief, oppression, distress, or breaking. Select a few of the following verses, all if you have time, and record what they teach about *afflictions* of various kinds:

a. Genesis 41:52b

b. Psalm 18:6

c. Psalm 22:24

d. Psalm 34:6

e. Psalm 34:19

f. Psalm 91:15

(1.) Star the verse that especially speaks to you and share why.

4. Choose one of that verses in today's lesson to meditate on and to prompt you to prayer in times of affliction. Write the verse here.

*Were half the breath that's vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftner be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me."*
-G. Rolling

FOURTH DAY: Read James 5:13-15

1. *Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.* James 5:13b - NIV Compare this version with the KJV. Often in times of prosperity and joyfulness there is a tendency to forget the Lord. James prompts us to turn to the Lord in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. In troubled times, pray. In times of joy, sing praises. Singing is an expression of our inner life. One Bible scholar has said that the tense of this verb *sing* indicates we are to *keep on making melody*. What do the following verses encourage us to do: Selah

- Psalm 9:2
- Ephesians 5:18,19
- Which place are you in - *troubled* or *joyful*? Depending on your answer either write a prayer or sing a song of praise unto the Lord.

(1.) If you chose to sing, what song did you choose?

*I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.*
-C.M.

2. If a Christian is sick, what does James 5:14 say he is to do?

- Sick here (asthenei)* means to be *without strength* and depicts the debilitating effect of a serious illness. Pastor Chuck says, *The elders are the more spiritually mature men in the church. They are men who meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. They are selected to oversee the spiritual welfare of the church. The elders in Acts 6:4 gave themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. According to James 5:14b what are the elders to do?*

- (1.) The *oil* is symbolic of the power of the Holy Spirit. The *oil* represents *God's work* is not accomplished through man's strength. The healing is accomplished by the Lord not by the elders who pray. Confirm this statement by completing the following sentence: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick (make well or whole), and the

_____.

3. If the person being prayed for is sick because of sin in his life, what does James 5:15b say will happen?

a. "The fact that the man was healed is proof of a repentant heart." Comment on this.

Advanced Students: Explain the meaning of James 5:15b in the light of Luke 5:18-26.

4. James 5:14,15 is not meant to prohibit a believer from praying for someone who is sick. All believers are to pray one for another. It also is not to stop believers from going to a doctor. What glorious benefits do you see in a seriously ill person calling for the elders of the church to pray for him or her?

a. Do you have an experience of this? Share if not too personal.

*He... healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled
which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,
Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

-Matthew 8:16c,17; (Isaiah 53:4,5)

FIFTH DAY: Read James 5:16-18

1. Write the first sentence of James 5:16.

a. Pastor Chuck says: *Notice it doesn't say confess your sins. We are to confess our sins to God Who is faithful and just to forgive us. A fault has been defined as: a shortcoming, a failure, a defect, or deficiency in conduct, condition, thought. What does the instruction of James 5:16a say to you personally today? (This is not an encouragement to indiscriminate confession.)*

(1.) Discretion is needed in our *confessing of our faults, and praying for one another must be strictly obeyed. Share an example of your obedience to this if it is not too personal.*

b. Some Bible scholars connect James 5:16a with 5:15b. They believe that faults (sins) such as bitterness, anger, or unforgiveness have caused the sickness and until the sick one makes things right with the one he is holding these feelings against, he will not be healed. Certainly we know these things can make us sick. Whether this particular verse applies to this or not, explain why a believer is to let go of these sins. See Ephesians 4:31

(1.) In what way does Hebrews 12:13-15 amplify the ultimate purpose for confession and prayer? (*healed here has the meaning of cured*)

2. Print the promise of James 5:16b. Selah. Don't rush on. Stop and let this truth be absorbed into your spiritual bloodstream and nourish your prayers.

- a. *The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results.* James 5:16b TLB
The word *righteous* might cause us to feel “that excludes me”. We perhaps think this only applies to the great, godly, extraordinary prophets of the Old Testament or super saints. Who does James use as an example to correct that thinking? James 5:17a

(1.) Summarize what you learn about Elias (Elijah) from James 5:17,18.

3. How does Elijah’s example encourage you to be that *fervent* woman of prayer that *availeth much*?

- a. What do the words *availeth much* say to you about *fervent* prayer?
- b. As an example of *fervent* prayer, read Colossians 4:12. How is Epaphras described in this verse?

(1.) What do you learn about prayer from his example?

4. How will you apply James 5:16-18 to your life? Be specific.

At the close of verse 18 you can sense James calling the believers to prayer. When you think about the power in prayer and its effectiveness in any situation, whether to bring healing to the body or soul, restoration to marriages or other soured relationships, comfort to the bereaved, help for the helpless, return to the Lord of the backslidden, release of satan’s grip on loved ones and friends, how can you neglect this most important ministry and privilege of all believers.

SIXTH DAY: Read James 5:19,20

1. *If anyone has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord and someone helps him understand the truth again, that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins.* James 5:19,20 TLB Compare this version of James 5:19,20 with the KJV. *If any of you* refers to a believer. What is the believer’s condition in James 5:19,20?

- a. What is our responsibility when we see a believer wandering from the truth?

(1.) *Convert* in Greek refers to bringing the straying one back. Before you set forth to bring an erring believer back, what should you do? See Jesus’ example in Luke 22:32a.

(a.) What does Galatians 6:1 add to this?

2. What two things does James want the rescuer to know? verse 20

a. In the context of James 5:15 what kind of *death* does verse 20 refer to?

- (1.) The early church believed and taught that persistence in sin could cause a believer's physical death. Verify this from I Corinthians 11:30.

Challenge: Explain the meaning of the phrase *hide a multitude of sins*. Use scripture to support your answer.

3. Read II Timothy 2:24,25a (25b,26). With what attitude is the servant of the Lord to instruct those who oppose the truth whether they are straying believers or have never been born again?

4. What promise is given in Daniel 12:3 to those who turn others to righteousness? Selah

5. In response to James 5:19,20 what do you feel is the believer's responsibility?

- a. The work of saving souls and covering sins is God's work. Only the Lord can truly *save* anyone, but He uses Christians to be His instruments on earth to reach the backslidden Christian and the sinner. Christ's love in our hearts should motivate us to go to those who stray from the *truth*. We may suffer rejection or even persecution. Often the backslider does not want to hear the *truth*, yet, it is our responsibility to pray for that one and do our utmost to turn him/her back to the *truth*. How does John 15:13 encourage you to reach the straying believer?

6. Review James 5:12-20. In what area/s of your life has this lesson worked most effectively?

The last verse of James shows the results of love in action. So much of the practical-living teaching of James can be summed up in Matthew 22:37-39. Love for God will produce joy in trials because we can trust Him to take us through victoriously. (Thanks be to God Who always causes us to triumph. II Corinthians 2:14a) Christ's love in us for others will cause us to lay down our life for them rather than to put our own selfish interest first.

