

# JAMES: FINDING A FAITH THAT WORKS

## Lesson 10 – FAITH DOES NOT MISUSE OR OVERVALUE WEALTH - James 5:1-6

### INTRODUCTION/THOUGHTS

- James seems to use a literary style or device here known as “apostrophe”. It occurs when a speaker breaks off from addressing one party and instead addresses a third party.
- **To this point, the book has clearly been addressing fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.** (1:2, 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:7, 5:19)
- **In James 5:1, he directly addresses a group he calls “rich men”.** It does not seem that he is addressing rich men within the church body, but rather unbelievers outside of the body of Christ. He does this to give a clear contrast between how faith handles wealth and the world handles wealth.
- The message in these first six verses is clear: **Christians do not act this way!**

It is important to note a couple things as we look at the passage:

1. The Bible does not vilify or condemn wealth or riches as an object.
  - He uses Job as an illustration in verse eleven. Job’s wealth was restored following his trials. God would not reward a man’s faithfulness with an evil thing.
2. The Bible often warns of the vices, temptations, and sinful attitudes that surround earthly wealth.
  - 1 Timothy 6:17-19 – There are peculiar troubles that surround physical wealth, but like any temptation, God can strengthen us to overcome.
3. The Bible teaches that godliness with contentment is a greater gain.
  - 1 Timothy 6:6-8 – There is no list of things to which Christians are entitled, but what we are given is a good gift from God.
4. The Bible teaches that all things that we enjoy are given from God.
  - 1 Timothy 6:17

### HE BEGINS WITH THE END

#### **1. Rich men are instructed to sorrow because the end of riches without God is misery. - vs.1**

#### **2. Earthly riches are allusive and do not last. - vs 2**

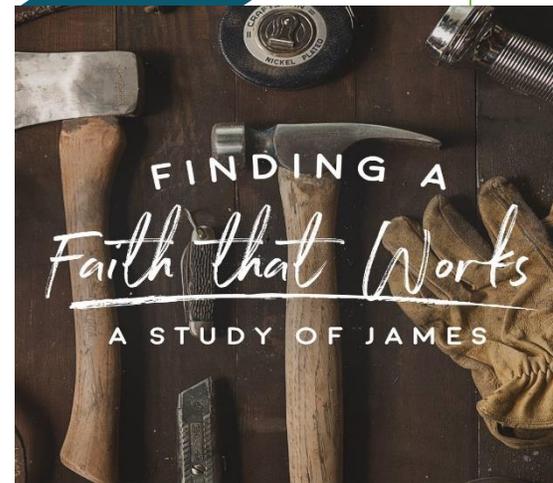
- A Christian should understand that wealth can be gained only to be lost. Things can be stored up only to disappear. It is a never-ending search for “the next” or “the better”.
- We have a God who is eternal yet focus on things that last only a moment.

#### **3. A reliance on wealth for protection and comfort is vain and pointless. - vs. 3**

- While it is wise to save and prepare for provision and emergency, there is an obsession that can come with certain “wealth goals”. When we place our trust or peace of mind in a number, we are ignoring the sovereign provision and control of God in our lives.

Again, James is not teaching us to live flippantly with our finances. He is not teaching us to live in poverty. He is warning us that ultimately they are a physical item that can waste our time, affections, and thoughts.

*Heaven does not allow entrance by cash payment, and eternal reward cannot be purchased by card. Do we live focused on God’s economy or on our own.*



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## HE GIVES US EXAMPLES OF THE SINFUL ACTIONS PRODUCED BY A SINFUL HEART OF GREED.

### 1. Exploitation and maltreatment from a desire to have more.

- Exploitation is the action of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work, or the act of using power or influence to systematically extract more value from workers than is given to them.
- The phrase “which is of you kept back by fraud” (*apostereo*) means to defraud, deprive, or to cheat, taking away what rightfully belongs to someone else.
- This verse does not speak to “getting a deal”, but it speaks to a deeper issue in our lives. When we desire and build our lives around gaining physically, it can drive us to treat people in a way opposite of which Christ treats us. We can become willing to cheat, cut corners, abuse our position over others, lie, seek undue credit, and turn others away from the merciful mindset of the Gospel. A direct sign of the Gospel working in our lives should be an overwhelming, obvious lack of attachment to this physical world.
- James 5:4 tells us that these types of actions are noticed by the “Lord of Sabaoth”. (*Lord of Hosts or Armies*)

### 2. Decadence and greed affecting our daily lives.

- Decadence is “luxurious self-indulgence”. It is the opposite of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that we are commanded to have, self-control.
- Do you ever have things that you must have or things you must do even at the cost of your family or God’s work in your life?

### 3. Condemnation of others based on our desires, even to the place of murder.

- The unbelieving rich man has no need to regard the lives of others. He can live as though there no one else matters because his life is about selfish fulfillment of all his desires. He can justify his actions by blaming others.
- True faith cannot live this way! It is the opposite of all the things that Jesus is trying to cement in our hearts. I do not need to cling to wealth because I understand it does not last. I can place priority on the souls of others because they are eternal. I can live free of offense or obsession with what is mine... because it is not truly mine!

Summary: Money is dangerous. The heart is deceptive. A love of money is deadly. The Gospel delivers.

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## FAMILY DISCUSSION / PERSONAL STUDY

The Book of James teaches us that true faith reveals itself by works. What we do in our Christian life is fueled by what we believe.

Take time together as a family in God’s Word. Think throughout the day to reinforce the main truth of the week. Remember significant ways God has worked in your lives.

### TAKE TIME

Read 1 Timothy 6.

### THINK

What can you share? What can you give away out of love? How can you show your love for God by living selflessly toward others?

- Let’s show our kids, grandkids, and mentees how we give to others and give to God. Teach them that we can give, not simply because we have extra, but because we love God and people more than we love money and things!

### REMEMBER

- Recall a time when you were defrauded or abused because of greed and selfishness.
- Recall a time when your desire to have overcame your desire to obey the Lord in action or in attitude and spirit.
- Spend time thanking God for every good “thing” in your life.