



**JAMES: Week 4**

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## JAMES

### WEEK 4: How to Become Patient, Steady, and Strong

**Bottom Line:** To endure trials and temptations, you need to be patient, steady, and strong.

#### WEEK 1-3 SUMMARY

So far, we've taken in quite a bit of advice from James.

James has made it clear that a true believer will bear fruit.

This means that our faith should be visible through the way we treat others, how we behave, how we love, what we say, and how we endure trials and temptations.

Of course, all of this is just an outpouring that comes from the One whose Spirit lives in us.

James encourages us to repent of our sin and turn to God, who gives us every perfect gift.

#### Read James 4:11-17.

*11 Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. 12 God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So, what right do you have to judge your neighbor?*

*13 Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." 14 How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. 15 What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." 16 Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.*

*17 Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.*

James warns us of two things in the passage above: judging others and self-confidence.

Please note that "judging others" is not the same as holding others accountable, as God does expect us to speak the truth in love to others in the faith who are doing wrong or struggling.

Instead, James is talking about judgment and criticism that comes from a place of pride and arrogance, or as James calls it, "self-confidence."

When we think too highly of ourselves, we begin to look down on others who we believe are falling short.

We criticize their every move and mock them in front of others.

We call out what we perceive to be their shortcomings, and in many cases, we do this to boost our own self-confidence.

But James calls this evil.

Our goals as Christians are quite simple.

We are to humble ourselves and do the will of God.

We should avoid harsh insults toward other Christians, and instead, build them up with love and truth.

When we recognize how much we've been forgiven, it becomes tough to be critical of others.

Suddenly, we see them through the eyes of grace.

In verse 13-16, it seems as if James is warning us not to make plans, but that's not the point that he's trying to make.

Instead, James is warning against our presumption that God's plan is subject to our own.

In other words, when we make plans without consulting God and without recognizing His sovereignty over our lives, we are "boasting" that we have it all figured out.

This is pride.

Of course, setting positive goals for your life is a good thing.

But the assumption that you control your own life demonstrates arrogance.

What a hard lesson to learn!

**Discussion questions:**

1. What is the difference between holding a friend in Christ accountable for his sin and slandering him?

Give some examples of how these two responses would play out.

2. In what areas of your life is it difficult to surrender control?

3. What are your motives when you confront another for his or her sin?

**Read James 5:1-6.**

*1 Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. 2 Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. 4 For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.*

*5 You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.*

At first glance, you might think that James is saying that those who have lots of money are doomed.

But when we understand the context of this passage, we begin to see that the "rich people" in this passage idolize money and possessions.

They are those who step on others to get rich (see verses 5 and 6).

In modern America, we can see this type of behavior on full display.

For many, the goal of life is to prosper financially.

To have money, status, cars, mansions, and all the brand name clothes.

And because they feel entitled (as if they are owed these things), they'll plow down others.

Can you relate?

Essentially, entitlement comes from arrogance.

When we believe that we are better and more deserving than others, we behave as if we're entitled to have what we have.

Instead of viewing financial blessing as an undeserved gift, we *expect* it.

James warns that this idol—wealth—leads to our ruin.

**Discussion questions:**

1. Have you ever found happiness in wealth or material possessions?

If so, provide an example.

2. Why do you think human beings are so taken with the idea of being rich?
3. When others prosper financially more than you and your family, how do you react in your mind and heart?

**Read James 5:7-12.**

*7 Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. 8 You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

*9 Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!*

*10 For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.*

*12 But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.*

Patience.

If we're all being honest, no one *enjoys* patience.

It seems that, no matter how many times God teaches us this lesson, we struggle to make it stick.

Specifically, this passage is about being patient for the Lord's return.

What a difficult thing to patiently wait for!

The truth is, we have no idea when Jesus will return.

BUT we do know that He will.

If we call Jesus our Savior, we trust that He will return for His church as He said He would.

We also trust that he will judge people justly, according to His perfect justice.

To be patient, therefore, is to trust.

We won't be disappointed because God does not break His promises.

As we wait patiently, we trust that God is working out His plan and that we are simply to be obedient in the meantime.

**Discussion questions:**

1. What does "waiting patiently for the Lord" look like?

Are there certain behaviors or actions that you associate with waiting on the Lord?

2. Why is being patient so difficult?

Would it be easier if you knew when Jesus was going to return?

3. Do you struggle with patience?

If so, why do you think it's such a difficult thing to practice?

**Read James 5:13-20.**

**13** *Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. 14* *Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. 15* *Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.*

**16** *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. 17* *Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! 18* *Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.*

**19** *My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, 20* *you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.*

Again, James brings up the power of the tongue.

However, instead of warning us about its misuse, James tells us how to use our words for good.

It's through prayer, through worship, through confession, through speaking truth to a wandering brother or sister in Christ.

Ultimately, our goal as Christians is to glorify God.

What better way to do so than to build others up, love them through prayer, and lead them to confession for their forgiveness.

Earnest prayer is powerful, and when we confess our sins and prayer together, we will see God move.

With all the distractions in your lives, you might find it hard to remember to pray.

Or you might question whether God hears or forgives you.

But His Word, time and time again, reminds you that God listens to His people, and He forgives our sins.

When you're tempted to use your tongue for evil, remind yourself of this passage of scripture.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. James tells us we should pray through any circumstance, whether we're struggling, happy, or sick.

Do you pray more when you're having a hard time or when everything is going well?

Why do you think this is so?

2. Why do you think confession to one another is effective?

Why not just confess to God and God alone?

3. How are verses 19 and 20 related to prayer with other believers?

Why do you think James included these verses in a section about prayer?

### **SUMMARY OF JAMES**

The Book of James frequently circles back to the theme of patience and endurance through the trials and temptations that will inevitably come.

James also repeatedly insists that we live out our faith every day and that faith is evident through our good works and obedience to Christ.

As Christians, we must be set apart.

We must be consistent.

We must be obedient to God's Word.

We must allow God to lead our hearts, our actions, and our words.

And we must seek Him for fulfillment instead of the things of this world.

James, a man who once denied his brother's claim to be the Messiah, became a pastor in Jerusalem, and a believer and leader in the church!

What a story of redemption and transformation!

Let's listen to James, a man who lost his life for the truth.

May we be willing and eager to follow in his footsteps—to bring glory to God by living out what we say we believe.