

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
Study Guide
Lesson Seven – James 4:13-5:6

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The second part of James chapter two focuses on how our faith should produce good works. James 2:14-17 says, **“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”** James 2:24 adds, **“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.”** We can tell people all day long that we have faith but if they don’t see love and kindness in our behavior then they either won’t believe that our faith is genuine or they won’t believe that God is genuine.

As examples of faith that is NOT working, James used the issues of partiality, the tongue, jealousy and selfish ambition that lead to quarrels and conflicts, and being a friend of the world. James 4:4 tells us how serious “dead” faith is, **“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”**

James 4:6-10 delivers the answer of how to get our faith alive and working. James 4:6 says, **“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.’”** “He gives a greater grace” means that God’s grace is greater than our sin. The grace found through Jesus Christ is the root of our faith that produces the fruit! The only time that grace is mentioned in the book of James is in 4:6 but grace is power behind the whole book. Recognition of God’s grace which covers our sinful behavior motivates us to humble ourselves and gives us power to do verses 7-10, **“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”**

From the power of verses 4:6-10, James continues on to give other examples of faith that is NOT working. Verses 11-12 address judging one another. Verses 13-17 address the issue of not surrendering our agenda to God’s will. Verses 5:1-6 are a parenthetical section describing the judgment coming to the ungodly who take advantage of others. Next week we will study verses 5:7-11 and we will see that James picks up the theme of faith as he encourages his readers to live a surrendered life, trusting in God’s will.

James 4:13-5:6

1) **Read James 4:13-17.** In your own words describe the main teaching from these verses.

- a) This passage does not condemn making a profit or planning for the future. Read the following Proverbs. What do they say about the following aspects of work ethic and handling money?
- i) Investing - Proverbs 21:5

- ii) Greed - Proverbs 28:22

- iii) Debt - Proverbs 22:7

- iv) Generosity - Proverbs 21:13

- b) No matter how hard we try to be financially secured in this life, God is in total control of every penny that goes in and out of your bank accounts. He is the Chief Economist. He owns and controls the smallest denomination of every world currency.
- i) Read Luke 12:15-25. What is Christ's warning in this parable?

- (1) What comfort does Christ bring at the end of the passage (Luke 12:22-24)?

- c) Compare James 4:14 and James 1:10-11. What lesson do you learn from these passages? How do these thoughts humble you?
- d) God wants us to surrender every area of our lives to His will. Read Mark 3:31-35. Remember that James was Jesus' earthly brother. James may not have heard Jesus' remark but if someone had told him what Jesus said, how do you imagine he would have felt at that time? How do you think his attitude changed after he became a believer?

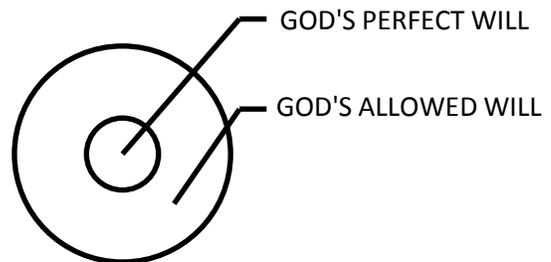
- e) James 4:15-16 indicates that we should make plans but then surrender those plans to the will of the Lord. Why is it boasting to make plans without acknowledging God's sovereignty (total control)?

Note: Finding God's will for our life seems tricky at times. If we genuinely want to seek His will, he will give us wisdom. Remember James 1:5, *"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."* Sometimes when we have a tough decision to make, we wish He would just write the answer on the wall. We have to trust, however, that God is giving us wisdom through our natural ability to reason through a problem. God is in control of every pro and con list that we make. For example, if a high school student is trying to decide which college to attend, God will direct through his or her reasoning and also through circumstances as He opens and closes doors. God will make one school seem better than the others. After we have decided on a plan, we still need to lift that plan to the Lord and be willing to change directions as He moves in our life. Sometimes a door will open and then suddenly close. In those times, God is drawing out our faith, causing us to trust in His leading.

- f) Read Romans 12:2. How are we to prove what the will of God is?

- i) What three words are used to describe the will of God?

- g) Look at the little diagram. God's perfect will always line up with His Word. Loving God and loving others will always be at the center of His will. Sin and self-centeredness is not God's perfect will but all things are in God's allowed will. Last week we read the story of Joseph from Genesis 37:9-11 and 37:18-21. After Joseph's brothers



sold him into slavery, he became a leader in Egypt. When a famine hit the area, he was able to save his family. Turn to Genesis 50:18-21 to see the end of the story. Were Joseph's brothers in God's perfect will or were they in His allowed will when they sold him into slavery? Defend your answer.

- h) From James 4:17, when we know what God's perfect will is but we don't do it, it is _____.

- i) Describe a time when you saw God's hand as He gave you direction on a tough decision. It would be a blessing to the group if you share your story!

2) Read James 5:1-6. In your own words describe the main teaching from these verses.

- a) Look at James 2:2 and 2:6-7. These rich people blasphemed (showed contempt or insulted) the name of Jesus according to verse 7. James could be referring back to these unbelieving rich men in 5:1-6 and he called them to repent. In James 2:6, what were the rich doing to the poor? In light of that, why do you think the poor wanted to cater to the rich?
- b) James 5:1-6 is similar to Old Testament declarations of judgments against pagan nations. Read Isa 13:6-11. In verse 11, what will God put an end to?
- c) Compare James 5:2-3 with Revelation 20:11-15. Unbelievers will be judged according to their deeds because they did not accept Jesus and His sacrifice for their sins. What awaits those who experience the second death?
 - i) James stern warning to the unbelieving rich was out of compassion. Most of the time when we witness to people, we share God's love. Have you ever warned someone about the coming judgment of hell? Describe their reaction.
- d) From James 5:4-6, what were the wealthy landowners doing to the poor?
- e) Compare James 5:6 with Matthew 5:38-42. What should our response be to those that take advantage of you? Why do you think this glorifies God?