

JAMES

MARK IT UP

James 5:7-12 **LEADER** Discussion Guide

Week of 5/22/22

Icebreaker: What situations make you feel most impatient?

Getting Started: Read James 5:7-12 as a group.

Select 2-3 questions you think will be most helpful for your discussion.

1. In verse 7, James commands the believers to be patient until the coming of the Lord. What do you think it looks like for believers who are suffering to be patient?

This is meant to give people a chance to think through the overall situation in these verses. The brothers and sisters James is addressing are in very difficult circumstances (see verses 1-6), so patience might sound like a very passive and unproductive response.

Application: Think of a time or situation where you were suffering for some reason. How did that impact your ability to be patient?

Time often slows down when we're suffering or afflicted in some way. Physical pain, relational trouble, despair, etc...these are all experiences that can cause us to grow impatient. We want the situation to be over! Now!

2. The kind of patience prescribed in this passage is like the patience of the farmer described in the second half of verse 7. What do you notice about the farmer's patience that could help us understand what it means to be patient in this way?

Farmers don't simply throw seed in the dirt and hope for a great crop! There's the plowing, planting, weeding, fertilizing, etc. that's required for the plants to grow and produce. This is hard and disciplined work. The farmer is waiting on the Lord to provide the rains and, ultimately, the fruit; however, the farmer isn't passively sitting around simply thinking happy thoughts about a good outcome.

Application: What do you think this kind of patience means for your life if you are also to "be patient...until the coming of the Lord"?

This is an invitation to think through ways we are engaged in God's work in the meantime. What are we giving ourselves to that are in alignment with God's plan and purposes?

3. Application: The word “establish” in verse 8 can also be taken as “strengthen.” What do you think we can do to establish or strengthen our hearts until the coming of the Lord?

Hopefully your LifeGroup is one way this happens as you meet as a group, open God’s Word and pray together and help meet each other’s needs? Also, our weekly worship services are aimed at this very thing. This isn’t as much a call to do something new as it is to simply make sure we’re engaging in the kind of activities that every believer can do to encourage his or her faith.

4. James calls the believers to look to the example of the prophets and Job in how they were steadfast. What do you think their examples can teach us? The prophets suffered in various ways as they proclaimed a message that few wanted to hear. They persevered, though, as they were doing what the Lord had called them to do.

Application: Whose example of steadfastness do you (or could you) look to for encouragement?

Potential examples could include a person from Scripture (see, for example, Hebrews 11) or the life of someone near you who demonstrated a firm commitment to the Lord.

5. James highlights the character of the Lord in verse 11. Why do you think he includes this as he has been talking about the examples of people like the prophets and Job?

Each of these human examples was imperfect, yet they trusted in a perfect Lord. God’s character is what makes His promises trustworthy. We can have confidence that the Lord will come one day with justice because we’ve seen the Lord’s faithfulness in the lives of people like the prophets and so many others. He is truthful, powerful, and good. He is compassionate and merciful toward us as we wait.

Application: Why could it be really important for us to keep the Lord’s character in mind as we wait for the Lord’s coming?

Waiting is difficult, as we all know, and we’re waiting for something that is only as sure as the One who made the promise. If we forget the Lord’s trustworthy and unchanging character, we risk growing discouraged as we wait or even losing faith that the Lord’s coming will one day take place.

6. Verses 9 and 12 stand out in this passage. Why do you think James includes these instructions related to our speech as he is talking about our need for patience?

It’s likely that James wants to emphasize that our waiting should be done in righteousness and unity. Also, if we are being formed into the likeness of Christ (or, being made “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” from chapter 1), we should not be surprised that James would encourage us to

interact with each other in a way that reflects Christ to each other. These are difficult verses to understand in their context.

Application: How are your words toward others impacted when you're feeling most impatient?

Impatience and being "short" with others can go hand-in-hand. Also, it's possible in the face of impatience that we may begin to slip in truthfulness. Think of the example from James 5:1-6...as these impoverished and mistreated believers were working to pay off debts, it's possible they were under pressure to stretch the truth by making promises to pay their debts even though they knew they wouldn't be able to.