

STUDY GUIDE

JAMES: Week 11 8.18.13

Note: You will often receive more questions than it's possible to use in your LG meeting time. So, as a leader, please be selective about which questions will be best for your group. And remember, you can always craft your own questions as you disciple the people in your LG. Thanks!

[set up]

What was one of the most extravagant meals or luxurious accommodations you have ever experienced? How did that experience impact you?

Who is the richest person you have known? As far as you know, was he/she a follower of Christ or not? How did she/he influence you?

[digging deeper]

Read Matthew 19:23-26. What are the unique temptations the rich have that the poor don't that would cause Jesus to speak about the difficulty of the rich being saved?

Make a list of godly people in the Bible that had wealth. (Hint: Read Genesis 13:2, I Chronicles 29:28, II Chronicles 17:5, Job 1:1 and 42:10, Matthew 27:57, Acts 4:36-37, Acts 9:36, Acts 10:1, Acts 16:13-15, and Philemon 1.) What implications can we draw from this list?

Read James 4:13-18. Describe the kind of person to whom this section seems to be addressed. What kinds of tasks do these people seem to be engaged in? Why is it safe to say that the people addressed here are fairly affluent?

What mistake are these businesspeople making in their assumptions (vv. 13-14)? What sins underlie these mistaken assumptions?

What does James say ought to be a Christian's frame of mind when thinking about the future? Is James saying that planning or investing for the future is wrong? If not, what then is he saying is wrong?

Based on 4:13-18, describe the difference between the way self-reliance looks and the way God dependence looks in planning for the future.

Do you think you should actually say the phrase "if the Lord wills" when you talk about the future? How can you work to cultivate that kind of dependence on God in your own life and thinking?

Essentially, James is here taking aim at the human tendency to think we are in control. What kinds of bad effects does a godless sense of self-sovereignty have in our lives?

According to James 5:1-3, miseries are coming upon the unrighteous rich. Where are those miseries coming from? What might be a 21st century way to say that wealth is rotten, moth-eaten, and corroded?

Read James 5:3b. How would you describe the difference between hoarding and investing?

STUDY GUIDE

Scan II Corinthians 9:6-15 and make a list of the benefits of generous sharing.

In James 5:4, the unrighteous rich are condemned because they defraud, rob, cheat their workers out of a just and equitable paycheck. Read the OT background for this condemnation in Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14-15, and Malachi 3:5. Where and how have you seen this happen in 21st Century NE Ohio? What is the message God desires the unrighteous rich to hear regarding this injustice?

How have you seen employers treat employees as means to the end of their own self-indulgence? How have you seen employers treat employees as people whom God has put in their lives for them to love and care for?

Re-read James 5:5. What are some tell-tale signs today that a person is living in luxury and self-indulgence? What do you think some third world believers might say about the lifestyles of most believers who live in NE Ohio?

Re-read James 5:6. How is living unjustly and in luxury akin to murdering a righteous poor person?

How would you summarize James' message to the unrighteous rich?

[living it out]

If you were to read letters that some godly people wrote 150 years ago, you would have noticed the postscript: "d.v." d.v. was an abbreviation for the Latin words "deo volente" which mean "God willing." How might you live differently if you wrote "d.v." on your heart as you pray and as you plan?

In what areas of your life do you have a certain degree of power? How do you use it? For example, how do you treat your employees? The family who rents your property? The person who cleans your office building or school? The person who makes your food at a restaurant?

The spiritual leader J. C. Ryle said, "It is possible to love riches without having them and to have riches without loving them." Discuss the implications of this statement. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Who is a rich person you know who does not appear to be a Christ-follower? (Be careful not to be guilty of "critical condemnation"!)

Spend some time as a group praying for his/her salvation.

Who are some examples of generous givers that inspire you? What practices from their lives have you thought about implementing in your own? What has held you back? What will you do about it?

Discuss ways in which you might decrease your level of living and increase your level of giving so that you might "get rich quick... in heaven." Spend time praying for each other in your group regarding a greater obedience toward generous living.