

The General Epistle of James

Faith
that works!

4

OPENING WORSHIP

To begin your Bible study, read together **Proverbs 9**. Throughout Scripture the term “wise” is regularly applied to believers, while the term “fool” refers to unbelievers. One of the outstanding characteristics that distinguishes the wise from the fool is the ability to accept correction and receive instruction. For the foolish, pride gets in the way, the walls go up, and loving admonition from a concerned Christian is met with resentment and bitterness. Lord, keep us always from such pride, and grant us humble hearts to receive your discipline and instruction!

INTRODUCTION

We’ve got big plans for the future! We’re going to live the American dream, find earthly success, and be worthy of the admiration of our peers.

Sometimes we think we’ve got life all figured out: get a good education in elementary and high school; go to college and earn a degree; get a job; get married; have kids; raise the kids; retire and live out our golden years basking in the glow of a happy and prosperous life.

Many things can intervene along the way to upset our carefully conceived plans. We might become victims of our own unsound decisions, or external factors might radically change the direction of our lives.

Submit all things to the working and will of God, and do all things to his glory. Remember: *Man proposes, but God disposes!*

BIG PLANS

Read **James 4:13-17**

Why are the earthly plans described by James here so foolishly laid?

Is it wrong to plan for the future? Explain your answer.

Consider James’ words (v. 14): *You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes*. How does this compare with your assessment of your life? (See also the book of **Ecclesiastes 1:2ff** and the meaning of the Hebrew word הָבֵל [havel].)

Look again at verse 17. Explain how this verse fits with this section.

LARGE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS

Read **James 5:1-6**

Consider these verses as a whole. How does this section speak to Americans living in the early part of the 21st century?

In verse 3 James accuses his readers: *You have hoarded wealth in the last days*. How do these words serve as a warning to you?

What is *the day of slaughter* mentioned in verse 5?

WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD

Read James 5:7-12

For discussion: Important words in this section are *patience* and *perseverance*. We are living in the age of immediate information retrieval, jet transportation, microwave popcorn, same-day delivery and immediate gratification. Describe the unique challenges our world presents to God's people of faith. How are these challenges overcome?

What are you as a Christian to wait patiently for?

How does this perspective tie together all of the thoughts we've considered in this lesson thus far?

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Read James 5:13-20. In these verses James lists a number of tools at a Christian's disposal to help God's people succeed in patient perseverance. How does each of these tools apply to you? How can you use them to help you in your walk with Christ?

Prayer (v. 13ff)

Praise (v. 13)

Anointing (v. 14ff)

Confession (v. 16)

Admonition (v. 19, 20)

May the Lord grant you patience and perseverance, as you walk humbly with him, and may he preserve you faithful to him until the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

VERSES TO REMEMBER

James 5:16 *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

James 5:20 *Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*