



Study Series

James: Week Twelve

Bible

James 5:7-11 (NIV)

Patience in Suffering

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. **8** You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. **9** Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you

will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. **11** As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Sermon Summary

James begins to wrap up his letter in 5:7-11 with a renewed call to patient endurance. These verses are typical of James' style, reflecting on a theme from several overlapping perspectives. In this case, James appears to be linking his call to patient endurance to the primary theme of the letter. James has urged his readers to move towards maturity, and to become wholehearted and singleminded in their desire for the things of God. This is the aim of our patient endurance and reminds us that patience is not passive, but active. As we wait for a desired outcome we exercise patience, preparation and hope. For example, as you wait for a job opportunity to open up, you exercise patience, preparing for that hoped-for position by improving your skills, applying for different roles that might move you forward, or by networking with others who are seeking the same outcome.

As James concludes he wants his friends to consider carefully what they need to do as followers of Jesus as they continue towards maturity. And James provided guidance on several aspects of this journey worth working on as they wait for the Lord to return; Caring for those in need, demonstrating faith through their deeds, being careful with their words, and similarly careful about how they think about and interact with wealth. But James is not asking them to just work harder. In nearly every verse of this short section he refers to the provision and activity of God either directly or indirectly. This reminds us of the opening verses where we are encouraged to ask God for wisdom for he gives generously. The bottom line for James is that we don't sit around but continue our active endurance in cooperation with the gifts and provision of God to become mature. This is at once very simple and very challenging. Do we have maturity and completion as our goal? And if so, what do we need from God to become more mature?

Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation. Please take your time over them, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. The objective of a group discussion is to engage in meaningful conversation around a Biblical idea, invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time of reflection.

Have a go at question 1 before reading the passage.

1. Opening Discussion: In a culture where waiting could be considered a dying practise, what has patient endurance looked like in your life? What have you had to faithfully wait for, perhaps in the face of difficulty? Share your reflections with the group.

2. Read James chapter 5:7-11. As you read, or hear it read, notice if there are words or phrases that 'jump out at you'. What are they? (Try to resist the urge to explain *why* it jumped out – this is about creating space for often familiar passages to say something new to us, allowing God to show you something). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to that word or phrase, take time, and share what you've been lead to.
3. James has an active view of patience, it is not about doing nothing whilst waiting. How does the idea of patience as an active exercise change your perspective of it?
4. What does Christian maturity look like?
5. In Marc's words, "The tone of scripture is the melody of grace." He described God's evaluation of our growth in maturity as more like starting from zero and finding any way to give us points, rather than starting from 100 and taking points away for failure. What impact does God's grace have on your growth in spiritual maturity? And, where have you matured as a follower of Jesus over the last few months?
6. This section of James invites us to review his key points throughout the letter. Reflecting on previous studies and sermons from this series, what has stood out as a primary challenge for you, and what has caused or inspired change in your life?

Prayer

This life following Jesus, cannot be sustained in our own power. The grace of God at work in us, by the power of His Holy Spirit, enables us to obediently follow and to patiently endure. Take some time now to reflect on your answers to questions 6. Pray for each other, that you might draw on God's provision to continue persevering in these challenges, revealed to us over the course of this series.