



## KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE GOAL

We live in an age that much is available instantly. Knowledge, entertainment, food - all readily available when we want it. We can find ourselves distracted and not keeping our eye on long-term goals, but choosing more enjoyable short-term activities with an exuberant amount of “fun” distractions everywhere. Moreover, social media and instant communication access cause many interruptions in our daily focus. We constantly see the best of what others look like, what fun they are doing, and what fun people they are with. Judgment is on the rise as we blame others for what we don’t have, and we feel disenfranchised.

As we look at James 5:1-12, we see two groups of people that have different perspectives about life success. This is not unlike it is in today’s society. James is speaking to believers helping them view their lives in not just an earthly sense, but what their lives represent for eternity. James desires believers to see their choices from a heavenly long-term view, not an earthly short-term view, and to make choices that represent who God is as our Heavenly Father.

### READ JAMES 5:1-6

The warning is clear that trusting in wealth can bring unexpected dangerous misery (v.1), ends up in decay (v.2), and results in condemnation (verses 4-6). However, the temporary happiness of wealth can be deceiving both to the possessor as well as to other believers. Money itself is not evil, but we must not put our faith in it – we should only put our faith in God. The warning is to not be tempted with money’s false sense of security. Money has a tendency to increase the desire to control others and can rise personal pride.

Although an earthly worldview says, “get all you can, as fast as you can, any way you can,” James now moves on to instruct the second group of people (verses 7-12) whom are believers to have a Christian worldview. The Christian worldview expectantly awaits the return of Christ and instructs us to demonstrate patience in the face of persecution and injustice from others.

## READ JAMES 5:7-12

Now James gives two negative commands regarding the tongue - don't grumble (v. 9) and don't swear (v. 12). As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to avoid complaining about each other - not even under our breath. He is advising us to keep our eyes on the long-term goal of Christ's return and to patiently extend generosity to others both in word and deed. We are not to retaliate the wrongs committed against us, but leave the execution of justice to our Lord. We should not grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13; Hebrews 12:3). James gives us three examples of patient endurance in the farmer, the prophets, and Job.

*"Therefore, be patient..."* The verb "patient" in Greek is *makrothymese*. It means to persevere, to be patient, to refuse to retaliate with anger, to display self-restraint. It literally means to extend a long time. The example of the farmer helps believers see that we are primarily sowing and cultivating in this life, not reaping rewards here and now as extensively as we can. We must not lose sight of our hope in Christ patiently waiting for the future harvest when the Lord returns.

My father was a part-time farmer. I admired his example of Christ in many ways, one way was seeing him patiently trusting God in farming. My father did not have an elaborate irrigation system to water the land. He trusted God for the rains to come at the needed time. A farmer has to work at his farming with no hint of rain on the horizon to cause the seed to grow in the spring and bring later rains to grow the crop to full maturity. As James gives the example of how farming in Israel required working and waiting on the Lord, so it did for my father. In the waiting, patience is learned and trust grows deeper as the Lord faithfully provides. I had the gift to learn through my father how to prayerfully and patiently await my Heavenly Father's provision of the rains. In farming, my father displayed the kind of patience God wants us to exhibit as we wait for the Lord's return. Is there someone in your life that did this for you? Who might need you to be an example for them today?

## REFLECT & PRAY

How is the health of your heart? Is there an area of your life that has caused your heart to fatten? Confess it before the Lord. Are you strengthening your heart daily by spending time with Him in the Word and prayer? Be mindful and persistent in resisting the temptations of time and money focused on short-term gains. Spend time in prayer asking the Spirit to help you recommit daily time with Him so that He can refresh and lovingly strengthen your heart to be ready to represent Him in what He has prepared for you that day. Remember that God is compassionate and merciful.

**Everyone a Disciple. Everyone a Disciple Maker.**