

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, November 6, 2011

Passage: James 5:1-6

Memory Passage: Matthew 6:19-20

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:1-6.** Is James referring to rich believers or rich non-believers in these verses? Are the ones to whom he writes inside or outside the church? Upon what do you base your opinion (context, grammar, content, etc.)?

(b) Why does James command them to “weep & howl”? How would they obey? What “miseries” are coming upon them?

(c) At what level of wealth would one be considered “rich” and therefore need to listen to James’ exhortations? Are you rich? Spend a moment right now contemplating the amount of money that comes into your hands each month and write down what percentage of it is spent on necessities and what percentage of it is spent on kingdom advancement (i.e. things that the Bible says are heavenly-minded ways to spend our money). Add these two percentages together and subtract it from 100%. This is the amount that you spend on things that are not necessity and are not extolled in Scripture as advancing God’s kingdom.

(d) *Family:* Ask: “How much money must one earn in a year to be considered rich? Are we rich?” Record everyone’s answers on your white board. After the discussion, display this chart (either by copying it for your family or displaying it online): http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco_gro_nat_inc_percap-gross-national-income-per-capita Explain that this is a list of the average annual individual income by country. Make these sums understandable to your family by making comparisons to sums of money they understand. (I.e.: If your child earns \$5/week in an allowance they would earn more than the average annual salaries in 26 nations; if you spend \$50 on a tank of gas 2 times each month, you will spend more on gas annually than the annual average salaries in 76 nations.) Be creative! Then ask again, “Are we rich?” (“Yes!”). Then read James 5:1-6 and explain that this week we will study instruction from James about the misuse of wealth.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:1-6.** What is James describing in v. 2? Since gold and silver do not rust (the Greek word the ESV translates as “corroded” means, “to rust or corrode thoroughly or completely”), why does James say in v. 3 that they have?

(b) James is addressing the idea of hoarding wealth in vs. 2-3. Thinking of his description, in what ways are you guilty of hoarding your wealth? Think about this by asking yourself questions like: Do I have so much food that it spoils before I can eat it? Do I have more clothes than I could possibly wear? Do I have financial resources not being used for kingdom work?

(c) **Read Luke 12:13-21.** What is Jesus illustrating through this parable (v. 15)? What was the primary sin of the rich man? In what way was his thinking in v. 19 in error? What is Jesus’ warning to him?

(d) In what ways are you “on guard against all covetousness” in your life? In what ways should you be? In what ways are you tempted to covet that with which God has not blessed you? Does your life consist in the abundance of your possessions?

(e) *Family:* **Read Luke 12:13-21.** Ask, “What does the word “covet” mean?” (To desire or long for something one does not have.) Teach through this parable, explaining why the rich man’s actions were covetous, how Jesus warns him, and the judgment of one who “lays up treasure for himself.” Then re-read the parable inserting something that your kids covet (this can be anything over which they obsess, anything that captivates their thoughts, even something that is important to them that they do not necessarily yet covet). This exercise will help them apply Jesus’ teaching to their own lives. Now **Read James 5:1-3** and explain these verses and the relationship between hoarding and coveting.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:1-16.** How will the corrosion of their wealth stand as evidence against them? In what setting will this evidence be used? What will it prove?

(b) Is the treasure to which James refers in v. 3 laid up for good or evil? To what time does, “in the last days” refer?

(c) **Read Matt. 6:19-21.** To what does “treasures on earth” refer? How does one store them (since Jesus commands us not to store up treasures on earth we should probably have a good idea of what they are and how they are stored up ☺)? What about “treasures in heaven;” what are they and how are they stored up? Now return to your financial evaluation from Day 1 (c). What percentage of your use of wealth falls into each category?

(d) *Family:* **Read James 5:3.** Explain that the hoarding James rebukes is equal to one who “laid up treasure in the last days,” and that the “last days” refers to any time between Jesus’ first and second coming (so we live in the last days). Then **Read Matt. 6:19-21** and explain the difference between treasure laid up on earth and treasure laid up in heaven (note the use of rust and moths in both passages). Then explain v. 21 and compare it with Luke 12:21 from last night’s study. Emphasize that we pursue and desire what we love the most, and our attitudes toward earthly possessions reveal our attitude toward God.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read James 5:1-6.** James continues itemizing his pieces of “evidence” in vs. 4-6 as he describes the evil way these landowners have gained and used their wealth. All 6 verses use the language and tone of the OT prophets as they cried out in judgment against those who oppress the poor with their wealth (cf. Is. 3:24-25; 5:1-9; 10:1-4; Amos 4:1-3; 8:4-10, et. al.).

(b) What pieces of evidence do you find in vs. 4-6 that point to the landowners’ guilt and will lead to their judgment? Explain the picture James uses in v.5: “You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.” How have these landowners “condemned and murdered the righteous person?”

(c) Is God against wealth? Is He against rich people (see Gen. 24:35; 26:12; Deut. 8:18; Prov. 10:22; et. al.)? Since you are among the “rich” these warnings apply to you: In what ways are you living “in luxury?” In what ways are you living in “self-indulgence?” Since your wealth is a blessing from God, how will you adjust your use of and attitude towards your wealth so you are not overcome by the love of stuff & things and your actions show that your love is for the Giver rather than His gift?

(d) *Family:* Ask, “What things in our life could we *not* do without?” Write down the responses on your white board. If the answers are incomplete, help everyone complete the list; if they are too full, including things that are not necessary, don’t address these yet. **Read 1 Tim. 6:6-10** and teach these verses to your family. Tie them to what you have learned from James 5:1-6. Emphasize being content with what God has provided, the basic necessities of food and clothing, and the perils awaiting those who desire to be rich (stress *desire* because God is not against riches and wealth; He gives them to many people as His blessing and so it is our desire to be rich which reflects discontentment). Then return to your list and make sure that only the proper things are on it (and your list will probably include more than food and clothing).

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read 1 Tim. 6:17-19 & 2 Cor. 9:6-15.** In 1 Tim. 6:17-19 Paul instructs us how “the rich in this present age” (us!) should live. I think you will clearly see the ties with James 5, but notice that one of the things Paul mentions is our need to “be generous and ready to share” (v. 18). In 2 Cor. 9:6-15 Paul addresses how we are to be generous, why we are to be generous, what that generosity will bring, how it will be rewarded by our generous God, and the effects it will bring about.

(b) Meditate on these passages of Scripture, asking God to reveal to you how He wants you to more fully obey the truths they present. Write down at least 4 specific applications that the Holy Spirit will provide for you, and, if needed, specific times & ways you will carry them out this week.

(c) Now spend time thanking God (2 Cor. 9:11-15) for His provision of grace and all sufficiency (v. 8), for Him being the supplier of all your wealth and providing you with an increase in righteousness (v. 10), for the enrichment He will provide for you to continue in generosity in every way (v. 11), the glory He will receive for your submission to the Gospel as you live this generous life (v. 13), the prayers of the saints offered for you as a result of your obedience (v. 14), and most of all, for His inexpressible gift of Jesus Christ who makes this generosity possible (v. 15)! Whew! That’s a lot for which to be thankful!

(d) *Family:* Lead your family through a time of celebration and thanksgiving by doing (a)-(c) above.

DATE: November 6, 2011

PASSAGE: James 5:1-6

The Miseries of Materialism

In James 5:1-6 James pronounces judgment against rich people who misuse their wealth (v. 1) by entering 4 exhibits into evidence against them.