



## Scotts Hill Baptist Church

JAMES: A FAITH THAT WORKS •

FAITH THAT WORKS PRODUCES PATIENCE IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY • JAMES 5:7-12 •

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### MAIN POINT

God's patience toward us has led to our salvation, so we must extend the same kindness toward others.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Our world today moves a lot faster than it used to. What are some differences you have noticed from even just a few years ago?**

**How do you think the "speed" of our world affects our level of patience?**

**Can you describe a time in your life when haste led you to jump to a wrong conclusion or to make a decision you came to regret?**

We should all be very grateful for the patience of our God. Paul reminds us that we should not "despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience" because "God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance" (Rom. 2:40). The Lord is patient, and He knows every detail for every reason for the things that happen. How much more patient should we be since we rarely know the circumstances for the things that happen in our lives? Our prayer today is that we will learn how to be more patient and celebrate the joy that comes with not being hasty.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 5:7-8.

**Does the impatience of the farmer have any effect on how quickly his crops will ripen? What good will being impatient accomplish?**

**How do faith and patience go together? How is the farmer an example of patience for us?**

**How can being patient often be hard work?**

We know that impatience will not help the farmer's crop grow any faster. If he wants corn, cucumbers, or beans, he will simply have to wait for them. Being impatient will only make the waiting more miserable at best, or it will lead him to do something foolish at worst. If the farmer has faith that his work will be rewarded and that he will get to eat the fruit of his labors, it will help him wait.

**Read 1 John 3:2-3. What are all of God's children called to wait for patiently?**

**How would you say you are doing at this patient waiting?**

The illustration of the farmer is a reminder that we wait for Jesus' return, and we are confident that when He returns, He will reward us for our labors. Being patient doesn't mean that we sit around and do nothing, though. It means that we work with joy, knowing that our Lord sees our effort for the kingdom, and He will reward us in due time.

| HAVE TWO VOLUNTEERS READ JAMES 5:9-11 AND MATTHEW 5:11-12.

**What is the danger of grumbling against another brother or sister? How does this grumbling demonstrate impatience?**

**What does it mean for us if we suffer as the prophets suffered?**

**How can remembering the rewards of the prophets keep us patient in a time of testing?**

Grumbling against our brothers and sisters demonstrates that we are impatient with their progress in the faith or even smaller aspects of life that are not moving along as we expected. Not only this, our grumbling against others will also begin to divide church fellowship. It will force others to take sides, and it can lead to terrible problems in the church. Certainly, none of us are perfect, and we ought to be keenly aware of our own failings. If we are aware that God's patience toward us is changing us into better people, our patience with others will be rewarded with seeing them progress in their faith as well.

Just as an impatient farmer will not quicken the growing of his crops, so too our impatience with our brothers and sisters will not help them mature into the people God calls them to be.

If we name a hero of the Bible, we can almost certainly name how they suffered for the sake of God's kingdom. They endured, patiently, by remembering the reward of those who remained steadfast in their love for God. If we do the same, we will be as blessed as those of the faith who came before us.

| HAVE TWO VOLUNTEERS READ JAMES 5:12 AND MATTHEW 5:34-37.

**Why doesn't Jesus want us to "swear by" things?**

**What does God's ownership over everything have to do with our promises?**

**What does saying "yes" or "no" have to do with our patience?**

We don't truly own anything in this world. Everything, from our homes to the hairs on our head, are the property of the Lord. We should not be presumptuous in swearing by things that we do not own in the first place. We are stewards of the Lord, taking care of the time and the things He has given to us while we are on the earth. Remembering that God is sovereign—that He owns everything—should remind us that we are not in control. We don't have to feel like the outcome of everything depends on us. If we will remember this, it will help us remember what God has called us to do individually, and hopefully keep us from over- or under-committing ourselves!

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what areas of your life do you have a hard time choosing patience and a heavenly perspective rather than a worldly perspective?**

**Who in your life do you think would be impacted the most from seeing God in you as you model patience?**

**What are some ways we might take care to be more patient with one another in the church family?**

**How can we demonstrate more patience toward the ministries of the church? What might this look like?**

# PRAYER

Ask the Father to help us learn to be patient with others as He has been patient with us. Pray that we will not be hasty in our judgments of others or situations. Ask the Father that we will always remember that His patience toward us has led to our salvation, so that we can extend the same kindness toward others.

## COMMENTARY

### | JAMES 5:7-12

5:7. In light of God's ultimate justice, James exhorted his brothers to be patient. The Greek term rendered be patient means "to be long-suffering," "to endure." Rather than to seek revenge for wrongs, we are to live in anticipation of the Lord's coming—Christ's return. An illustration from farming presses James's point. The farmer plows his field and sows his seed. He eagerly expects a crop of precious fruit, which he holds dear because of his toil and his dependence on it for survival. The early and the late rains refer to the promised land's two rainy periods. The early rains began during October and lasted for a couple of months, and the late rains began in February or March and also lasted a couple of months. These rains usually came gradually. The farmer sowed his seed when the early rains came and softened the earth. Then he anticipated the late rains to cause the grain to grow to maturity. Farmers depended on these crucial rains for crop production. Without them, people could face famine.

5:8. Believers are to follow the farmer's example of perseverance. In light of Christ's imminent return, we are to strengthen our hearts. We are to persevere in faith and renew our courage and commitment. Our phrase "just around the corner" captures the sense of the words is near. Living in light of Christ's return should give believers staying power, because at His return believers will be vindicated and the wicked oppressors will be judged.

5:9. The Greek term rendered complain means "to groan" or "to sigh" inwardly and then "to verbalize ill feelings toward someone." In this context it has the sense of blaming others for one's difficulties. James wanted believers to stop murmuring or grumbling against one another so they would not be judged. Again he echoed words of Jesus (Matt. 7:1-2). The word look calls attention to and emphasizes a strong warning: Jesus, the Judge, is on the threshold and is about to enter (see v. 8). With the Judge so near, how can believers continue to grumble against and find fault with one another? Verse 9 does not

mean Christians will face the same judgment as the wicked (vv. 1-6). Instead, believers will be judged on the basis of their relationship with Christ, and the wicked will be judged on the basis of their lack of a relationship with Him.

5:10. James pointed believers to the prophets as a group for an outstanding example of suffering and patience. The Greek noun translated example comes from a verb that means “to copy under.” It refers to students’ receiving copies of correctly formed letters to use in honing their writing skill. They practiced writing the alphabet under these excellent models. James referred to Hebrew prophets as models of perseverance. Jewish believers would mentally review their history for prophets such as Jeremiah who were persecuted but endured. The prophets persevered under pressure; thus, they were worthy examples of steadfastness.

5:11. See calls attention to James’s emphasis. Those who endured were worthy of congratulations and praise. The word for endured is different from the term for “patience” in verses 7-8 that also has the element of endurance. The word in verse 11 conveys the sense of bearing up under a load without collapsing and of taking blows and having the strength to strike back.

These believers had heard of Job’s endurance, perhaps in synagogue settings in which Job was presented as an example of perseverance. He was not patient in our usual meaning of the word; he “had it out” with God, but he remained steadfast in his faith. We know the outcome from the Lord for Job—the vindication God provided. That God restored Job demonstrates He is very compassionate and merciful. The Greek word rendered very compassionate means “full of pity or of tender affections.” It conveys great kindness. The term merciful has the idea of being moved by another’s suffering. We can count on God’s active kindness and empathy as we endure hardships.

5:12. Here the appeal is for us to avoid using God’s name disrespectfully. Above all does not suggest that this sin is more serious than other sins such as murder, immorality, or robbery. It is simply a common way of bringing a letter to a close, perhaps indicating that what follows in some way summarizes what has gone before.

Although these words prohibit profanity, they are not chiefly concerned about “taking the Lord’s name in vain.” They warn against the use of a hasty, irreverent oath involving God’s name during a time of suffering or hardship. This logically follows the discussion of suffering in verses 10-11. Above all during our stress we should not resort to flippant oaths that communicate something about God to the world that we do not intend.

This prohibition bans the careless use of God's name to guarantee the truthfulness of a statement. Christians who face suffering can be easily tempted to make a frivolous appeal to God's name to bargain their way out of trouble or difficulty.

In the New Testament period, some Jews used oaths for frivolous swearing. They would make a statement such as "by my life" or "by my head" to bolster the truth of a promise or statement. They also used evasive swearing. If a person swore by the name of God, his oath was binding. If he swore by another object such as heaven or earth, his oath was not binding. Jesus condemned such false actions. He wanted the words of his followers to be so patently honest that they needed no additional confirmation. James affirmed what Jesus had already said. He wanted an individual's yes to mean yes, and the no to mean no. God would judge the words of an evasive or frivolous swearer (see Matt. 12:36).