



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

June 5, 2005
James 4:13-5:6

OVERVIEW

There's an old song that says "Money makes the world go around." Although that isn't actually true, money does "grease the wheels" of everything in the world. And, much of the world runs on a pursuit of money and wealth and stuff. It's easy, even for Christians, to get enticed to live for the same kinds of things. But, as James has already told us, friendship with this world system (living for the values and going after the pursuits that are held up in the world) means that we undermine our friendship with God (4:4). This week, we turn our attention again to the subject of money. James has provocative words for us that we need to take to heart.

DISCUSSION

Because it can be an uncomfortable subject for many, be careful how you prod and nudge the conversation as you discuss the opening questions. It will help if you can begin with some general observations/thoughts about wealth and "stuff." That is what the initial questions are intended to do. Don't press too hard for "Biblical answers" right at first; let people think aloud about what they really do feel about money and stuff. After they have the chance to put their thoughts on the table, turn to James.

James uses some strong and hyperbolic language to speak about wealth. Apparently, those he was writing to (who were suffering under the hardship of persecution), were slipping into two problems: They were setting their goals based on the desire to get more, and they didn't really see that the "stuff" of this world really doesn't last. (Those are easy temptations to give into when things are tough. Come to think of it, those are easy temptations to give in to when we are constantly bombarded with messages that we "need" more stuff even when things aren't going tough!)

As you assess James' evaluation of the three statements on the handout, don't worry too much about pressing everyone to answer the same way that you would about what James might say. Let the Scriptures bring whatever conviction is needed.

It will be important to make sure you touch on the driving forces James has in mind. He isn't "anti-stuff;" his concern is what is at the core of life. The issues he is addressing are clearly issues that will reveal a lot about what is at our core. If you think it's "up to you" to determine how and when you will make a profit (and fail to genuinely lean on God), at your core you are not living from faith. And, if you are living as if stuff and money and possessions and wealth are really the things by which the value of life is to be measured, at your core you are not living from faith. Faith says God is in control of life; He is the one who brings blessings (1:17). Faith says that meeting the needs of others in love is to be valued, more than having more for yourself (2:14-17). So these issues James addresses are really just another way of helping us come to grips with how we are living what we say we really believe. Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-24 sum it up well: We can't live out of two cores!

BIG IDEA

Is there a dollar sign at the core of your life?



DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

June 5, 2005
James 4:13-5:6

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

We are going to talk a bit about a sometimes uncomfortable subject: your "stuff," your money. So, let's begin with a relatively non-threatening question: Why do you think God gives you the "stuff" that you have?

How do most people tend to connect stuff/wealth with their walk with God?

Which of the following do you think most people would say is true?

- The longer I walk with God, the better off I will be financially.**
- If I am faithful in my relationship with God, I will continue to get promoted to better jobs at work.**
- God typically blesses His faithful children with material blessings.**

Read what James has to say about attitudes about "making a profit" and the "good life" in James 4:13-5:6.

In light of what James says here, which of the above statements would he say is true? Why?

What driving forces of life is James contrasting in these sections we have read?

Turn to Jesus' word in Matthew 6:19-24. How do His words help clarify what James is driving at?

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