



LEADER'S NOTES

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

June 12, 2005
James 5:7-11

OVERVIEW

It's a stereotype, but it conveys an all-too-common truth. Joe has a bad day at the office; things didn't go his way and someone got the promotion that he felt he deserved. So now as he comes home . . . well, his grumbling about how unfair life is gets expressed in the way he treats the dog (kicks the dog!), his kids (ignores the kids), and his wife (he yells at her for not having dinner ready). You may not want to use this stereotyped illustration but it does paint a picture of James' point: When life doesn't go the way we think it should, we often take it out on others. That is what we will explore this week.

DISCUSSION

You may need to encourage some real honesty among your people in answering the first couple of questions. (We all tend to see ourselves just a bit better than we really are!) Most people do tend toward grumbling when things aren't going their way. And, often, that grumbling gets "taken out" on others. After you have raised those ideas in the awareness of your people, turn to the passage to see what insight James offers.

As we have seen, James knows people. He tells us straight up here that if we are not patient and aren't waiting on the Lord in times of difficulty we just might "complain against one another." That response is way too common and all too human.

Why is such a response inappropriate? James telegraphs the answer: It puts us at risk for being judged. What is the idea there? Perhaps Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1 can serve as your commentary. There Jesus warns us against judging others because we risk ending up being judged by the standard we use against others. To grumble against another is to complain about how and why they do what they do. When we don't like how life is going, we can easily find someone to blame, complaining against them. But James tells us that such an attitude is not appropriate.

Fortunately, James doesn't just leave us with the "don't do this" part of the advice. He has offered us some advice on the flip side as well. Reading through the passage, his counsel is clear. When things aren't going well, rather than grumbling and taking our feelings out on others, James calls us to wait patiently on the Lord.

His illustration (7:1) of waiting for both the early and the late rain would have been a metaphor common to his readers. For the crops to come in properly, they needed both the fall rain and then the spring rain; both gifts from God that brought blessing. But the people still had to wait for God to bring the latter rain. So it is with us when we are in the midst of life's challenges. We will need to wait patiently for what God wants to bring our way in "the late rain." Because the Lord is "full of compassion and is merciful" we can trust Him to bring into our lives what we need no matter what the challenge. And we won't have to take out our frustration on our unexpected friends and family!

BIG IDEA

Wait on the Lord, don't rant against others, when life doesn't seem fair.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

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

June 12, 2005
James 5:7-11

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

What is the common reaction or response to life when things don't go the way someone wants?

When are you most likely to react to life in such a way?

When you are reacting to life that way, how do you tend to respond to others?

Keep one eye on how you tend to do life when things aren't going so well, read James 5:7-11.

Here, James is returning to a frequent theme: patience or endurance when things aren't going well. What does he suggest we sometimes do in relationship with others when life isn't going well?

According to James, why is such a response to others inappropriate?

It's not enough to simply tell us "don't do this;" James also gives us some "but do this" kind of advice. In place of grumbling against others when things aren't going our way, what does James tell you to do?

What will you need to be sure of if you are going to live the way James is calling for?

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