

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: November 25, 2018

Lesson Title: "With Anticipation"

Lesson Passage: James 5:7-9,13-20

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In our lesson passage, James deals with four different subjects. First, he pleads with his readers to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord. Second, he advocates unimpeachable honesty. Third, he exhorts them to experience the power of prayer. Finally, he urges them to salvage wayward believers.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Explain why the readers of James' letter needed to be patient.
- (2) Describe ways to deal with the "church dropout" problem.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Observe that, in the conclusion of his letter, James deals with the following subjects (display this outline):*

A PLEA FOR PATIENCE (James 5:7-11)

AN APPEAL FOR HONESTY (James 5:12)

THE POWER OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (James 5:13-18)

SALVAGING THE STRAYS (James 5:19-20)

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Discuss "A PLEA FOR PATIENCE" (James 5:7-11): (1) The Greek verb translated "be patient" in v. 7 (*makrothumesate*) means literally, "be of long spirit." (Sometimes, this word is also translated "longsuffering.") This refers to the ability to wait; but, more specifically, to wait for something. However, this kind of patience is not passive like the patience of someone who sits and hopes for the best. Rather, it is like the endurance of a runner who doggedly pushes toward the finish line. (2) Pose this question: Why did these early Christians need to be patient? Call attention to the reference to "the coming of the Lord" (v. 7), an expectation shared by most New Testament Christians. Perhaps the Christians to whom James was writing were beginning to wonder when this was going to happen. Some were suffering persecution, making it hard to practice patience. (3) Explain the agricultural analogy in verse 7: The early rains in Oct. and Nov. were needed to soften the sun-baked soil and cause the seed to germinate; the late rains in April and May were essential to the maturation of the grain. James is urging his readers to have hope and patience like the farmer, as they await the Second Coming (v. 8).

2. Refer to the next point, "AN APPEAL FOR HONESTY" (v. 12, not included in the lesson passage): The second half of v. 12 shows us that James is not thinking of profanity here. He is referring to the practice of swearing oaths to guarantee truthfulness (Mt. 5:33-37). James is appealing for the kind of honesty that regards a simple "yes" or "no" as binding.

3. Call attention to "THE POWER OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER" (James 5:13-18): (1) Suffering and joy are both occasions for prayer (v. 13). Christians should live in an attitude of prayer when the sun shines as well as when clouds gather. (2) The Greek term for "sing" (*psallo*) refers to "praising God in song." And this is a form of prayer. APPLICATION: Singing in congregational worship should be regarded as an offering to God, not merely as entertainment for the congregants. (3) With reference to vv. 14-15, point out that anointing with oil was commonly used for medicinal purposes in that day (see *Isa. 1:6*). But the use of "the name of the Lord" (v. 14b) shows that power to heal belongs to the Lord, not to the oil or to the elders. (The importance of praying with faith has already been emphasized in James 1:6-8.) (4) Verse 16 strongly suggests that there is a relationship between sin and sickness. (Refer to *Mk. 2:5*, where Jesus prefaced an act of healing with the words, "your sins are forgiven.") (5) "Pray for one another" in Jas. 5:16 shows that neither hearing confession nor the ministry of intercessory prayer are to be practiced exclusively by "official clergy."

4. Deal with the last point, "Salvaging the Strays (Jas. 5:19-20): (1) The KJV translation, "converteth the sinner," is somewhat misleading, because this passage has to do with straying church members. How do we know that? First, v. 19 says, "if any of you..." Secondly, this verse refers to a person who "errs" (literally, "wanders" or "goes astray") from the truth. (How could one stray from the truth if he has not already followed the truth?) (2) To "wander from the truth" could mean either to lapse into immoral conduct, fall into doctrinal error or lose one's close fellowship with Christ. (3) "Soul" (in v. 20) is the Greek *psuche*, which means "life" or "personality." (The NIV's translation "will save him from death" is correct.) "Cover a multitude of sins" means simply "to obtain forgiveness."

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

Lead a discussion of ways to deal with the "church dropout" problem:  
SUGGESTIONS: (1) Make it clear at the beginning that church membership entails demands as well as privileges. (2) Relate every new member to a support group, such as a Bible class. (3) Assign a "spiritual mentor" to each new member. (4) When anyone is inactive for more than a month, find out why. (These are just samples. Ask class members to offer other suggestions.)

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