

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer

2. Welcome any newcomers

3. Read James 5:7-12 and give a five-minute review of the sermon using Peppy's sermon notes.

Facilitator: Please don't feel you have to cover every question. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

CONNECT Group study questions, James 5:7-12

June 29, 2014

Title: Enduring the Unendurable

Ever heard of the murder prayer? Probably not, but you may know what I'm referring to. Let me explain. The murder prayer is what my wife and I call it when we hear a Christian say something like, "I'm praying that the Lord will take him out, just remove him, so he's not there to bother us anymore." They may even go so far as to use some more specific, but acceptable sounding way of saying it, like, 'take him home,' or 'give him what he deserves.' It's like making God into some cosmic hit man—nothing personal, just business. James says, don't do it. He says, "But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation." Bringing God into our personal condemnation as an advocate against someone we hate, or against a situation, or to express our determination as if we can enlist God's power to fulfill our willful desire is an oath—it's swearing. Instead, James says, endure it with a simple yes or no, and know that vindication comes from the Lord in His good time—not ours.

Question: Following his condemnation of wealthy people who mistreat the righteous poor, James addresses those who are suffering with "Be patient, therefore,..." Review verses 1-6 of chapter 5 and suggest reasons why you think James would tell them to be patient.

Question: Why is it so difficult for us to be patient when we are clearly and severely wronged?

Question: Verse 8 says, "...for the coming of the Lord is at hand." Why is the Lord's coming a reason to "establish your hearts," or as Peppy said, "Buck up?"

Question: Couples divorce, churches split, feuds erupt in families and between neighbors when tragedy strikes—we've seen it time and again. The death of a child, inability to meet budget commitments, career and family conflicts are enemies from the outside that turn us against each other. What does it take to recognize the real enemy when it's not each other?

Question: These are impossible commands: patience, steadfastness (endurance), compassion, mercy. Yet, these are what we are commanded to extend to those who severely wrong us. What reality makes it possible to endure the unendurable?