



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Encouragement is often used in Christian circles to describe a kindness shown or a well-timed word. In cultures where Christianity is not threatened or perceived as threatening, the word may even lose a bit of its edge—a pity, when the crux of the word is rooted in *courage*. In the context of James 5:7–12, “encouragement” was exactly that: James, with his words, rallied his original audience to develop the grit—specifically the “strength of heart”—to patiently persevere in righteousness despite unjust and harsh circumstances. Two millennia later, what does it mean to be a courageous Christian? Let’s discover the answer together.



Getting Started: Patiently Resisting Revenge

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you’re studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You’ll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you’ll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it’s the first time you’ve read them.

Quotable

*You witness
to others every
time you respond
graciously to an
ungracious act.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hints

- Reading different Bible versions can help you to read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you.
- Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 5:7–12, make some initial observations about what you see. For instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:7–12, apply the four primary techniques—*observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*—in the searching the Scriptures process. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Jot notes in the margins of your Bible as you go or on a separate sheet of paper.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Make your notes as specific as possible at this stage.

James 5:7–9

James 5:10–12



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Doing Right When You've Been Done Wrong
James 5:7–12

Interpretation: What does it mean?

James 5:1–6 was addressed to “you rich,” but James’ audience changed to “brethren” beginning in verse 7. You should definitely perk up at this point, because James’ advice definitely applies to *all* Christians. Here are some universal principles that James proffered as encouragement:

- Patience is a virtue that should mark all Christians.
- Our hearts are strengthened during times of patient suffering when we know that the Lord’s coming is near. Vengeance belongs to God, and in the Day of the Lord, all wrongs will be made right (Obadiah 1:15).
- When we are wronged, we lean into God. We still trust in God’s compassion and mercy, like Job did.
- Don’t use God’s name to cosign your own agenda (taking an oath).

James 5:7–12

What concepts are illustrated in the metaphor of the farmer? Specifically, how does one wait for rain? Who brings the rain?

What are two circumstances James mentioned as worthy of judgment? (See verses 9 and 12.)

What are some ways that the prophets serve as examples of suffering and patience?



What is the link between patience and swearing oaths? Is swearing an oath a form of “playing God”?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two as to how they help confirm the meaning of James 5:7-12.

Genesis 50:20

Psalms 55:22

Romans 8:18

Romans 8:28



2 Corinthians 4:17–18

SERMON NOTE

Waiting . . . suffering. These two topics can be challenging to teach, especially in cultures that value do-it-yourself comfort, convenience, and immediacy. Young people growing up in a “right-now” culture are most prone to instants: instant fame, instant wealth, instant answers. How would you communicate the message of James 5:7–12 to a group of teenagers? How would you define *suffering*? What would you emphasize as their biggest challenges? What encouragement would you offer this generation?

Some encouragement might be:

- The interconnectedness of this generation creates new opportunities to support persecuted and suffering Christians and to pray for both local and global challenges to the church.
- This generation is passionate about justice and compassion. They can follow the example of the prophets by speaking out against those who have “condemned and put to death the righteous” (James 5:6) and by demonstrating the compassion and mercy of God (5:11) to those in need.
- While cyberbullying and social media revenge are popular responses to mistreatment, a Christian stands out as godly when he or she shows restraint online.

Application: What difference does it make?

When you've been wronged, don't ruminate endlessly on the situation, or you'll be consistently angry. Don't focus on yourself, or you'll be filled with self-pity. Don't focus on someone to blame, or you'll complain—a fruitless endeavor. Don't focus solely on the present circumstances.

Instead, practice patience. Be strong and stay objective, as much as you're able, by realizing that God's purposes in present circumstances may not be immediately clear. Insight doesn't usually come until later.

In the space below, write out a few specific personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 5:7–12.





A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for being full of compassion and mercy. I am amazed by You. Though You are holy and I am a sinner, You didn't seek revenge or judgment, but in Your compassion, You rescued me. Because You have given me life, forgiveness, and mercy, I pray that You will help me to extend compassion and mercy to others. Help me to turn over to You any vengeful desires. May I find favor in Your sight by serving others with patience and kindness. I trust that in Your time, You will make all things new. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.



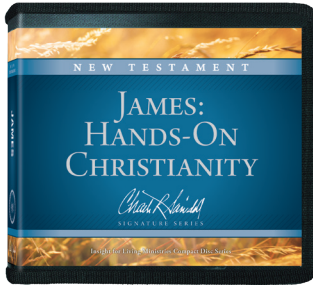
JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Doing Right When You've Been Done Wrong
James 5:7–12

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

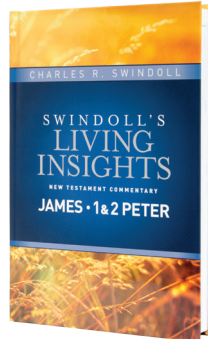
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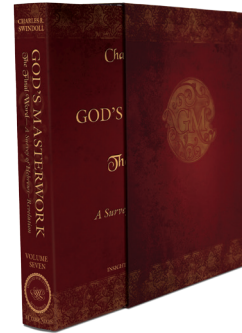
Tools for Digging Deeper



**James: Hands-On
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Swindoll's Living Insights
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For the 2016–2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts. It was released as a Message Mate through Insight for Living Ministries.



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