

JAMES

A Faith That Works Study 15

The Perils of Materialism

James 5:1-6

James 5:1-6

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.”

1) Comprehension question. Based on James 5:1-6 and the video lecture, God gives us lessons regarding the perils of materialism. Fill in the blanks.

#	Summary	Lessons	Supporting verses
1	Accountable	God will hear the cries of the poor and hold the rich accountable for their oppression of the poor	v. 4
2	Temporary	Their ill gotten wealth will be lost	v. 2-3
3	Liability	Their wealth becomes a liability on judgment day	v. 3, 5
4	Distraction	The pursuit of wealth is a deadly distraction in the last days	v. 3, 5
5	Dehumanization/ Oppression	Materialism dehumanizes the rich and oppresses the poor	v. 5-6

Note: If any difficulties are faced answering Q1, return to this question after attempting the rest of the questions below.

A. God will hear the cries of the poor and hold the rich accountable for their oppression of the poor

James 5:6

“You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.”

Isaiah 1:15

“When you spread out your hands,
I will hide My eyes from you;
Even though you make many prayers,
I will not hear.
Your hands are full of blood.”

2) Objective question. Based on James 5:6 and Isaiah 1:15 above, is the oppression of the others is better/worse/equally bad to the sin of murder?

- A. Better than murder
- B. Worse than murder
- C. Equally bad as murder

3) Discussion question. A specific example of how the rich oppress the poor is by delaying their wages (not paying them on time) so that they can earn the interest on those funds. What are other ways the rich oppress the poor today?

B. Their ill gotten wealth will be lost

James 5:2-3

“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.”

4) Comprehension question. There are two ways to interpret the word “corrosion” [“ios” in Greek]?

Word	Rusted	Poison
Reference	James 5:3	James 3:8

5) Discussion question. Rust and moth eaten riches are a thing of the past. One could say that those don't affect us any more today with stainless steel and better quality clothes. Yet the Bible is still true in that wealth will not last. What is the equivalent of "rust and moth eaten" corrosion today?

Inflation.

6) Discussion question. In what way can riches poison/corrode us? (Refer to Ecclesiastes 5:10 and 1 Tim. 6:9-10)

7) Objective question. Based on the video lecture, what are the psychological effects of materialism?

- A. Become sympathetic
- B. Become competitive
- C. Become manipulative
- D. Become selfish
- E. Become loving
- F. Become less empathetic
- G. Lower levels of well-being
- H. Less pro-social interpersonal behaviour
- I. Increased wealth and riches
- J. Spending problems and debt
- K. Increased levels of happiness
- L. Unpleasant emotions, depression, and anxiety
- M. Lack of satisfaction

C. Their wealth becomes a liability on judgment day

James 5:3, 5

"Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days."

"You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter."

8) Comprehension question. Based on the video lecture, what can we bring with us when we die? (Refer to Revelations 14:13)

Our deeds.

D. The pursuit of wealth is a deadly distraction in the last days

James 5:3, 5

“Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.”

“You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.”

9) Reflection question. Imagine you have just one more year to live. Instead of being distracted by increasing our wealth in the last days of our lives, what should we be doing?

E. Materialism dehumanizes the rich and oppresses the poor

James 5:5-6

“You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.”

10) Objective question. In Luke 16:19-31, which of the following are true?

- A. The riches of the rich man make him less sensitive towards the needs of Lazarus
- B. The riches of the rich man make him more sensitive towards the needs of Lazarus
- C. Riches desensitize us towards the needs of others because it makes us think of ourselves more
- D. We are dehumanized when we value riches more than people

Takeaway

- A. God will hear the cries of the poor and hold the rich accountable for their oppression of the poor**
- B. Their ill gotten wealth will be lost**
- C. Their wealth becomes a liability on judgment day**
- D. The pursuit of wealth is a deadly distraction in the last days**
- E. Materialism dehumanizes the rich and oppresses the poor**

Case Study

Case 1 – Desensitization

Eng Hew Man grew up in a poor household. His family never made much money and they were heavily steeped in debt. Nevertheless, they had many good and genuine friends. With the little they had, Eng's family still shared what they had with those who were truly in need through the First Baptist Church's Manna Box.

When Eng became an adult, he felt the pressure of earning more and came across a job in sales. He was gifted in selling products to people and soon enough, he started to make a decent amount of money.

Unfortunately, in his greed, he started to approach his friends **only** to sell them his products. He would not attend to friends who needed help from him. He only responded to those who were interested to purchase what he was selling.

Additionally, he began to only spend time with richer colleagues, family, and friends. He would only visit those who had big houses and luxurious cars in expensive neighbourhoods like Mont Kiara and Damansara Heights.

Unlike his family, he became less generous with his wealth, and decided to not personally support any giving of aid to the poor to save more. He felt that the poor should work harder and help themselves out of poverty.

1) Discussion question. From the perspective of sensitivity to others' needs, what was happening to Eng?

Eng was becoming more and more desensitized to the needs of others.

2) Discussion question. Why was this happening?

The love of wealth or materialism has started to corrode/poison Eng's mind.

He is starting to see his friends as commodities. He saw them as opportunities to make money.

Additionally, he starts to weigh people's worth based on what they owned.

3) Discussion question. What was Eng's issue - earning money or loving money?

Loving money.

4) Discussion question. Read 1 Tim. 6:10. In what ways has Eng erred from the faith?

5) Discussion question. The Lord commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves. What should Eng have done in love towards his neighbour?

6) Reflection question. If you were Eng what would you do?