

February 24/25, 2024

"Faith and Wealth"

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SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

February: Read Genesis to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 James 4:13-5:6 | Faith and Wealth

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:13-14

After addressing matters of faith and the heart, James tackles a core issue in the first-century church: how should wealthy Christians think about and handle their finances? Though the majority of Christians in the first century were poor, some were wealthy enough that the New Testament provides answers to this question (see also [1 Tim. 6:17-18](#)). James warns certain affluent Christians that their wealth should not be hoarded or used to fuel self-indulgence (as it had been). Instead, it is a tool for the glory of God and the good of others.

There are many similarities between our affluent society and James's wealthy audience. Just as James warns these believers about the danger of wealth and the importance of living for God and others, we must also be careful about how we use what God has given us. Rather than being consumed with the things of this world (such as money, possessions and earthly comforts), we are to focus on honoring God and serving others—which implies that we use the wealth and resources we have been given for the benefit of those around us.

TODAY: Spend some time considering what living intentionally with money looks like. Notice the advertisements or messaging that encourage you to buy more or expand your lifestyle. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you resist the natural pull of our culture and instead live a life of contentment and generosity.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Genesis 38-40](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider Joseph's plight and how he is a type of Christ.

Day 2 James 4:13-15 | If It's the Lord's Will

Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." James 4:15

Before specifically addressing the topic of money, James speaks to the issue of work and one's view of God. Apparently, some of James's readers were separating their view of God (and their walk with him) from their daily work. James reminds these readers that God is sovereign. He rules over all things, including all of one's daily activities and labors. Rather than boasting about going here or there, believers are to live with the humble recognition that we breathe and move only by the will of God.

The antidote to such a self-reliant life is to invite Jesus into everything we do. God cares about all our happenings, including our work, family life and community engagement. We must be careful about a "spiritual" and "secular" division in our thinking. All of life is lived before God, so all of life matters. Our "spiritual life" includes work, play, eating and everything in between. As a result, rather than putting Jesus into only a small portion of life (such as during a "daily chair time"), invite him into every part of the day.

TODAY: Invite Jesus into every meeting, conversation and activity today. If you have a business meeting, go with a prayerful awareness of God's presence. As you spend, give, or save money, ask Jesus for wisdom to manage the money he has entrusted to your care. As you spend time with coworkers, classmates, family or peers, do so with a prayerful posture of loving and serving them as best you can.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Genesis 41-43](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note how Joseph provides for his brothers before they even know who he is.

Day 3 James 5:1-3 | Now Listen

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. James 5:1-3

James rebukes his rich audience harshly. The problem isn't that these individuals are wealthy. The problem is that these rich landowners hoard their wealth and live in self-indulgence while the harvesters entrusted to their care go unpaid or underpaid for their services. These individuals lost sight of the things that matter most (such as love for God and love for people) and put their hope in money and possessions. James sternly warns them, however, that their wealth is corroding, and will ultimately be a testimony to their selfish lifestyle.

We are not to put our hope in money or possessions. Instead, we put our hope in God. Paul charged Timothy, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" ([1 Timothy 6:17](#)). Money, possessions, and worldly comforts always fail to satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts. A promotion, vacation, house, or retirement account are all blessings that should be received with thanksgiving. But they are not worthy of our hearts' hope, trust or confidence. Only God is worthy of such devotion.

TODAY: Memorize [1 Timothy 6:17](#). Post it where you'll see it often and remember the bigness and goodness of God and the deceptiveness of wealth. Ask God to help you remember that he is the one who can satisfy your heart's deepest longings.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Genesis 44-46](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers and provisions for them.

Day 4 James 5:4 | Do What is Right

Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. James 5:4

James rebukes his rich readers and their unjust treatment of their workers. Wealthy landowners failed to pay harvesters for work completed in their fields. God is not happy about this. James notes, "The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty" ([James 5:4](#)). God is the one who sees and knows all—no injustice escapes his notice. James calls his readers to live with integrity, knowing that God sees even acts done in "secret" (see [Romans 2:16](#)).

Integrity means being the same in public as in private. It includes doing the right thing even when no one else is looking. We can fail to be fully truthful or upright in our dealings just as the wealthy landowners were. Living with integrity often means doing the right thing even when it hurts. It can mean fully divulging information when selling a car or a smaller item on marketplace—even if the admission will cost you money. Integrity includes avoiding "stretching the truth" and choosing complete honesty—even when it may be inconvenient. God calls us to be upright, fair and just in all our dealings. This is the life of integrity God intends for us to lead.

TODAY: A life of integrity includes making things right. Ask God to reveal if you need to talk with someone to make a wrong right. Is there someone you owe time or money? Is there a lie or half-truth that you need to confess? Walking with integrity is challenging. But it is the good path that God has for us to walk. What step can you take today to right a wrong with someone?

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Genesis 47-48](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

Day 5 James 5:5 | Choose Contentment

You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. James 5:5

James's readers are living in "luxury and self-indulgence" while hoarding money that rightfully belonged to their workers. The problem is not their wealth but how they acquired it through unjust means and used their wealth for a self-absorbed lifestyle. They fail to remember God and the coming day of judgment. They turn money and possessions into idols. The remedy is to develop a biblical view of money.

Living biblically with money implies saying both "yes" and "no." We must say "no" to many of the lures of our culture to have the financial margin to say "yes" to God's priorities for us. Continually buying more and more thwarts our ability to live contentedly and give generously. Rather, we are to live a disciplined life of saying no to excess or "luxury and self-indulgence" while saying "yes" to generous living—which is the life of leveraging wealth for the honor of God and the good of others.

TODAY: Biblical practices reorient your heart around money. There are three key practices to engage. (1) Give God thanks for the good gifts he has blessed you with. All good gifts come from his hand ([James 1:17](#)). (2) Choose something to say "no" to today. Maybe it is an unnecessary Amazon purchase or a cup of coffee at a coffee shop. (3) Say "yes" to contentment and generous living by taking a step toward greater generosity. Maybe it is giving to a friend or neighbor in need or increasing your contribution to a worthy cause. In all, practice gratitude, and say "no" to excess while saying "yes" to the life of generosity God calls us to.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Genesis 49-50](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note how Joseph points to how God can turn such evil and use it for good and salvation.