

Warning to the Rich



Start Talking. Conversation starter for your group.

- What was the first job, outside your home, you ever got paid for?
- How much did you get paid?
- How did you feel about that wage at the time?

Start Thinking.

- Read James 5:1-6
- Leader:
 - *This may be a challenging study, for several reasons. James addresses “rich people” directly and accuses them of exploitation and neglect. The people in your group will not want to think they’re included in the “rich people” category, no matter how wealthy they are. If you press the point, applying the Scripture to them, as you would with any Scripture, they might get defensive or even angry. And in today’s political climate, this might spark a debate about class warfare, taxation, welfare, and upcoming elections. You don’t want that to happen. So you might want to be extra careful about where the discussion goes. What is the Lord telling all of you through this Scripture? Do all you can to help people listen to God’s voice on this touchy matter.*
- How would you describe the tone of this passage? Who is James addressing in this section?
- What is he predicting for them?
- Do you think this is written to all “rich” people ever, to rich people in that time and place, or just to the rich people who were guilty of exploitation?
- Discuss:
 - The deeper question is: What are we going to do with this? James really lays into these people, and it makes us uncomfortable. If we can dodge this barrage, we want to. We want to say it’s their problem, not ours. And most of us don’t think of ourselves as rich, do we? We’re always looking at someone else who has more, and we say, Go after them, James. They’re the problem. But whenever we come to Scripture, we want to see what’s there for us. God wants to speak to us in these pages, and we need to be ready to listen, even if it’s uncomfortable. So maybe James is speaking to people who use their wealth badly, but there’s still a lesson here for us. How does God want us to use our resources? That’s the question we want to zero in on today.

Start Sharing

- In James 5:1, what’s the first thing James wants the “rich” people to do?
- How do you think this compares with their current attitude? (Do they spend a lot of time “weeping and howling”?)
- Why would this be important? What is there to weep about?

- There are some questions we can ask of ourselves even if we're not rich.
 - How can we use the resources we have, such as they are, to help the poor?
 - What can we do to make sure that poor workers are not exploited, that they get a fair wage for their work?
 - We know God loves justice and hates the exploitation of the poor. So as we participate in our world economy, how can we advance the cause of justice?
 - Where are we storing our treasure? How can we break free from the idolatry of money and all the things it buys? How can we seek first God's kingdom?

Start Doing

- How can we break the mastery of money in our lives? How can we center our hearts on God rather than wealth? How can we store up treasures in heaven?

Pray/Recite Ephesians 3:16-21

- 'I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.'