

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: Live On

What is something you've accomplished in your life that took a lot of perseverance?

Did you ever want to quit? What kept you going when you wanted to quit?

Conversely, what's something that you wish you would have persevered in doing until the end? What do you think made the difference between those two things?

Throughout the book of James we see that authentic faith demonstrates itself in action. This action is not something that comes and goes depending on mood or circumstance; it lasts. This final session in James will help us recognize characteristics of faith that persevere to the end.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 5:1-5.

Do "riches" necessarily mean material possessions? What are some other ways we can be "rich" and misuse those resources in ways that hurt others?

Verse 3 partially states, "You have laid up treasure in the last days." Is there anything wrong with gaining wealth here on earth? Why or why not?

James 5:1-5 gives a Kingdom-minded perspective on finances. This passage is not condemning the rich for the sake of being rich. Rather, James 5:1-5 provides eternal perspective for earthly living. The unrighteous in this passage (who happened to be affluent) lived lives of self-indulgence and failed to care about those working for them. These landowners focused on the present, their glamorous lives here on earth, with no regard for eternity. The landowners did not think about how their actions have consequences. They were not concerned with salvation, or with heaven.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 5:7-12.

Why did James urge patience? What was happening to his readers?

Why is it hard to wait and be patient in the midst of suffering?

In James 5:7-11, James told his readers to be patient and wait on God. These believers were enduring prejudice and discrimination for being followers of Jesus, and some of them considered God slow to act in their defense. Faith that perseveres "is patient in suffering," like a farmer waiting for the harvest and like Job.

Read Job 42:10-17 and list Job's rewards for patience and faithfulness. How can Job's example be a comfort to us during difficult times? How can we develop perseverance?

James presented Job as a classic example of faithful endurance. Though Job complained, he never renounced God. God vindicated Job after he had endured many trials (see Job 42:12). At

the end of verse 11, James reminds us of God's compassion and mercy, which affirm the deep tenderness of God's love toward us. That love doesn't change with our circumstances.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 5:13-20.

Which situation for prayer that James lists is easy for you? Which is difficult? Why?

In verses 17-18, James gives his final example from Scripture of someone for his readers to imitate. **What do we learn from the example of Elijah (see 1 Kings 17-18)?**

James pointed to the prophet Elijah to show that Elijah was human as we all are; yet because of his right relationship with God, his prayers were effective in God's causing and then ending drought.

In addition to prayer, what is another responsibility we have in each other's spiritual journeys, according to verses 19-20?

Have you ever strayed from your faith as a result of suffering you were going through? What happened to bring you back to God? How did He use other believers to help you return to Him?

Although we all want to endure suffering with joy and patience, sometimes that is not our reality, and our trials take a toll on us emotionally and spiritually. That's where our community comes in. James reminded his readers of the significance of a restoration ministry. The restorer guides the wanderer back, not with a spirit of judgment but with love. Faith that perseveres "Is loving toward sinners."

APPLICATION

Describe a person you know who exemplifies godly, patient endurance under suffering. What have you learned from that individual?

Will God keep us faithful? Yes. How will He do it? Through brothers and sisters." How can we help each other live out the truths about authentic faith James presents to us?

PRAYER

Thank God for the gift of community, other people to help us bear the burden of suffering and draw us back to His presence when we stray. Pray that your group would persevere in the faith as you aim toward the great glory of Christ.