

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

1. INTRODUCTION

- A. **James 5:9-12 (NLT2)** “Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door! For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy. But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.”
- B. **1945 #1 SMASH HIT SONG... “ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE”**
- C. **CURRENTLY THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF BOOKS AVAILABLE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING POSITIVE.**
- D. **IN 1952 NORMAN VINCENT PEALE WROTE, “THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING”.**
1. **WITH OVER 20 MILLION COPIES SOLD, THE PREMISE IS THAT YOU CAN OVERCOME MOST OF LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES, CHALLENGES, AND PROBLEMS WITH POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND A POSITIVE MINDSET.**
- E. **HOWEVER... THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR BALANCING TOTAL POSITIVITY WITH A LITTLE REALITY.**
1. **PSYCHOLOGY TODAY WRITES, “WHILE POSITIVE EMOTIONS SUCH AS GRATITUDE, HAPPINESS, AND LOVE MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING, A DASH OF NEGATIVITY CAN BE A HELPFUL SPICE IN THE RECIPE FOR A GOOD LIFE. SO ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE... BUT, DO NOT ELIMINATE THE NEGATIVE. NEGATIVE THINKING CAN ACTUALLY SAVE YOUR LIFE. YOU SAY, IF I EAT THAT, I COULD DIE. IF I DO THAT, I COULD GET INTO TROUBLE. SO, NEGATIVE THINKING HELPS YOU ENVISION THE WORST, SO YOU CAN AVOID THE WORST.”**
- F. **TO THAT POINT: MOST OF THE 10 COMMANDMENTS ARE WRITTEN IN THE NEGATIVE.**
1. **GOD IS, IN EFFECT, SAYING IN THEM... “STAY AWAY FROM DOING THAT... SO, YOU CAN HAVE A POSITIVE LIFE.”**

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

G. BACKGROUND James 5:9-12: JAMES' AUDIENCE OF FIRST CENTURY

CHRISTIANS WAS:

1. SUFFERING OPPRESSION AND BEING PERSECUTED BY:

- a. THE JEWS
- b. THE UPPER CLASS

2. JAMES IS WRITING TO ENCOURAGE AND TO STRENGTHEN THEM.

H. SO... HE GIVES THEM THESE FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE:

1. FIRST: DO NOT GRUMBLE!
2. SECOND: DO NOT BACK DOWN!
3. THIRD: DO NOT GIVE UP!
4. FOURTH: DO NOT SWEAR!

2. DO NOT GRUMBLE!

A. James 5:9 (NLT2) “Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!”

B. GRUMBLERS ARE PRONE TO NOTICE ALL THE BAD THINGS GOING ON, AND THEY LOVE TO SHARE THAT WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

1. NOTE: THAT IS NOT THE SAME AS VOICING DISCONTENTMENT WHEN WE, OR SOMEONE WE LOVE, ARE SUFFERING OR HURTING.

2. HOWEVER, THAT IS NOT THE ISSUE IN JAMES 5:9... WHICH READS “Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters...”

C. THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN JAMES 5:7 AND 5:9.

1. James 5:7a (NLT2) “Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return.”

2. James 5:9a (NLT2) “Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters”

3. THE CONNECTION: IMPATIENCE WITH GOD WILL LEAD TO IMPATIENCE WITH GOD’S PEOPLE... AND THAT WILL SHOW ITSELF IN COMPLAINING... GRUMBLING.

a. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS HUMAN NATURE THAT WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING OR HURTING, WE GET ANGRY WITH THOSE WE LOVE THE MOST... FELLOW CHRISTIANS, “BROTHERS AND SISTERS”, HUSBANDS AND WIVES, BEST FRIENDS, ET CETERA.

1) SO, JAMES SAYS... “DON’T GRUMBLE... AGAINST ONE ANOTHER” SO YOU CAN HAVE A POSITIVE LIFE!

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

D. **“GRUMBLE” GK. = GONGYZO WHICH MEANS TO MURMUR, MUTTER, OR COMPLAIN WITH SMOLDERING DISCONTENT.**

1. **EXAMPLE: WHEN A PERSON BUILDS UP RESENTMENT, OVER TIME... THAT STRAINS RELATIONSHIPS.**

2. **JAMES SAYS, “DON'T LET THAT HAPPEN. DON'T LET RESENTMENT BUILD UP. DON'T TAKE YOUR BALL AND GO HOME. DON'T SAY I'M GOING TO GO TO ANOTHER CHURCH, JOB, OR MARRIAGE.**

a. **NO!!... RESOLVE THOSE ISSUES WITHOUT “GRUMBLING”!**

E. **HOW? BECOME A PEACE-MAKER... BE INTENTIONAL!**

1. **PEACEMAKERS DRAIN MOATS!!**

a. **IN THE OLD DAYS, THEY BUILT MOATS THAT SEPARATED PEOPLE FROM ATTACKING A CITY OR A CASTLE.**

b. **BUT WHEN YOU DRAIN YOUR MOAT, WHEN YOU TAKE THE WATER OUT OF IT, YOU ALLOW ACCESS.**

1) **A PEACEMAKER IS SOMEONE WHO DRAINS THE DIVISION, THE MOAT, AND BUILDS BRIDGES RATHER THAN MOATS.**

c. **DISCUSS: THE WAYS WE BUILD MOATS?**

F. **QUESTION: AM I A “GRUMBLER”?**

1. **AM I QUICK TO POINT OUT PROBLEMS IN OTHERS... ESPECIALLY CHRISTIAN “BROTHERS AND SISTERS” ... COMPLAIN ABOUT THEM, AND THEN SPREAD THAT AROUND?**

2. **... BECAUSE IF I DO THAT'S A SIN!**

a. **Numbers 11:1 (NLT2) “Soon the people began to complain about their hardship, and the LORD heard everything they said. Then the LORD’s anger blazed against them, and he sent a fire to rage among them, and he destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp. (= JUDGMENT)**

3. **NOTE: WHEN WE COMPLAIN AS BELIEVERS, WE'RE BASICALLY SAYING THAT GOD IS NOT A GOOD SHEPHERD BECAUSE HE IS NOT MEETING OUR NEEDS... AND THAT IS A SIN.**

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

a. NOTE: WHEN WE **GRUMBLE** AND **COMPLAIN** IN FRONT OF **BELIEVERS**, THEY GET **DISCOURAGED**.

1) WHEN WE **GRUMBLE** AND **COMPLAIN** IN FRONT OF **UNBELIEVERS**, THEY GET **REPELLED** AND **WONDER WHY** THEY SHOULD **FOLLOW JESUS?**

2) **DISCUSS:**

4. THE **SECOND** PART OF **JAMES 5:9** SAYS THAT WE **WILL BE “JUDGED” IF WE GRUMBLE ABOUT “EACH OTHER”!!**

a. **James 5:9 (NLT2)** “Don’t **grumble** about **each other**, brothers and sisters, or **you will be judged**. For look—the **Judge** is standing at the door!”

b. **REMEMBER: GOD JUDGES US FOR OUR SINS!**

1) **SO... GRUMBLING/COMPLAINING ABOUT EACH OTHER MUST BE A SIN.**

2) **HOWEVER, HIS “JUDGMENT” DOES NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF OUR SALVATION.**

G. **WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR GOD SAY, “WELL, YOU MADE IT HERE, BUT YOU COMPLAINED ALL THE WAY ALONG.**

1. **NO, WE WANT TO HEAR “WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!”**

H. **CONCLUSION: OBVIOUSLY GOD TAKES GRUMBLING SERIOUSLY... SO, FOR A POSITIVE LIFE DO NOT GRUMBLE... ESPECIALLY AGAINST FELLOW CHRISTIANS.**

1. **CHOOSE TO BE A PEACEMAKER INSTEAD OF A GRUMBLER!**

3. **DO NOT BACK DOWN! IS THE SECOND NEGATIVE COMMAND FOR A POSITIVE LIFE.**

A. **James 5:10 (NLT2)** “For **examples of patience in suffering**, dear brothers and sisters, look at the **prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**”

B. **THE PROPHETS REPRESENTED GOD AND SPOKE HIS WILL TO HIS PEOPLE.**

1. **THEY INTRODUCED GOD'S WILL TO HIS PEOPLE BY SAYING “THUS SAYS THE LORD”.**

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

- a. **“THUS SAYS THE LORD”** APPEARS BETWEEN 413 AND 426 TIMES IN THE **OLD TESTAMENT** DEPENDING ON THE TRANSLATION.
 - b. THE **PROPHETS** BEGAN WITH **“THUS SAYS THE LORD”**... AND THEN **SPOKE GOD’S TRUTH**.
- C. **BECAUSE THE PROPHETS SPOKE GOD’S TRUTH... THEY WERE OFTEN REJECTED, SCORNE**D, **ABUSED, THREATENED, AND IMPRISONED!**
1. **BUT... THEY DID NOT BACK DOWN!!**
 - a. THEY **KEPT** COMING BACK... THEY **KEPT** SPEAKING TRUTH... THEY **KEPT** SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER... **OVER AND OVER AGAIN!**
 - b. **BECAUSE THE PROPHETS** WOULD **NOT BACK DOWN**, JAMES SAID THEY WERE **EXAMPLES** OF **“PATIENCE AND SUFFERING”**.
 - c. THE GREAT **THEOLOGIAN TOM PETTY** WROTE:
“Well, I **won't back down**
No, I won't back down
You could stand me up at the gates of Hell
But I won't back down

No, I'll stand my ground
Won't be turned around
And I'll keep this world from draggin' me down
Gonna stand my ground
And I **won't back down”**
- D. **CONSIDER: NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR CHRISTIANS TO BACK DOWN.**
1. **BECAUSE OF: THE (1) CULTURAL CONFUSION, THE (2) POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DIVISION, AND THE (3) INCREASING ATTACKS AGAINST CHRISTIANS THAT ARE OCCURRING IN THE WORLD... NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR CHRISTIANS TO BACK DOWN!**
 - a. **NOW IS THE TIME TO STAND UP!**
 - b. **NOW IS THE TIME TO SPEAK OUT.**
- E. JUST AS THE **WORLD TRIED TO SILENCE THE PROPHETS, THE WORLD WOULD LIKE TO SILENCE CHRISTIANS.**
1. **FACT: OUR WORLD IS CHANGING... CLEARLY THERE IS A TENSION THAT EXISTS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND “THE WORLD”, EVEN IN AMERICA.**

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

2. JESUS SAID...

a. Matthew 5:13-16 (NLT2)

“You are the **salt** of the earth. But what good is salt if it has **lost its flavor**? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. “You are the **light of the world**—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for **all to see**, so that **everyone** will praise your heavenly Father.

1) **NOTE: JESUS INDICATES THAT CHRISTIANS CAN LOOSE OUR FLAVOR AND OUR LIGHT TO THE WORLD.**

b. DISCUSS:

1) **HOW DO WE LOOSE OUR FLAVOR AND OUR LIGHT TO THE WORLD?**

2) **HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND WHEN POLITICAL ISSUES FORCE US INTO A MORAL CORNER?**

F. DR. ERWIN LUTZER WROTE, “WE TELL OURSELVES THAT WE DON'T WITNESS ABOUT OUR FAITH BECAUSE WE FEAR OFFENDING SOMEONE. WE ARE SILENT IN THE FACE OF POLITICAL AND MORAL DECLINE BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE THOUGHT OF AS NICE AND NOT JUDGMENTAL. WE DON'T WANT TO LET PEOPLE KNOW THAT THE WAY INTO THE KINGDOM IS NARROW, AND THERE IS A COST TO FOLLOWING JESUS. WE ALL HAVE CROSSES TO BEAR, AND WE ARE CONSTANTLY TRYING ON DIFFERENT ONES FOR A GOOD FIT. WE ARE ALL TRYING TO FIND A LIGHTER CROSS.”

1. **FACT: THERE ARE NO “LIGHTER CROSSES”!**

a. **THE REALITY IS THAT AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE TO BE SALT AND LIGHT TO THE WORLD WE LIVE IN... SO DO NOT BACK DOWN!**

G. CONSIDER: WE CANNOT “ENDURE” UNLESS THERE IS A TRIAL IN OUR LIFE.

1. **THERE CAN BE NO VICTORIES WITHOUT BATTLES;**

2. **THERE CAN BE NO PEAKS WITHOUT VALLEYS.**

3. **IF WE WANT THE BLESSING, WE MUST BE PREPARED TO CARRY THE BURDEN AND FIGHT THE BATTLE.**

4. **SO... DO NOT BACK DOWN!**

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

FOUR NEGATIVES FOR A POSITIVE LIFE – JAMES 5:9-12

H. JAMES SAYS... IF YOU WANT TO HAVE A **POSITIVE LIFE:**

1. FIRST: **DO NOT GRUMBLE!**
2. SECOND: **DO NOT BACK DOWN!**