

James: Concerned Sharing - What a Christian Gives

Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:16b-21, 21:1-4; John 15:13-14; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; James 5

Through this series, James has challenged us to examine if our faith is genuine. We have looked at what a Christian has, does, says, and values. Today we are looking at: “What does a Christian Give?”

A Christian gives resources instead of hoarding, patience instead of complaining, integrity instead of deception, prayer instead of self-reliance, and restoration instead of condemnation. Real faith always moves outward.

A Christian Gives Generously:

Read James 5:1-6. James begins with one of the strongest warnings in the New Testament. The issue is not that these people are rich, but that their riches became their god. James isn't only talking about money here. He is talking about a life poured out for God and others. Being rich is not about monetary wealth or possessions. We all have something to give

James proclaims the worthlessness of *riches*; Not the worthlessness of the *rich*. The issue is not that someone has abundant wealth. The problem comes when there is no generosity.

Money itself is not evil. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. Money itself is not a bad thing. Money can fund ministry, support missionaries, feed families, support our initiatives, and advance the gospel. However, money makes a terrible master. *Greed corrupts while generosity flourishes.*

James gives four accusations against these wealthy oppressors:

They Hoarded Wealth:

Their riches were rotting while people suffered. Think about Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16b-21. The question is not, “How much do I have?” The question is, “What am I doing with what God has entrusted to me?”

In contrast, Jesus tells the story of what extreme generosity looks like. Read 21:1-4.

They Cheated Workers:

Verse 4 pictures laborers whose wages were withheld. In James' day, workers depended on daily wages just to eat. To withhold their pay was not merely unfair, it was life threatening.

The possessions of the rich were accumulating while others were dying. It reminds me of the lyrics of a Dave Matthews song. “*Funny the way it is, if you think about it. Somebody's going hungry and someone else is eating out. Funny the way it is, not right or wrong. Somebody's heart is broken and it becomes your favorite song.*”

-Dave Matthews

They Lived Self-Indulgently:

James says that they fattened themselves in a day of slaughter. There is nothing wrong with enjoying blessings but we should be reasonable about it.

In fact, here are some Megachurch examples of being self-indulgent. One pastor has a helicopter in order to travel between their campuses.

I went to a Megachurch campus in AL for a conference that had a fleet of robot lawnmowers.

One church has an Olympic size swimming pool for a baptistry. For baptisms, they have synchronized swimmers.

They Condemned the Innocent:

The poor had no power to defend themselves. In Jewish thought, depriving a person of their means of support was equivalent to murder. God sees every injustice. Read Matthew 6:19-21. *Hoarding wealth corrupts while selfless generosity flourishes!*

A Christian Gives Patient Endurance:

Read James 5:7-11. James is now turning toward believers who are suffering. He encourages us to be patient. However, being patient does not mean being passive. Like a farmer waiting for the harvest, he doesn't just wait for the crops to sprout up from the ground. He plants seeds, waters, weeds, prunes, and prepares while he waits for the harvest.

This is NOT an excuse to be a miserable person. You know the type... "Too blessed to be stressed" on their license plate while they moan and complain with a 'woe is me' expression on their face. Real faith is more than lip service and saying the right things. When faith is soaked into your soul, it can be seen in your life. "Consider it joy..."

James also has a warning for believers. He tells us not to grumble against one another. It is human nature to want to find someone to blame for our problems and to bring others down with us. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. And we still do the same. But James reminds us that the Judge is standing at the door. Real faith refuses to become bitter while waiting. One of the greatest gifts you can give your family, your church, and your community is your steadfast faith. Your endurance may become someone else's encouragement

A Christian Gives Trustworthy Words:

Read James 5:12. People who constantly exaggerate eventually lose credibility. Christians should be known for truthfulness. Not half-truths. Not misleading statements. Not carefully crafted deception. Simple truth.

Our words should be so dependable that they require no extra guarantees. Your character needs no defense when it can defend itself. Trust is built one truthful conversation at a time. The Christian gives others the gift of reliability.

A Christian Gives Persistent Prayer:

Read James 5:13-18. Prayer is the dominant theme in this section. James covers every circumstance. Are you hurting? Pray! Are you happy? Pray! Are you sick? Pray! Are you struggling? Pray!

Prayer is not a last resort. Prayer is the natural response of faith.

We need one another. As believers, we are not alone. The church is meant to help bear one another's burdens together. When one suffers - we all care. When one hurts - we all pray.

Elijah was not a superhero. He just prayed according to God's promises. Prayer is not about what we want. It is about aligning ourselves (hearts & head) with what God wants.

Jesus taught: "*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*" (John 15:13-14)

To pray in Jesus' name means to pray according to: His character, His purpose, and His glory. Prayer may be one of the greatest blessings we can give someone. Never underestimate what God can do through a praying church

A Christian Gives Pursuing Love:

Read James 5:19-20. James ends with a picture of someone wandering from the truth. This isn't an outsider. This is someone who has drifted: struggling, wandering, trapped. James

does not tell us to gossip about them or to shame them but to pursue them. Real faith doesn't stand at a distance and criticize or to confront in order to condemn. Real faith moves toward people.

James began his letter by calling believers to be doers of the Word and not merely hearers. He ends the same way. Faith must have hands and feet.

Conclusion:

A Christian gives: Generously, Patiently, Truthfully, Prayerfully, and Compassionately. Ultimately, this is the pattern of Jesus Himself. Jesus gave up riches, endured suffering, spoke unpopular truth, prayed faithfully, and pursued wandering sinners. Because He gave Himself for us, we are free to give ourselves for others.

Reflection Questions:

- The question James leaves us with is simple: What are you giving away for God and others?
- Take time to consider where you are and what God is asking you to do today.
 - Is He challenging you to give something that you have been holding onto?
 - Is He asking you to trust Him through a difficult situation?
 - Is He encouraging you to have a hard conversation in love with someone?
 - Is He reminding you to trust Him and go to Him in prayer over situations in your life and the lives of others?
 - Is He calling you to go out and share His good news with others?
- If all of this is new to you:
 - Maybe you are struggling to make sense of it all because you haven't fully turned your life over to God. Maybe you are feeling that tug right now but you don't know what to do about it or how to respond.
 - If that is the case, I simply want you to know that God loves you. He loves you so much that He gave up everything for you. He loves you so much that He has never stopped and will never stop pursuing you. Just be open to His love. Stop running and hiding.