

Discussion and Application:

1. Followers of Jesus in America have not experienced as much persecution and oppression as their brethren in other parts of the world. What are some subtle ways that persecution occurs in America? If you have experienced persecution or oppression because of your faith, how did you respond to it emotionally? How would meditating on James 5:7 help you face persecution or injustices in the future?
2. What does it mean to “**strengthen your hearts**”? How was it used of Jesus in Luke 9:51 and of Peter in Lk. 22:32? What are some practical ways to strengthen your own heart and help strengthen the hearts of others? How does meditating on the soon return of Jesus and the physical proximity of Jesus help when you are under intense pressure from the world?
3. Why does James command them not to “**complain**” (groan; sigh) against one another? What does that have to do with the context? How might this show up when someone is being attacked or treated unjustly by others? In what way is complaining the opposite of being patient? What does God think about complaining? (see Numbers 11)
4. Why are the Old Testament **prophets** a good example for us when we are being mistreated? Why does James specifically point out that they spoke in the name of the Lord? Read **1 Peter 2:11-24**. What principles do you find in that passage that help you respond properly when you are suffering at the hands of evil people?
5. Why do you think James uses **Job** as an example in v. 11? Did Job ever complain about his circumstances? What is the difference between “**endurance**” and “**patience**”? How specifically was Job blessed after he endured? (See **Job 37-42**) Most people point to the material blessings. What other blessing did Job receive from enduring his trials that is even greater than material things? Hint: look at the end of James 5:11.
6. Read **Exodus 34:5-7** (cf. Num 14:18; Deut 4:31; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 108:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Rom 2:4). How are the qualities listed in those verses the equivalent of God’s glory? What would the devil want you to believe about God when you are going through a really difficult time? How would an ever-deepening understanding of God’s compassion and mercy help you when you are experiencing injustices in this world? How would deep convictions and expectations about the soon return of Christ help you trust in God’s compassion and mercy when it doesn’t appear that He is answering your prayers or bringing relief?
7. Read the following passages and discuss how believers with a deep conviction about the imminent return of the Lord Jesus should respond to the sufferings of this world: 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10-18; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-15. Encourage one another and pray for one another to stand firm and wait patiently.
8. Memorize James 5:7-11. Meditate on the soon return of Jesus and live every day in light of that reality. “Here comes the Judge!”