

LESSON 11

WHAT POSSESSES YOU?

JAMES 5:1–6



1 List any millionaires you can name.

2 Describe a time when you desperately wanted something but getting it ultimately led to a major disappointment. Why didn't this live up to your expectations? What did you learn from this experience?



Read James 5:1–6 and the following notes:

☐ 5:1–6 ☐ 5:6

3 How does James describe the lifestyle of the rich?

4 What is the effect of their lifestyle on others?

5 What is the effect of their lifestyle on themselves?

6 Who are these rich people—are they non-Christians or sinful Christians in the church?

7 What influences can blind people to the ultimate worthlessness of material possessions?



Jesus spent a lot of time talking about money because there is a close connection between the heart and material possessions. In Matthew 16:26, Jesus asked what it would benefit a man if he gained the whole world but lost his soul. In this passage, James makes the same point using powerful and dramatic images. It is nothing less than folly to value and pursue things that don't satisfy and won't last beyond the grave. These rich people were compounding that error by exploiting and manipulating people in pursuit of wealth. When material possessions become most important, people become expendable. If you have been blessed with riches, guard your heart so they don't become your god. If you find yourself being caught up in the pursuit of material possessions, hear the words of warning and perspective offered by James. Finally, if you have suffered under the hand of rich oppressors (even other believers), know that God has heard your cry and will dispense judgment in his time.



8 It has been said that one of Satan's strategies is to change the price tags while no one is looking so that people value the wrong things. In light of this, what do people tend to pursue that has little eternal value?

9 List some well-known people who seemed to have it all but were, in fact, impoverished?

10 Why does James speak so strongly against self-indulgence? What kinds of self-indulgent activities are "in" now? Why is this inappropriate for believers?

11 God gives you money for your needs, pleasure, and his glory. What does it mean to offer all your resources, time, and gifts to God with open hands?

12 Are you investing time and money in anything that is not really worth much from an eternal perspective? If so, what?

13 What would be worth pursuing that you aren't?

14 How can you invest yourself even more in what will matter forever?

15 Write down one way that you intend to change your lifestyle to reflect eternal and imperishable values. Consider sharing this with a close friend who will pray with you and encourage you to be a doer and not just a hearer.



A When will the ungodly rich receive the promised misery that is coming? How does the threat of impending judgment affect their lifestyle?

B Why does James refer to God as “the Lord Almighty” (5:4)? What does this name mean? How should referring to God by this name affect our attitudes and behavior?

C Compare the descriptions of the rich in this passage with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31. How is this an encouragement?

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