

Lesson 7: The Limits of Time¹

The Book of James

Scripture Passage: James 4:13-12

Growing Connected (10 min)

Take turns sharing about “prized possessions” you once had that eventually broke, got lost, or became worn out. As a group, spend time in prayer thanking God that he is Eternal, and his love endures forever.²

Introduction (2 min)³

Most people have had the experience of shopping in a store, only to hear an announcement be made from the loudspeakers: “the store will be closing in five minutes.” This announcement likely has an impact on the way you might shop. Perhaps it brings a greater level of focus. Perhaps you might skip some non-essential items on your list located at the other side of the store. Maybe you run down the aisles with a sense of urgency.

Shopping with a small amount of cash in one’s pocket might also have a similar effect. Once again, it likely has an impact on the way you shop. Perhaps it brings a greater level of thinking through each purchase. Perhaps you might stop and attempt to do math, wishing you had paid more attention in third grade. Others might respond differently to knowing they have only so much time or cash. Yet in each case, there would likely be an impact in some form or another.

Most people can relate to the experience of shopping with limited time or funds. Yet Scripture leads us to view our entire lives in a similar way. The Book of James shows us that, viewed in light of God’s perspective, we live all of life with only so much time and resources. And knowing that makes an impact on our lifestyle. In this lesson, we will learn that:

Big idea: Our time on earth is limited, and therefore everything we do and accumulate on earth is limited as well.

Play Video- Part 1 Notes

Group Think Tank (15-25 min)

The theme of this lesson was on the limited nature of our time, wealth, and suffering on Earth. The teacher brought out that our time and plans are not ultimately under our control. Likewise, our wealth will not last. And finally, our suffering in this life will come to an end. Take some time to process this teaching in small groups.

Small Group Activity in Zoom Breakout Groups (Groups of 2-3). Discuss the following:

1. Read James 4:13 - 5:12 together slowly.
2. As the teacher pointed out, making plans is not necessarily wrong. Verse 16 highlights that the people making plans in this passage were doing so *in arrogance*. How would you describe the difference between making plans *in arrogance* and making plans in a way that honors God? Can you relate to times when you have made plans in either one of these ways? What was it like?
3. As stated in the lesson, wealth can easily become our “central focus.” When wealth is our central focus in life, how does it impact the way we live and treat others? Use the description in verses 4-6 to provide examples.
4. In verses 7-10, how many times is the word “patient/ patience” used? What does it look like to be patient during suffering? Verse 11 connects this “patience” with the fact that “*the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*” How does God’s compassion and mercy help you get through suffering with patience?

Group Discussion

1. Ask two or three people to report back what they learned from the small group activity.

Play Video- Video Notes- pt. 2

Group Training (20-25 min)

The lesson concluded by charging us to consider how to practically handle the three areas of our time, resources, and suffering. Knowing that they are all limited leads us to not be passive in these three areas, but purposeful. We are called to be purposeful in handling each of these areas in a way that reflects God's will.

Individual Activity

Reflect on the following:

1. Being purposeful about God's will in these areas begins with releasing our personal control over them. Take a moment to pray through the three areas of time, resources, and suffering, releasing your control over each one to God. If you don't feel ready to do so, feel free to simply pray that God would help you be ready, or meet you where you are at.

Example:

- God, I surrender my time/ plans to you...
- God, I surrender my resources to you...
- God, I surrender my suffering to you...

2. Take a moment to consider what action step God might be inviting you to take as a response to giving each of these areas over to him.

Group Discussion

1. Ask a few people who are willing to share their experience with the individual activity. Which area was the hardest for you? What did you learn from this experience?

2. As a group, how might each of us use our time, resources, and even suffering to serve and encourage others this week? If possible, make a plan. For example: who could each of us serve? When? Share your ideas with one another.

Training Session Wrap Up (2 min)

Summary: Our lives on Earth are limited. This reality helps us remember that:

- 1) Our time on Earth is limited.
- 2) Our wealth on Earth is limited.
- 3) Our suffering on Earth is limited.

Knowing that these three areas are limited impacts the way we handle them. It leads us to use them in a purposeful way that reflects God's will for our lives.

*Closing Prayer:*⁴ Ask someone in the group to pray that God would grant wisdom to provide perspective in the way we make plans, use money, and endure suffering.