

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*What Church Ought to Be Like*  
James 5:7-20

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #...). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Have a white board or large piece of paper available for the study.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

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*What Church Ought to Be Like* – 12-32-06

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Make copies of **The Church's One Foundation** for the three readers who will participate. **The page for copying is at the end of the Worship Time session.**

### **Music Sources:**

**We Will Glorify**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 22; CCLI # 19038

**The Master Hath Come**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 421; CCLI # 1424529 Public Domain

**Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 7; CCLI # 27329

**They'll Know We Are Christians**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 385; CCLI # 26997

**The Church's One Foundation**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 346; CCLI # 55377 Public Domain

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

## Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

### *What Church Ought to Be Like*

#### **Focal Text**

James 5:7-20

#### **Background**

James 5:7-20

#### **Main Idea**

Life in the church should be characterized by patience in awaiting the Lord's return, refusal to complain against fellow believers, trusted communication, prayer that trusts God to respond, and restoration of fellow Christians who go astray.

#### **Questions to Explore**

What is life in our church like? What are we doing about it?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the church identify ways to incorporate into the life of your church the qualities of congregational life James taught.

#### **Gathering together:**

Sing one or both of the following:

**We Will Glorify**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 22; CCLI # 19038

**The Master Hath Come**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 421; CCLI # 1424529 Public Domain

#### **First thoughts:**

The title for today's study "What the Church Ought to be Like" is a thought-provoking one. The home church is a small church. But the truths of James 5:7-20 apply to home churches as well as to larger, more traditional churches.

We are living in anticipation of the Lord's return – that is, our daily actions reflect behaviour which would be acceptable to Him should He return this very day.

We are patient and non-judgmental in our relationships; we are prayerful; we are quick to forgive.

This may not be all the qualities needed in a faithful church, but it is a rich summary of those qualities and a fitting ending for our study of James.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *What Church Ought to Be Like*

#### **Focal Text**

James 5:7-20

#### **Background**

James 5:7-20

#### **Main Idea**

Life in the church should be characterized by patience in awaiting the Lord's return, refusal to complain against fellow believers, trusted communication, prayer that trusts God to respond, and restoration of fellow Christians who go astray.

#### **Questions to Explore**

What is life in our church like? What are we doing about it?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the church identify ways to incorporate into the life of your church the qualities of congregational life James taught.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

Prayerfully consider your church experiences. Think of the things that have made them rewarding. What has contributed to your spiritual growth? What are “basic essentials” to you?

#### **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

### **James 5: 7-11 Patience in Suffering**

Three principal teaching exist in the passage to follow:

Be patient until the Lord’s coming (vv. 7-9)

Be patient in the face of suffering (vv. 10-11)

Be patient and you will be blessed (v. 11)

***Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You, too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!***

***Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.***

James returns to the theme of Chapter 1—perseverance in times of trial. This was not a far off reality for James. We remember that James was martyred. “The accounts of the circumstances of his death vary, but the fact that he was martyred remains constant. “Josephus’ (a historian who wrote of the early church) account is very brief (Antiquities 20:9.1):

So Ananus, being that kind of man, and thinking that he had got a good opportunity, because Festus was dead and Albinus not yet arrived, holds a judicial council; and he brought before it the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ – James was his name - and some others, and on the charge of violating the Law he gave them over to be stoned.

Ananus was a Jewish High Priest; Festus and Albinus were procurators of Palestine, holding the same position as Pilate had held. And the point of the story is that Ananus took advantage of the interregnum (the inbetween time) between the death of one procurator and the arrival of his successor to eliminate James and other leaders of the Christian Church” (Wm. Barclay, **The Daily Study Bible: James and Peter**, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, page 13).

The words of Josephus “Ananus, being that kind of man” are significant. Ananus must have been a constant threat to the Jerusalem church. We don’t know how many were killed with James, but it was to those very people that James was speaking.

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***What Church Ought to Be Like – 12-32-06***

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The early church was under threat from the Roman government as well as the Jewish leaders. Living under the constant threat of persecution led the people to truly long for the return of Jesus. The early church understood that to be an imminent thing. They expected Jesus to return soon. They hoped He would return in their lifetime. James encourages the church to be patient. He uses the picture of the Palestinian farmer who hopes for spring rain and autumn rain. Sometimes, that hope is a long time in being realized. But over the course of time, the farmer is confident that rains will come and his crop will grow.

The early church lived in very a close relationship with one another. Acts 2: 42-47 is a wonderful picture of that experience:

***They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.***

James is writing sometime between those early days of 33-34 A.D. and his death in 62 A.D. We don't know how long the early church continued to share possessions and to meet daily. We do know that selfishness entered into those relationships (Ananias and Sapphira sold land and gave only a part of it to the church, but acted as if they were giving the entire amount – Acts 5: 1-11). At the very least, the early church and all the churches since that time had to learn to live together in harmony. Thus the need for the admonition which James gave – ***Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!***

Perhaps the concept of The Judge standing at the door is another reference to the expectation of Christ's early return. It could possibly refer to God as judge as well. It does indicate that what we might consider petty irritations and quarreling with a Christian brother is a serious offense.

The prophets suffered and were patient. Hebrews 11:36-38 records their suffering:

***Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goat skins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.***



The Jewish believers, but not the Gentile believers, of the early church would have been familiar with the story of Job. It is the story of a righteous man who suffered loss of family, belongings, health, and his standing in the community. Theological conclusions from the book of Job are as follows:

Suffering can come suddenly and inexplicably to anyone, even a righteous person.

Undeserved suffering raises the question of justice in the world and ultimately the justice of God. Job questioned the ways of God and God agreed Job was justified in doing so (42:7-8).

Human wisdom is not adequate to solve the problem of undeserved suffering.

The book of Job provides us hints of possible explanations for human suffering. Suffering may be a test; in our struggles we may honor God. Suffering may be to discipline and teach us, but this is not a comforting explanation. Suffering may be due to known or unknown sin. Outsiders who try to explain someone's suffering by saying it is due to sin are of little help to the sufferer.

Only God can meet our needs in a time of suffering. (See **Disciple's Study Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, Pages 590-591)

James affirms that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy to those who persevere. He is full of compassion and mercy to those during the suffering and following the suffering. Once more James emphasizes the importance of the strong, determined fortitude with which we need to face difficult circumstances.

### **James 5: 12**

***Above all, my brothers, do not swear – not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes: be yes and your “No” no, or you will be condemned.***

James continues to talk to “my brothers” or Christian believers as contrasted to his strong warning to rich oppressors in James 5: 1-6. He recalls to their memory the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5: 33-37.

***“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ ‘No’; anything beyond this come from the evil one.***

“When James says Do Not Swear, it is not coarse or vulgar speech he prohibits but evoking God’s name to guarantee the reliability of what a person says” (Moo, D. J. **The Letters of James**, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000, page 232).

What is prohibited here is the use of God’s name to give legitimacy to a statement or promise made. Jesus always demanded the honesty of the heart not just an outward show of compliance. When he spoke of adultery he said “***You have heard it said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart***” (Matthew 5: 27-18)

When Jesus and later James spoke of not swearing they were indicating that if one makes a statement that statement should be true. This is a very basic thing to ask of the believer. The contrast between the believer and the rich oppressors of verses 1-6 is obvious. The rich person promised to pay wages to the workmen, but did not do so.

No sworn oath or legal document is needed for the Christian to keep his/her word.

“The New Testament view is that every word is spoken in the presence of God, and that, therefore, every word must be true; and the New Testament would agree that the Christian must be known to be a man of such honour that it is quite unnecessary ever to put him upon oath. The New Testament would not entirely condemn oaths, but it would deplore the human tendency to falsehood, which on occasion makes oaths necessary” (Barclay, page 150).

### **James 5: 13-20 The Prayer of Faith**

***Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.***

***Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.***

***My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins.***

James ends the book with a discussion of prayer. There is prayer in many situations –

Prayer in trouble – v. 13  
Prayer of thanksgiving – v. 13  
Prayer in sickness – v. 14  
Prayer for one another – v. 16  
Prayer is powerful and effective – v. 16  
Elijah gave a model of prayer – vv. 17-18

(See Cedar, P. A. **The Preacher's Commentary, Volume 34.** Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1984.)

This is the task of the church. It is the task of the whole church. We pray for those who are in trouble – financial trouble, relationship trouble, spiritual trouble. The church as it should be is a place of prayer because the church as it should be is a place for people who have difficulties. The church is made up of people saved by grace, but those people still have the difficulties of their past and of the present circumstances of living in an ungodly world.

Not only do we pray in times of difficulties. We pray in times of happiness, of thanksgiving. Prayer is an expression of our joy and contentment and appreciation for the many good gifts of God.

“It is characteristic of the Christians that they speak to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). For very gratitude they are compelled to sing” (Barclay, page 151).

We often focus on prayer for the sick. Does James give a model for how that prayer should be executed? Who are the elders – the elected officials, the trusted older people, the pastor and staff? In the early church, the elders were undoubtedly those who were more mature Christians. They may have been men since the culture of the day left little opportunity for women to have positions of leadership. However, we read in Acts 10: 36 of Tabitha or Dorcas:

***In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas) who was always doing good and helping the poor.***

She became sick and died and Peter was sent for and came and prayed and she returned to life.

In addition we are reminded of the leadership given by Priscilla who taught Apollo; Phoebe, a deacon mentioned in Romans 16:1-2. Other women are mentioned in this same letter from Paul who sends greetings to ***Mary who worked very hard for you; Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord; my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord;*** the mother of Rufus

who Paul says ***has been like a mother to me***; Paul says to ***greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.***

It seems intuitively right that women were involved in the healing aspects of ministry. They would have been the ones to care for the physical needs of the sick. They prepared a body for burial in many cultures up until very recent times.

It is important to realize that in New Testament times oil and wine were often used as medicine. We are told in the story of the Good Samaritan that ***He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine*** (Luke 10: 34).

The wine would have served as an antiseptic to cleanse the wound. Olive oil would have soothed the pain. Natural herbal remedies are very popular today as well although most people are glad for the antibiotics and other advances of medicine available to us.

“But another great characteristic of the early Church meets us here: the early church was a *healing* Church. Here the Church inherited its tradition from Judaism. When a Jew was ill, it was to the Rabbi he went rather than to the doctor. And the Rabbi anointed him with oil – which Galen the Greek doctor called ‘the best of all medicines’ – and prayed over him” (Barclay, page 152). Barclay continues with a discussion of the healing done in the early church. “A very early Church code lays it down that each congregation must appoint at least one widow to take care of women who are sick. For many centuries the Church consistently used anointing as a means of healing the sick. In fact it is important to note that the sacrament of unction, or anointing, was in the early centuries always designed as a means of cure, and not as a preparation for death, as it now is in the Roman Catholic Church. It was not until A.D. 852 that the sacrament of unction did, in fact, become the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, administered to prepare for death.

The Church has always cared for her sick; and in the Church there has always resided the gift of healing. The social gospel is not an appendix to Christianity; it is the very essence of the Christian faith and life” (Barclay, page 153).

Regardless of how it was done or who was involved in the early church, it seems clear that the mandate is for all of us who are the church to be involved in prayer for the sick. It is wise for us to examine our attitude toward praying for the sick. What might we include in that prayer – wisdom for the medical team; comfort for the family who is involved especially when children are involved; financial needs of the family; patience for the one who is ill and for others in the family. And as always we ask that God’s will be done.

It is the testimony of many who have been very ill and have returned to a healthy condition that the prayers of their church sustained them in very difficult times. ***The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.***

Elijah is given as an example of a righteous man. He was able to start and stop the rains of heaven when he prayed (1 Kings 17:1) Elijah was a prophet during the reign of Ahab who was considered one of the most evil of Israel's kings –**Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him** (1 Kings 16: 30). He was greatly influenced by his wife, Jezebel. This resulted in Ahab's worshipping Baal. The prayer of Elijah directed by God was that a drought overtake the land. The purpose of the drought was to cause Ahab to return to God. That did not happen even after Elijah showed the ineffectiveness of the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18: 38-39). The Jewish believers would have been familiar with the story of Elijah; Gentile believers would not have known it or known it so well. This may indicate that James saw his audience as primarily Jewish believers.

James ends this chapter and his writings with an admonition to the church to care for those who have wandered away from the truth of the gospel. Prayer is involved here, but there is also an admonition to actively seek out the one who has wandered. This is a difficult task. One may wander away because of sin in one's life. The believer who has sinned may be embarrassed to return to the church. Or he or she may simply be unwilling to give up sinful behaviour. Sin may not be the root cause. Involvement in family activities, business or travel needs may cause an absence from fellowship with the church family. The dynamics of the church change quickly and the absent one may be uncomfortable in returning. Leadership roles may have been assumed by others. If no one has sought him/her out during the absence, it is easy for the church to be blamed as uncaring or judgmental. It is important in each church and certainly important in the home church that absentee members are contacted and concern expressed. A phone call or e-mail or cheerful note may encourage the wanderer to return. Of course, in many cases it is necessary to visit the person and may be necessary for them to be admonished about their actions. This must be done in love. People often are most comfortable with just disappearing from church and church members are reluctant to confront them about it. James emphasizes the importance of this seeking out of the one who has left by saying **Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins**. Most commentators feel that the multitude of sins being covered are those of the wanderer. This thought returns the reader to James' original emphasis on the importance of persevering **Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything** James 1: 4.

## **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

Everything about James' book is pointing to the mature and complete faith of the believer. A church which is what it ought to be is one which concerns itself with the maturing faith with each participant. The final verses of Chapter 5 encourage us to be patient in the face of suffering; to be honest and trustworthy; to pray in every kind of situation and to always be concerned about one another.

As leader you want to help the church identify ways to incorporate into the life of your church the qualities of congregational life James taught.

**For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***What Church Ought to Be Like***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

James 5:7-20

#### **Background**

James 5:7-20

#### **Main Idea**

Life in the church should be characterized by patience in awaiting the Lord's return, refusal to complain against fellow believers, trusted communication, prayer that trusts God to respond, and restoration of fellow Christians who go astray.

#### **Questions to Explore**

What is life in our church like? What are we doing about it?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the church identify ways to incorporate into the life of your church the qualities of congregational life James taught.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Introduce the lesson by asking: How responsible are we for the maturing faith of others in our church?

After a few minutes of discussion say: James has given many practical ways in which we impact one another's faith experience. The last verses of Chapter 5 continue in that teaching.



## Guide the Study:

Have someone read James 5: 7-11.

Write on a whiteboard or large piece of paper the three points of this passage:

Be patient until the Lord's coming (vv. 7-9)

Be patient in the face of suffering (vv. 10-11)

Be patient and you will be blessed (v. 11)

Lead your group to discuss the understanding of the imminent return of Jesus which was prevalent in the early church.

Comment on the threat which early Christians experienced from the high priest and other Jewish leaders as well as the Roman government.

Review the three points written on the white board and add teachings that have not already been mentioned.

Have someone reread James 5:9.

Seek an answer: Does this admonition apply to us today?

Add: What are some things we "grumble against each other" about?

Have someone read Hebrews 11: 36-38.

Comment: This is a vivid description of the suffering of the prophets to which James referred.

Describe the situation which Job faced.

Use the following to teach the group Biblical principles regarding suffering:

Suffering can come suddenly and inexplicably to anyone, even a righteous person.

Undeserved suffering raises the question of justice in the world and ultimately the justice of God. Job questioned the ways of God and God agreed Job was justified in doing so (42:7-8).

Human wisdom is not adequate to solve the problem of undeserved suffering.



The book of Job provides us hints of possible explanations for human suffering. Suffering may be a test; in our struggles we may honor God. Suffering may be to discipline and teach us, but this is not a comforting explanation. Suffering may be due to known or unknown sin. Outsides who try to explain someone's suffering by saying it is due to sin are of little help to the sufferer. Only God can meet our needs in a time of suffering. (See **Disciple's Study Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, Pages 590-591)

Allow time for discussion of this comment and question: In James 5:11 it says **The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.** How does that relate to the discussion on suffering and perseverance. (God did not abandon the prophets or Job; he will never abandon us).

Have someone read Matthew 5: 33-37 and James 5: 12.

Ask: How are these teachings similar?

Discuss this with the group: How important is it that a Christian's word is absolutely true and trustworthy?

Share the following quote:

"The New Testament view is that every word is spoken in the presence of God, and that, therefore, every word must be true; and the New Testament would agree that the Christian must be known to be a man of such honour that it is quite unnecessary ever to put him upon oath. The New Testament would not entirely condemn oaths, but it would deplore the human tendency to falsehood, which on occasion makes oaths necessary." (Barclay, page 150).

Have someone read James 5: 13-20.

Use the whiteboard or large piece of paper to list when prayer is important.

Prayer in trouble – v. 13

Prayer of thanksgiving – v. 13

Prayer in sickness – v. 14

Prayer for one another – v. 16

Prayer is powerful and effective – v. 16

Elijah gave a model of prayer – vv. 17-18

Question: Who in the church should be responsible for praying? (It is the task of the whole church.)

Focus on the statement *Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.*

Look for several responses to this: What are some times when your prayer is a prayer of happiness?

Invite the group to share how prayer has been important in the sickness and healing of someone they know. (Watch your time here!)

Have someone reread verses 19-20.

Offer this comment: We began the study thinking about our responsibility to help others in our church grow in faith.

Now look for opinions on this: What does James say to us in these verses? (We need to seek out those who have wandered away from faith).

### **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Explain: The aim of this lesson has been to help the church identify ways to incorporate into the life of your church the qualities of congregational life James taught.

Ask several people to tell, in one short sentence, how that can be done.

Call for someone to pray for God's presence and guidance in helping the church to become the wise and mature body that our Lord wants.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***What Church Ought to Be Like*** **James 5:7-20**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.**

### **Improving the Church**

*One thing that is common to most young people who have been a part of a church during their childhood and youth is the wish that they could make some changes in the way things are done.*

*Using today's scripture, what changes or improvements would you suggest to adults in your congregation?*

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***What Church Ought to Be Like***  
**James 5:7-20****Beginning the Service:**

Sing the following:

**Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 7; CCLI # 27329  
**They'll Know We Are Christians**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 385; CCLI # 26997

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

Pray for the Kalwar of Bihar who, although typically known as “distillers of liquor”, may be found working as agricultural laborers in the forests or even in industry. Due to frequent droughts in Bihar, a state in northern India, the 3 million Kalwar struggle to feed their families or provide for their basic needs. A local priest cures diseases and protects them against evil spirits, while the Brahman (high) priests perform religious rites and conduct marriages. Although the young people are now receiving an education, most of the elderly have never had that opportunity. Pray that the elderly Kalwar will hear about Christ in a way they can understand and receive; may the young Kalwar read the Word and choose to follow Jesus.

**Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

## A Healthy Church What the Church Ought to be Like

Many Bible scholars, Christian education specialists, and Church Growth consultants agree on tasks or functions of a healthy church. They feel that a healthy church should worship together, learn together, care for one another, evangelize the lost, and minister to others. These are things that the church in the New Testament did.

In any discussion of church it is wise to remember that the church is not a building or an organization. The church is the people who believe in Christ. You and I are the church. The group meeting and worshipping and studying together in this place is the church in this place. Some languages such as Spanish make this clearer. *La iglesia* in Spanish refers to the people who believe; *el templo* refers to the building or place of meeting. Unfortunately, many people do not make that distinction. The church is for many the building. Home churches by their nature do not so easily equate place with church.

However, we all need to be reminded that we are the church. We are not apart from the church and thus able to criticize its services, program, leaders etc. We are each one responsible for making sure that the local congregation of which we are a part is being the church – a church which worships together, learns together, cares for one another, reaches the lost, and ministers to a needy world.

This must have been the passionate understanding of James who had pastored the Jerusalem church for perhaps almost thirty years when he wrote the book of **James**. Throughout the book are teachings which are important for us who are the church.

James wanted us to understand about persevering in difficult times. He was undoubtedly referring to the outside difficulties of living in a hostile society. But he must have also been concerned that those who were a part of that early church stayed faithful to it. They needed to stick with that to which they had committed.

This is a critical issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are a consumer society. We look for what we like best and purchase it. If it is not available in the local store, we order it on the internet and it is delivered to us within a few days. Of course, this is not true in all societies and places where home churches flourish, but it is becoming more true each day.

It is easy to transfer this attitude to our choice of a church. When things displease us in our church, we quickly look for another church. We have little sense of being the body of Christ which is the imagery used over and over in the New Testament: ***Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*** (1 Corinthians 12:27). And

we may have little consideration for the fact that to lose a part of the body is a traumatic experience for a human being and it is a traumatic experience for a church.

James said: ***Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*** (James 1: 4). Sticking with a church when things are not going as well as we might like helps us grow into maturity and completion as a Christian. Leaving a congregation because of disagreements over worship styles, financial commitments, or leadership is hurtful to the church and it is hurtful to one's own spiritual growth.

The home church asks that each person makes a contribution to the worship and learning experience. Many will have the opportunity to teach the Bible study; others will lead worship, some will choose and lead music. Everyone is encouraged to share experiences in discussion. It is a rich environment for personal growth and for truly being the church. The learning and worship functions of church are closely related in a home church. Worship is not something we attend; it is something we do. Learning is not given to us by an "expert"; we are the ones looking at Scripture together and asking God to direct our paths. In this setting we have fellowship and care for one another.

James had a number of admonitions about how we care for one another. He said ***My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry for a man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires*** (James 1:19). In the close relationships of the home church, we will irritate one another. We will not always agree with a Biblical interpretation, a political point of view or the manner in which a brother or sister relates in the group. We should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. This is one of the ways in which we care for one another in a home church. Taming the tongue – that is, being very careful of the words we speak – was a primary warning which James gave.

A vital ministry we have to one another is that of prayer. We pray with thanksgiving when good things come to those in our group. We worship God as we sing songs of thanksgiving together (a good way to pray). We pray for one another in sickness and for those outside of our group as well. We pray for spiritual healing of the lost as well as physical healing of those within our circle of influence. We are reminded that ***the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective*** (James 5: 16).

James has strong words to say to those who listen to Biblical truth and do not act on it. One of the tasks of the church is to minister to others. ***What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*** (James 2:14-17). A healthy church must ask itself how it is ministering to others in its local community and beyond.

For some churches, there will be financial means with which to minister. Since a home church has few expenses compared to more traditional churches with buildings and paid staff, there can be money spent on support of missionaries or the homeless or disenfranchised of society. Wise use of these resources helps us complete the task of ministering to others.

James' final word speaks to our need to be concerned for those who wander from the faith or those who have never come to faith. ***My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins.*** (James 5:19-20).

Always the work of the church is that of seeking to turn sinners from the error of the way of sin. James must have thought of the kind of people who would draw others to Christ when he wrote ***But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*** (James 3:18).

This seems a good verse for the healthy church ***Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*** (James 3:18). The healthy church is busy worshipping, learning together, caring for one another, ministering to the world outside of their church, and being a positive witness for Christ. Surely that is sowing in peace to raise a harvest of righteousness.

## **Call to Commitment and Concluding the Service:**

Sing the old hymn **The Church's One Foundation** if your group is large enough to do so. If not, have readers to present the hymn by reading dramatically. **If needed, copies can be made from the final page of this session.**

### **The Church's One Foundation**

#### **First reader:**

The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is His new creation, By Spirit and the Word;  
From heav'n He came and sought her  
To be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her,  
And for her life He died.

**Second reader:**

Elect from every nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation:  
One Lord, one faith, one birth;  
One holy name she blesses,  
Partakes one holy food,  
And to one hope she presses,  
With ev'ry grace endued.

**Third Reader:**

'Mid toil and tribulation,  
And tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation  
Of peace forevermore;  
Till with the vision glorious  
Her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great Church victorious  
Shall be the Church at rest.

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Use this hymn as the closing for the Worship Time. Make copies for the three readers.

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