**1. Motivate**

When has an unexpected change turned out better than the original plan?

* restaurant where you intended to eat was closed, found a new, better one
* jilted by one girl/fellow, you met your eventual spouse
* section of a college class you wanted was full, the one you got into had best professor ever
* used car you had your eye on was bought by someone else, car you ended up with was better and cost less than the other
* hotel room you wanted was taken, they upped you to a bigger, better suite – no extra cost
* road was closed, detour was very scenic, pleasant drive
* you missed your scheduled plane, you had to wait for another, but got first class seat

**2. Transition**

We might be initially disappointed with the way things are going.

* But no matter what lies ahead, maintain your trust and dependence on God.
* He will accomplish His good purposes for you

**3. Bible Study**

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_8tdyrroo> . If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/457s3rs8>

3.1 Your Plans and God’s Will

Listen for an example of planning.

James 4:13-17 (NIV) Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

In James’s illustration, what were some assumptions the businessmen made in planning their future ventures?

* when we go
* where we go
* how long we will spend
* what business we will do
* how much we will make

What kinds of events can so easily alter our carefully made plans?

* an accident, a turn of the economy, Covid, even a terrorist event
* a natural disaster (earthquake, blizzard, flood, etc.)
* a missed airplane connection due to weather or mechanical problem
* a health emergency (stroke, heart attack, even longer term health traumas)
* a government decision (our government or some other)

What does he say we should do instead?

* take the attitude that plans are made with the understanding of God’s overall control
* we make plans as we believe God would direct us, but we acknowledge His ultimate control
* involve God in your choices and plans before you make them

What imagery did James use to emphasize the brevity of life?

* like a mist
* appears in the morning
* soon vanishes

If life is so brief and uncertain, how should we approach it as a people of faith?

* God is the one in charge
* old Yiddish proverb, “Man plans, and God laughs”
* certainly, we prepare and schedule
* but we should allow God to guide our steps
* be ready for God to redirect
* when interruptions or events occur to alter our plans, don’t respond in anger or despair



How does James characterize presumptuousness, arrogance, and failure to do the good we know to do?

* we boast and brag
* we might know we should be trusting God and seeking His guidance
* but we think we know better
* God is not on the throne of your life
* we go ahead without even thinking about God’s role in our lives
* we can end up running our lives

How can we find the right balance between planning for our future and trusting God for our future? What steps can we take to determine God’s will?

* begin with prayer
* tell God you are trusting Him to guide your planning
* keep God on the throne of your life
* investigate the options
* in some cases, we might seek wise counsel
* proceed, continuing to trust God
* when detours, interruptions, or “roadblocks” appear, continue to trust God to open and close the right doors.

3.2 Focus on Christ’s Return

Listen for the need for patience and perseverance

James 5:7-9 (NIV) 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. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

What area of life have you found it difficult to completely depend on God? When have you had to be patient while waiting for the Lord to provide?

* looking for a job
* seeking a potential spouse
* dealing with long term illness or disability
* loss of a spouse or other close family member
* financial reverse
* a child or grandchild who has walked away from the Lord
* a “rocky” marriage

What do we need to do as we wait for the Lord’s return to earth?

* live with patience
* model your life and attitudes after a farmer who knows how to wait for a crop to grow in good time
* trust God to prosper and provide
* stand firm in the knowledge that God is at work
* be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission

What makes it hard to wait on God’s timing?

* we don’t know exactly when or how God will meet the need
* we feel like we are not in control
* seeing an unjust person prosper, while you struggle
* sometimes we feel that God has forgotten or abandoned us
* we are impatient, we are used to fast food, instant meals, fast internet downloads

What effects should the belief of the return of the Lord have on the way you view life and establish priorities?

* so much of our actions and motives are centered on the here and now
* God has given us the Great Commission
* our resources (time, skills, finances) are meant to be used to further God’s Kingdom
* we are 2000 years closer to Christ’s return than James was at the time of his writing
* we are called to be *involved* in reaching a lost world for Jesus

What kind of changes does God want to make in us over an extended period of time?

* teach us to trust Him more
* teach us that He is always there for us
* we need to learn that He is always sufficient for our needs
* He will accomplish His purposes for us in the best way possible
* we learn it is pointless, even harmful, to live with a grumbling attitude

3.3 Stay the Course

Listen for how the prophets were an example.

James 5:10-11 (NIV) Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 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 mentions the prophets and people who endured in the face of suffering. How did they model endurance?

* they were often ignored
* sometimes they were asked to do or say embarrassing things
* they were sometimes persecuted and harassed
* they lived in danger
* but they still declared the messages God gave them
* they were rarely popular figures

Why can those who endure be characterized as happy?

* they might not be happy during the time of endurance
* if they endured by trusting in God and praising Him during their problem
* then they were rewarded by God in the end … even if it was release from life to be with God in heaven

What are lessons that can be learned from the example of Job?

* keep trusting in God, persevere
* God will prevail and accomplish His purposes in good ways
* God restored his prosperity
* God doubled his former possessions

According to this passage, in what ways does God help us when we must endure suffering?

* God blesses those who persevere and trust Him
* God demonstrates compassion
* God doesn’t judge us, even when we deserve His punishment

How will God reward us if we are patient?

* God can turn the tables on those who do the persecuting
* eternal rewards
* our perseverance can be a testimony to others
* we have the peace of knowing that we have done the right thing
* God’s assurance and blessing

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Pray with praise.

* Trust God, knowing Christ’s return will bring full justice, freedom, and deliverance.
* Consider ways you can pray and praise God for how He is working in your life.
* Thank Him for the future that awaits you when He returns.

Pray over your plans.

* Give all your scheduling, appointments, and plans—both big and small—to God and trust Him with them.
* If those plans change, thank Him and pray to see how He is at work throughout your day.

Pray for the persecuted church.

* Take time to pray for believers who face persecution for their belief in Jesus.
* With your group, make prayer for the persecuted church an intentional part of your prayer time together.
* Check out imb.org for specific places and ways to pray.



Crossword Puzzle



Clues and Words taken from James 4:13 – 17; 5:7 – 11 (NIV). Help and other fun filled activities at <https://tinyurl.com/457s3rs8>

