

The Letter of James 4:13 – 5:6

English Standard Version (ESV)

1 ¹¹ Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one
 2 who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks
 3 evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge
 4 the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There
 5 is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and
 6 to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

7 ¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we ~~will~~ go
 8 into such and such a town and spend a year there and
 9 trade and make a profit”— ¹⁴ yet you do not know what
 10 tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist
 11 that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead
 12 you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do
 13 this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All
 14 such boasting **is evil.** ¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing
 15 to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

16 ⁵ Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that
 17 are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your
 18 garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have
 19 corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you
 20 and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure
 21 in the last days. ⁴ Behold, the wages of the laborers who
 22 mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are
 23 crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have
 24 reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You have lived on
 25 the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have
 26 fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have
 27 condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does
 28 not resist you.

29 ⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the
 30 Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of
 31 the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early
 32 and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your
 33 hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not
 34 grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may
 35 not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

**Read the passage through completely
before looking at these questions.**

Observation (What does it say?):

Consider the observation questions on the back of this page. What do you notice in this passage?

- Mark the verbs in the passage as ~~past~~, present, or future.
- Circle people's **actions** James mentions.
- Box the **consequences** James warns about.
- What else do you observe in this passage?
 - Repeated words or ideas?
 - Comparisons or contrasts?
 - Purpose or explanation?
 - Unusual or symbolic language?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

After observing the passage:

- How do these two paragraphs relate to each other? Or do they?
- How does this section relate to what James has written before? Why would he address these issues here in his letter?
- Was this section written to Christians or to non-Christians or to both? Why do you think that?
- What questions come to mind as you read?
- How would you title this passage?

Application (What does it mean for me?):

- What specific effect could this passage have on how you make plans?
- If you don't have farm laborers or harvesters, how would this passage relate to your life?
- How might this passage affect your understanding of who God is and what He is doing and what is important to Him?

James 4_13-5_6.docx

For additional thought and discussion:

- Why does James refer to the “last days” in 5:3b (You have laid up treasure in the last days)? Was he mistaken about the coming again of Jesus? What would that timing have to do with his line of reasoning in this passage?

For more suggested methods of study: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/methodical-bible-study/>

For examples of inductive studies: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/inductive-bible-study-examples-2/>

Inductive Bible Study

(A few general ideas)

Observation (What does it say?)

What facts do you **observe** about the passage that help bring out the writer’s thought process?

- Who are the people involved?
- What action takes place?
- What type of literature is it (poetry, history, didactic, etc.)?
- What details are included or left out?
- Are any unusual words used?
- Is there symbolic language?
- What is the grammar of the passage (pronouns, prepositions, verb tenses)?
- Are words or ideas repeated?
- Any comparisons or contrasts?
- Any cause and effect?
- Are there indications of purpose (“in order that...”)?
- Are there conclusions (“Therefore...”)?
- Are there explanations?
- Does the passage logically break into sections?
- How would you summarize the passage?
- What would be a good “headline” for the passage?

Interpretation (What does it mean?)

What questions come to mind about the facts that would help you **interpret** the meaning?

- How would the original readers have understood the passage?
- What is the main emphasis?
- Why does the writer use repetition, or contrast, or unusual words?
- What does the grammar or structure of the passage reveal about the writer’s thought pattern?
- Is there a logical sequence in the passage?
- How are different ideas in the passage connected?
- Are there any new ideas or concepts presented?
- Are there difficulties in the passage?

Application (What does it mean for me?)

What is the impact on your life? What **application** does the Holy Spirit want to show you?

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to be thankful for?
- Is there an attribute of God to worship?
- Is there an example to follow?

**Read nothing into the Scriptures,
but draw everything from them,
and suffer nothing to remain
hidden that is really in them.
J.A. Bengel (1687-1752)**

For a much more detailed description of the methodology, see

Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*. Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1952.

James 4_13-5_6.docx