

**Victoria Fellowship Church**  
**International & Interdenominational**  
**Bible Study Worksheet – June 12, 2022**

**Theme: James: Faith in Action Topic: Shunning Oppressive Behavior**

**Main Texts: James 5:1-6**

**Key verse: James 5:1** – *‘Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you’ (NKJV)*

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**INTRODUCTION:** As we continue with our study, we come to a matter so familiar: oppressive behavior. That James includes this here is indicative that oppressive behavior is also present, even among Believers. James chapter five opens by declaring that miseries/woes would come upon the rich and so they should weep and mourn (James 5:1-3). It goes further to describe the reason for such woes: oppressing the poor by withholding their wages! *‘Indeed, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (James 5:4 NKJV).* It is noteworthy that riches are not condemned; but riches gained through oppressive means are corrupted and defile the possessor in every aspect of life. Withholding what is due another corrupts our gains and values. It is not acceptable before God. It is oppression; God hates it and wants us to shun oppressive behaviors.

1. **(a) Read Deuteronomy 24: 14-15; Proverbs 11:26. Let participants discuss the implications of the commands in these passages in relation to the topic. (b) What do you make of this practice of withholding workers’ wages, and why do you think that some people use oppressive means to accumulate riches? (c) Read Jeremiah 22:13 and James 5:1-3. How does God view the practice of withholding the wages of those who work for us? And how should these verses affect the way you deal with those who work for you?**

The Collins English Dictionary defines ‘Oppressive’ as something which is hard to put up with, which causes great discomfort or is overbearing. Although James 5:1-6 addresses the rich, oppressive behavior is found across all social classes: Top governments officials who withhold or delay salary of their staff to make profits; big businesses that delay their suppliers’ payments, or allow them very slim profit margins, or with bureaucracies which are inimical to such small businesses; small business owners oppress their staff; masters oppress their maids and stewards; employees who cheat their employers in different ways; in-laws oppress widows, husbands oppress wives (and vice versa), and so on. Any advantage gained from such oppressive behaviors will suffer the same fate irrespective of the social status of the perpetrator. God neither wants us to be oppressed nor does He want us to oppress others. Rather, wherever we find ourselves, God’s desire is that we shun oppression and even speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9).

2. **Read Proverbs 14:31; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5. (a) What other examples of oppressive behaviors have you encountered? (b) How can believers shun oppression in every aspect of life? (c) Read Psalm 146:7; Luke 4:18-19 and reflect on your life and relationships. Are there people you are oppressing in one form or the other? What will you do this week to align with the character and mission of God?**

At first glance, it would seem like in James 5:1-6, God is addressing only how wealth is acquired. But in James 5:3b, God warns against hoarding! In economics, hoarding is a speculative practice of holding or piling up assets in preparation for future events. And is often motivated by a fear of the future. It is purchasing and storing large quantities of a commodity with the intention of benefiting from future price increases. Hoarding comes from the word ‘Hoard.’ Hoard is both a verb and a noun. As a noun, hoarding is a store, stock, or quantity of anything accumulated or laid up. This could be a hoard of supply, treasure, provisions, or money. Whatever it is, God has something to say about hoarding and it is not a complement. But as Andrew Murray said: ‘The world asks, “what does a man own?” Christ asks, “How does he use it?”’ How we use the resources in our hands matters more than how much we have.

3. **(a) Read Proverbs 11:26; James 5:1-3. How does hoarding relate to the topic? (b) What lesson does Luke 12:15-21, 34 teach about how not to view and use the resources in our hands? (c) Read and reflect on Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 13:16; How does God want us to use the wealth He has entrusted to us? And what adjustment would you need to make to align with God’s desires for you in this regard?**

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**Prayer:** *Our dear heavenly Father, we thank You for today’s lesson. Please help us, in our attitude and actions, to trust You as our Source and the One who gives us the ability to create wealth. Amen.*