JAMES 5:1-11
IT'S NOT JUST THE MONEY

TEACH IT **MIDDLE SCHOOL** SESSION 10

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the James 5 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 10
- his or her own Bible, pen, and notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- a pack of play money from a dollar store or an old Monopoly game

2. Session Intro

GOALS OF SESSION 10

As students experience this session, they will—

- discover how treatment of the poor ranks with God.
- explore ways they are rich that have nothing to do with money.
- be challenged to adjust their priorities and pursuits to a godly perspective.

PRAYER

After your group has gathered, begin by praying that your students will use this session to begin to develop a trust in God's Word and see they can depend on God's perspective.

OPEN

The Good and Bad of Money

After opening with prayer, get into the session by handing everyone a handful of play money in assorted denominations. Have your students count their money. Ask—

If this money were real and yours to spend, what would you spend it on?

What is the most generous use of money you've ever heard of?

What's the worst use of money you've ever heard of?

3. Digging In

Painting the Money Picture

Explain to your group—

1. **Money is one of the top five topics addressed in Scripture. In fact, it gets almost as much attention as love.**

2. **Read James 5:1-11 from your Scripture sheets.**

3. Use colored pencil to circle every reference to the readers of the letter.

4. Use another color to underline every mention of the Lord.

After they've been working for about five minutes, ask—

What did you learn about the Lord in these verses?
-The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord God (5:4).
-The Lord Jesus is coming (5:7).
-The Lord Jesus' coming is near (5:8).
-The Lord God brought about great things in Job's life (5:11).
-The Lord God is full of compassion and mercy (5:11).

List the students' observations on the whiteboard. Leave them on the whiteboard throughout the session—you'll come back to them. As the discussion unfolds, be sure to help your group determine whether James is referring to Jesus or God with the title *Lord* (which means "master" or "boss").

What group of people does James appear to be singling out in this passage?
James appears to be singling out the rich.

Can we come up with any ideas about who these rich people are in James 5:1-6? Are they the same people as in James 5:7-11?
As the students discuss, feel free to add your thoughts from your Prep It. Draw out the following possibilities:
-They could be rich people who are part of the Christian community (James' original audience).
-They could be rich people outside the Christian community who are exploiting James' readers (see James 2:6). In James 5:7-11 the author turns back to his original audience, the Christian community.

What word pictures does James use to describe the situation of the rich?
-Your wealth has rotted (5:2).
-Moths have eaten your clothes (5:2).
-The corrosion of your gold will eat your flesh like fire (5:3).

Why do you think James is being so harsh?
The rich were exploiting, abusing, and using their workers (the poor).

In verses 7-11, James instructs his readers about how they should behave. Looking at what you circled in this passage, what behavior is James encouraging?
-Be patient (5:7).
-Be patient and stand firm (5:8).
-Don't grumble against each other (5:9).

Why are James' readers supposed to act this way?
The Lord's coming is near (5:8).

4. Taking It Inward

Harsh Words for the Rich

Now ask the group—

Putting it all together, what two main points is James making in this passage?
-If you're rich, watch how you're using your riches; don't exploit the poor.
-If you're poor or being oppressed by those richer than you, be patient and persevere; the Lord is coming soon.

How do these teachings relate to the rest of James' letter?
Encourage students to look over their Scripture sheets from previous sessions. James addresses the subject of wealth in James 1:9-11; 2:1-9; and 4:13. Help the students see his pattern of defending the poor and admonishing the rich.

Which category do we fall into—the rich or the poor?
There's no right or wrong answer to this question. Just help your students relate their choice to what James wrote.

If we're not rich in money, there are ways we can still take advantage of and use people badly. All of us are rich in some way. We may be rich in personality, humor, athletic ability, or musical ability. Like money, all of these things can be used for bad or for good. For instance, how could someone use humor to take advantage of people just as the rich took advantage of people in James 5?
Making fun of others to get a laugh.

5. Cross-Checking

What's Your Account Balance? (Does It Even Matter?)

Transition into the next exercise by saying—

Do you ever see homeless people and wonder if God cares? He does. In fact, God mentions the poor and the needy more than 200 times and in nearly every book of the Bible. In most of these verses God is asking his people (that means us) to look out for them.

We won't be looking up all 200 verses, but I want to give you a chance to hear God's concern about helping people in need.

Explain—

1. **Find places where you have some privacy and can be alone with God.**

2. **Be sure to take your Bibles, journal pages, and pens.**

3. **You'll be doing the Cross-Checking exercise on your journal pages. As you read the passages listed, make notes on everything you learn about how we're to treat the needy.**

After about 10 minutes, have your students get back together. Ask—

How would you sum up the main theme of these verses?
Live generously and give mercifully—expecting nothing in return.

Any clues as to why mercy is such a big thing with God?
God wants us to show mercy to those who can't pay us back since God showed mercy to us and we can't ever pay him back. As we extend mercy, we show our gratitude for what God has done for us.

6. Taking It Inward

Share the Wealth!

Explain there are two ways we can apply James 5:1-11—as a warning and as a declaration of hope. First we'll look at the warning.

The list about the Lord should still be on the whiteboard from earlier in the session. Direct your students back to it. Ask—

Let's get back to what we learned about the Lord in James 5:1-11. What trait of the Lord do you see that goes along with the Bible verses you just read?
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (5:11).

Your journal pages contain a list of potential areas in which you could be rich—areas that have nothing to do with money. Check any that apply to you. Add other areas if you think of them.

Then think about how you can use your riches to help the people around you who are needy in those areas. For example, if you checked intelligence, perhaps you could use your brainpower to tutor someone who struggles in school. Write an idea or two for each quality you checked.

After about five minutes have volunteers share their ideas. Then say—

Look again at James 5:7-11 on your Scripture sheets and note the places where you marked instructions and references to the Lord. What connection do you see between these instructions and the info about the Lord?
-It's easier to be patient in suffering if you know that the Lord's coming soon.
-Patience and not grumbling are offshoots of compassion and mercy.

Ask a volunteer to look up Hebrews 10:23-25. While the volunteer is finding the passage, say something like—

One of the main themes of the New Testament is that life as a believer will be tough, but we can take heart—Jesus is coming back. We're going to listen to a Bible passage that reflects this theme. As it's read, write any instructions you hear in the space provided on your journal pages.

Have the volunteer read the passage. Give your students time to finish making notes. Then ask—

How are these verses similar to James 5:7-11?
They give instructions for how we should treat each other; they point to the fact that Jesus is coming soon.

As you ask the following three questions, have your students rate themselves on the scales printed on their journal pages.

1. **How well does the way you act toward others reflect the fact that Jesus could return any minute?**

2. **How well does the way you're handling life reflect the fact that Jesus could return any minute?**

3. **How well does your relationship with God reflect the fact that Jesus could return any minute?**

7. Wrapping It Up

Make a Prayer Deposit

Spend the closing moments of the session in silent prayer and journaling. Ask students to dwell on the fact that Jesus is coming soon—maybe even tomorrow. Encourage them to think of their behavior in recent days—thoughts, attitudes, dates, free time, schoolwork—in light of the fact that Jesus could return sooner than they think. Have your students write their prayer on the back of a piece of play money.