

■ SCRIPTURE

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. **2** Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. **3** Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. **4** Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by

fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. **5** You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. **6** You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. *ESV*

■ DISCUSS

1. How would you describe the tone of this passage? Who is James addressing in this section?
2. What is he predicting for them?
3. Why will this happen?
4. Do you think this is written to all “rich” people ever, to rich people in that time and place, or just to the rich people who were guilty of exploitation?
5. In James 5:1, what’s the first thing James wants the “rich” people to do?
6. How do you think this compares with their current attitude? (Do they spend a lot of time “weeping and howling”?)
7. Why would this be important? What is there to weep about?

8. How can we use the resources we have, such as they are, to help the poor?
9. What can we do to make sure that poor workers are not exploited, that they get a fair wage for their work?
10. Where are we storing our treasure? How can we break free from the idolatry of money and all the things it buys? How can we seek first God's kingdom?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Review: Think back through the group discussions today. Were there any ideas that you could try out in the coming weeks?

Read: Isaiah 58. This chapter bears a lot of similarities to the book of James. People were religious, proud of their frequent fasting. But God challenges them to a new kind of devotion—caring for the needy, treating workers fairly, etc. Then that will open up a whole new kind of relationship with God.

Prayer of Confession and Commitment: Talk with God honestly and humbly about the role of money and possessions in your life. **Research:** Find out more about exploitation in our world today. Share your findings with other believers. Pray together about what you could do to change things.

Budget: Examine your household budget. How do your expenditures reflect your spiritual priorities? What might need to change?