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James 5

*“Ten Marks of Maturity” Part 5*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

This is the last study in Pastor Gary’s five-part series. So far we’ve looked at the following marks of spiritual maturity: 1) Persevere under trials. 2) Put God’s Word into practice. 3) Put faith into action. 4) Avoid favoritism. 5) Guard your tongue. 6) Exercise wisdom from above. 7) Make the Lord your friend and the world your acquaintance. 8) Don’t be presumptuous about tomorrow; live each day to its fullest.

In this study we’ll look at patience and prayer in the life of the Believer.

### Be Patient

1. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit.
  - a. **Galatians 5:22-23** - *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*
2. **Colossians 3:12** - *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”*
3. The first word that defines love in **1 Corinthians 13** is patience!
  - a. *“Love is patient, love is kind...”*
4. James makes two comparisons that illustrate different types of patience Christians need: patience like a farmer and patience like Job.
5. Patience Like a Farmer
  - a. God wants us to be patient because, in general, we have a low tolerance when it comes to being inconvenienced, especially if we are tired, hungry, or in a hurry!

- b. If something isn't going our way or taking longer than we like we can be very impatient.
- c. We can be unusually impatient in traffic, in grocery lines, at airports, at shopping malls, at fast food drive-in windows, etc.
- d. Impatience is often connected with the problem of anger.
  - i. **Proverbs 16:32** - *"Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city."*
  - ii. **Proverbs 14:29** - *"A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays his folly."*
- e. God is very patient!
  - i. **2 Peter 3:9** - *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*
- f. The example of the farmer reminds us that life is measured in seasons.
  - i. There is a season for planting, a rainy season for watering, and a season of harvest.
  - ii. If you're in a planting season, God is doing some plowing in your life; and by pulling up some weeds and digging up rocks, he's preparing you for something. Even when it feels like nothing is really happening, be patient.
  - iii. If you're in a rainy season and it's dreary, cloudy, gray, and lonely and God seems quiet, be patient.

## 6. Patience Like Job.

- a. **James 5:10** - *"... patience in the face of suffering..."*
- b. Job was a righteous man who suffered in incredible ways.
  - i. His health deteriorated.
  - ii. His children died.
  - iii. He lost everything.
  - iv. His wife and friends weren't helpful or comforting.
    - 1. In **Job 2:9**, Job's wife said, *"Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"*
    - 2. His friends suggested that there was hidden sin in his life, which was the reason he was suffering.
- c. James uses the example of Job as being one who *"persevered,"* which reminds us that even the righteous suffer, so be patient, because *"the Lord is full of compassion and mercy."* (**James 5:11**)

## Be Prayerful

7. Among Christian books, prayer is one of the most published topics, and it's one of the most talked about topics among Christian people, however, it's one of the least practiced things Christians do.
8. James tells us:
  - a. Prayer is the answer when we're in trouble.
    - i. **James 5:13** - *"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray."*
  - b. Prayer is the answer when we're sick.
    - i. **James 5:14** - *"Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."*
  - c. Prayer is the answer when we're burdened with sin.
    - i. **James 5:16** - *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."*
9. James writes about Elijah and Elisha, who other Old Testament examples of prayer.
  - a. Elijah did some pretty amazing things, including praying that it wouldn't rain in Israel so the Israelites would have a sign of God's judgment against their idolatry. (**1 Kings 17**)
    - i. It didn't rain for 3 ½ years!
    - ii. He prayed again and it rained!
  - b. Even though he did amazing things like this, James tells us that he *"was a man just like us."* (**James 5:17**)
  - c. God hears the prayers of the most ordinary person as much as he heard the prayers of the prophets.
10. Another characteristic of a mature Believer is a consistent prayer life.
  - a. **Matthew 6:5-6** - *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*
11. Jesus instructs Christians to not pray to be seen or heard by men, but to go to a private, quiet place and pray and meet with God.
  - a. It's important to remember that listening to God is just as important as talking.

i. [John 10:27](#) - *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*

12. Prayer is not our last resort; it should be our first priority!

a. [Mark 1:35](#) - *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [James 5](#) to provide an overview for this study.<sup>1</sup>
3. What would people say about you regarding how patient or impatient you are?
4. Someone has said that at any given time, you're either in “a season of root or a season of fruit.”
  - a. What are the characteristics of these “seasons”?
  - b. What is it like to be in a planting season?
  - c. What is it like to be in a rainy season?
  - d. What is it like to be in a harvest season?
5. Review and discuss some of the findings from the survey about prayer.<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Pastor Gary said the most interesting finding in the study was that the average prayer lasted just under five minutes.
  - b. What is a good guideline regarding the amount of time Christians should spend in prayer each day?
  - c. Allow the people in your group to talk about the place, amount of time, and other aspects of their prayer life.
6. What would people say about you concerning your prayer life?
7. Read and discuss [Matthew 6:5-6](#) and [Mark 1:35](#), concerning the need for private prayer and an appropriate time for regular prayer.
8. Do you think God hears the prayer(s) of “regular” Christians or do you think the only way to get a *real* answer to prayer is to call in the pastor (read professionals)?

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<sup>1</sup> Most Bible scholars believe [James 5:1-6](#) were not written specifically to Christians, but to non-believers.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.the7greatprayers.com/prayerstats.aspx>

9. What do you think the purpose of prayer is?<sup>3</sup>
10. Spend time talking about examples of God doing amazing things in answer to prayer.
11. Have you given up on developing a regular prayer life, even though you've tried again and again?
12. Read and discuss [Matthew 7:7-8](#).
  - a. How much would God be willing to do if only we were willing to ask, seek and knock?<sup>4</sup>
  - b. What do you think it means to pray earnestly and seek the Lord?
13. Have you had the experience of having a pastor anoint you with oil for healing?
14. Do you know someone who was healed when a pastor anointed them with oil<sup>5</sup> and prayed according to [James 5](#)?
15. Spend time talking about the fact that God sometimes heals miraculously, sometimes medically and sometimes eternally.
16. Review and discuss the life of one of the greatest men of prayer, George Muller.<sup>6</sup>
  - a. Discuss the remarkable incident of God's provision for breakfast at the orphanage.<sup>7</sup>
  - b. What are the seemingly impossible needs in your life today?
  - c. Do you think God is still in the business, so to speak, of doing the impossible?
17. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: become a model of patience in the life of a Christian; to trust God in the seasons of

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<sup>3</sup> Pastor Gary said the purpose of prayer is "to align ourselves with the will of God."

<sup>4</sup> In the original Greek, Jesus' instructions are in the present imperative, which means that we're to keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking.

<sup>5</sup> The olive oil has no magical qualities; the oil is just a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's power to heal.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bmuller4.html#MUL>

<sup>7</sup> "One morning the plates and cups and bowls on the table were empty. There was no food in the larder, and no money to buy food. The children were standing waiting for their morning meal, when Mueller said, 'Children, you know we must be in time for school.' Lifting his hand he said, 'Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat.' There was a knock on the door. The baker stood there, and said, 'Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at 2 a.m. and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it.' Mueller thanked the man. No sooner had this transpired when there was a second knock at the door. It was the milkman. He announced that his milk cart had broken down right in front of the Orphanage, and he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it. No wonder, years later, when Mueller was to travel the world as an evangelist, he would be heralded as 'the man who gets things from God!' " <http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?ID=177>

planting and watering, and to rejoice in the seasons of harvest; to become a man or woman of prayer who trusts in the Lord and their desire is to align their will with God's will; to be more disciplined in their prayer life; to wait on the Lord to work in wonderful and miraculous ways!

Note: Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV).