



**PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE**  
**Lesson Eleven: Riches, Trials and Oaths**  
**James 5:1-12**

1. Some Christians insist that it is an overt sin for North American believers to drive expensive foreign cars when people around the world are starving to death. Others look unfavorably on Western Christians who live in luxurious homes or who take extravagant vacations. Are those advocates of frugal living correct? Why or why not?

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2. Would you consider yourself materialistic? Why or why not?

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3. In courtrooms every day, witnesses place their hand on the bible and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Is this a Christian practice or not? Why do you think so?

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**The Context**

As noted throughout this study, James goal is to present various test of genuine faith. Building on the teachings of Jesus, James presents a blistering denunciation of those who profess to worship god but in fact worship money. His rebuke of the wicked wealthy is in keeping with the tradition of the Old Testament prophets. James tells them to examine the true state of their hearts in light of how they feel about wealth.

He then shifts his focus to the topic of persecution, instructing the folks who are suffering at the hands of the rich and powerful to be patient and keep perspective. Verse 12 then touches on another custom during biblical times-that of swearing oaths. This practice had become an issue in the church, particularly since swearing oaths was an integral part of Jewish culture and Jewish believers comprised a large segment of the early church. James commands them not to swear oaths and encourages believers to be distinctive in speaking the truth.



**James 5:1-3**

1. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!
  2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
  3. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.
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**James 5:4-6**

4. 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 Sabbath.
  5. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.
  6. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.
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**James 5:7-9**

7. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain
  8. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
  9. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!  
*(Gal. 6:9, 2 Tim. 4:8, Titus 2:13)*
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**James 5:10**

My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

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**James 5:11**

Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. (*Ps. 5:6, 103:8, 116:5, 136:1, 145:8*)

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**James 5:12**

But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment. (*Matt. 5:33-37, 4:25*)

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**Life Application Questions:**

1. Which do you have to watch out for most in your own life: acquiring riches ruthlessly or unjustly, hoarding money uselessly, or spending wealth self-indulgently? What needs to change in your view of wealth and how to handle it?

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2. Different respond differently to trials. Some become quiet, philosophical, even resigned. Others become sad, hopeless, and despondent; still others become angry and bitter. Some, though, put their hope in God and maintain a tangible joy despite their circumstances. What description best characterizes you in times of difficulty?

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3. Why is it always comforting and wise to remember God's character in times of difficulty?

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