

# EXTREME FAITH

WISDOM IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

## Discussion Six: Our Work is Worship (4:13-5:6)

The title of this lesson may be surprising, especially if we see our work outside the church as ‘secular’ labor. We have all heard people say, “I cannot wait until I retire or make enough money so I can devote my time to God’s work.” This represents an ungodly separation of sacred and secular, religious and practical...a separation found nowhere in the Bible. God does have different vocations and occupations for his people, but there are no “little people” and no unimportant labor. Romans 12:1-2 commands us to offer ALL we do as worship. And we must remember that work was God’s will before sin entered the world (Genesis 1-2 and work will be part of the new heavens and new earth (though it will be enjoyable without bad bosses! Revelation 21-22).

Here is a definition of work: Work is all meaningful and moral activity apart of leisure and rest. It is paid and unpaid, labor and leadership, in the home, the field and factory, the office and volunteering. James is admonishing businesspersons to have humility before God as they go about their work life and for those in power and possessing wealth, once again brings strong warnings about fairness.

### Opening conversation:

Share about a moment when you have a really good and/or poor boss as part of your work. What were the characteristics of the good leader?

## Reading #1: James 4:13-17

### Key idea:

We need to invite the Lord into our planning in all areas of life. As we think of our agendas, are we also thinking about serving others? James reminds us that if we are ignoring what the Lord has already told us to do, we are sinning by omission.

- Parallel scriptures: Proverbs 3:5-10; Matthew 6:25-34
- Question: How have you invited God into your planning for life or work?
- A story: one Christian husband said to us recently, “The only poor decisions I have made are the ones when I failed to pray sufficiently and invite my spouse into the process.” Apart from clothing and menu decisions (smile), why is it vital we consult with our spouse and/or other mature believers?
- Reflection moment: Think of a moment when you 1) asked God to bless your ideas; and 2) asked God for his ideas on a situation.

### Insight:

A good prayer: “God, what is on your mind today?”

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## Reading #2: James 5:1-6

### Key ideas:

1) A negative from the text: Christians in business must not exploit their employees. 2) A positive response: how are we creating conditions at work or other situations where people can flourish?

- Parallel scriptures: Amos 2:6-8; 5:11-12; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; 4:1
- Question: Where do we see unfairness in the economy?
- Question: How can we help improve the lives of those who do the hard work? What is a modern example of “gleaning” where those struggling have opportunity to become sufficient?

### Insight:

James is not very kind to the rich (remember back in chapters 1 and 2?). This is NOT because he rejects enterprise and the risks and rewards of good work. Nor is James some kind of communist. James is writing when the majority of people really did work for their “daily bread” and if wages were not equitable and on time, their families might actually starve.

In our day the application is just as strong:  
*How are we treating people under our leadership or care?*

### For further application:

We recommend that you look at the Made to Flourish website for insights on faith and work: [www.madetofLOURISH.org](http://www.madetofLOURISH.org). Two great books by Brian Fikkert: *When helping Hurts* and *Becoming Whole*. A book by Dr Charlie Self, *Flourishing Churches and Communities*. This is the first primer of integrating faith, work and economics from a Spirit-filled perspective.