

Integrity matters. Structural integrity cost lives in the 1986 Challenger disaster when a crucial component – the O-Ring – failed under pressure. The analogy of the Reuleaux Triangle (a curve of constant width but not truly a circle) reminds us that appearances can deceive. Christians are called not just to *look* like people of faith, but to *be* people of integrity.

James calls us to a life where our faith is shown in patient endurance, honest speech and committed community. We are invited to be people who live what we believe, even under pressure.

I. People of Integrity Wait with Patience

- a. **Patient Like a Farmer:** We do the work, but we trust God for the rain. We learned in the opening verse of James that trials, struggles and circumstances grow us with resilience. Often, we pray for our circumstances to change and that is not wrong; but, in the meantime, we must trust God in these circumstances. We need to learn to harness our thoughts around them, as well as notice and work with the emotions they bring up in us.
- b. **Patient Like the Prophets:** The prophets spoke into what they could not see; and, for most of them, they hoped and prayed for what they did not see within their lifetime.
- c. **Patient Because We Are Not the Judge:** Our judgement is often well meaning. Instead of saying things that could be loving but uncomfortably vulnerable, we speak with judgement. For example:

‘You never listen to me.’ When what we mean is, I feel unheard and that makes me lonely. I really want to feel close to you.’

‘You never help around the house;’ instead of, ‘I’m feeling overwhelmed and would love to feel like we’re in this together.’

Judging will not bring about the closeness in relationship that you are craving. Judging will never draw your kids or your spouse or your friends to you or to Jesus.

- d. **Patient Like Job:** Job is an interesting example of patience, because he complained a lot. The difference is his complaint was aimed to God. Job questioned, grieved and wrestled – but he didn’t walk away. This is why Job is a good example for us - Life is hard, take it to God.
- e. **Patient Because We Believe in God Who is Full of Compassion and Mercy:** God sees you and loves you. Life is hard, but He’s given us Jesus, who understands life is hard. He is available to you – to walk with you, to bear your burden and to give you wisdom. You do not have to walk this path alone. In offering your life to Him you immediately join a line of people who waited patiently, many dying never having seen what they prayed for. Your life is part of a story of God’s redemption – the story started before you, and one that will carry on after you are gone.

II. We are a People of Prayer & Changing Speech

James 5:12-18 starts with, “*Above all...*” – not just about oaths but about the entire section.

We are a people of changing speech because it is a process. This is what you need to be working on and training your tongue to do:

1. **Don’t Grumble:** We are to lift each other up and not tear each other down.
2. **Don’t Swear Oaths:** Our word is enough; don’t add anything to your speech. Using oaths is saying we have the power to make things happen. Say what you mean and leave it at that.
3. **Let Your Yes Be Yes and Your No, No:** If you say yes, show up with enthusiasm. It’s not wrong to say no. You don’t even have to add a justification. For example:

‘No, that doesn’t work for me right now.’

‘Thank you for thinking of me, but I’ll have to pass. I’m honoured you asked but I don’t have the capacity to say yes right now.’

‘I need to say no so I can say yes to other priorities.’

‘I’ve learned I do better when I don’t overcommit, so I’m going to decline.’

4. We are a People of Prayer:

- a. **When in trouble, Pray:** Talk to God about it. What is the option – complaining, worrying, catastrophizing – imagining the worst possible outcome.
- b. **If you are happy, Praise:** Praise is a form of prayer, thanking God for what He’s done.
- c. **If you are sick:** Call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Prayer is where the realms of the difficult life here on earth connect with the heavenly realms –where God dwells. Prayer calls us to accept the reality of our current state, to believe there is a loving and compassionate God and to ask that He would touch us.

“God’s new time has broken into the continuing time of this sad, old world, so that the person praying stands with one foot in the place of trouble, sickness and sin and with the other foot in

the place of healing, forgiveness and hope. Prayer then brings the latter to bear on the former” N.T. Wright¹.

III. As A People of Integrity, We Lean into Community (James 5:13-20):

- a. **In Prayer for Each Other:** The other option is to pull away. God calls us here to press into community when sick – call the elders; reach out to our pastoral team, and we involve those with prayer ministry to join us in praying. Get people to pray. Our church has a prayer chain – if you need prayer – call. There are prayer warriors here doing amazing things in the background that will lift you up before the Father.
- b. **In Confession:** Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so you may be healed. What is the option? Hiddenness – I won’t let you see my struggles. Deceit – I’ll just pretend I’m alright.

We keep those things inside in the dark, and, like mold, they grow into something ugly. Bringing things into the light with someone who has earned your trust can be healing in itself. It isn’t the end of what you need to address, but it opens the window and lets the light penetrate that darkness. We can get so burdened by our own shame. The antidote for shame is empathy – someone who hears and understands.

As a church we practice praying and anointing with oil. The oil is not some magic elixir blessed by a holy person. Anointing with oil is simply a profound and effective visual of the presence of God in that moment. Like prayer itself, such an act is mysterious and full of meaning and power.

James uses Elijah as an example. Elijah did many amazing miracles but the part James refers to is a time when Elijah persisted. Although he knew what God had had spoken to him – he had to persist in prayer to see it.

- c. **We Don’t Leave Anyone Behind (James 5:19-20):** To be people of integrity we can’t stand alone. We need others. We are a people prone to wander. Part of the protection against this is community. Sometimes the hardships in life show us where our safety network is lacking. James teaches us we need to be in community, we don’t leave anyone behind, and we don’t ignore the whistleblowers in our life.

¹ Wright, N.T. (2012). James for Everyone, Part of the Series NT Wright for Everyone Bible Study Guides. IVP Connect. ISBN-13: 9780830821969

Life Group Discussion and Reflection

Dig In

Read James 5:7-20

1. James 5:7-20 is full of directives. Which ones stand out to you as something you may need to focus on?
2. What areas of your life are you having to practice waiting patiently?
3. Are there places where you're tempted to judge rather than love?
4. Are there places where you feel disappointed or discouraged in prayer? What would change if you trusted your words and prayers were powerful and effective?
5. Have you ever been lovingly corrected by someone? What impact did it have?
6. Who in your life might need your encouragement or reconnection today?

Pray

Take some time in quiet reflection or group prayer to do the following:

- Thank God for His compassion and mercy. Acknowledge His faithfulness even in seasons of waiting or uncertainty.
- Confess areas where you've been impatient, judgmental or inconsistent—where your integrity has been strained or your words have not reflected your faith.
- Pray for others in your community who are sick, struggling or wandering. Ask God to bring healing, restoration and renewed faith.
- If you're in a group, take time to pray with and for each other, modeling the mutual prayer James calls us to.