

Faith, Fashion, Workers' Rights

James 5:1-6 (NRSV)

"Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you."

Other Bible Verses to Study:

- Deuteronomy 24:14-15
- Isaiah 58:1-14
- Matthew 20:1-16

OBSERVATION

Important questions:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- How?

Important things to notice:

- Repetitions
- Similarities or comparisons
- Contrasts
- Cause and Effect
- General to Particular
- Particular to General

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Observation Questions

1. What kind of literature is this? (There may be more than one.)
 - Narrative
 - Dialogue
 - Poetry
 - Letter ("Epistle")
 - Gospel
 - Law
 - Prophecy
2. From whose perspective is the story written?
3. Whose perspective is missing from the story?
4. Who is shown love during the story? Who is cared for in the story?
5. Who is not shown love? Who is not cared for?
6. Who received justice? What did that justice look like?
7. Who did not receive justice?
8. How do clothing and fashion play a role in the story?
 - Why are the clothes and possessions of the rich people rotting or ruined?
 - The clothing of the harvesters is never mentioned – does that mean their clothing and possessions are spared from the rotting and the moths?
9. Note the unexpected or unusual in the text.
 - Why do the wages cry out? In the first half of the sentence, it is not the harvesters that are crying out to God.
10. Is there anything in the passage that raises a question for you? Anything that intrigues, perplexes, or troubles you? Write it down!

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INTERPRETATION

Interpretation Questions

1. Look back at the connections that you made as you observed. What are the main connections that run throughout the passage? What are the main threads?
2. What did the author intend to communicate to the original readers?
3. What seems to be the main point or the core teaching of this passage?
4. What context is helpful in interpreting these texts?
5. How does the passage approach worker's rights and justice?
 - Is it helpful?
 - Is it problematic?
 - What do we do with this?
6. Does the passage mention gender justice? Why or why not?
7. For those in the story that did not receive justice, what should that justice have looked like?

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APPLICATION

Application Questions

1. How do you sense that God is speaking to you through this passage?
2. What part of your life is connected to the core teaching of this text?
3. How are you experiencing what a character in the text is living out?
4. Are you sensing any deeper insights into God or your experience with God?
5. Based on these verses, how can fashion and clothing help us practice justice?
6. What ways have you seen communities use dress, clothing, and the ways we treat people who make our clothes to oppress rather than uplift?
7. When you think about those oppressive practices, what theological perspectives have supported them? What would you say in response to those after today?
8. What are examples you have seen or heard of where fashion and clothes have been used to liberate people and help social justice movements?
9. What specific actions are you going to take in response to what God is saying to you?
10. What action will you take together with your community, in response to what God is saying to your community?

Adapted from InterVarsity ["How to Do Inductive Bible Study,"](https://collegiateministries.org/sites/collegiateministries/files/resource/file/How%20to%20Do%20Inductive%20Bible%20Study.pdf) which was Adapted from Bob Grahmann, based on the paper "How to Use Individual Study Time" by Lindsay Olesberg. October 2016
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