

Discussion Questions for James 5:12

Background Note - James is not talking primarily about "cussing" (although we might extend the passage to apply to cussing). In his day, people rarely signed written contracts for business and personal agreements. Instead, they swore oaths. The thing by which they swore supposedly bound them to keep their word. The Jewish teachers knew all kinds of legal loopholes for escaping from such oaths without breaking the Jewish law; Jesus condemned this practice (Matthew 23:16-22). But even common people were in the habit of swearing frivolously to validate their words, even invoking God's name to do so.

How can you tell if a person is telling the truth or making a promise that he she will keep?

What warning did James give concerning swearing? (5:12)

What is the alternative to swearing? (5:12)

How does ungodly oath-making (like the grumbling in verse 9) reveal a heart that is not steadfast and established? How does an unestablished heart lead to ungodly oath-making?

Looking at other passages: Exodus 20:7 and Matthew 5:33-37, why is swearing so offensive to God?

Do you think there is any connection or resonance between 5:12 and 4:13-15? If so, what is the connection?

What can a Christian do to be trusted with his word and promises?

What promise do you need to keep? How?