

James 4:1-10

Submit to God

James is ratcheting up the intensity of his letter. The theme of James is growing into maturity, becoming mature in the Christian walk. Verse 4:1 is confrontational. James is saying, “You have the wrong focus. This isn’t the way to mature in your faith.”

Who is experiencing this serious dissension? Believers! This is not believers against the world. This is among Christians.

Application: What conflicts do you see among Christians today? Church splits, denominations, unhappy homes, divorce

What is the major cause/source of conflict in verses 1-5? Selfishness, self-centeredness, self-focus, pride, sinful nature, and not walking with God. Some say the Bible is not relevant for our times, but the sins mentioned in the Bible are the same as today. Not much has changed really.

When the world observes this conflict and dissension, what impact does it have? It destroys our witness to the world. They are watching and they expect a higher standard from us.

Verses 2-3

How can we get what we want? Ask God

Why don’t we get what we want? We ask with wrong, selfish motives.

The purpose of prayer is not to persuade a reluctant God that I need something. The purpose of prayer is to align my will with His, acknowledge my total dependence on Him, and change my heart.

Verses 4-6

How are they adulterous? They have another love—the world.

What does friendship with the world look like? There is a strong desire for material things, pleasure, gratifying bodily appetites, jealousy, envy, being double-minded (James 1:8), wanting the best of both worlds, and living in a state of compromise.

Application: Since we are not supposed to have a desire for the things of the world, can we enjoy things the world has to offer like skiing, going to ball games, or eating out? What is James talking about here? He is talking about where our hearts are, what’s important, our value system.

Why can’t we be friends with the world and friends of God at the same time? God is a jealous God. He allows no divided allegiance. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Why does the Spirit envy? He knows what’s best for us—God!

Application: How have you seen this in your life?

We need God’s grace daily to live for Him—in addition to being saved. We need sanctification, not just salvation.

Consider these verses:

- “But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.” —James 1:14
- “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”
—Romans 7:14-25
- “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” —Ephesians 6:12-13

How do we get rid of friendship with the world and get ourselves right with God? In verses 7-10 James tells us to do several practical things to remedy our situation:

1. Submit to God.
This is the heart of the issue: our willingness to confess Jesus as Lord of our lives, acknowledge our sinfulness and weakness, and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to His control.
2. Resist the devil.
When we submit to God and actively resist the devil, the promise is that he will flee from us. That's great news!
3. Come near to God.
And He will come near to you. How amazing that our Creator wants close fellowship with us!
4. Wash your hands and purify your hearts.
We need to admit that we are sinners and double-minded. When David was confronted with his sin, he wrote a powerful prayer we know as Psalm 51. David said, "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.... Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.... A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."
5. Grieve, mourn, and wail. (change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom)
We need to have true repentance over our sin. Don't merely admit it, grieve over it.
6. Be humble before the Lord.
When we truly realize Who God is and who we are, we are flooded with true humility. Pride comes from refusing to recognize God in His rightful place.

***Application:* What do these steps look like in your life?**

It's all about grace. God will give us the desire and power to do these things. If we humble ourselves, He will lift us up.

Why does God give grace only to the humble?

Have you ever wondered why God doesn't feel near? What should we do about it? What place do feelings have in this?

An elderly couple drove down the road in their car with a front bench seat. As they drove, the wife noticed that in many of the other cars with younger couples in the front seat, the woman sat close to the man as he drove. She asked her husband, "Why is it that we don't sit that close anymore?" He simply answered, "It wasn't me who moved." If we are far from God, He hasn't moved. He hasn't distanced Himself from us. We have distanced ourselves from Him.

MEMORIZE: James 4:7