

James

Practical Principles for Life

Zoom Bible Study | Lesson Five

December 5, 2023

Chapter 4

James 4:1 – 3:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

What causes conflict between people, as James tells us in verses 1 – 3?

The "law of Christ" would put an end to world wars and personal conflicts. What is that law of Christ?

Matthew 5:21-22: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

When you have a conflict with someone, what does that show about you or the other person?

James 3:16: For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Romans 12:18: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

What is the first thing you should do when you realize that you are in conflict with someone else, especially a fellow believer?

FIRST - examine yourself.

Use James 3:17 to measure your attitude. Take full inventory of your motives and methods.

SECOND – Obey Jesus' instructions:

Matthew 5:23 - 24: Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Effective Prayer

First James talks about “no prayer”: You do not have because you do not ask God.

Spurgeon said: “If you may have everything by asking, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is, and I beseech you to abound in it... Do you know what great things are to be had for the asking? Have you ever thought of it? Does it not stimulate you to pray fervently? All heaven lies before the grasp of the asking man (or woman); all the promises of God are rich and inexhaustible, and their fulfillment is to be had by prayer.”

Then James addresses the problem of wrong kinds of prayer—selfish prayer:

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:4 – 10:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

What is friendship with the world? Why is it compared to adultery?

Jeremiah 3:1-5: “If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers—would you now return to me?” declares the Lord.

²“Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness.

³Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame. ⁴Have you not just called to me: ‘My Father, my friend from my youth, ⁵will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?’ This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can.”

Think of the inner pain and torture inside the person who is betrayed by an unfaithful spouse. This is what the Spirit of God feels regarding our world-loving hearts.

What are some ways that we commit adultery against God?

- When we give to other people or other activities what we owe to God.
- When we spend more time with the “world” than we do in God's presence.
- When we give in to our fleshly desires and they become our priority.
- When we form relationships that hinder and corrupt our relationship with God.

How do we become friends with the world?

We become involved with the world gradually - baby steps. Then we begin to love the world.

1 John 2:15-17: Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

And then we conform to the world:

Romans 12:2: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing
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of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

How do you guard against becoming “friends with the world”?

1. Submit to God

Psalm 32: 1-5: Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. ³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Notice David's condition while he refused to surrender, and afterwards.

- Bones wasted away
- Groaned all the time
- Strength was sapped
- No rest

Why are we reluctant to submit? What lies have you believed?

“If he (God) were a tyrant it might be courageous to resist, but since he is a Father it is ungrateful to rebel.” (Spurgeon)

The truth is, you are submitting even now.

Romans 6:16: Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

2. Resist the devil

Ephesians 4:27: Do not give the devil a foothold.

What is a foothold?

A foothold can allow a wicked person to do you great harm.

But the devil's footholds are far more dangerous! They are often very subtle and seem small to us, but the devil is happy to get a foothold which he can turn into a stronghold.



Common Footholds:

- Unforgiveness and bitterness
Ephesians 4:26 – 27: “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.
- Lack of thought control
2 Corinthians 10:5: We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
- Allowing “the world” to intrude your life.
What do you watch? What do you listen to? What do you read? Who influences you?
1 John 2:15: Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.
- Lack of knowledge of God's Word, weak or non-existent prayer life, etc.

How do we resist the devil?

James tells us how in verses 8 and 9:

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

What do you need to do right now in your life to draw nearer to God?

- Purify your heart of any known sin?
- Renounce any compromising ways or habits?
- Stop trying to justify your sin?
- Separate yourself from people who are drawing you away from God?
- Offer or ask for forgiveness?
- Put strong new disciplines in your life, i.e., reading your Bible, prayer, church attendance and participation, serving others?

3. Shore up the weak spots.

4. Humble yourself - verse 10.

Remember: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Other translations: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Don't ask God to humble you; humble yourself.

Isaiah 66:2: "Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the Lord. "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word."

Romans 12:3: For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

What can you do on a daily basis to humble yourself?

James 4:11 – 17

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

- Life is uncertain.

Proverbs 27:1: Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

Luke 12:16-21: And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

- Life is short. How do we count our lives? In years.
Psalms 90:12: Teach us to number our *days*, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

God tells us to number our *days*. Many people *spend* their lives. Some *waste* their lives. We want to *invest* all the days of our lives.

- The frailty of man. "You boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil."

James points out three attitudes toward the will of God, only one is correct.

1. Ignoring God's will

2. Disobeying God's Will

2 Peter 2:21: It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Why do people who know the will of God deliberately disobey it?

3. Obeying God's Will

The will of God for each of us includes his general will that applies to everyone.

1 Thessalonians 4:3: It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: Rejoice always,¹⁷ pray continually,¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

START WITH THE THING YOU KNOW YOU OUGHT TO DO.

You will learn God's will both from successes and failures.

Colossians 1:9: For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.

Romans 12:2: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.