

James, a Bible Study - Chapter 4

1. Read James 4
2. **V1-3: 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.**
 - a. This passage addresses one of the major challenges of the Christian life: Whom will we serve? James goes on to cite some of the outcomes of making a wrong choice. How are our individual lives and society at large impacted when we make a wrong choice?
 - b. What "tools" do we have at our disposal to help us make right choices?
3. **V4-10: 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.**
 - a. In **V4**, James calls Christians who war with each other "adulterers and adulteresses." Why does he use this phrase?
 - b. What does this phrase suggest about the kind of relationship God wants with his people?
 - c. Look at **V4b** and Matthew 6:24. What larger theme is James addressing?
 - d. What point is James making in **V5**? How does Godly jealousy differ from human jealousy?
 - e. Consider **V6b-7**. What are the characteristics of God-based humility?
 - f. The need for humility is fairly constant theme in both the OT and NT. What are the larger issues at play when we talk about a proper humility? Why is humility so important?
 - g. When have you seen a person with a humble attitude bring peace to a volatile situation?
 - h. Look at **7b**. What are our motivations for resisting the devil? What gives us the ability to resist him?
 - i. Look at **V8-10**. What does James mean when he says, "Come near to God"?
 - j. The Jews were big on ceremonial cleansing. What kind of cleansing is James referring to in **V8b**?
 - k. What radical change in attitude is addressed in **V9**?
 - l. How do we humble ourselves before the Lord (**V10**)? Why is this often a necessary first step to spiritual growth?

- 4. V11-12 – 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. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?**
- James and Paul (see 2 Corinthians 12:20) are both seasoned pastors. Why do you think they were so concerned about slander?
 - Slander is usually an outward manifestation of inward sin. What kind of inward sin might cause one person to slander another?
 - James makes the case that the one who slanders is really appointing himself or herself judge over the law. Why is this so problematic?
- 5. V13-17 – 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.” ¹⁴Why, 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. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.**
- What lesson is James teaching us in this passage? What other NT passages support this same idea?
 - Look at 1 Corinthians 4:19 and 1 Corinthians 16:7. What emphasis is Paul making?
 - How do we strike a balance between waiting for God and acting?
 - What reminder (threat?) is James making in the last verse?