

Book of James



LESSON 7

James 4:1-10

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You 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. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulterous people, [a] 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. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us [b]? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." [c] 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 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. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

The Big Idea

James warns that a life lived for pleasure rather than for righteousness is an unsatisfying life. One desires and has not. One murders and wages war, yet satisfaction eludes them. God alone can satisfy. James is suggesting that satisfaction cannot be found outside of seeking righteousness.

If we are so blinded by our desires that we cannot pray the will of God, our prayers will not be answered. 1 John 5:14 tells us, "If we ask anything according to His will, he hears us."

James accuses Christians of being "worldly-minded" and "adulterous," the same term God used in the Old Testament for the children of Israel because of their constant involvement in heathen worship. These Christians who've been caught up in the lusts of the world have committed harlotry because of their friendship or affection with it. James

emphasizes this by explaining that it's a choice to be an enemy of God. It's like breaking a marriage vow with God and being in an adulterous relationship with the world.

We stand between rival rulers – God and the world (Satan's system).

God is a jealous god. Jealousy is God's longing for us and is a lot different from human jealousy. Human jealousy is selfish. God's jealousy wants nothing but the best for His children and He wants us to hate everything else. How do we give God the love He deserves? James states that, "He giveth more grace," which means that God gives us the grace to fulfill the great demand of loving Him.

A characteristic of God's grace is humility. Pride prevents one from humbling themselves and submitting to God to receive His grace. Pride is the food of satanic activity. That is why James tells us that if we resist the devil, he will flee. We no longer have to depend on our power but God's power.

James emphasizes how we must cleanse our hands by cleaning off the filth of the world. In the Old Testament, the washing of hands was a ritual that priests went through before they could render any service to God or draw near to Him in temple worship. It was one way God demonstrated the importance of holiness.

The heart is the center of one's life, and James is suggesting that we need to purify our hearts and deal with the sin that's within us. He calls his audience double-minded, a Christian who has one foot in the world - a hypocrite essentially.

James says, "Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness." He is saying to reject the hollow merriment of the world, the laughter of fools. James is encouraging them to come to God through the process of repentance. When we see ourselves as God sees us, how unworthy we are of His love and how great He is, we should humble ourselves before Him.

Conversation

1. What does resisting the devil look like in your life?
2. Satisfaction and fulfillment is a basic human need, Where do you find your satisfaction?
3. Repentance is a requirement for salvation, how do you recognize and acknowledge your sin before God?

Take Away

If pleasure is the most important thing in our lives, there will be confusion and dissatisfaction. We can never satisfy the craving for pleasure. Real joy, real peace, real satisfaction only comes through hungering and thirsting after God. Real peace comes through righteousness.

James is challenging us to not straddle the fence. Choose to serve God with all your might! Don't see how close to the world you can be, but how close to heaven. James teaches us to see the importance of humbling ourselves and submitting to God. People often say they want God's blessing, but they're not willing to let Jesus be Lord, to rule and reign in their lives. It's only with an attitude of submission to God that we will have the power to resist the devil, who's power is built on delusion. He doesn't have power over us unless we give it to him.

