

## James 4 – Pride vs Humility

### Read James 4:1-10

**Vs 1** What is the source of war and fighting among Christians? Selfish desire for pleasures. The source of wars and fights among Christians is always the same. There is some root of carnality, an internal war within the believer regarding the lusts of the flesh. No two believers who are both walking in the Spirit of God towards each other can live with wars and fights among themselves. If you are fighting with another Christian, you must examine yourself. It takes two to fight.

**Vs 2** James goes deeper and identifies the root of division. What is it? Lust (*to set the heart upon, to long for*), lack and covetousness (*to earnestly desire, to envy*). What do these lead to? Covetousness leads to conflict. Anger and animosity lead to hatred and conflict (murder). See Matt 5:21-22 This helps us to understand the folly of living life after the lusts of the world and our fleshly appetites. You are tempted to fulfill a sinful desire because you think (or hope) that it may be satisfied, but it will never be satisfied. Does fighting and war get what you want? No. What does James say you should do instead? Ask. Instead of asking, these Christians were taking (or trying to). See Matt 5:42 and Luke 6:30. The reason these destructive desires exist among Christians is because they do not seek God for their needs (you do not ask). James reminds us here of the great power of prayer, and why one may live unnecessarily as a spiritual pauper, simply because they do not pray, or do not ask when they pray.

**Vs 3** Some people were asking, but were they receiving? No. Why? Because they were asking wrong by asking to satisfy their selfish desire for pleasures (see vs 1). After dealing with the problem of no prayer, now James addressed the problem of selfish prayer. We must remember that the purpose of prayer is not to persuade a reluctant God to do our bidding (like a cosmic “Santa Claus”). The purpose of prayer is to align our will with His, and in partnership with Him, to ask Him to accomplish His will on this earth (Matthew 6:10). Spend is the same verb used to describe the wasteful spending of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:14.

**Vs 4** What label is James giving these selfish askers? He is calling them adulteresses. Why do you think he is using that descriptive? This is a rebuke presented in Old Testament vocabulary. God spoke this way in the Old Testament when His people were attracted to some form of idolatry (Jer 3:8-9, Eze 6:9;16:32;23:37, Hosea 3:1). As James saw it here, their covetousness was idolatry (Colossians 3:5) and friendship with the world. God expects us to give Him first place. He is a jealous God see Ex 20:3-5 God is the “husband” and we are His “wife” (as in Old Testament passages such as Isa 54:5, Jer 3:20, Ex 34:15-16). When we give the world first place, we are being unfaithful to Him. What does friendship with the world cause? Enmity (*an enemy of, hatred toward*) with God. James recognizes that we cannot both be friends of this world system in rebellion against God, and friends of God at the same time (Matt 6:24).

**Vs 5** What is this verse saying? Scripture tells us the Spirit of God is jealous for our attention and it is on purpose.

**Vs 6** This is a quote from Prov 3:34 What does God give us to help us in this struggle with the draw of the world? Grace! How much grace? More or great (*megas* in Greek) which means *abundant, exceedingly*. What is the key to receiving this amazing supply of grace (unmerited favor)? Humility. Humility merely puts us in a position to receive the gift He freely gives. What does God do to the proud (opposite of humble)? Resists (*rage in battle against*) them. James reminds us that this grace only comes to the humble. Grace and pride are eternal enemies. Pride demands that God bless me in light of my merits, whether real or imagined. But grace will not deal with me on the basis of anything in me – good or bad – but only on the basis of who God is.

**Vs 7** What is “therefore” there for? In light of the grace offered to the humble, there is only one thing to do: submit to God (and, by implication, resist the world). How can we apply this practically? See yourself as under God, surrender to Him as a conquering King, and start receiving the benefits of His reign.

Charles Spurgeon has said;

- We should submit to God because He created us.
- We should submit to God because His rule is good for us.
- We should submit to God because all resistance to Him is futile.
- We should submit to God because such submission is absolutely necessary to salvation.
- We should submit to God because it is the only way to have peace with God.

So what does James tell us to do? Resist (*to stand against, to oppose*) the devil. If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power. Which shall be your master, God or the devil? These are the only choices. No man is without a master. What wonderful thing happens 100% of the time when you resist the devil? He will flee! The word translated “flee” means to run away from a stronger foe. Remember 1 John 4:4 and Rom 8:31. James challenges individual Christians to deal with Satan as a conquered foe who can and must be personally resisted. You can’t do it for another nor can another do it for you.

**Vs 8** Step 1, resist the devil. What is step 2? Draw near to (*approach*) God. See the contrast; push away the devil, draw near to God. What wonderful thing happens 100% of the time when you draw near to God? He will draw near (come close) to you. The call to draw near to God is both an invitation and a promise.

Charles Spurgeon explains what it means to draw near to God;

- It means to draw near in worship, praise, and in prayer.
- It means to draw near by asking counsel of God.
- It means to draw near in enjoying communion with God.

As we draw near to God, what two things do we need to do? Cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. Why does he direct the “cleanse hand” command to the sinner? The word used for sinner is *hamartolos*, which means the hardened sinner, the man whose sin is obvious and notorious. As we draw near to God we will be convicted of our sin. Why does he direct the “purify heart” command to the double minded? A pure heart is single minded, where the mind of the soul and spirit are in agreement with God. When your soul mind does not agree with your spirit mind (which has the mind of Christ) you are double-minded and your heart (your soul) is not purely aligned with God.

**Vs 9** What else do you do as you draw near to God? Lament (*to feel afflicted and miserable*), mourn (*the act of grieving*) and weep (*to sob*). In using terms like lament and mourn and weep, James speaks in terms of the Hebrew prophets’ language about the anguish of conviction which leads to repentance. You are not happy about your state when compared to our Holy God.

**Vs 10** James closes this thought with another command and promise. What are they? Humble yourself before God and He will lift you up. As we come acknowledging our sin before our Holy God (not as self righteous religionists, as Jesus explained in Luke 18:10-14), we appropriately humble ourselves before Him. Then He will lift us up, because God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble, and grace – the unmerited favor of God – always lifts us up.

**Vs 11 - 12** What is the new topic James now addresses? Do not speak evil of a fellow Christian. Humbling ourselves and getting right with God must result in our getting right with other people. When we are right with other people, it will show in the way we talk about them. So we must not speak evil of one another and not judge our brother. This sin is wrong for two reasons. First, it breaks the royal law that we should love one another. Second, it takes a right of judgment that only God has. What does James equate judging one another to? Violating the law. When we judge our brother, we put ourselves in the same place as the law, in effect judging the law. This is something that we have no authority to do, because there is one Lawgiver, God. Who are you to judge another? This is an extension of the same humility that James writes about in this chapter. When we have proper humility before God, it just isn’t within us to arrogantly judge our brother. Remember, this is not judging behavior, which we are told to do. Matt 18:15-17, John 7:24

**Vs 13 – 16** Here we have another new topic. What is it? We should not boast about tomorrow. James rebuked the kind of heart that lives and makes its plans apart from a constant awareness of the heart of God. What does James compare our lives to? Vapor. James asked us to consider the fragility of human life, and the fact that we live and move only at the permission of God. James does not discourage us from planning and doing, only from planning and doing apart from reliance on God. See Luke 12:16-21 What should we say instead? As Jesus did, not My will but Yours be done Luke 22:42. It is nothing but sheer arrogance that makes us think that we can live and move and have our being independent of God. This boastful arrogance is the essence of sin: a proud independence.

**Vs 17** What does James give as a definition of sin? When you know to do good, and don’t do it, to you it is sin (missing the bullseye of God’s perfect will). Here James returned to his consistent theme through his letter: the idea that genuine faith is proved by action. Jesus told a story with much the same point in Luke 12:41-48. With greater light comes greater responsibility.