

James 4:1-10

I. The Source of War – Friendship with the World (Vs. 1-6)

James is setting before his people a basic question – whether their aim in life is to submit to the will of God or to temporarily gratify their own desires for the pleasures of this world?

“The world we’re not to love is the organized system of human civilization that is actively hostile to God and alienated from God.” [C. J. Mahaney; *Worldliness, Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World*]

The world God forbids us to love is the fallen world. **1 John 2:15**, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

“The world is human nature sacrificing the spiritual to the material, the future to the present, the unseen and the eternal to that which touches the senses and perishes with time. The world is a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which have been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, molding it, degrading it.” [Richard Wolff; *Turning Toward Integrity*]

“‘The World’ means human life and society with God left out – the Devil’s lair for sinners and his lure for saints.” [John Phillips]

Summary – The world is an organized system of ideas and values that is energized by Satan and leaves out God and His Word. Within the auspices of this world system, there are areas of conflict that we must be aware of and must triumph over in Christ Jesus.

A. Conflict with Others (Vs.1a)

James is primarily talking about wars (literally “quarrels”) and fights in the church. That is logically deduced from *“fights among you.”* The “you” (plural) are the recipients of the letter who are the early Christians.

The devil (who is called *“the god of this world”* in **2 Corinthians 4:4**) knows that if he can get us fighting one another, we forget where and who is the true enemy.

Galatians 5:15, *“But if you bite and devour one another beware lest you be consumed by one another!”* The Bible is full of “one-another’s”- love one another, pray for one another, support one another, and so forth, but not devour one another.

B. Conflict with Self (Vs. 1b-3)

The world breeds discontent, an argumentative spirit, self-centeredness, inconsideration, and unfortunately sinful longings that cannot be filled. The world holds out promises to entice us, but the world never delivers.

The word *“desires”* is also translated “cravings.” The Greek word translated *“pleasures”* in verse 1 is the word *“hēdōnē”* it is the word from which we get our word *“hedonism.”* Hedonism is the overwhelming desire for pleasure. God designed us to find that pleasure in Him, but the world redirects this desire for pleasure to focus on stuff, fame, and human relationships that are usually self-serving.

The basic desires are for “material things” such as money, power, prestige, worldly possessions, and gratification of bodily lusts. Listen again to the Word from **1 John 2:16**, *“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”* That is the warning, now observe the promise in the next verse **1 John 2:17**, *“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

“Lust” refers to any consuming desire. From the Greek word translated *“covet”*, we get *“zealot.”* Desires this strong that are not satisfied result fighting and war. That includes fighting and war in a marriage, in a child – parent relationship, in a church, in the workplace, among nations, but primarily conflict with self. Have you prayed and your desires have not been fulfilled? Verse 3 informs us, *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”* So many people who are conformed to the world and see prayer as the way we get their lust and coveting desires fulfilled.

James 4:1-10

Psalm 37:4, “Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” God will give us the desires, not anything we desire. The Greek word translated “amiss” means with wrong motives. God is the perfect Father. We come to God asking Him to give us what He determines we need.

C. Conflict with God (Vs.4-6)

In the Old Testament, God’s chosen people, the Jews, were compared to God’s wife. *Isaiah 54:5a*, “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name.” In the New Testament, Christ is the Bridegroom and the church is the bride of Christ (*Romans 7:4*). Friendship with the world is serious spiritual adultery against God, more serious than adultery in the physical realm.

The word translated “friendship” means to have common interests and affection for another. In other words, spiritual adultery is adopting the world’s values, ideas, and priorities. “Enmity” means to become an adversary or foe. Neutrality toward God is impossible. Either we are a friend of God or we are at enmity with God. *Luke 16:13a*, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.”

Vs. 5-6

James gives us several commands that when obeyed will insure that we do not drift into friendship with the world.

God is a jealous God and demands our undivided devotion. He sent His Spirit to indwell us so that He could fill us and enable us to be totally devoted to our God in our thoughts and actions. The word “yearns” means to earnestly desire. God does so “jealously,” accepting no rivals. The cure for friendship with the world is to allow the Holy Spirit who dwells within us to fill us, control us, empower us, and permeate us so that we do not walk according to the flesh which always results in friendship with the world.

Vs. 6 – The Greek word for “proud” literally means “to appear over.” Pride is leaving God out and thus we appear over God. The phrase, “God resists the proud” in the Greek text literally means to stand in full battle array against someone. What’s the solution? We humble ourselves. Humility is when we admit our need for Him. Humility is living in constant dependence on Him. Before we can be obedient we must humble ourselves before God.

II. The Source of Peace – Fellowship with God (Vs. 7-10)

A. Submission (Vs. 7a)

The word “submit” is a military word that means to line up under those in authority over you. To submit to God means that we recognize that He is in authority over us and we no longer rebel but get under that authority in total surrender.

B. Opposition (Vs. 7b)

The word “resist” means “to be hostile toward,” “to set up or stand against” something. We have authority only as long as we are under God’s authority.

C. Proposition (Vs. 8a)

We draw near first because we are the ones who moved away. The word translated “draw near” is the word used to describe in the Old Testament when the priests approached God with their sacrifices. We draw near to Him in worship. The word “purify” means to take away what dilutes or adulterates.

James is not demanding a gloom and doom encompassed life. He is identifying two things. First, he is pleading for sobriety in place of frivolousness. Second, James is calling for an intensity for the holy things of God.

The last part of what James is instructing concerning joy and mourning identifies what happens when we recognize our sins, move to regret, repent, we then experience the wonderful joy of forgiveness.