

## **JAMES: HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING**

W4 - "A Disciple is a Peacemaker" - James Ch. 4

Through the first 3 Chapters, James has given us a number of responses a disciple should have: Response to Trials, Response to Temptations, Response to the Word, Response to People, Response of Faith, Response with our Words, and finally a Response of Wisdom.

This is where we come to Ch. 4 entitled "A Disciple is a Peacemaker."

Let's begin.

### **Point 1: RESPONSE TO THE WORLD**

If we recall from last week, James finished the passage on wisdom stating:

***James 3:16-18** "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be **disorder** and **every** vile practice, But the wisdom from above is first pure, then **peaceable**, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in **peace** by those who make **peace**."*

This flows right into our discussion today, a disciple is a peacemaker. Yet, the Church James is writing to appears to not experience peace. Why?

When "believers" do not denounce the world, but rather hold onto it, the result is three separate conflicts—disorders and every vile practice—and then a call to action: Conflict with others, Conflict with ourselves, Conflict with God, and do everything in love.

#### **I. Conflict with others**

In January of 1919, the world was beginning their recovery journey from the destruction of WWI. World leaders would gather at Versailles in France in order to discuss the big question: what now? Among those world leaders was none other than US President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson brought with him 14 points to restore the world. Among those 14 points, was the introduction of the League of Nations. The idea behind this organization was to prevent another world wide conflict—diplomacy over violence.

20 years following the introduction of this organization, WWII broke out which was significantly worse than WWI. Since WWII—the past 80 years—there have been hundreds of separate conflicts.

Every time war breaks out, the public cries out "why don't we all just get along." Great in theory, terrible in practice. Because a world that rejects God CANNOT obtain **peace**.

What's my reasoning behind sharing this? James is writing to a Church that finds themselves in a war amongst themselves. They may not verbally reject God, but effectively, by their life, they have.

He writes:

***James 4:1a*** *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?*

These are issues IN the Church, not between the Church and the world. But why is that? 2 reasons that have already been covered thus far: Class Divide and Jealous-driven Church fighting.

#### A. Class Divide

If we recall from two weeks ago, the Church was struggling with this very issue.

***James 2:1*** *“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory,”*

He obviously wrote that because they were showing favoritism.

If we were to look at the Corinthian Church, we would see something similar. In a rebuke to the Corinthians based on their abuse of the Lord's supper, Paul writes:

***1 Corinthians 11:18-19*** *“For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are **divisions** among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be **factions** among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.”*

Factions (haireseis) in the greek means philosophical or religious sects based on our self chosen opinion. In the direct context, and if you were to continue reading on, in many ways Paul seems to find a similar issue that James finds—the age old issue of dividing a group of people based on class or wealth.

Why is this? A good argument could be made that it is because the world has made these distinctions, and we have been groomed and molded into dividing people into these classes—thus making us stained by the world (1:17). That is why when we come to Christ, we are to be transformed by the renewal of our mind (Romans 12:2) which occurs through the reading of the Word.

When class divisions are allowed inside the Church, the Church has brought in worldly wisdom which is vile and will cause disorder. Therefore, *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?*

## B. Jealous-driven Church Fights

If we recall from last week, many believers that James was writing to desired the position of overseer or teacher. The Word of God is beneficial, for *teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (1 Timothy 3:16)*.

It is supposed to unite the disciples, yet instead it divided because of selfish ambition and jealousy (**James 3:13-16**). It became a struggle for whose way was right.

Where can we see this division today—denominations.

John Bunyan wrote in his book *The Pilgrim's Progress* “And as for those titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians and the like, I conclude that they came neither from Jerusalem, nor Antioch, but rather from hell and from Babylon, for they naturally tend to divisions.”

Paul discusses this as well:

**1 Corinthians 1:11-13** *“For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is **quarreling** among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*

What we don’t realize is we too have fallen into quarrels and fights BECAUSE of selfish-ambition and jealousy.

- Therefore, the Church has been ineffective in the war against unrighteousness because we have been too busy fighting a Civil War.

James asks the question *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?*

## II. Conflict with ourselves

**James 4:1b** *Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?*

If you are in an internal war, your environment will reap the consequences.

- Hurt people...hurt people.

James writes:

**James 3:14, 16** *“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your **hearts**...there will be disorder and every vile practice,”*

Selfishness is the root of divisions and quarrels among the Body of Christ.

**James 4:2** *“You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.”*

Sin begins with desire.

**James 1:15** *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

- Murder begins with deep hatred.
- Adultery begins with friendship, lust, and dwelling on what ifs?
- Robbery begins with covetousness—a deep desire to have something that is not yours, and you do not have the means to obtain said thing.

**James 4:3** *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”*

Passions are the reason there are divisions anyhow. Yet their prayers are solely motivated out of their passions—the thing that is STAINING God’s bride. Therefore they do not receive.

Wiersbe states, “When our praying is wrong, our whole Christian life is wrong.” Prayer is central to the Christian Faith.

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** *“pray without ceasing,”*

But what is the purpose of prayer? Wiersbe continues, “It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man’s will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth.” What’s God’s will?

**Matthew 28:19** *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”*

That CANNOT be accomplished without prayer.

Furthermore, in our individual lives, it is to live holy, obedient, Christ-centered lives. This cannot be accomplished apart from prayer. Prayer is central to the faith.

Wiersbe states, “Instead of seeking God’s will, we tell God what He is supposed to do; and we get angry at Him if He does not obey.”

We want all the blessings of God, but don’t want to do any of the work for His Kingdom.

When our Prayer is off, our Christianity is off.

### III. Conflict with God

James writes:

***James 4:4a*** “*You adulterous people!*”

Why adulterous? Marriage is the picture of God’s relationship with His people. We are married to Him in a covenant, which cannot be broken. However, we entertain other lovers. We entertain other:

- religions
- manifestations
- zodiac signs
- immoralities
- gossiping
- partiality
- superiority
- politics
- drunkenness
- drug addictions
- sports

What is our relationship like with the world?

***James 4:4b*** *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*”

Enmity in the greek can be translated hostile. It is the same word used in Romans 8:7

***Romans 8:7*** *For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile** to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it **cannot**.*

Hostile is defined by [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com) as “opposed in feeling, action, or character; antagonistic.”

A MIND FIXATED ON THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD, is a mind that is OPPOSED—ANTAGONISTIC—toward God.

- See, we as Christians effectively live as if we don't believe in God. We go on ignoring his will, ignoring his calling, and just believe it will be okay if we attend Church on Sunday.

**Effectively, by our WORKS, we are an atheist.** *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God...(Romans 8:7)*

I want to ask: How often do you think of God? Is He ever on your mind?

**James 4:5** *“Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?”*

- For those of us who are married, do you want to share your spouse with someone?

Neither does God want to share you with the things of the world, yet for a far greater reason. He knows that *sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (James 1:15).*

**James 4:6** *“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.””*

As a disciple we are to rely on God's grace. There are areas in our life, or situations in our life that I believe God places there so we learn to lean on Him (\*\*TRIALS WEEK 1\*\*). Yet we live in a technologically advanced society, and we quickly turn to our phones, to modernity, to books. When instead it came into our life to LEARN more about GOD'S great POWER and GRACE.

**2 Corinthians 12:8-9** *Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me “My **grace** is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

- Are you going through anything right now in your life that God may be teaching you to rely on Him? How have you responded to this situation?

**James 4:7** *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

It's not resist the devil first, it's submit to God. You cannot resist the devil when you are not submitted to God because you are roaming freely in the devil's playground (Ephesians 2:2) absent of the spiritual armor and protection.

- It's like bringing a knife to a gunfight.
- Or an astronaut going to space with no space suit.
- Ignorance is NOT bliss.

Not understanding the spiritual hierarchal system results in decay and death. *Submit yourselves therefore to God THEN Resist the devil, and he **WILL** flee from you.*

**James 4:8a** *“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...”*

Jesus says this to the lukewarm—*adulterous*—church of Laodecia:

**Revelation 3:20** *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

And Jesus says this in the Sermon on the Mount:

**Matthew 7:8** *...the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.*

You see as we are drawing near—He is already there.

**James 4:8b-10** *“...Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**”*

He is talking about Repentance. REPENT! Renounce the world and your friendship thereof. Come to God humbly, mourning, and sorrowful of your disobedience to Him. And the Word says *the one who seeks finds*.

Often, we seek without repentance, and wonder why we don't find. It's because you are still walking around blind—you don't even know where to look.

#### IV. Do everything in love

James closes this passage with a brief reminder of our words:

**James 4:11** *“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against*

*the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.”*

John in his epistle writes:

**1 John 2:9-11** *“Whoever says he is in the light and **hates** his brother is **still** in darkness. Whoever loves his brother **abides** in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”*

In the context of drawing near to God: Do you hate a brother in Christ? Do you have any bitterness or jealousy to a brother in Christ. Scripture says you are blinded if you do, therefore making you unable to seek and find.

Paul writes to the Church in Corinth

**1 Corinthians 13:1** *“If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but have not **love**, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal,”*

Paul instructs the Ephesians that we are to speak the truth in love (*Ephesians 4:15*).

Many many Christians in this nation lack this one core component of Christianity and without it, they are essentially denying Christ. The greatest commandment is: 1, love God and 2, love people.

We have directly disobeyed the scripture and joined factions—our own religious sects—which has caused a great deal of conflict between the Body of believers. The result has been a lack of love for those they disagree with.

**James 4:12** *“There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”*

This is talking about hypocritical judgement. You judge your brother in Christ, or a sinner, yet you aren't praying or reading the word. You have as little of a relationship with God as they do.

**Matthew 7:1-3** *Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*

In John's words *“whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes,” (1 John 2:11).*

You are judging as if you are in the light rather you are consumed by darkness.  
FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS HOSTILE TO GOD.

## **Point 2:** RESPONSE TO THE WILL OF GOD

A disciple delights to do the will of God because of his regeneration and new birth. Before, we were *dead in the trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1)*, but now, we received the Spirit therefore leading us toward the will of God.

David writes:

***Psalm 40:8** “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”*

Jesus states:

***Mark 3:35** “For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Peter instructs

***1 Peter 4:2** “so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.”*

With this knowledge, let's read James 4:13-17.

***James 4:13-17** “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”*

There are 3 attitudes toward the will of God: Ignoring God's will, Obeying God's will, and Disobeying God's will.

### I. Ignoring God's will

If we truly believe in God, why do we ignore what He asks for our lives. James presents three arguments: Life is complex, life is uncertain, and life is brief.

#### A. Life is complex

**James 4:13** *“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—”*

The businessmen mentioned here believed that by moving to a new town, in a year, they would have great success. The issue here is not planning, rather planning without God.

What did God have planned for them? Was it to go to this town to make a profit? Or was it to stay and preach the Gospel.

What is God’s plan for your life? Have you been running away from God’s plan and taking your own will into account. Reminder: the result of our own will (selfishness) is disorder and every vile practice.

I’d like to also point out—looking to the future can cause us to avoid the present. It’s like the man James talked about in Ch. 2:

**James 2:15-16a** *“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled...”*

These so called believers are essentially saying tomorrow you will receive what you need. However, if they had a TODAY outlook, that man would receive his immediate needs (as the Lord has instructed).

- It’s always, I’ll repent tomorrow.
- I’ll read tomorrow.
- I’ll pray tomorrow
- I’ll evangelize tomorrow.
- And then tomorrow turns into kneeling in front of the judgement seat, awaiting your eternal destination, absent of the blood of Jesus.

I have heard it said: the devil’s favorite word is tomorrow.

## B. Life is uncertain

**James 4:14a** *“yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.*

The businessmen said that all these things would occur within a year. They are unsure of what the future holds because they are not...GOD.

Proverbs states:

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

James is rightly making the point, none of us knows what tomorrow holds.

- REPENT TODAY.
- READ TODAY.
- PRAY TODAY.
- TEXT THAT PERSON TODAY.

### C. Life is Brief

***James 4:14b*** *What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”*

There’s no guarantee that the businessmen would be alive in a year. Life is literally short, and if we are always thinking about what we are going to do tomorrow, we will never accomplish what we NEED to do today.

There’s no guarantee that we will wake up and see tomorrow. For the disciple, we have peace at night with assurance in Christ. For the unbeliever, life on this earth is all you have. The moment you breathe your last, your idea of peace is gone. Your very rejection of God—after He has given you chance after chance—has landed you in a place NOT made for you. Are you willing to gamble with this reality?

For those who are saved, yes, you have peace at night knowing if you didn’t wake up—you have escaped the world and it’s infirmities and have been united with our Lord. But think about those loved ones who have not yet received the Christ as Lord yet...what awaits them?

Heaven is real. Hell is real. How do we see people?

We need to have an urgency to tell the lost of the good news in Jesus Christ. Our days are short and our years are short. We can either waste those years thinking about tomorrow or invest these years building for eternity.

### II. Obeying God’s will

***James 4:15*** *“Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.””*

The businessmen should have first sought God above all else. They should have prayed before planning and executing said plans.

**Matthew 6:33** *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

It's seek God FIRST, before everything else.

God's will allows us to operate in gifts that he has predetermined for our life for the betterment of the Church. What we find in operating in these gifts is a great side-effect: JOY! Along with that joy, is a great peace knowing that you are following the will of God in your life, and doing what you were created to do.

### III. Disobeying God's will

**James 4:16** *“As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

The businessmen were boasting in nothing...I mean literally nothing has happened yet and they were boasting about a great profit. That's arrogance.

**James 4:17** *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”*

What is that right thing? Well the previous 4 chapters.

- Enduring through trials
- Not falling to temptations
- Impartiality
- Getting to work
- Controlling your words
- Avoiding worldly wisdom
- Renouncing your friendship with the world.

In the broader sense, what exactly is the right thing, or what exactly is God's will?

1. be saved;
2. Spirit-filled;
3. sanctified;
4. submissive.

All summed up in this one phrase, to be **conformed to the image of Christ daily.**

Those who know this but DO NOT do this, are therefore sinning against God. You profess Christianity yet don't do anything—it's a sin. It's a representation that nothing has changed in you, and you still desire your old friends.

Peter writes:

**2 Peter 2:21** *“For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.”*

Disobedience is worse than ignorance. You are saying that “yes God, I sit in Church every Sunday, hear your Word preached, and I know what it says, BUT, I like my way better.” That shows selfishness and pride which James has already established is an abomination to God.

The will of God is not misery rather your own will is where misery has come from.

- Your will is unspiritual, earthly and demonic.
- Your will leads to disorder of many kinds.
- Your will leads to divisions.
- Your will leads to anger and the actions of the flesh.

God’s will leads to everything that is the opposite.

- Yes you suffer with Christ, but you are also heir with Christ.
- You receive the fruits of the Spirit.
- You are placed in the position you were created to be placed in.
- You are living as you were created to be.
- You receive internal peace resulting in external peace.

There is much joy in pursuing God and living out His will. Following God’s will leads to a Disciple being a peacemaker.

#### ACTION STEPS:

- Read James 4
- Has God called you to serve somewhere, move somewhere, or work somewhere and you have ignored it. Seek the Lord for guidance this week, and I encourage you, take a step out of obedience TODAY.
- Are there areas in your life that you need to let go of? Are you a friend with the world? The scripture states that it makes us an enemy with God. If that is you, I want you to open your heart to Jesus today in repentance. You can stand, can come up to the altar, or sit in your seat. Wherever you feel like the Spirit is leading you.
- Secondly, if you are someone who doesn’t know Jesus, life is short. You too, can stand, come to the altar, or sit in your seat. I want you to open your heart to Jesus today. If you are not confident where you will go upon death, open your heart to Jesus today.

James saves the best for last next week, A Disciple is a Prayer.