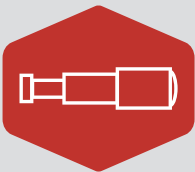




Lesson 10: Don't Be Selfish

Main Idea: What is the greatest problem you are having in your relationships? Who is the person with whom you are having the greatest friction? Although you cannot control their responses or take responsibility for their actions, you can examine your own life. Are you in any degree responsible for the relational rupture? James asserts that the root of relational problems is our own desires that battle within us. The cure is threefold: Submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to God. This requires the practical integration of humility into every part our lives.

Scripture: James 4:1-10



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

When James wrote his letter, it had only been a few decades since Christ's resurrection, yet the believers were already becoming cold in their faith.

According to James 4, personal backsliding impacts relationships. James uses strong language to address the disorder and conflict he observed in the church. The Christian community is facing relational discord, and James confronts it forcefully. One commentator suggests, "The word James uses for "war" is *pólemos*, which means just that: war or battle. The word translated as "fights" is *máchē* which can also be correctly translated as strife, struggles, or quarrelings. To be sure, both of these words denote interpersonal conflicts."¹

¹ Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:78.

James uses the word “desire” to refer to evil pleasures that have a negative spiritual effect in the life of a believer and, by extension, the community. The Greek word for desire is one that may be familiar to you: *hedonism*. With forceful language, James states that the root of relational breakdown is the individual’s lust and envy.

James strongly chastises Christians for their prayerlessness as an indicator of their spiritual condition. As a result, there is relational havoc in the church because they have neglected to go to the source of real fulfillment, God himself.

James uses the strong term “adulterous” which would have conjured up passages from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, this language is used whenever people would turn away from the true God and give themselves to serve something else.

James also uses a strong word “enmity.” One commentator suggests, “The Greek word for “enmity” is a very strong word, *échthra*, which is sometimes translated as “hatred.” If that is so, James is saying that anyone who is in love with the world (a friend of the world, *phílos*) hates God.”²

James then provides an answer for relational dysfunction by pointing readers to the path of humility. The first step is to submit to God. This is the act of willfully yielding your preference. Although this idea of submitting may sound cold or nonrelational, it is actually an invitation to submit to God’s love for you.

The second step is to resist the devil. This is knowingly and purposefully putting yourself on the enemy’s opposing side.

The third and final step is to humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. As you recognize your sin, repent, and bow before God in submission, He will lift you up.

2 Cedar and Ogilvie, *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*, 34:81.

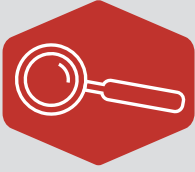


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

Hedonism is a philosophy of life that says, “Me first!” If it feels good, do it. If it brings pain, avoid it. If it makes you walk through conflict, if it makes you work things out, if it calls you to sacrifice, if it calls you to steadfastness—walk away from it. In this portion of Scripture, James provides some powerful thoughts on the results of hedonism. The first six verses of James 4 diagnose why this lifestyle does not lead to inner peace. Verses seven through ten provide the cure.

- Moving away from God causes a higher level of internal and interpersonal friction and hostility (4:1).
- Moving away from God causes you to live a lifestyle that puts you always at another person's throat (4:2).
- Moving away from God causes the door of prayer to be shut (4:2-3).
- Moving away from God causes your relationship with God to be shattered (4:4-6).
- Moving back into relationship with God requires submission to Him (4:7).
- Moving back into relationship with God requires resisting the devil (4:7).
- Moving back into relationship with God requires getting close to God (4:8-10).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Read James 4:8-10. What are the seven commands and corresponding promises given for you to resist the devil?

- What does the word “resist” mean to you?

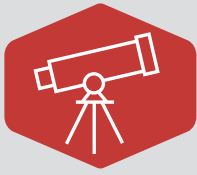
- Read James 4:1-4. Where do fights and quarrels originate?

- Read Matthew 16:24. What does Jesus say about fights and quarrels?

- Describe a time in your life when you got into a quarrel because of your selfish desire.

- Read James 4:4-7. Why do you think James uses the analogy of adultery?

- What are some things that lure you toward friendship with the world?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 4:1. What is the root of most quarrels and fights in the church?

- James 4:3. What prayer will God not answer?

- To what types of prayer will God respond?
- James 4:4. With what does James liken “friendship with the world?”
- Why does James use this imagery?
- James 4:6. Why does God oppose the proud?
- What is the key to receiving grace from God?
- James 4:7. What ten steps are necessary to spiritual victory?