

Reedy Fork Baptist Church

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: " "How to End Wars?"

SCRIPTURE: James 4:1-12 NIV

¹What 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, 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?

⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

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.

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

I. Key Words:

- War
- Fights
- Quarrel
- Desire
- Adulterous
- Friendship
- Enemy
- Submit
- Humble

II. People, Places, & Times:

- James
- Jerusalem

III. Background:

War is a fact of life, in spite of treaties, world peace organizations, and the threat of nuclear, cyber and atomic bombs.

Not only are there wars between nations, but there are wars of one kind or another on almost every level of life— even "gas wars" among filling station operators!

James discussed this important theme of war in this 4th chapter, and he explained that there are three wars going on in the world.

He also told how these wars could be stopped.

IV. In Depth:

1. Lesson Emphasis: 1 The Flesh.

A. The Flesh (vv. 1, 5).

- By "the flesh" is meant the old nature that we inherited from Adam, that is prone to sin.
- The flesh is not the body.
- The body is not sinful; the body is neutral.
- The Spirit may use the body to glorify God, or the flesh may use the body to serve sin.
- When a sinner yields to Christ, he receives a new nature within, but the old nature is neither removed nor reformed.
- For this reason, there is a battle within:
- "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.

- They are in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want" (Gal. 5:17 NIV).
- This is what James termed "your lusts that are in your members" (James 4:1).
- Just as the world is the enemy of God the Father, so the flesh is the enemy of God the Holy Spirit.
- Living to please the old nature means to declare war against God. "

B. The devil (vv. 6-7).

- The world is in conflict with the Father; the flesh fights against the Holy Spirit; and the devil opposes the Son of God.
- Pride is Satan's great sin, and it is one of his chief weapons in his warfare against the saint and the Savior.
- God wants us to be humble; Satan wants us to be proud.
- God wants us to depend on His grace while the devil wants us to depend on ourselves.
- Satan is the author of all "do-it-yourself" spiritual enterprises.
- He enjoys inflating the ego and encouraging the believer to do it his own way.
- Humankind has nothing to be proud of in himself. There dwells no good thing in us (Rom. 7:18), but when we trust Christ, He puts that good thing" in us that makes us His children (2 Tim.1:6, 14).
- These are the three enemies that want to turn us away from God: the world, the flesh, and the devil.
- How can we overcome them? How can we be the friends of God and the enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil?
- James gave us three instructions to follow if we would enjoy peace instead of war.

1. Submit to God (v. 7).

- This word is a military term that means "get into your proper rank."
- If there is any area of the life kept back from God, there will always be battles.
- This explains why uncommitted Christians cannot live with themselves or with other people.
- Satan needs a foothold in our lives if he is going to fight against God, and we give him that foothold.
- The way to resist the devil is to submit to God.

- Submission is an act of the will; it is saying, Not my will but thine be done."

2. Draw near to God (v. 8).

- How do we do this? By confessing our sins and asking for His cleansing.
- "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."
- The Greek word translated-purify" means "make pure or celibate.
- The more we are like God, the nearer we are to God.
- God graciously draws near to us when we deal with the sin in our lives that keeps Him at a distance.
- The double-minded Christian can never be close to God.

3. Humble Yourself before God(vv. 9-10).

- It is possible to submit outwardly and yet not be humbled inwardly.
- God hates the sin of pride (Prov. 6:16-17), and He will disciplined the proud believer until he is humbled.
- We have a tendency to treat sin too lightly, even to laugh about it ("let your laughter be turned into mourning").
- But sin is serious, and one mark of true humility is facing the seriousness of sin and dealing with our disobedience."
- Far better that we humble ourselves before God, confess our sins, weep over them, and turn from them.
- If we obey these three instructions, then God will draw near, cleanse us, and forgive us; and the wars will cease!
- We will not be at war with God, so we will not be at war with ourselves.

V. Make It Happen

James 4:1-3

- What does James identify as the root cause of fights, quarrels, and inner conflicts among believers?
- Why do some prayers go unanswered according to verse 3, and what does it mean to ask with "wrong motives"?
- In what ways do your own unfulfilled desires or selfish ambitions trigger arguments with people around you?

James 4:4-6

- Why does James use strong language like "adulterous people" to describe friendship with the world?
- How does choosing the world's values make someone an enemy of God?
- How do you interpret the statement that God yearns jealously for the spirit He placed within us (v. 5)?
- What comfort or hope does verse 6 provide right after this strong rebuke ("But he gives more grace")?
- How does God treat the proud versus the humble?

James 4:7-10

- What specific, active commands are given in verses 7 and 8? - What does it mean practically to submit to God and resist the devil?
- What is the promise attached to drawing near to God?
- What kind of attitude or repentance is reflected in the call to "cleanse your hands," "purify your hearts" (v. 8), and mourn over sin (v. 9)?
- How does humbling yourself lead to being lifted up by the Lord (v. 10)?

James 4:11-12

- What does it look like to "speak evil against" or judge a fellow believer in everyday life?
- How does judging your neighbor equate to judging and speaking evil against the law itself (v. 11)?
- Why is God uniquely qualified as the sole Lawgiver and Judge, and how should remembering this change the way you talk about or treat others?

VI. Follow the Spirit:

What will you do as a result of this lesson?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.