

WOMEN IN THE WORD FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH

THE BOOK OF JAMES - Growing Up in Christ

Scripture Reference Notes – November 14, 2023

Lesson Seven

God's Will – James 4:1-17

Chapter Summary:

Chapter 1: Confident stand - What a Christian has.

Chapter 2: Compassionate service - What a Christian does.

Chapter 3: Careful speech - What a Christian says.

Chapter 4: Contrite submission – What a Christian feels.

Chapter 5: Concerning sharing – What a Christian gives.

James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

Fights: to actively oppose or combat, as with weapons; to gain by struggle.

Quarrels: angry argument; complaint.

Desires/pleasures: having a longing for; wish or request.

Battle within you: an encounter between opposing forces.

NASB: Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

NLT: Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?

David Jeremiah: “In the Greek, the word that James uses for pleasures is *hedone*, from which we derive *hedonism*. Hedonism is simply the pleasure derived from fulfilling one's own desires. James saw hedonism as a negative force that led to pride – putting one's own needs above the needs of the group and recognized it as the source of many conflicts in the church.”

Gal. 5:17 – 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.

From last lesson, **Gal. 5:19-20a: The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions; and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.**

Roman 7:21-23: So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being, I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Titus 3:9 – But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

James 4:2 – You want something but don’t get it. You kill (murder/hate) and covet (desire what someone else has), but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

The Reformed Study Bible: “It flows from a lack of gratitude toward God who bestows gifts upon his people (every good and perfect gift). It also results from a failure to seek one’s own gifts from God rather than from the world.”

Matt. 5:21-22: You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, “Raca,” is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, “You fool!” will be in danger of the fire of hell.

1 John 3:15 – Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

James 4:3 – When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Motives: an emotion or desire that urges a person to act in a certain way.

Spend on their own **Pleasures** – enjoyable sensation or emotion; a source of delight or joy.

Hodges: “Coupled with the word *spend* here, the word *pleasures* suggests transient gratifications of the wrong kind. No wonder they did not receive answers to requests of this type!”

John 16:24 – Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

1 John 3:21-22 – Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

1 John 5:14-15: This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we asked of him.

1 Timothy 4:4-5: For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

James 4:4 – You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Adulterous people – people who love the world instead of God, spiritually unfaithful, cheating on God, allegiance to their own affection/attention toward themselves and the world.

One cannot serve two masters. It's either the world or God.

World – in the Greek: *kosmos*, a system or entity that is hostile to God and manipulated by Satan.

Hodges: “Materialism, immorality, and spiritual blindness are all components of this wicked entity and are in sharp conflict with God's interests and purposes on earth.”

Rom. 8:8 – Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Worldliness – definition, concern with material values or ordinary life rather than a spiritual existence.

Enemy of God – went their own way, excluded God from their lives.

Col 3:2: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

1 Cor. 2:12 – We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

1 John 5:19 – We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Matthew 6:24 – No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

1 John 2:15-16: Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father but from the world.

James 4:5 – Or do you think that Scripture says without reason (in vain) that the spirit he caused to live in us envies (yearns) intensely?

Exodus 20:5 – You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

Exodus 34:14 – Do not worship any other god, for the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Zechariah 8:2 – This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.

1 Cor. 6:19 – Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.

Hodges: “But since the HS is God, what can be said of God can also be said of the Spirit. If God is jealous, His spirit is jealous. Thus James is affirming that God’s indwelling Spirit yearns jealously over the affections of his readers. He is, therefore, grieved by their pursuit of friendship with the world.”

James 4:6 – But he gives us more grace. This is why the Scripture says: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Grace: unmerited favor. God’s free and unmerited favor for sinful humanity.

Humble: not proud or arrogant; having a spirit of submission or deference; to bring into submission.

Hodges: “Divine favor (grace) will therefore be available to his readers if they recover the necessary attitude of humility.”

1 Peter 4:10 – Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 5:5 – Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Prov. 3:34 - He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.

Matt 23:12 – For whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Ps. 84:11 – For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

The proud: arrogant or haughty; having excessive self-esteem.

Prov. 16:5a - The Lord detests all the proud of heart.

Prov. 16:19 – Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

Rom 12:16 – Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Swindoll – “James ends this section with practical advice on how to put the principle of humility into practice through the power of the Spirit. Our frustrated pursuit of pleasure was the cause of our propensity to fight (4:1-4). And God’s Spirit of Grace is the prescription (4:5-6). James now spells out the way we apply the cure to our lives (4:7-10).”

James 4:7 – Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Weirsbe – “If there is any area of the life kept back from God, there will always be battles.”

Resist the devil – stand firm (put on the armor of God) and he will flee from you.

Eph 4:27 – and do not give the devil a foothold.

2 Cor. 11:3 – But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

2 Cor. 2:10-11: If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven, if there was anything to forgive, I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

1 Peter 5:8 – Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Eph 6:11-18: Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.

1 Peter 5:6 – Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s might hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

James 4:8 – Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Ps. 73:28 – But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

Zec. 1:3 – Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Return to me,’ declares the Lord Almighty, and ‘I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty.

Mal. 3:7 – Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty.

Heb. 7:19 – For the law made nothing perfect, and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Wash your hands – James commands the believers to cleanse their hands, stop doing evil, renounce sin.

Is. 1:16 – wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong!

Psalm 24:3-4: Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

Jer. 4:14 – O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?

Barclay: “Sinner: hamartolos – the hardened sinner, the man whose sin is obvious and notorious, those who choose to live in company with disobedience to the law, and who love a corrupt life.”

Purify your hearts – stop thinking evil. James calls for a pure and undefiled heart. (1:27)
2 Timothy 2:22 – Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Double-mindedness – references back to James 1:8 in believing and not doubting. “he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” **Psalm 119:113-114: I hate double minded men, but I love your law. You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.**

James 4:9 – Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Grieve: In doing so, one would be miserable and mourn and weep – feel remorse for their wickedness, deal with sin in the presence of God.

Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom – Don’t make a joke out of your wickedness. Repent from wickedness. (James 4:1-3).

Hodges: “The sins of which the readers needed to repent fully justified the demands James makes in this verse. As in all Christian repentance, the goal was a definitive renunciation of their grievous faults. A glib and superficial repentance of sins makes the repetition of the same offenses much more likely.”

Luke 6:25 – Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Wiersbe: “Far better that we humble ourselves before God, confess our sins, weep over them, and turn from them.”

Job. 5:11 – The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

Matt. 5:4 – Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

James 4:10 – Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Humble: not proud or arrogant; having a spirit of submission or deference; to bring into submission.

Prov. 29:23 – A man’s pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.

Matt. 23:12 – For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Phil 2:13 – for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Wiersbe: “If we obey these three instructions, (submit to God, draw near to God, humble ourselves before God), 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. This means we will not be at war with others.”

Isaiah 32:17 – The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

James 4:11 – Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him, speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

Slander: to deliberately lie in order to cause harm.

Speak against your brother – speak evil of one another in any form, it speaks against God’s command to love one another.

Rom. 1:29-30: They have become filled with every kind of wickedness; evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents.

1 Peter 2:1 – Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Lev. 19:16-18: Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord. Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Speaks against the law and judges it – speaks against the royal law: **James 2:8 – If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right.**

Ps. 50:20 – You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother’s son.

Rom 2:1 – You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

Matt. 7:4 – How can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

Romans 2:3 – So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?

Hodges: “James charges that the person who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother was at the very same moment a person who speaks evil of the law and judges the law.”

Matt. 22:37-40: Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Matt. 7:12 – So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Exodus 20:16 – You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Prov. 6:16-19: There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

Psalms 15:1-3: Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless, and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man.

Romans 13:8 – Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:10 – Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

James 4:12 – There is only one Law-giver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you, who are you to judge your neighbor?

Law giver – Isa. 33:22 – For the Lord is our judge, and the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, it is he who will save us.

Judge – There is only one judge. Ps. 50:6 – And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for God himself is judge.

Only One can Save and destroy – as Judge, God is the only one who can save and to destroy.

Save – to rescue or preserve.

Destroy – to cause ruin or loss.

Hodges: “The verbs used here (sozo and apollumi) were both used very commonly in secular Greek in reference to physical life and physical death.”

Deut. 32:39 – See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life. I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.

1 Samuel 2:6 – The Lord brings death and makes alive, he brings down to the grave and raises up.

Romans 14:4 - To preserve one’s physical life or take it in death.

James 4:13: Now listen, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. James 4:14 – Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Rules for playing God:

1. Set your own schedule..... Today or tomorrow.
2. Select your own path.....will go to such and such a city.
3. Place your own limits.....and spend a year there.
4. Arrange your own activities.....and engage in business.
5. Predict your own outcome.....and make a profit.

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

Prov. 16:9 – In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Prov. 19:21 – Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.

Prov. 20:18 – Make plans by seeking advice, if you wage war, obtain guidance.

1 John 5:17 - The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Charles Erdman: “The uncertain tenure of life, the mystery of the future, the knowledge that God has for each of us a purpose and a plan, should make us conscious of our dependence upon him, eager to know and to do his will.”

Job 7:7a – Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath.

Ps. 39:5 – You have made my days a mere handbreath; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath.

Ps. 102:3 – For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers.

Hosea 13:3 – Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears, like chaff swirling from the threshing floor, like smoke escaping through a window.

Ps. 24:1 – The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

James 4:15 – Instead, you ought to say, If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.

James tells them to seek God’s will for their days.

Hodges: “a genuine expression of their dependence on God.”

Proverbs 16:3-4a: Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. The Lord works out everything for his own ends.

Acts 18:20-21: When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, I will come back if it is the Lord’s will.

Ps. 40:8 – I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

Ps. 143:10 – Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

Eph. 6:6 – Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

1 John 2:17 – The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Acts 18:21 – But as he left, he promised, I will come back if it is God’s will. Then he set sail for Ephesus.

1 Cor. 16:7 – I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.

Life Application Bible – “Plan ahead but hold your plans loosely. Put God’s desires at the center of your planning, he will never disappoint you.”

James 4:16 – As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

Boasting – a prideful statement, an evil boastful arrogance. Found in the NT, in the expression ‘the pride of life’.

Wiersbe: “Man’s boasting only covers up man’s weakness.”

1 John 2:16 – For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father, but from the world.

Prov. 16:33 – The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

Jeremiah 9:23 – This is what the Lord says, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, or the strong man boast in his strength, or the rich man boast in his riches.

Ps. 10:3-4: He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord. In his pride the wicked do not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

James 1:9 – The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.

Gal. 6:13-14a: Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ps. 34:2 – My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

2 Cor. 1:12-14: Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God’s grace. For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

James 4:17 – Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

Wiersbe: “He acts as though the will of God is something he can accept or reject. In reality, the will of God is not an option; it's an obligation. We cannot “take it or leave it.”

Luke 12:47 – That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.

2 Peter 2:21 – It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

John 9:41 – Jesus said, If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

FBC Commentary: “It is a sin to lie; it can also be a sin to know the truth and not tell it. It is a sin to speak evil of someone; it is also a sin to avoid that person when you know she needs your friendship.”

Frances Ridley Havergal’s hymn:

Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise;
Take my voice and let me sing, Always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be, filled with messages from Thee;
Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne.

Next lesson and last lesson – November 28, 2023
Patience (James 5:1-20)