

BELIEVE

WISDOM FROM JAMES FOR THE WAR CALLED LIFE

GROUP NOTES, WEEK 5

OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever become angry or worried only to find out later that you were quite silly for doing so?

SCRIPTURE

Read James 4

BIG IDEAS

In today's passage, James takes his wise warning wider than our words, all the way into our whole lives, leading us to the conclusion that **gospel faithfulness means resisting worldliness.**

Worldly Wants

In vv. 1-10, James encourages his readers to resist worldly wants. Using really strong language, he tells us that part of what gospel faithfulness means is resisting worldly wants. The desire for money, sex, power, control, success ... these are not the wants that should be motivating the people of God. And yet how often do we find these very wants ruling over our actions? These very things, however, God has given grace to overcome.

>>Re-read vv. 1-10. Which of these worldly wants do you most struggle with? What is the way out, according to vv.6-10?

>>Read the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:24. How do Jesus words relate here?

Worldly Wars

Not only does worldliness lead us to wrong desires, it leads us to the wrong fights. You can't turn on the news or scroll across your newsfeed without seeing someone angry at someone else. Political fights, racial fights, national fights, and personal fights actually tend to be *all* that is ever on the news! But a cursory reading of vv. 11-12 reminds us that hand-to-hand or word-to-word combat is not the right war.

>>Re-read vv. 11-12. Test yourself in this way: If a total stranger were to read your last 20 Facebook posts or overhear your last 20 conversations, what "war" might he say you're most interested in fighting?

>> Read Ephesians 6:12 and 1 Tim 6:12. How do these words shape your understanding of the right battles with which we are to engage?

Worldly Wishfulness

The final admonition that James gives his readers is against that false sense of security that worldliness offers – wishful, autonomy. Blissfully believing that we're in charge of our own destinies is a belief that should have no place in the life of the Christian. Such a thought is worldliness, not Godliness. Instead, we must consider that our whole lives – money, marriage, career, kids – belong to God. Not only that, but the man and woman of God are to consider that God is free to do with them as He wills.

>> Re-read vv. 13-17. How does the temptation to consider yourself autonomous and in charge of our own life manifest? What are you trying to control? Are you willing to trust God with your future, your finances, and all the rest, even if He were to use your life in a way totally different than what you currently want?

Jesus life, death, and resurrection show us a better. They demonstrate that God is not only better than the fruits of worldliness, but that He offers us power to overcome and grace to forgive when it threatens to take us off the way of the righteous.

PRAY

As you pray today, take a moment to deeply search your heart. What worldiness lies therein? What sin, left unconfessed, threatens to fester into a gangrenous growth that will slowly choke out gospel faith?