

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“He Wants More than Roses”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): James/Jacob 4:1-6; 1:5; Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Zech. 8:2; Prv. 3:34; Mt. 5:21–22

Imagine a husband walking into the house with a bouquet of roses. He places them on the table and says, “You told me you wanted flowers, so here they are. I took you on a date. I said, ‘I love you.’ What else do you want? Are we good now?” The flowers may be beautiful, the date may have happened, and the correct words may have been spoken, but something is deeply missing. She does not merely want roses. She wants *him*. She wants his heart, his affection, his attention, and the assurance that his actions are flowing out of a genuine relationship.

We can approach God in the same way. We pray the prayers, attend the gatherings, read the Scriptures, say the right words, and perform the expected actions. Then we wonder, “What else does God want from me?” Jacob brings us beneath the outward actions and into the deepest part of the heart. God is not simply asking us to bring Him religious roses while our desires, loyalties, and affections belong somewhere else. He wants us. He wants a heart that is whole, undivided, and faithfully His.

1. ROSES CANNOT COVER THE WAR WITHIN

Jacob asks, “*Where do quarrels and conflicts among you come from? Don’t they come from this, namely your passions that battle within your body parts?*” (Jas. 4:1). Most conflicts appear to begin with something outside of us. Someone did not listen, did not cooperate, did not meet our expectations, or stood between us and something we wanted. Yet Jacob tells us that the conflict around us is often exposing a conflict already taking place within us. Beneath the argument is an unrestrained desire that insists, “I want what I want, when I want it, and how I want it.”

We may still bring God our roses while this war rages inside. We can sing, pray, serve, and speak spiritual words while jealousy is boiling, selfish ambition is driving us, and anger is spilling into our relationships. Jacob says, “*You crave and have not. You murder and you envy, yet you cannot get it. You fight and you wage war*” (Jas. 4:2). The outward “flowers” cannot hide the inward hostility. God is not satisfied with religious activity that leaves the heart untouched. He wants the deepest part of us, including the cravings, anger, envy, and demand for our own way.

2. ROSES CANNOT MANIPULATE THE GIVER

Jacob continues, “*You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives so you may spend it on your passions*” (Jas. 4:2–3). Some people do not ask God because they are determined to grasp, fight, and manipulate their way into getting what they want. Others do ask, but their asking is merely another

attempt to control the outcome. Prayer becomes a religious rose presented to God in the hope that He will reward us by supporting our desires.

God is not a vending machine that dispenses whatever will gratify our flesh. Earlier, Jacob wrote, *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him”* (Jas. 1:5). God is the giving God, but His gifts flow from His character and are intended to form His character within us. He gladly gives the wisdom that is pure, peaceable, merciful, and willing to yield. But we cannot offer Him the rose of prayer while asking Him to empower our selfishness, our bitterness, or our insistence on having our way.

3. GOD WANTS THE PERSON HOLDING THE ROSES

Jacob’s rebuke reaches its strongest point when he writes, *“You adulteresses! Don’t you 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”* (Jas. 4:4). This is covenant language. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God’s relationship with His people is pictured as a marriage. When His people embrace the world’s values of grasping, taking, elevating themselves, and demanding their own way, it is not simply poor behavior. It is covenant unfaithfulness.

Yet God’s jealousy is not the insecure jealousy of sinful humanity. It is the jealousy of faithful covenant love. Jacob says, *“He yearns jealously over the spirit which He made to dwell in us”* (Jas. 4:5). God is not primarily after the rose, the date, or the right religious words. He wants the person holding the roses. He does not want us to perform acts of devotion while withholding ourselves from Him. The prayers, obedience, service, generosity, and worship matter deeply—but they must be the overflow of a heart that belongs wholly to Him.

CONCLUSION

After exposing the wars, cravings, selfish prayers, and covenant unfaithfulness within us, Jacob gives a word of hope: *“But He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble’”* (Jas. 4:6). Our desires may be powerful, but His grace is greater. Our dividedness may run deep, but His grace reaches deeper. We do not need to hide behind more activity, more words, or more religious roses. We can come honestly and humbly before Him.

The altar call of this passage is an invitation to lay down the bouquet and give God the heart that has been hiding behind it. Where have you been going through the motions while still demanding your own way? Where have you said, “I love You,” while giving your deepest affection to status, pleasure, control, recognition, or personal ambition? He is not rejecting you. He is calling you closer. Humble yourself before Him, bring the war within you into the light, and surrender every divided loyalty. He wants more than roses. He wants you—and He gives greater grace to the humble heart that returns to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to Jas. 4:1–2, what is the true source of the quarrels and conflicts taking place among God’s people?
2. How does the wisdom described in Jas. 3:17–18 contrast with the desires and conflicts described in Jas. 4:1–3?
3. Are there spiritual activities in your life that have become like “roses”—outward actions that may not currently be flowing from wholehearted love and relationship with God?
4. Think about a recent conflict in your home, workplace, congregation, or relationships. What frustrated desire or insistence on “my way” may have been operating beneath the surface?
5. What desire, loyalty, ambition, or source of comfort may be competing with God for your deepest affection? What would it look like to surrender that area to Him?

CLOSING PRAYER:

ADONAI, forgive me for the ways I have offered You outward actions while withholding the deepest parts of my heart. Search me and reveal the desires that are waging war within me. Show me where I have demanded my way, envied what belongs to another, wounded people with my words, or asked You to support desires that contradict Your character.

Thank You that Your grace is greater than my selfishness, dividedness, and failure. I lay down every empty performance and surrender myself to You again. Give me the wisdom from above—the wisdom that is pure, peaceable, willing to yield, full of mercy, and filled with good fruit. Let my prayers, obedience, service, and worship be the genuine overflow of a heart that belongs wholly to You. You want more than my roses. You want me.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.