

James 4:1-10 “Faith and Humility”

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Thesis: God stirs us to want to draw closer to Him, and discover what we really want and need in this life and the life to come. The key to drawing close is to believe (faith), and humility (a proper view of God and ourselves).

Subject: Faith and humility

Object: Experience unity with God

4 Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires* for pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

A. God wants you to experience unity with Him [5] Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”

There is good reason why the Scriptures say, “*The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.*” God wants you to experience unity with Him. This is where you will discover the greatest contentment, and where God is glorified and blessed. God’s jealousy is unlike man’s jealousy. God is not lacking in any way, but He has created man for relationship with Him. As a follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit guides you to love God supremely [Deut. 6:4-5, Matt. 22:37-39]. God stirs us to want to draw closer to Him, and discover what we really want and need in this life (and the life to come).

B. Obstacles to unity with God [1-4]

Desire for pleasure [1]:

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? James asks what is the source of conflict, strife and quarrels? James tells us that the source of contention is our *desires for pleasure*. Our English word “hedonism” is derived from the Greek term translated *desires for pleasure*. It is a philosophy that makes the pursuit of pleasure as the goal of life. When God doesn’t reign in your life the pursuit of pleasure takes over. James recognizes there is a *war* or battle between a believer’s flesh and God’s Spirit within each believer. God’s Spirit is seeking to draw you closer to God, but your flesh pursues pleasure (and forsakes contentment from God).

Failure to pray [2]

You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. We yearn for something and strive in the flesh and don't obtain. What we really desire is contentment, and the way to find it is prayer or communication with God. And the problem is that you do not ask - a lack of prayer. James is not suggesting that if we pray, we will get what we lust and strive for, but prayer is a key to unity with God which produces contentment. Through prayer we acknowledge our dependence upon and devotion to God. Prayer is at its essence spending time speaking and listening to God. Time to contemplate, express adoration, thanksgiving, pray for others (intercession), pray for ourselves (supplication).

Pray with the wrong motive [3]

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

The purpose of prayer is to see God's will done on earth, not our will [Matt. 6:10]. There is nothing wrong with asking God to change circumstances that are near and dear to your heart. You are encouraged that you can, "Cast all of your cares upon Him knowing that He cares for you" [1Pet. 5:7]. Yet, how often do we pray, "God what are you trying to teach me in this situation?" I'm learning to more regularly ask God, "Lord show me how You want me to grow in Christ through this," or, "Help me trust You, and represent You well in this..."

Love of this world [4]: *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an*

enemy of God. James likens our love for the world with spiritual adultery. When James refers to *the world* he does not mean the planet or the environment, but is referring to the world's values apart from or opposed to God. The tendency to look to this world to satisfy you is an obstacle to finding true contentment in Christ; and keeps people opposed to God.

Jesus warned of the conflict of trying to love God and the world [Lu. 9:57-62].

Similarly, the apostle John wrote, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” [1Jn. 2:15]**. John is literally saying, “Stop loving the world...” We need to realize that our pursuit of happiness and satisfaction from the material world is an insurmountable obstacle to discovering contentment in Christ.

C. How to experience unity with God [6-10]

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Humble yourself [6,10]: *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* God resists the proud, but His very nature is gracious in that

God wants to bless you in ways that you don't deserve [6]. When you humble yourself, and acknowledge your dependence upon and devotion to God, He will lift you up or exalt you, *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up* [10]. Humility is the key that opens the door to intimacy with God.

Submit to God [7]: *Therefore, submit to God.* To submit means to place yourself under God's authority, and seek to remain under authority. God desires intimacy with you, but you must submit yourself, He won't force you to yield.

Resist the devil [7]: *Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* The enemy of men's souls wants to keep you from coming to Christ, receiving spiritual life, and salvation. Once, you have made Christ Lord and Savior, you become a child of God. So, Satan's next scheme is to tempt to draw you away from intimacy or unity with God. If you *resist* the temptation, the devil will flee.

Draw near to God [8-9]: *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.* As we seek God, he has assured us that we will grow in unity or intimacy with Him. God will change your thinking about Him, and your sin. Thus, producing changes in your actions and attitudes: *Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.* Your *hands are cleansed*, representing actions that glorify God. Your *heart is purified*, is the sense that your affections and attitudes honor God and are no longer divided by love for the world or desire for pleasure. *Lament and mourn and weep! Let your*

laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom [9] doesn't mean that unity with God is a bummer, to the contrary it is full of joy. The idea is that as you draw near to God and experience unity with Him you no longer have a careless attitude about God and sin. There is a sobering sense of wasted time, opportunities, and the relative brevity of this life and weightiness of eternity.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Describe a season of your life where you felt very close with God?

Q2. Review the section about obstacles to unity with God. How have these obstacles impacted your relationship with God?

Q3. Review the section on "How to experience unity with God." How have these practices helped your relationship with God?

Q4. What do you imagine unity or intimacy with God to be like or feel like in your life?

Digging Deeper

1. Here is an interesting article regarding obstacles to intimacy with God: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/chris-russell/5-things-that-cause-us-to-drift-spiritually.html>

2. Here is a good read about how to draw close to God: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/theology/060807.html?start=2>

Neighboring idea: Invite a neighbor to enjoy a meal in your home.