

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
3RD-5TH GRADE
TEACHER'S PACKET

SUNDAY MORNING

Study 7

James 4:1-10



Two Competing Voices

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To continue last week's teaching by showing that we can listen to the Lord or we can listen to the world. One leads to peace, the other to war and striving.

Key Verses

James 4:1-10—Main Teaching Passage

Memory Verse - James 4:7

"Submit to God. Resist the devil and he shall flee from you."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, James 3:17.

Ask the students if they have ever had an argument with a friend. When they say that they have, ask, "Why, do you not like you friend? Are you really enemies? If you are friends, you shouldn't fight, should you? So what caused the argument?"

Show the students that when it all gets boiled down, arguments are caused because one person wants their own way and isn't willing to let someone else get what they want. Is this the way God wants us to behave with our friends? Is this the way God wants us to behave with anyone else?

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

In last week's study, we read that there are two competing voices that we can listen to. We can listen to godly (or heavenly) wisdom, or we can listen to the wisdom of man (or earthly wisdom). We saw last week that earthly wisdom is selfish and evil-minded, while heavenly wisdom is meek and humble.

This week's study continues that thought. It starts by asking us where strivings, fights, arguments, and wars come from. The answer is from listening to earthly wisdom, which leads to covetousness and ultimately warfare. The passage continues, quite seriously, to say that by listening to the world, we are setting ourselves in opposition to the Lord.

We have already been told that every good and perfect gift comes from above, so therefore if we don't have something we desire, it is either because we have not asked, or because we ask with the wrong motives.

The solution to the selfishness and covetousness that leads to strife is straightforward: "submit to God." Instead of listening to the world and its wisdom, listen to the Lord and to His Word. We are promised that in drawing near to Him, He in turn will draw near to us. Rather than striving to get ahead and get our own way, if we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us up.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK

Did you ever see a cartoon where the main character was presented with a choice of right or wrong? An angel would appear on the character's one shoulder and urge him to do the right thing, then a evil character would appear on the other shoulder and try and convince them to make the bad choice. While this depiction isn't exactly accurate, James 4 does tell us that there are two voices that are competing for our attention.

James tells us that our arguments, our fights, and the problems that go along with them are caused by pride. Because we want something, we think we should get to be first, or we think that we are more important than other people, we argue and bicker. This attitude causes us to get frustrated and angry with other people, and it tempts us to do more and more sinful things (like stealing the things we so badly want).

As we learned last week, pride and selfishness is the wisdom of man. It is "earthly, sensual, and demonic." When we listen to the voice of the world, it leads us to sinful arguments and covetousness.

LOOK (Continued)

The other voice that we can listen to is the voice of the Lord. Instead of striving to get the things we so desperately want, we should submit to God and look to Him to give us joy and happiness. We have already learned that every good and perfect gift in our lives comes from Him. If we need something, we can ask the Lord. If we ask for something that is good and we ask with the right motives, God will meet our needs.

This doesn't mean that God will give us whatever we ask for. Again, we need to ask for things the He knows are good for us, and we need to ask with right motives. Sometimes what seems to good to us is not what God wants for us.

We can't listen to both the world and to God because they are telling us to do opposite things. God wants us to be humble, selfless, and peaceful, but the world says that we should always put ourselves first, and do whatever it takes to get ahead. The Bible says that if we choose to listen to God, we make the world our enemy. If we listen to the world, then we set ourselves in opposition to God.

James 4 shows us that when we listen to God and ignore the selfish temptations of the world, God lifts us up. We don't need to push other people out of the way or strive to get to the top. All we need to do is obey God.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize James 4:7.

Open up a time of discussion. Ask the kids, "What does it mean to submit to God and resist the devil?"

Pray: Thank the Lord for offering us wisdom in His Word. Ask for His help to listen to His voice and reject worldly wisdom.

Parent Question: How does the world tell us to behave? How does God tell us to behave?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on James 4:1-10 by David Guzik

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 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. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

a. **Where do wars and fights come from among you?** James accurately described strife among Christians with the terms **wars and fights**. Often the battles that happen among Christians are bitter and severe.

i. "He does not mean that they war within a man – although that is also true – but that they set men warring against each other." (Barclay)

b. **Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?** The source of **wars and fights** among Christians is always the same. There is some root of carnality, an internal **war** within the believer regarding the lusts of the flesh. No two believers who are both walking in the Spirit of God towards each other can live with **wars and fights** among themselves.

i. "James seems to be bothered more by the selfish spirit and bitterness of the quarrels than by the rights and wrongs of the various viewpoints." (Moo)

ii. Almost all who have such a critical and contentious attitude claim they are prompted and supported by the Spirit of God. James makes it clear that this contentious manner comes **from your desires**. "It is self-evident that the Spirit of God does not create desire which issues in envying." (Morgan)

c. **Your desires for pleasure that war in your members:** The types of **desires** that lead to conflict are described. *Covetousness* leads to conflict (**you lust and do not have**). *Anger* and *animosity* lead to hatred and conflict (**murder**).

i. Again James looked back to the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus also used **murder** to express more than actual killing, but also as an inward condition of heart, shown outwardly by anger ([Matthew 5:21-22](#)).

ii. "The word *kill* [**murder**] is startling and meant to startle; James sought to force his readers to realize the depth of the evil in their bitter hatred toward others." (Hiebert)

d. **Yet you do not have:** This points to the *futility* of this life lived for the **desires for pleasure**. Not only is it a life of conflict, but it is also a fundamentally *unsatisfied* life.

i. “The whole history of mankind shows the failure of evil lustings to obtain their object.” (Spurgeon)

ii. This is the tragic irony of the life lived after worldly and fleshly desires; it never reaches the goal it gives everything for. This fundamental dissatisfaction is not because of a lack of effort: “If the lusters fail, it is not because they did not set to work to gain their ends; for according to their nature they used the most practical means within their reach, and used them eagerly, too.” (Spurgeon)

iii. This helps us to rationally understand the folly of living life after the lusts of the world and our animal appetites. You are tempted to fulfill a sinful desire because you think (or hope) that it may be *satisfied*, but it will *never* be satisfied. Why not accept your lack of such satisfaction now, instead of after much painful and harmful sin?

e. **Yet you do not have because you do not ask:** The reason these destructive desires exist among Christians is because they do not seek God for their needs (**you do not ask**). James reminds us here of the great power of prayer, and why one may live unnecessarily as a spiritual pauper, simply because they do not pray, or do not **ask** when they pray.

i. We might state it as a virtual spiritual law: that God does not give unless we ask. If we possess little of God and His Kingdom, almost certainly we have asked little. “Remember this text: Jehovah says to his own Son, ‘Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.’ If the royal and divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that he may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favor. Why should it be?” (Spurgeon)

ii. “If you may have everything by asking, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is, and I beseech you to abound in it. . . . Do you know, brothers, what great things are to be had for the asking? Have you ever thought of it? Does it not stimulate you to pray fervently? All heaven lies before the grasp of the asking man; all the promises of God are rich and inexhaustible, and their fulfillment is to be had by prayer.” (Spurgeon)

f. **You ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures:** After dealing with the problem of *no prayer*, now James addressed the problem of *selfish prayer*. These ones, when they did ask, they asked God with purely selfish motives.

i. We must remember that the purpose of prayer is not to persuade a reluctant God to do our bidding. The purpose of prayer is to align our will with His, and in partnership with Him, to ask Him to accomplish His will on this earth (Matthew 6:10).

ii. “When a man so prays he asks God to be his servant, and gratify his desires; nay, worse than that, he wants God to join him in the service of his lusts. He will gratify his lusts, and God shall come and help him to do it. Such prayer is blasphemous, but a large quantity of it is offered, and it must be one of the most God-provoking things that heaven ever beholds.” (Spurgeon)

iii. **Spend** is the same verb used to describe the wasteful spending of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:14. Destructive desires persist, even if we pray, because our prayers may be self-centered and self-indulgent.

2. (4-5) A rebuke of compromise and covetousness among Christians.

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. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

a. **Adulterers and adulteresses:** This is a rebuke presented in Old Testament vocabulary. God spoke this way in the Old Testament when His people were attracted to some form of idolatry (Jeremiah 3:8-9, Ezekiel 6:9, Ezekiel 16:32, Ezekiel 23:37, and Hosea 3:1). As James saw it here, their covetousness was idolatry (Colossians 3:5) and **friendship with the world**.

i. Better ancient Greek manuscripts only say *you adulteresses*. “He uses the feminine form deliberately, for one turn of special contempt and scorn in the ancient world was to call a community or group by some feminine equivalent.” (Moffatt)

ii. The addition of **adulterers** was probably from an early scribe who thought James meant literal sexual adultery and didn’t want to exclude men from the rebuke. But James used the phrase *you adulteresses* to give a specific spiritual picture. According to this picture, God is the “husband” and we are His “wife” (as in Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 3:20, and Exodus 34:15-16).

iii. “The Jews, because of their *covenant* with God, are represented as being *espoused* to him; and hence, their idolatry, and their iniquity in general, are represented under the notion of *adultery*.” (Clarke)

iv. “You have your hearts full of harlotry . . . this vile strumpet the world, that lays forth her two breasts of profit and pleasure, and ensnareth many; for the which she must be burnt, as a whore, by the fire of the last day.” (Trapp)

b. **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?** James recognizes that we cannot both be friends of this world system in rebellion against God, and friends of God at the same time (Matthew 6:24). Even the *desire* to be a friend (**wants to be a friend**) of the world makes that one an **enemy of God**.

i. “Such **friendship with the world** means that one is on a footing of hostility towards God, for it defies His will and despises His purpose; disguise it as one may, it is an implicit challenge to God.” (Moffatt)

ii. The strong statements James made here remind us that all was not beautiful in the early church. They had plenty of carnality and worldliness to deal with. While the New Testament church is a clear pattern for us, we should not over-romanticize the spiritual character of early Christians.

c. **The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously:** The indwelling presence of the Holy **Spirit** has a jealous yearning for our friendship with God. The **Spirit** will convict the Christian who lives in compromise.

i. This phrase is a little hard to accurately translate. Is it *God jealously yearning for the devotion of our spirit which He put within us*, or is it the *Spirit within us jealously yearning for the full devotion of our heart*? Either way, the sense is much the same.

ii. “He went so far as to speak of them as adulterers and adulteresses; and then adopting a gentler, pleading tone, he says, ‘You are grieving the Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within you, who yearns with a jealous envy to possess your entire nature for Himself.’” (Meyer)

iii. James agrees with the many passages in the Old Testament that tell us God is a jealous God (Deuteronomy 32:16 and 32:21; Exodus 20:5 and 34:14; Zechariah 8:2). “The idea is that God loves men with such a passion that he cannot bear any other love within the hearts of men.” (Barclay)

iv. Think of the inner pain and torture inside the person who is betrayed by an unfaithful spouse; who must reckon with the truth, *I am faithful to them, but they are not faithful to me*. This is what the Spirit of God feels regarding our world-loving hearts.

d. **The Scripture says:** One cannot find this exact quote (“**The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously**”) in any specific Old Testament verse. James seemed to present an idea that is alluded to in several passages without quoting any specific passage.

i. “More probably is the view that James was not citing a particular passage but summarizing the truth expressed in several Old Testament passages.” (Hiebert)

ii. Or it may be that James 4:5 speaks in two independent sentences, and that the words of **Scripture** quoted refer to what was said in James 4:4.

3. (6-10) The solutions for strife: in humility, get right with God.

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

a. **But He gives more grace:** The same Holy Spirit convicting us of our compromise will also grant us the **grace** to serve God as we should. This wonderful statement – **but He gives more grace** – stands in strong contrast to the previous words.

i. “Note that contrast; note it always. Observe how weak we are, how strong he is; how proud we are, how condescending he is; how erring we are, and how infallible he is; how changing we are, and how immutable he is; how provoking we are, and how forgiving he is. Observe how in us there is only ill, and how in him there is only good. Yet our ill but draws his goodness forth, and still he blesseth. Oh! What a rich contrast!” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Sin seeks to enter, grace shuts the door; sin tries to get the mastery, but grace, which is stronger than sin, resists, and will not permit it. Sin gets us down at times, and puts its foot on our neck; grace comes to the rescue . . . Sin comes up like Noah’s flood, but grace rides over the tops of the mountains like the ark.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “Do you suffer from spiritual poverty? It is your own fault, for he giveth more grace. If you have not got it, it is not because it is not to be had, but because you have not gone for it.” (Spurgeon)

b. **God resists the proud:** At the same time, James reminds us that this **grace** only comes **to the humble**. Grace and pride are eternal enemies. Pride demands that God bless me in light of my merits, whether real or imagined. But grace will not deal with me on the basis of anything in me – good or bad – but only on the basis of who God is.

i. James used a powerful word in the phrase, **resists the proud**: “*Sets himself in battle array* against him.” (Clarke) “*God resisteth the proud*, ‘setteth himself in battle-array against such,’ above all other sorts of sinner, as invaders of his territories, and foragers or plunderers of his chief treasures.” (Trapp)

c. **But gives grace to the humble:** It isn't as if our humility *earns* the grace of God. Humility merely puts us in a position to receive the gift He freely **gives**.

d. **Therefore submit to God:** In light of the grace offered to the humble, there is only one thing to do: **submit to God**. This means to order yourself under God, to surrender to Him as a conquering King, and start receiving the benefits of His reign.

i. It is a wonder that the world does not submit to God. "I have heard much of the rights of man: but it were well also to consider the rights of God, which are the first, highest, surest, and most solemn rights in the universe, and lie at the base of all other rights. . . . Alas, great God, how art thou a stranger even in the world which thou hast thyself made! Thy creatures, who could not see if thou hadst not given them eyes, look everywhere except to thee. Creatures who could not think if thou hadst not given them minds, think of all things except thee; and beings who could not live if thou didst not keep them in being, forget thee utterly, or if they remember thine existence, and see thy power, are foolhardy enough to become thy foes!" (Spurgeon)

ii. "If he were a tyrant it might be courageous to resist, but since he is a Father it is ungrateful to rebel." (Spurgeon) Instead, Spurgeon (in another sermon) suggested reasons why we should **submit to God**:

- We should submit to God because He created us.
- We should submit to God because His rule is good for us.
- We should submit to God because all resistance to Him is futile.
- We should submit to God because such submission is absolutely necessary to salvation.
- We should submit to God because it is the only way to have peace with God.

iii. "I desire to whisper one little truth in your ear, and I pray that it may startle you: *You are submitting even now*. You say, 'Not I; am lord of myself.' I know you think so, but all the while you are submitting to the devil. The verse before us hints at this. 'Submit yourselves unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power. Which shall be your master, God or devil, for one of these must? No man is without a master." (Spurgeon)

e. **Resist the devil and he will flee from you:** To solve the problems of carnality and the strife it causes, we must also **resist the devil**. This means to stand against devil's deceptions and his efforts to intimidate. As we **resist the devil**, we are *promised* that **he will flee from you**.

i. Significantly, James does not recommend that demons should be cast out of believers by a third party. Instead, James simply challenges individual Christians to deal with Satan as a conquered foe who can and must be personally resisted. "He who, in the *terrible name* of Jesus, opposes even the devil himself is sure to have speedy and glorious conquest. He flees from that *name*, and from his conquering blood." (Clarke)

ii. **Resist** comes from two Greek words: *stand* and *against*. James tells us to *stand against* the devil. Satan can be set running by the resistance of the lowliest believer who comes in the authority of what Jesus did on the cross.

iii. “*Resist*, by faith, and the rest of the spiritual armour, Ephesians 6:13, 14, etc. Or, *resist* i.e. comply not with his motions and temptations.” (Poole)

iv. “*And he will flee from you*; as to that particular assault in which you resist him; and though he return again, and tempt you again, yet you still resisting, he will still be overcome; ye are never conquered so long as you do not consent.” (Poole)

v. A famous ancient Christian writer named Hermas wrote, “The devil can wrestle against the Christian, but he cannot pin him.” (Cited in Barclay)

f. **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you:** The call to **draw near to God** is both an invitation and a promise. It is no good to submit to God’s authority and to resist the devil’s attack and then fail to **draw near to God**. We have it as a promise: God **will draw near to** us as we draw near to Him.

i. “When a soul sets out to seek God, God sets out to meet that soul; so that while we are drawing near to him, he is drawing near to us.” (Clarke)

ii. What does it mean to **draw near to God**? Spurgeon considered a few ways:

- It means to draw near in *worship, praise, and in prayer*.
- It means to draw near by *asking counsel of God*.
- It means to draw near in *enjoying communion with God*.
- It means to draw near in *the general course and tenor of your life*.

iii. In one way, this text illustrates the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. In the old covenant, God told Moses to not come any closer to the burning bush and take off his shoes. Under the new covenant, God says to the sinner: “Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you.” Now the ground between God and the sinner has been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and we can come close to God on the basis of that blood.

iv. This also shows *what God wants to do for the sinner*. It doesn’t say, “Draw near to God and He will *save* you” or “Draw near to God and He will *forgive* you,” though both of those are true. But what God really wants is to be *near* man; to have a close relationship and fellowship with the individual.

v. From the rest of the chapter we see the results of drawing near to God:

- Drawing near to God helps us to resist the devil.
- Drawing near to God helps us to become pure.
- Drawing near to God helps us to sorrow for sin.

- Drawing near to God helps us to speak well of other people.
- Drawing near to God helps us to think of eternal things.

g. **Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep!** As we draw near to God, we will be convicted of our sin. So we **lament and mourn and weep** as appropriate under the conviction of sin, and we are compelled to find cleansing at the cross.

i. “The word used for sinner is *hamartolos*, which means the hardened sinner, the man whose sin is obvious and notorious.” (Barclay)

ii. In using terms like **lament and mourn and weep**, “James speaks in terms of the Hebrew prophets’ language about the anguish of repentance.” (Moffatt)

h. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up:** As we come as sinners before the holy God (not as self righteous religionists, as Jesus explained in Luke 18:10-14), we appropriately **humble** ourselves before Him. Then He will **lift us up**, because *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*, and grace – the unmerited favor of God – always lifts us up.

i. In this passage James has powerfully described both the *duty* and the *blessing* of repentance.