

The Letter of James - Chapter 4

Friendship with the World (James 4:1-12) - The key verse in this passage is verse 4: "Friendship with the world is enmity with God." Genuine and faithful spiritual living involves separation from the world and all its countless contaminations. Conversely, a continuing, habitual friendship with the world is grounded in human wisdom and is evidence of unbelief. What are some examples of activities that some Christians might typically view as worldly? How do we live in the world, but not of the world?

Key Points:

- The source of conflict is our individual personal desire.
- God's grace helps us to overcome our personal desires and sinful nature.
- We are called to constant repentance in order to defeat the double-minded and sinful behavior.

Key Words:

- The World: The Greek word used in this section is *kosmos*. It refers to the spiritual reality of the man-centered, Satan-directed system of the present age, which is hostile to God and God's people. The goal of the world is self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, and every other form of self-serving, all of which amounts to hostility toward God. While the world's philosophies and ideologies and much that it offers may appear attractive and appealing, that is deception. God, not the world, must have the first place in the Christian's life.

Questions to Consider:

- Why is James so intolerant of conflict in the church?
- What should be the Christians relationships with the world?
- Why is James so adamant about not slandering and judging others? Does this mean that believers are forbidden to confront overt sin in others? Why or why not?
- Read Psalm 63:1-11. Look at all the actions and verbs used here to describe the psalmist's relationship with God. What does this passage teach about drawing near to God?
- Read John 8:44. What is the relationship between unbelievers and Satan? What will it mean to "resist the devil" as James said?

The Will of God (James 4:13-17) - Doing the will of God is another test of faith. True Christians are characterized as "doing the will of God from the heart." They joyfully, willingly pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done." How do you define the phrase "the will of God." How do you go about determining God's will for your life? Why?

Key Points:

- God's will should be a major focus in the plans we make for our lives.
- To ignore God's sovereignty is to be arrogant and sin.
- To submit our plans to God shows an ultimate submission to God's sovereignty in our lives.

Key Words:

- God's Will: God's will is expressed in all the commands and principles of Scripture. For the Christian, doing God's will is an act of worship. Acknowledging God's will affirms God's sovereignty over all aspects of life. Nothing more clearly summarizes the character of a genuine believer than a desire to do the will of God.

Questions to Consider:

- How does James characterize our lives (i.e. the length of our lives)? Why is this significant?
- Why does James insist that we preface our plans by saying, "If the Lord wills...?" What does this mindset indicate?
- Read Luke 12:13-21. What does this parable teach about priorities? about wisdom? about certainties in life?
- Read Isaiah 46:9-10.. What does this passage say about God and the future?