

JAMES CHAPTER 4

Drawing Near to God in a World That Pulls Us Away

Main Theme

James 4 challenges believers to examine the desires of their hearts, surrender their pride, resist the world's influence, draw near to God, and live every day dependent upon His will.

1. Where Do Our Conflicts Really Begin?

James 4:1–3

James begins with a very direct question: **What causes quarrels and conflicts among us?**

His answer is uncomfortable because he doesn't begin by pointing to other people. He points **inside us**.

Our conflicts often come from desires that have become too important to us. We want something—recognition, control, comfort, respect, success, possessions, or simply our own way—and when something or someone prevents us from getting it, conflict can follow.

Key Point

Sometimes the problem isn't simply **what I want**, but **how much I want it**.

A good desire can become unhealthy when having it becomes more important than honoring God.

James also addresses prayer. He explains that sometimes we don't receive because we don't ask, while other times we ask with selfish motives.

Questions for Discussion

What do my reactions reveal about the desires of my heart?

When I become angry or frustrated, could it be because something I want has become too important to me?

When I pray, am I primarily asking God to accomplish my desires—or am I asking Him to shape my desires according to His will?

2. Friendship With the World

James 4:4–6

James uses very strong language here because our relationship with God is not casual—it is covenantal.

"Friendship with the world" does not mean that Christians should avoid unbelievers or everything in the world around us. James is addressing a heart that embraces the world's values instead of God's.

The world says:

Promote yourself.
Get what you deserve.
Follow your desires.
Protect your image.
Be your own authority.

God calls us to something very different:

Humility.
Surrender.
Faithfulness.
Obedience.
Dependence upon Him.

Then comes one of the most encouraging truths in the chapter:

"But He gives more grace." — James 4:6

Our sin may be great, but God's grace is greater.

Key Point

God isn't asking us to overcome pride and sin through our own strength. **He gives grace to those who humbly recognize their need for Him.**

Discussion Question

Where am I most tempted to adopt the world's values instead of God's?

3. Submit, Resist, Draw Near

James 4:7-10

This is one of the most practical sections of James.

James gives several commands:

Submit to God.

Resist the devil.

Draw near to God.

Cleanse your hands.

Purify your hearts.

Humble yourselves before the Lord.

Notice the order.

SUBMIT TO GOD

Before James tells us to resist the devil, he tells us to submit to God.

Victory begins with surrender.

RESIST THE DEVIL

We are not told to negotiate with temptation or entertain it.

We resist it.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD

And then comes this beautiful promise:

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." — James 4:8

God isn't calling us merely to stop doing wrong things. He is calling us into **greater intimacy with Him**.

Christianity isn't simply about avoiding sin.

It is about knowing God.

Key Point

The answer to spiritual distance isn't pretending everything is fine—it's turning toward God.

Discussion Questions

What does drawing near to God practically look like in my life right now?

Is there something I need to surrender?

Is there a temptation I need to resist?

Is there something distracting me from spending time with God?

4. Humble Yourself Before the Lord

James 4:10

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you."

Biblical humility doesn't mean believing that we are worthless.

Humility means seeing ourselves correctly in relationship to God.

He is God. I am not.

I don't have to control everything.

I don't have to know everything.

I don't have to prove myself to everyone.

I can trust Him.

Something to Think About

Pride says:

"I can handle this."

Humility says:

"Lord, I need You."

5. Be Careful How You Speak About Others

James 4:11-12

James then turns to how believers speak about one another.

Speaking evil against another believer places us in the dangerous position of acting as though we are their judge.

There is only **one Lawgiver and Judge—God**.

This doesn't mean Christians should never confront sin or exercise discernment. Scripture clearly teaches both.

The issue is the **heart behind our words**.

Am I trying to restore someone—or tear them down?

Am I concerned about their spiritual health—or do I simply want someone else to think less of them?

Key Point

How we speak about people reveals something about the condition of our own hearts.

Discussion Question

Before speaking about someone, what would change if I asked:

"Would I say this if they were sitting beside me?"

6. "If the Lord Wills"

James 4:13-16

James describes people confidently planning their future:

Today or tomorrow we'll go somewhere, conduct business, and make money.

James doesn't condemn planning.

The problem is **planning without acknowledging God**.

We often live as though tomorrow is guaranteed.

James reminds us:

"You do not know what tomorrow will bring."

Our lives are described as a **mist**—visible briefly and then gone.

That isn't meant to make us fearful.

It's meant to make us dependent.

Instead we should live with the attitude:

"If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Key Point

"If the Lord wills" is more than something Christians say.

It's a posture of the heart.

It means:

"God, these are my plans—but You are Lord over them."

Discussion Question

Is there an area of my future that I have planned without truly surrendering it to God?

7. The Sin of Knowing and Not Doing

James 4:17

James ends the chapter with a challenging statement:

"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

We often think about sin primarily as **doing something wrong**.

James reminds us that sin can also involve **failing to do what we know is right**.

Maybe God has prompted me to:

Forgive someone.

Encourage someone.

Help someone.

Apologize.

Give generously.

Speak truth.

Serve.

Pray.

Take a step of obedience.

And I keep saying:

"Later."

Key Point

Delayed obedience can become disobedience.

A powerful question to ask is:

What has God already shown me to do that I haven't done yet?

BIG PICTURE OF JAMES 4

James 4 repeatedly brings us back to one issue:

Who is sitting on the throne of my life?

My desires?

My plans?

My reputation?

My comfort?

My pride?

Or **Jesus?**

The chapter moves us from:

selfish desires → surrender

pride → humility

worldliness → closeness with God

judgment of others → humility toward others

confidence in our plans → dependence upon God's will

knowing what is right → actually doing it

Key Verse

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

James 4:8

A Question to Leave With the Group

Instead of only asking:

"What did I learn from James 4?"

Ask:

"What is God asking me to surrender, change, or obey because of what I just read?"

Because James isn't merely calling Christians to **know the Word**.

He's calling us to **live it**.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word and for the grace You give us when we humble ourselves before You. Search our hearts and reveal anything that has become more important to us than You. Help us

surrender our desires, our plans, our pride, and our future into Your hands. Teach us to resist temptation and draw near to You, trusting Your promise that You will draw near to us. Guard our words, help us love others well, and give us courage to obey when You show us what is right. May our lives reflect less of ourselves and more of Jesus. In His name, Amen.