

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 8 - *JAMES 4:1-12*

LEADER NOTES

Last week, we discussed how James warns against false wisdom. False wisdom produces a friendship with the world, which James now addresses in chapter four. Friendship with the world is rooted in sinfulness and self-centeredness. Friendship with the world produces the chaos we see in the world. God is not content to let his children be friends with the world. God is a jealous God, and he will not share us with the world. As followers of Jesus, we are called to have a heavenly view of the world and the trials we face. This perspective means that we pursue friendship with God not friendship with the world.

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SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

VISIBLE FAITH INTENTIONALLY PURSUES GOD.

James 4:1-12

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not 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. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves therefore 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 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

STUDY NOTES

James spent the last section talking about two types of wisdom. Here, as David Platt points out, he moves to talking about two types of friendship. What is clear in this section, as with the previous section, is you and I have a choice to make. Are we going to seek friendship with the world? Or are we going to seek friendship with God? It sounds simple, but on a practical level this is a choice we struggle with each day of our lives.

Friendship with the World

Friendship with the world comes from false wisdom (3:14-16). How do we know this? 4:1-5 can be seen as the practical outworking of false wisdom from chapter 3. Friendship with the world is really friendship with ourselves. We choose ourselves and our interests over others and God. James's point is that those Christians who have chosen such a friendship are the reason for the strife and conflict that exists within the church he is writing to.

His question in verse 1 outlines this, why do such things exist? Because you choose the friendship of the world over God. This friendship is driven by selfishness. This friendship may seem like it pursues God, yet it's always for selfish gain. James notes that even when these Christians "ask" God for help it's for dishonest gain to spend on themselves. In James's mind, this is akin to adultery. They are "cheating" on God to satisfy vain pleasures. In turn, the natural outworking we saw from chapter 3 is coming home to roost. Disorder, chaos, quarrels, and strife abound for those that choose friendship with the world. James's concluding point in this section is that you have to choose one of these friendships. You cannot remain a friend to this world and remain in right standing with God. Those who choose friendship with this world are choosing enmity with God.

Friendship with God

James ends the previous section and starts this section (6-12) reminding his readers (and us) God is a jealous God. This is a good thing. God isn't content to let us simply choose the world over him. Rather, God moves in our lives to see a better way, a better friendship. What does this friendship with God look like? It's heavenly minded. Whereas the earthly friendship seeks the here and now; friendship with God seeks the already but not yet. Earthly friendship seeks the immediate, friendship with God seeks the lasting. James points out what this friendship should look like. It's driven by grace (6). This is a friendship that isn't based upon performance or continuously seeking pleasure. Rather, it is based upon the free grace from God.

This grace enables the Christian to find a rest that cannot be found anywhere else. This grace enables the Christian to resist the devil (7) by submitting to God, and ultimately overcome the temptation of following the devil. It's the grace of this friendship that allows the Christian to be single-minded towards God and thereby to fight sin effectively.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *How would you define the two types of friendships in your own words?*
- *Why does friendship with the world create chaos and strife?*
- *Have you ever thought of choosing friendship with the world as spiritual adultery? Why or why not?*
- *What is the main characteristic of a friendship with God?*
- *How does this friendship help us to fight sin?*
- *Why does this friendship allow us to take the “long view”?*
- *How can this group help you choose friendship with God?*
- *How can you fight against friendship with this world?*
- *What changes need to take place in your life today to choose friendship with God?*