

JAMES

A Faith That Works

Study 12

Wisdom from below : Conflict

James 4:1-10

A) Wisdom from below leads to conflict

James 4:1-3

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

1) a) Discussion Question. What was happening among the Christians during James' time?

b) Reflection Question. Do you see this happening in your church today? What are the types of topics or subjects that were quarreled about?

Background Information

Did the Christians kill each other during James' time?

"kill" May refer to the physical violence to which zealous Jews in James's day were resorting to defend the faith. More likely, however, James wants to turn his readers away from their argumentative attitudes by reminding them of the ultimate expression of unbridled passion and selfishness. James 4:2

D. A. Carson, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible For the Olive Tree Bible App*, Zondervan, 2018.

c) Reflection Question. What advice have you recently heard from the world about pursuing what you wish for?

B) Self-interest leading to over desire is the root of conflict

James 4:1-3

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

2) a) Discussion question. What is the root of the conflict that James describes as asking “with wrong motives”?

b) Reflection question. Is there anything in your life that can draw you away from God? Do you have a particular weakness?

c) Disordered love is the motive behind wisdom from below

James 4:4

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

3) a) Discussion Question. Why was James' calling the Christians of his times “adulterous”?

The relationship between God and the believers have been described as a faithful husband and a faithless wife across the bible. We are called to be faithful but often failed (i.e friends with the world).

God's covenant with the church is similar to the marriage covenant between a husband and wife. (Eph 5:31-32, Eze 16:8, Eze 16:14-15, Jer 3:20)

b) Discussion Question. What can you do to avoid becoming a friend of the world?

c) Discussion Question. Is it possible to be friends with both God and the world? (Refer to the verses below to help you)

Quick Verse Reference

2 Timothy 4:10

for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

Matthew 13:22

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

d) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture slide, fill in the results of love of God vs Love of World.

Love of world	Love of God
Leaves us unsatisfied, Addicted	Leaves us yearning for Him
Spiritually impoverished	Spiritually Enriched
Chaos and Conflict in community	Peace in community
More of world, less of a human, more animal-like, becoming more creature-like, rather than Creator-like	More human-image of God, more like Creator instead of creation/creature

D) God gives grace to the humble who are willing to receive His Wisdom

James 4:5-7

Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble.”

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

4) a) Discussion Question. Based on verses 5-7, does God sound invested in helping us as long as we are willing to humble ourselves and submit our full being, thoughts, will and action to God?

James 4:7-10

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

b) Objective Question. Select all that apply. What are the list of things James ask the believers to do in verses 7-10?

A. Submit yourselves, then, to God.

B. Resist the devil

C. Draw near to God

D. Wash your hands every time before entering church and after using toilet

E. Purify your hearts

F. Grieve, mourn and wail about your own sins

C) Fill in Blanks. According to video lecture slide, fill in the type of category of things James ask us to do:

James ask us to:	Prayer? Attitude? Action? Emotion?
Submit yourselves, then, to God.	Prayer
Resist the devil	Action
Draw near to God	Prayer
Cleanse your hands	Action
Purify your hearts instead of being double-minded	Attitude
Grieve, mourn and wail on your own sins	Emotion

Background Information

“Wash your hands” (An allusion to the OT priests who washed their hands before they ministered in the tabernacle (Exod 30:17–21)

D. A. Carson, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible For the Olive Tree Bible App*, Zondervan, 2018.

Takeaway

- A) Wisdom from below leads to conflict
- B) Self-interest leading to over desire is the root of conflict
- C) Disordered love is the motive behind wisdom from below
- D) God gives grace to the humble who are willing to receive His Wisdom

Case Study

Case 1 – Double-mindedness

Liang Chuang goes to worship at Second Baptist Church every Sunday. When Liang is at church, he is always smiling and well-behaved. He serves in the usher ministry and serves as a leader in Bible Study Fellowship (BSF).

When he leaves the church premise, he becomes a totally different person. He loses his temper easily at home with his wife and children. He doesn't lead them in bible study but uses worldly advice not from the bible to guide his children's behaviour. He gets into a fight with his wife all the time over petty things because he is envious that his wife gets to stay home all the time and watch Kdrama while he needs to earn money for the family. He sees tasks like buying groceries, fetching kids from school, laundry, cooking and cleaning as menial tasks which is the bare minimum that she needs to do for the family. Therefore he takes it out on the wife a lot, criticizing her lack of interest in spending the 'extra' time serving church, reading the bible or at least have a part time job to earn extra cash like the neighbour's wife.

In his workplace he has no respect for his colleagues and those in lower positions under him but easily tries to please his superiors and bosses even if it means bribing and lying to them or even stealing credits for other's works.

1) a) Discussion question. What is Liang's root issue?

b) Reflection question. Do you relate to Liang?

c) Discussion question. There are two types of seeds in Luke 8:14-15, the seed that fell among thorns and the seed that fell on good soil. Can we know which seed is Liang?

Until Liang's end of life, we won't know which seed he is. He still has a chance to repent before his death.

Quick Verse Reference

Luke 8:14-15

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

d) Reflection question. Philippians 1:6 says “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Do you truly believe that God continues His work of transforming a believer like Liang or yourself?

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.