

James Lesson #14, Chapter 4:1-10

Read Chapter 4 before beginning this lesson. And as you do so, ask the Lord for His help in studying and applying His precious Word in your life.

1. What line of thought does James pick up in Chapter 4 verse 1? Explain how it connects with the end of Chapter 3.

2. What *is* the *source* of the quarrels and conflicts among us according to verse 1?

3. Both the NASB and NKJV translate the end of verse 1 with the word *members*, while both the ESV and NIV chose *within you*. Why would our pleasures or desires wage war *within us*? See Romans 7:21-25; Galatians 5:16-17; Colossians 3:5-7; James 3:14-18; 1 Peter 1:14; 2:11.

4. In verse 2 James gives two examples of what the war raging within us might look like. What two examples does he cite?

5. What solution does James propose at the end of verse 2?

6. James often appears to “hear” a rebuttal from those he’s instructing. The white space in between verses 2 and 3 is one such spot where it seems that James anticipated a response to his “You don’t have because you haven’t asked” comment in verse 2. What possible objection was he anticipating? You can figure that out by looking at verse 3.

7. There is a presupposition floating around here that isn't directly addressed, so let's take the time to bring it to the forefront. Look up the following verses and then explain how they undergird James' comments in verse 2-3. See Psalm 66:18-19; Isaiah 59:1-2; Matthew 6:31-32; Luke 11:9-13; 1 John 5:14-15.

8. There are other reasons for unanswered prayer than what we've discovered here, yet for now, please summarize what you've learned from verses 2-3 about prayer.

9. We can't leave verses 1-3 without taking some time to examine the desires of our hearts. I doubt you've committed murder, but most likely there have been times when you've been angry or envious or selfish. According to verses 1-3, if we want God to hear and answer our prayers what do we need to recognize?
 - a. Where do we go from there? See Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9-10.

 - b. What comfort do we find in these Scriptures? See Psalm 130:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 4:14-16.

10. What were James' hearers doing in verse 4 that prompted him to call them *adulteresses*?

11. From verses 1-4, explain why being a friend of the world would cause us to commit spiritual adultery against God.

12. What does friendship with the world look like? See Matthew 6:24; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; James 1:27; 5:5; 1 John 2:15-17.

13. What do you learn about God's heart for His children from verse 5? Why would friendship with the world jeopardize that relationship?

14. Is there ever a time when God is *not* jealous for our affections? See Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:23-24; also consider 2 Corinthians 11:2 that speaks of a similar jealousy. How does that knowledge, that the Lord longs for you to love Him with a whole heart, motivate and encourage you to spend time with Him each day?

“Our Lord hunts for our love.” Samuel Rutherford¹

15. Be sure to look up Proverbs 3:34 which James quotes in verse 6. Now consider and explain how that Old Testament quote supports James' exhortation to his hearers.

“My counsel is that ye come out and leave the multitude, and let Christ have your company. Let them take clay and this present world who love it: Christ is a more worthy and noble portion. Blessed are those who get Him.” ~Samuel Rutherford

16. Verses 7-10 provide us with the steps we need for becoming the *humble who receive God's gracious help*. What's the first step to humbling our hearts from verse 7? What does that look like in our lives? See Psalm 131; Proverbs 3:5-8; Isaiah 45:9; Daniel 4:34-37.

¹ Samuel Rutherford, *The Loveliness of Christ* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1909, reprinted 2008), 26.

17. What's the second step to humbling our hearts according to verse 7? What else do we learn about this process? See Matthew 4:3-11; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 5:18.

Pilgrim, burdened with thy sin,
Come the way to Zion's gate;
There, till mercy speaks within,
Knock, and weep, and watch, and wait.
Knock—He knows the sinner's cry;
Weep—He loves the mourner's tears;
Watch—for saving grace is nigh;
Wait—till heavenly grace appears.²

18. What promise is given at the beginning of verse 8 that encourages and aids as we engage in this heart-work of humbling ourselves before the Lord?
19. As we draw near to God, what must we make sure we do according to the second half of verse 8? How does that fly in the face of the current “just come as you are” Christian climate that never seeks to turn sinners from their sin?
20. Verse 9 explains part of the process of repentance in humbling our hearts before the Lord. What are we to do? What does being miserable, mourning, and weeping in repentance reveal to the Lord? See also 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.
21. As we humble our hearts before the Lord, what assurance do we have from verse 10? What other encouragements do we gain from the following Scriptures? See Psalm 10:17; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Peter 5:5-6.

²J. C. Ryle, *Hymns for the Church on Earth* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1876), 12.

“A garrison is not free from danger while it hath an enemy lodged within.”

You may bolt all your doors, and fasten all your windows, but if the thieves have placed even a little child within doors, who can draw the bolts for them, the house is still unprotected. All the sea outside a ship cannot do it damage till the water enters within and fills the hold. Hence, it is clear, our greatest danger is from within. All the devils in hell and tempters on earth could do us no injury if there were no corruption in our nature. Alas, our heart is our greatest enemy; this is the little home-born thief.³

“Holy Lord, I have sinned times without number, and been guilty of pride and unbelief, of failure to find Your mind in Your Word, of neglect to seek You in my daily life. My transgressions and short-comings present me with a list of accusations, but I bless You that they will not stand against me, for all have been laid on Christ.

Go on to subdue my corruptions and grant me grace to live above them. Let not the passions of the flesh nor lustings of the mind bring my spirit into subjection, but rule over me in liberty and power.

I thank You that many of my prayers have been refused. I have asked amiss and do not have, I have prayed from lusts and been rejected, I have longed for Egypt and been given a wilderness.

Go on with Your patient work, answering 'no' to my wrongful prayers, and fitting me to accept it. Purge me from every false desire, every base aspiration, everything contrary to Your rule.

I thank You for Your wisdom and Your love, for all the acts of discipline to which I am subject, for sometimes putting me into the furnace to refine my gold and remove my dross.

No trial is so hard to bear as a sense of sin. If You would give me choice to live in pleasure and keep my sins, or to have them burnt away with trial, give me sanctified affliction.

Deliver me from every evil habit, every accretion of former sins, everything that dims the brightness of Your grace in me, everything that prevents me taking delight in You. Then I shall bless You, God of Jeshurun, for helping me to be upright.”

Valley of Vision, "Confession and Petition"⁴

³ C. H. Spurgeon, *Daily Help* (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward & Company, 1892), 165.

⁴ Arthur Bennett, editor, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975, reprinted 1999), 77.