



July 6, 2025

*Real Wisdom for a Messy World*

## **BE GOD'S FRIEND, NOT THE WORLD'S**

James 4:1-10



### 1. **Opening Discussion:** (You will probably want to use only one of these openers)

- a. Sometimes arguments start over the silliest things and then escalate beyond all reasonable expectations (the Hatfield and McCoys). What is the silliest thing you've ever argued about? Why did it seem important at the time? What had to happen to resolve the dispute?
- b. Have you ever been in (or perhaps witnessed someone else in) a situation where two supervisors gave you conflicting instructions? What is it like to try to please two bosses who don't have the same objectives? What factors determined how you would proceed?
- c. Who is the humblest person you've known? How was their humility demonstrated? Did he/she recognize that they were humble? If you had pointed out their humility, how do you think they would have reacted?

### 2. **Prayer:**

- a. Adoration – Pray a Psalm or other Scripture to focus on praising God.
- b. Confession – Spend time confessing any known sins. 1 John 1:9
- c. Thanksgiving – Thank God for answered prayers, blessings, gifts, and opportunities to serve.
- d. Supplications
  - i. Pray for the activities of His Church locally and around the world.
  - ii. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of others and yourself.
- e. **Least Reached People Group: Yazeed of Sudan** (*from the IMB "Loving the Lost Through Prayer" guide*)

"Camels are valuable to the Yazeed of Sudan. The people live in fabric tents covered with roofs made of camel hair. They also drink camel milk and occasionally eat camel meat. Typically, the women and children stay in their family camps, tending their gardens and the smaller animals while the men travel the desert with their camels in desperate search of food for their herd. Although the people call themselves Muslim, most don't follow Islam's core requirements. Jesus died for these isolated, desert-dwelling people, yet most of the Yazeed population have no knowledge of God's steadfast love for them. Pray for the Yazeed people to hear and believe the wonderful news that God loves them and has made a way for their salvation."

### 3. **Sermon Key Points**

- a. Conflict With Other Christians Is Rooted In Our Own Flesh
  - i. Unfortunately, conflict happens between Christians
  - ii. Your flesh is the root of conflict, not just that other person
- b. You Can't Be Friends With Both God and the World
  - i. Friendship with the world is a constant risk for Christians
  - ii. Friendship with the world automatically means hostility toward God

- c. Be God's Friend!
  - i. Embrace grace
  - ii. Draw near to God

#### 4. Bible Study:

- a. **Sunday Afternoon** – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:
  - i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
  - ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
  - iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
  - iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
  - v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
- b. **Monday:**
  - i. This week’s focal passage is James 4:1-10. Start each day’s study by reading the entire passage and then meditating on the verses being highlighted that day. Since the original letter did not have verse and chapter divisions (nor subject headings), go back and start reading at James 3:13 today.
    - 1. What parallels do you see between last week's passage (James 3:13-18) and James 4:1-10?
    - 2. If James compared two types of wisdom in chapter 3, what two things is he picturing in this week’s passage?
    - 3. James is often described as the “Proverbs of the New Testament” because of the many proverb-like statements he includes. What are such statements in these ten verses?
    - 4. How would you describe the transition from 3:18 to 4:1?
  - ii. Based on this first reading, what is the single most important truth you see, and how should it influence your life?
    - 1. What is the most significant promise in the passage?
    - 2. What is the most critical warning?
- c. **Tuesday:**
  - i. Meditate on verses 1-2a.
  - ii. Discuss how you would answer James’s first question. To the extent you feel able to do so in your group, be very practical and consider answers that apply to situations you face in today’s world.
    - 1. How do the answers you discussed compare to the answer James gives to his own question?
    - 2. What do you understand his statement “your passions are at war within you” (“your desires that battle within you” in the NIV) in the second question to mean?
    - 3. Read Romans 7:21-24. What additional insight does Paul provide? Then read 1 Peter 2:11. How does Peter add to the discussion? What conclusion would you

reach about the importance and seriousness of this issue by noting that James, Paul, and Peter all address the same fundamental topic?

4. In verse 1, James addresses two different battles (wars), one is “among you”, the other is “within you”. Which is most important and needs to be resolved first? Why?
- iii. Considering verse 2a, how does James add emphasis to how serious this issue is? Do you think the members of the churches James was writing to were actually murdering each other? If not, what is James suggesting (see Matthew 5:21-22 and 1 John 3:15)?
- iv. In the second sentence of verse 2, James makes an interesting observation about the nature of covetousness. Why do you think he says we “cannot obtain” (“cannot get what you want” in the NIV) rather than “do not get”?

*d. Wednesday:*

- i. Today, focus and meditate on verses 2b-3?
- ii. What are we taught about prayer in this verse and a half?
  1. Read these verses about prayer: Matthew 7:7, 18:19, 21:22, John 14:13-14, 15:7 & 16, 16:23-24, 1 John 3:22, and 5:14-15. What does James make clear about unanswered prayer that is implied in these passages?
  2. Read the Lord’s Model Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. How does Jesus show us the way to avoid praying for the wrong things and with the wrong motives (see especially verses 10 & 11)?
  3. Compare Matthew 6:11 with Proverbs 30:8. How would our prayers be different and more likely to avoid the danger James is presenting if we truly adopted the attitude of this Proverb?
- iii. If you look back over what James has written so far, especially 1:5 and 3:17, what do you think James would say we should be praying for instead of for things to spend on our own passions?

*e. Thursday:*

- i. Meditate especially on verses 4-5.
- ii. So far in James, the readers have been addressed as “brothers” (see 1:2, 16, 19, 2:1, 5, 14, 3:1, 10, & 12). What does his change to the term “adulterous people” or “adulteresses” show? What do you think James is seeking to accomplish using this term?
  1. Read Isaiah 54:5-8, Jeremiah 3:20 & 31:32, Ezekiel 16:15-19, and Hosea 2:2. For Jewish Christians who only had the Old Testament Scriptures and would have been familiar with these verses, how would they have understood James’ address?
  2. How would the teaching that the Church is Christ’s bride (Ephesians 5:25-32, Revelation 19:7, and 21:2) have reinforced the importance of what James is writing?
- iii. According to verse 4, what are the only two options we have? Why is it impossible to be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time? How does this teaching agree or disagree with the contemporary worldview?
  1. Read Luke 16:13, Romans 8:5-8, 1 John 2:15-17, and 3:8. What do these verses tell us about loving the world?

2. What would be symptoms of friendship with the world (see James 4:1-3, 1 John 2:15-17, Ephesians 2:12, James 4:3, and Proverbs 14:12)? What would be symptoms of Loving God rather than the world (see 1 Corinthians 13:13, Galatians 5:22, John 10:10 & 3:16, Matthew 7:12)?

f. **Friday:**

- i. As you read the focal passage, meditate on verses 7-9
- ii. What does it mean to “submit”? How would you describe the relationship between one who submits, and the one submitted to?
  1. Probably the ultimate example of submission is found in Matthew 26:38-39 & 42. While we will never be in that same situation, what phrase does Jesus use that we should adopt in our lives and prayers?
  2. Why are submitting to God and resisting the devil like two sides to a coin? Is it possible to do one without the other?
  3. Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and 1 Peter 5:6-9. What are the key tactics for resisting the devil?
- iii. What two actions does James say are necessary to “Draw near to God”? Compare what James says with Psalm 24:3-4, 51:7, 73:13, Isaiah 1:16-17, and Jeremiah 4:14. What do 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 9:14 tell us is necessary for this washing?

g. **Saturday:**

- i. Finally, meditate on verses 6 and 10.
- ii. In verse 6, James quotes from Proverbs 3:34. Read these other verses from Psalms and Proverbs: Psalm 18:27, 25:9, 55:19, 147:6, 149:4, Proverbs 11:2, and 29:23. What conclusion can you reach about the importance and result of humility?
- iii. Read Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14. How does Jesus show we must humble ourselves if we want to enjoy the blessing of James 4:10? How do Ephesians 2:8-9 apply?

5. **Application:**

- a. We sometimes hear it said that Christians should “be in the world, but not of the world.” While it is sage advice, it requires some amplification to be practical. Almost every survey of evangelical Christians in America shows that there is no statistical difference in many areas of moral behavior between the lifestyle of believers and those who openly reject Christianity. We need the Holy Spirit’s leading to show us how to love the world (i.e., the people who are lost) as God does (John 3:16) while hating the world (i.e., human society apart from God and dominated by Satan and sin). Pray that God will show you areas in your life that need to change and that He will grant you the strength necessary to repent.
- b. While we talk often about avoiding sin, we less frequently acknowledge the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged with Satan and his allies. C.S. Lewis, in the preface to the Screwtape Letters, noted that it is equally dangerous to display either too much or too little attention to the Devil’s activities. Peter tells us that he “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (that would be us). We should seek the Holy Spirit’s help in recognizing the seriousness of this spiritual warfare and the strength to “resist the devil” because when we do, he will flee – God is sovereign!