

**JAMES 4:1-10, 13-17****LESSON: HUMILITY BEFORE GOD—** July 20, 2025**INTRODUCTION:**¹**TRUE WISDOM COMES FROM GOD**

CHAPTER 3:13-18 **13** If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. **14** But if you are bitterly jealous, and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. **15** For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things ARE earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. **16** For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. **17** But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism, and is always sincere. **18** And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace, and reap a harvest of righteousness. (NLT)

LESSON:**I. JAMES 4:1-6**

4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?— James is addressing the church members who have come against each other, causing wars and fightings among themselves. ²The word "wars" here means quarrels (angry words) rather than real wars. So, there were quarrels and fights among them, and it seems that things got so bad, that there were actual fights. We're always facing temptations and trials and we find ourselves yielding and doing wrong. Next, James tells them that their lusts are warring in their bodily members. The word "**lusts**" means what they crave; what gives them pleasure and gratification; their strong desires are what's warring within their bodies (members) which resulted in wars and fightings trying to take control. When they could not agree on what they wanted to do, there was trouble. Where it should have been peace, there were angry words and fightings. The word lust is used three times here in James 4:1-3.

³*God made us for his pleasure and not for ours. Our desire should do what God wants us to do, and be what He wants us to be.*

4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. James tells the church, "You want something, but you cannot have it." This word "**lust**" means a yearning desire or passion that ignores God and begins to lie, steal, cheat, kill, and war to gratify your desires and yearnings. "So, you are ready to kill. Your desire is so much that you quarrel and fight to obtain it. But you can't have it. The bottom line is that you do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it." Quarrels among believers are always shameful, but now to be ready to kill; do harm went in the wrong direction. It went from desire and gratification to evil desire and murder. It's extended to evil motive and greediness. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" means the person didn't trust God nor call upon God to supply

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%203%3A13-18&version=NLT>

² <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

³ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>





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the need. You know in this case after you get what you want, it's never enough to satisfy you. You always want more!

⁴This shows that they had turned away from God in their hearts. If they would look to Him first, then He would change their desires. The primary need is to desire the right things. They needed to desire those things that God would want to give them. They should not pray to God for their own selfish desires, but for His wisdom and help. The choice we have to make is whether to please ourselves or to please God.

4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

“Ye ask, and receive not” means they asked for the wrong reason, and thereby received nothing. The word “**amiss**” simply means to pray wrongly; not praying right. It's not with the act of asking; it's the heart's intention of asking. Proverb 16:2 says “*All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord*” (NIV). So, praying amiss or praying wrongly is when we're asking for things to gratify our lusts and pleasure. Wrong motives:

- For success to be recognized. • For position to hold authority. • for healing and a longer life to continue a comfortable life. • For family to be blessed to enjoy a good time.
- Seeking God for more comfort, enjoyment, better food and clothes.

⁵God is ready to answer the prayers of those who ask for what is right. God hears those who repent of their sins and asks Him to forgive them. He will answer those who pray with faith for that which is good. Some of these people prayed, but with wrong desires. They did not receive what they asked for. They did not receive it because they asked wrongly. They asked God to give them more to satisfy their own desires. They wanted to please themselves. They did not want to please God or to bless someone else. God does not answer that kind of prayer.

Therefore, if we want anything from God, we are to want it so that we can glorify God:

- If you want health, life, strength, or a strong testimony, it must be so that you can glorify God.
- If you want to bear fruit in your life and work, or in your church, and upon your land, it must be so you can glorify God in your life and testimony.
- If you want the basic necessities of life, food, clothing, shelter, or purpose meaning, and significance, confidence and security—or if you want more position, authority, or money, it must be so you can glorify God in your life and testimony.

Our motives in our prayers may not be squandered or consumed for lustful pleasures.

4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity

with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. James uses strong language in calling the people adulterers and adulteresses. This means they were guilty of spiritual adultery. The point is: that when we turn away from Christ to the world, it is like committing spiritual adultery. This shows us just how meaningful God counts our relationship with Christ. It is a relationship of love, and our bond should be the closest than all the world. There was immorality and all forms of sexual vices running rampant, and James showed them that they were not faithful to God.

⁶The Old Testament speaks about God as being like a husband and the Jews as his wife.

⁴ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

⁵ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

⁶ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>





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Sometimes the Jews turned from God to other gods. Then it was like a wife who went to another man. The New Testament says that the church is like a bride. It is the bride of Christ. James is saying that they were not faithful to Christ. They did not love God as they should. Instead, they loved the things of the world. Those who share the values of the world are not faithful to God. That is the world apart from God. It is not the natural world, which God made. The things of the world include all that opposes God and his rules. James is thinking here about those pleasures and aims that draw people away from God. It is the desire for wealth, power and pleasure that governs those of the world. They refuse the rule of God.

Desire for the things of the world is friendship with the world. By its nature, friendship with the world is against God. He who is a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Christians cannot love God, and be friends with the world. They have to choose between God and the world. They can be friends either with the world or with God, not both.

- An impure person is an enemy of God's purity. • An unholy person is an enemy of God's holiness.
- A deceptive, lying person is an enemy of God's truthfulness.
- A covetous, banking, hoarding person is an enemy of God's heart that gives sacrificially.
- A worldly-minded person is an enemy of God's Will for man.

4:5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?—

The question was asked *"Do you think the scripture means nothing?"* They were acting as if they did not accept the Scriptures. The Scripture with good reason says, *"God has caused His Spirit to live in us. He wants very much to keep us for Himself."* Believers must know that the Spirit of God yearns over us with jealousy all the time. And when temptation confronts us, and we do wrong, He does not cast us off, reject us, nor forsake us. No, we did the wrong, but He still loves the believer, but in order to come back, there are two cures:

1. **Believers must know this:** The Holy Spirit who dwells in us must convict us to repent and return to God, for God's jealous love attracts, and pulls the believer back to Him!

⁷The Spirit desires us to be faithful and to love God and the Lord Jesus. God is a jealous God. He loves us. And He does not want us to love anyone more than we love Him. **"Jealous"** comes from a word meaning burning heat. This shows the strong desire with which God longs for our love.

4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. "Grace" means the favor and blessings which God gives.

2. **Believers must know this:** God gives the humble believer grace and more grace. When the believer faces temptation or does wrong, God meets the believer's need, still knowing that the believer does not deserve God's grace and blessing, but God still loves him, and gives grace upon grace! Only the Holy Spirit of God can make us able to accept the love and grace of God.

However, God's standards are high and not every believer, and not every person receives God's grace! God opposes those who are proud, stiffnecked, haughty, and rebellious against God. In their refusal to obey God, it shows their commitment to wrong, and they don't love God, and therefore, He has to resist the proud. God wants to pour out His grace upon them, but they had hardened their





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hearts against God, not realizing they need Him more. They think that they can manage life without God. They are friends of the world, and enemies of God, and so He has turned away from them.

⁸*The humble are those who know their own weakness. They depend on God, and He alone can give them the help that they need. They give themselves to God, and desire to please Him. They want to receive the loving help that God gives. No one can receive this help until he or she accepts the need of it and comes to God for it. To these who come to Him, God delights to give His loving help freely.*

II. JAMES 4:7-10

4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Every sin is preceded by temptation.

*The word "**submit**" means to put yourself under God; under His care, power, and strength; yield to God; to His Will, command, instructions, laws, behavior, and Word, etc.*

Focus upon God and His Word immediately when temptation strikes!

*The word "**resist**" means to take a stand against the devil with the Word of God; exert the energy and effort to oppose and defeat the devil and his temptation.*

Focus upon God and His Word counteracting and conquering the temptation of the devil!

Both these words are military words, therefore being urgent and imperatives coming from our military commander, God Himself. Both acts are required. Don't allow the enemy to get a foothold by entertaining the thought. You must believe, keep submitting to God and keep resisting the enemy! (*turn to God and turn against the devil*). He will flee! Again, he will flee!

⁹*The devil knows that his only hope is to draw Christians away from their trust in God. The cause of their failure is that they are proud. The devil appeals to that. As strong as the devil may be, humble Christians can defeat him. As they say 'no' to his temptations, he has to go away from them.*

4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. This Scripture teaches us that the door into God's presence is never closed, and we are encouraged to "*Come near to God and He will come near to us.*"¹⁰ They were still God's people, but they had become like strangers to Him; moved away from him, and pleasing themselves. Therefore, they had to repent of all that had caused them to go from God. And they had to ask him to forgive them. James called them "**Sinners**", those who do not do what God says, those with two souls (or minds); those who want to be friends with both God and the world. These sinners, with two minds must wash their hands, and make their hearts pure. The washing of hands was part of the ceremony of worship. It was to make a person fit to come near to God. "*Who shall go up to the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart ...*" *Psalm 24:3-4*. This means that they must repent and turn from their sin. They have to choose to follow God, and not be friends with the world, meaning being double-minded. They are told to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts.

4:9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your

⁸ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

⁹ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

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joy to heaviness. The words **“Be afflicted”** means to endure; to discipline, and to voluntarily abstain. Another translation for this Scripture: *“Be sorry and weep because of your sins. Do not laugh but be sad. Do not be happy, but be serious and sad.”* The picture is that when temptation or affliction strikes you, it’s not a time to be laughing or joking or comfortable. Temptation is affliction, and therefore a time to be discipline; a time of rigorous warfare, and to stop the laughter, and your joyous comfort. Focus getting near to God. Our hearts must mourn and weep under the heaviness of the temptation, and its attack; asking and begging God for strength, and deliverance while enduring. We must focus our hearts and minds upon God as we draw near Him, and following the above scriptures. James has literally given us a Roadmap.

4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. In our humility:

- God must see the change, that is, laughing and being joyous in our comfort. He must see us drawing near Him in and crying out for deliverance.
- God must not see a self-sufficient spirit; a spirit that overlooks calling upon Him; a spirit that ignores His Word; a spirit that faces the temptation or affliction on his own. He must see us humbly coming into His presence, calling and depending upon Him for strength and wisdom to overcome the temptation or affliction.
- God must not see us dallying around thinking and picturing the attractiveness of any temptation—be it the taste of a second helping of food or a second look at an attractive man or woman or any other enticing attraction. He must see us using 2nd Cor.10:5 *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”* Focus totally with your heart and mind on things that are *“true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* Philippians 4:8.

The point is: when a person is tempted, if he humbles himself in the sight of God, God will lift him up. God will meet his need, give him whatever he needs from the onslaught of temptation.

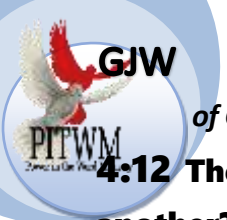
NOT APART OF THE LESSON: VERSES 11-12

4:11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. God hates all sin, but these are a few that are constantly and strongly condemned by Scripture—that is, judging others, condemning, criticizing, backbiting, gossiping, speaking evil, and talking about others.

- Judging others is speaking evil of brothers. • Judging others violates the law of God.

¹¹In the church, there were those who said bad things about other Christians. What they said was unkind. And perhaps it was not true. They must stop doing it because they are brothers and sisters. To speak against a Christian is against the law to love him or her. We cannot speak evil about other Christians, and at the same time love them. The person, who speaks bad things about another person, acts as a judge of that person. Those who do this also speak against the law of God. It is as if they say the law is not right. It is as if they have put it aside. They have become judges of the law. Their own ideas are to them more important than the law of God. But our duty is not to judge the law, but to obey it. Those who judge the law set themselves above the law. This is taking the place





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of God, who is the judge. Only God can be the judge because He alone is not under the law.

4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?— God alone is the great Lawgiver! *What does that say? He has the Final Word!*

- Judging others sets one up as judge, as a law-giver. We can't do this.
- Judging others usurps God's right and authority. We can't do this.

Therefore, we do not have the right when we do such, we are setting ourselves up in the place of God. We are ever so short (weak) in ourselves. God alone is able to save and to destroy. Not one of us is able to know and judge the whole about a person. And the question is left in our hands—*"Who are you to judge another?"*

BACK TO THE LESSON:

III. JAMES 4:13-17

4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:— To seek God's Will, Plan with God! Yes, we should plan and prepare for the future, but this scripture gives a warning to us not to plan without God! Most of us plan as if our own wills and desires controlled our destiny of life. Why is that? Because of self-sufficiency. They feel capable of handling our own life and work. I think we are never taught to ask God or go to God for such trivial things. And thereby leave God out of a lot of our plans. All these things we have figured out on our own, so we think, and then we pick and choose which things to ask God about. And then get to Proverbs 16:9 *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."* Until we get to Jeremiah 17:9 *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Hebrews 12:2a says *"...Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith..."* **Man's Plans, God Laughs!** He knows our heart, and in what direction it would go. It's best to check our plans with God!

In this section,¹²James speaks about merchants who are in the church. Here are some merchants who are planning a trip. They say, 'We will go on the day that we decide. We will go to a certain city and stay there a year. We will trade there and we will make a profit.' But God has no place in their plans. These merchants think that they can do as they have planned. As they made their plans, they forgot God. It was as if the future was in their hands to control. But God alone knows the future and it makes no sense to plan without him. Planning for the future is good, but it must be with God. God's plan is above all other plans. His plans can never fail.

4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Humility in uncertainty helps us acknowledge our limits and be open to other possibilities because God is in control! Self-sufficiency is failure to recognize the uncertainty of life. There are two reasons why tomorrow is uncertain:

1. Our minds and nature are limited. We don't know the future.
2. Our lives at most are only a vapor that appears for a brief time, and then vanishes away.

Out of both of these: things happen.

- Accident •Disease •Broken relationship •Bad news •Death •Plane crash •Fire •Money loss.

We don't know about tomorrow. Life is like a vapor. The end of life will come to everyone of us, and nothing can stop it. It may come today or tomorrow, but it's coming! Make your eternal plans

¹² <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>





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with God first, then make your funeral plans with someone you trust—God!

4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. Humility places God first. Self-sufficiency is failure to acknowledge God. The only way to plan for the future is to trust God. Man is said to be dependent upon God for two things:

1. Man is dependent upon God for Life. *“If the Lord will, we shall live.”*
2. Man is dependent upon God for all that He does. *“If the Lord will, we shall do this or that.”*

“We will do it if God allows it.”

4:16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Humility does not rejoice in boastings. Self-sufficiency is boasting, bragging, and arrogance. A thousand things can happen to change one's plans. They boast about what they have done; their ability and possessions. We have a tendency to boast, and be seen and recognized as better and more successful than others. But such pride and arrogance is evil. Why? Because a man's ability and life are due to God, and rests in the hands of God!

¹³The proud merchants were sure of themselves. They were sure that by their own efforts they would succeed. They planned and acted as if God did not exist. It was as if they claimed to be able to control the future. They were wrong, and a confidence in themselves like that is evil. To think that they could plan the future is to sin against God. Only God can know what is to come.

Again, man Plans, God Laughs!

4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Humility is knowing and doing God's Will. Self-sufficiency is sin. A person is to walk in fellowship and communion with God, day by day, and moment by moment, acknowledging God in all his ways. He is to commit his life unto the Lord! Refusing to do so is sin, and the wages of sin is death—spiritual and eternal death. ¹⁴Sin is not just to do wrong things, but also the failure to do right things.

SUMMARY:

¹⁵James asks his readers to consider the source of wars and fights among themselves. He identifies the problem as their own desires for pleasure which war within themselves. Perhaps exaggerating for the sake of emphasis, he describes their lust and coveting (even murder!) for things they do not have and cannot obtain. It renders their prayers fruitless, for they have selfish motives in mind. Sounding like an Old Testament prophet, James charges them with adultery for trying to befriend the world. Becoming a friend of the world leads to enmity with God, who jealously desires us. But if they are willing to humble themselves, God is willing to show more grace (**4:1-6**).

James therefore counsels them to draw near to God in humble submission, with clean hands, purity of heart, and true contrition. *“Be sorry and weep because of your sins. Do not laugh but be sad. Do not be happy, but be serious and sad.”* Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up. The chapter ends with a call to make plans with the Lord's will in mind, for we have no idea what the morrow holds and life is short. Otherwise we boast in our arrogance and sin when we fail to do what we know is good (**4:7-17**).

¹³ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

¹⁴ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

¹⁵ https://executables.outlines.com/guides/james/ja2_04.html

