

Resolved

James 4:1-5

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A. Do not Live Dependent on the Flesh (vs. 1-3):

1. Source – There are a lot of inner experiences, whether emotional or mental that quarrels and conflicts can originate from.
2. Quarrels – Quarrels here means the creation of conflicts, so intense it causes individuals to strive over words so passionately, that it can lead to being physically abusive.
 - a) They might perhaps be better translated as “factions” and “quarrels”.
3. Conflicts – The word for conflict here is in reference to intense serious protracted hostile acts that can extend for a long period of time.
 - a) The terms James used for conflict comes from the language of warfare, but can also be used as powerful imagery for the destructiveness of relationships where violent attitudes have broken out unchecked. Just as a lack of mercy was evidence of his addressees’ sin of favoritism, now their active hostility toward each other is used as evidence of their conflict with God.^[1]
4. Is not the source of pleasures – The numerous inner experiences that quarrels and conflicts can originate is based on what gratifies our natural emotional and physical desires.

5. Wage war in our members – These emotional and physical desires are so intense it is very similar to a military campaign where soldiers are actively engaged in relentlessly besieging a city.

a) Maybe one of the things that James is dealing with here is that the believers were playing church; they complained about being in trials, they were double-minded, getting caught up in temptation, and angered (Zealots fighting Rome), hearing the word, but not living it, and responding to people based on their financial status. They demonstrated intellectual and static faith, but not dynamic faith, because they were more religious than true to God's Word.

6. How can we recognize the source by the war it wages?:

a) You lust – We habitually fix our strong inward impulses on things that the Lord has forbidden.

b) And do not have – No matter how intense the desires may continuously carve for things God has forbidden, we can never get enough (Ecc. – vanity). Godliness leads to contentment (Philippians 4:10-12)

c) Murder - By committing murder James is making reference to believers continuously hating someone, secretly wishing they would die because they keep being blessed while not getting from God what they desire and are praying for. Later James would say their motives are wrong.

d) Envious - To be envious, James is describing a believer who continuously and eagerly displays jealousy to another person. This person literally and continuously burns with jealousy towards another. They go from secretly hoping the person would die to openly being irritable to the person.

e) Obtain – No matter how much this person burns with jealousy towards another, even after much effort they are not able to acquire what the other person has attained.

f) So you fight – This attitude that is described in this verse causes a person, when they are not able to acquire what they lust for, they become so irritable they

continuously, purposefully, and intensely struggle whether physically or non-physically with those around them.

7. How does God's response teach us we are in the flesh?:

- a) You ask – To ask is to continuously come before the Lord recognizing that He is superior over us and we are dependent on Him for what we need.
- b) You ask – Even though we demonstrate by praying, we recognize His power and our dependence and we cannot find what we are asking for to be supported by His Word.
- c) You ask – What we are asking for is with the attitude above so He does not answer (1 John 3:21-22).
- d) You do not receive – We may go before the Lord, in respect of who He is, but continuously not get a favorable response from Him.

- His ears are open to the cries of the righteous (Ps. 34:15). He is nigh unto all that call upon Him in truth (Ps. cxlv. 18). He listens to the penitent (Lk. 18:14). He hears all who ask anything that is according to His will (1 Jn. 5:14).

- a) Wrong motives – Our pleasures, lust and jealousy can cause us to ask with evil desires that wage war in our members (Romans 6:12-14).
- b) Spend it on our pleasures – Our request is focused on exerting a lot of energy in satisfying our natural sinful desires. We are going before God to get Him to satisfy what we are exerting a lot of effort to obtain on our own.

B. No Loyalty to the World (v. 4):

1. Adulteresses – These believers who cultivate a friendship with the world while forsaking their need to spiritually develop a relationship with the Lord are like a husband or wife who seek someone outside of their marriage while being married. This believer is likewise being unfaithful in their relationship with the Lord because they are constantly seeking to satisfy their own pleasures with the ways of the world while claiming to desire the Lord.

a) In the Old Testament, Israel was often called an adulteress for claiming to serve God while pursuing idols (e.g., Hos. 1-3). Those who claimed to be God's friends (Jas. 2:23) but were really moral clients for the world (friendship often applied to patron-client relationships)-that is, they shared the world's values (3:13-18)-- they were really unfaithful to God. ^[2]

2. Do you not know – James asks a rhetorical question to a church he once pastored. From their past experiences to the present, they should have a complete divine knowledge based on everything they had seen, to be an adulteress does not please the Lord. They know of Israel worshiping false gods and how God responded. They know of the story of Hosea and Gomer described in their relationship with the Lord. So how do they not know?

a) 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon' (Mt. 6:24); while they implied corollary that love of God will involve for the Christian, the world's hatred echoes the warning of Jesus to His followers "'because ye are not of the world....therefore the world hateth you"' (Jn. 15:19).

3. Friendship with the world is hostility – To adopt an interest in the things of a system that is directly opposed to the principles of God, creates war with the Lord.

a) Double-minded again alludes to the general ancient contempt for hypocrisy: one must act from either God's peaceful wisdom or the devil's hateful wisdom (3:13-18; 4:4).

4. Friendship with the world is hostility – To seek to establish a common interest in the fallen, evil, rebellious nature of a system that is led by satan (1 John 5:16), is to answer the question “what fellowship can light have with darkness?” (1 Cor. 6:14-18).

a) They either forgot to go to God to meet their needs (4:2) or they tried to use God as a celestial shopping center for worldly goods (4:3). They either forgot the source or tried to manipulate the source. Either way, they were manifesting the ambivalent view of God that James had already addressed (1:5–18). Worldliness is an attitude that places self and the things of this world at the center of the believers’ aspirations and activities. This attitude caused disputes among the saints.^[3]

5. Whoever wishes to be a friend with the world – Any believer who desires to have a fond interest in what the world, that is rebellious to the principles of God (also led by satan), has becomes a hostile adversary against God (Romans 8:5-8) just like satan did (just like in the case of Israel – mostly Jews being written to).

C. Live from the Inside Out (v. 5):

1. Or do you think – Because of the continuous possibility that we may be of the world we may have an opinion that does not line up with what the scriptures state.

2. The scriptures speak – The prophetic divine knowledge of God is not silent it communicates a message that directly addresses all these issues (2 Peter 1:3-4).

3. He jealously desires the Spirit - When the Lord sees us so engaged in the world committing adultery against Him 'the spirit that he placed in us is filled with jealous desire'. The Spirit's displeasure is that we would walk by faith and not by sight.

a) *He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us.* God is a jealous God (cf. Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 32:16; Zech 8:2; I Cor 10:22), and hence he will not tolerate divided allegiance. No specific OT passage contains the words of this verse, but many passages express a similar sentiment.^[4]

4. Dwell in us – We do not lose the work of the Holy Spirit because His presence in us is permanent (John 14:16-17). Our bodies are His place of residence (1 Cor. 3:16-17) so that we can grow spiritually to be a friend of God. This function lays dormant because of our passion to line up with what the world teaches.

5. Dwell in us – While we are carving to follow the way the world thinks the Spirit of God is envious because His function is to guide us into truth (John 16:13), but not against our will.

6. Dwell in us – The Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8:26) so He is envious of us because our prayers cannot be heard since we pray with wrong motives. He affectionately longs for this relationship while we pray uselessly.

7. Dwell in us – The entire purpose of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us for us to be Christ's friend (John 15:13). His purpose for us must be our resolve.

^[1] Richardson, K. A. (1997). [James](#) (Vol. 36, p. 173). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^[2] Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Jas 4:3). InterVarsity Press.

^[3] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 683). Tyndale House Publishers.

^[4] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament](#) (Jas 4:5). Moody Press.