James 4:1 Study Guide

11 Things We Can Learn from James 4

James [4:1] (AMP) What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members?

1. Strife is caused by our lustful desires.
   - God gives us healthy desires (See Psalm 37:4)
   - Lust means we cannot be happy without the thing we desire.

James [4:2] You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask. [I John 3:15.]

2. We have not because we ask not.

James [4:3] [Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures.

3. We don’t receive because of impure, selfish motives

James [4:4,5] You are like unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world’s friend is being God’s enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.5 Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love? [Jer. 3:14; Hos. 2:19ff.]

4. Always put God first.

James [4:6] But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it). [Prov. 3:34.]

5. Grace is the power to change!

James [4:7] So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.
6. Submit to God and the devil has to flee.

James [4:8-10] 8 Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery]. 9 [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins]. 10 Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant].

7. Repent over disloyalty

James [4:11,12] 11 [My] brethren, do not speak evil about or accuse one another. He that maligns a brother or judges his brother is maligning and criticizing the Law and judging the Law. But if you judge the Law, you are not a practicer of the Law but a censor and judge [of it]. 12 One only is the Lawgiver and Judge Who is able to save and to destroy [the One Who has the absolute power of life and death]. [But you] who are you that [you presume to] pass judgment on your neighbor?

8. Don’t speak evil of one another or judge others.

James [4:13,14] 13 Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a city and spend a year there and carry on our business and make money. 14 Yet you do not know [the least thing] about what may happen tomorrow. What is the nature of your life? You are [really] but a wisp of vapor (a puff of smoke, a mist) that is visible for a little while and then disappears [into thin air].

9. Don’t be presumptuous.

James [4:15,16] 15 You ought instead to say, If the Lord is willing, we shall live and we shall do this or that [thing]. 16 But as it is, you boast [falsely] in your presumption and your self-conceit. All such boasting is wrong.

10. Acknowledge God in all of our ways.

James [4:17] So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin.

11. Always do what you know is right to do.
Practical Applications

• Send somebody a card or note of congratulations for something good that has happened to them.

• Make a list of things you want to ask God to provide. Check your motives. Why do you want these things? How will getting them enable you to better serve others?

• Do an audit of your time. Is God getting the first and the best from your life?

• Decide on one area of your life you would like to change. Make it a priority to pray for the grace you need to make this change a reality.

• Have you been critical lately? Are you judging people, not behaviors? If necessary, repent of that judgmental attitude. If you judged someone publicly, go to them and apologize for that attitude.

• Is there something within your plans and goals that you haven’t “cleared” with God first? Invite Him to direct every step.