

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-22-15 AM NOTES
"WAR AND PEACE"
JAMES 4:1-10
12 in Series, "James: Practical Wisdom"

The Christian life is _____

I. The Source of War—Friendship With the World (vv. 1-6)

James 1:27 (NKJV) "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

John 3:16 (NKJV) "For God so loved the **world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Acts 17:24a (NKJV) "God, who made the **world** and everything in it..."

"The world we're not to love is *the organized system of human civilization that is actively hostile to God and alienated from God*. The world God forbids us to love is the fallen world. Humanity at enmity with God. A world of arrogant, self sufficient people seeking to exist apart from God and living in opposition to God. It is a world richly deserving of the righteous wrath of a holy God. Dead set against the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the world we're forbidden to love" — C. J. Mahaney

"The world is human nature sacrificing the spiritual to the material, the future to the present, the unseen and the eternal to that which touches the senses and perishes with time. The world is a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which have been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, molding it, degrading it." —Richard Wolff

"[James] means human life and society with God left out—the Devil's lair for sinners and his lure for saints." —John Phillips

The world is an organized system of ideas and values that is energized by Satan and leaves out God and His Word.

A. Conflict With Others (v. 1a)

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NASB) "in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

B. Conflict With Self (vv. 1b-3)

1 John 3:15a (NKJV) "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer..."

C. Conflict With God (vv. 4-6)

Isaiah 54:5a (NKJV) “For your Maker *is* your husband, the Lord of hosts *is* His name...”

Luke 16:13a (NKJV) “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.”

Romans 12:2a (NKJV) “And do not be conformed to this world...”

II. The Source of Peace—Fellowship With God (vv. 7-10)

A. Submission (v. 7a)

B. Opposition (v. 7b)

C. Proposition (v. 8a)

D. Admonition (vv. 8b-10)

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“WAR AND PEACE”

JAMES 4:1-10

12 in Series, “James: Practical Wisdom”

Fill in the blank. “The Christian Life is _____.” There are lots of words that we could put in that blank that would be true. We could say, “The Christian life is wonderful, joyous, or glorious. All of those would be true to some extent, but a non-Christian hearing those might get the wrong idea that the Christian life is easy. That certainly is not true. James, thus far, has been sharing the challenges of being a born again follower (disciple) of Christ. He tells us in chapter 1 that the Christian life is full of trials and temptations. In chapter 2 we see that the Christian life is evidenced by good works. That means we have to get down into the messy world of needy, sinful people, and people that the world pretty much ignores.

Though we are not saved by good works, true salvation is evidenced by unselfish, others focused works. In chapter 3 James gives examples of two of the things that we have to constantly battle with in this difficult Christian life. We constantly battle against the misuse of the tongue (speech) and following worldly wisdom instead of being guided by godly wisdom. As we think about all those words that I suggested earlier to fill in the blank, “The Christian life is _____”, all have some application and truth, but in light of what we have learned from the book of James (and indeed all the New Testament) I believe that the most accurate word is “war”. The Christian life is war! To know God in Christ is truly wonderful; there is a joy in the Lord that is ours as we walk through the battles; knowing Him truly is glorious; seeing His power and how He providentially works through circumstances that He has ordained is indeed exciting. Growing in our knowledge of Him realizing more and more what happened in us when He saved us is truly fulfilling. However, I still say that on this side of Heaven, the Christian life is war. In today’s text, we are going to see who we are at war with and then we will see how we can experience peace even in the middle of warfare.

I. The Source of War – Friendship with the World (V1-6)

James has already warned us about our relationship with the world. **James 1:27 (NKJV)** “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” That word “world” can be confusing because it is used in several ways and the context dictates its meaning. The word “world” is sometimes used to refer to the world of people. That is its meaning in **John 3:16 (NKJV)** “For God so loved the **world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” That obviously refers to people. Sometimes the word “world” refers to the planet, the earth. **Acts 17:24 (NKJV)** “God, who made the **world** and everything in it...” Most often, however, the New Testament uses the word “world” to refer to something that we war against, as something that spots or stains us, as something that we are not to love, be friends with, or be conformed to. That is the “world” that James is referring to. Allow me to give you several definitions or descriptions of this world that James says we are not to be friends with. C. J. Mahaney in his book, “Worldliness, Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World” said: “The world we’re not to love is *the organized system of human civilization that is actively hostile to God and alienated from God*. The world God forbids us to love is the fallen world. Humanity at enmity with God. A world of arrogant, self sufficient people seeking to exist apart from God and living in opposition to God. It is a world richly deserving of the righteous wrath of a holy God. Dead set against the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the world we’re forbidden to love” [Page 26]. Richard Wolff defined the world like this: “The world is human nature sacrificing the spiritual to the material, the future to the present, the unseen and the eternal to that which touches the senses and perishes with time. The world is a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which have been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, molding it, degrading it” [Richard Wolff, Quoted in David Jeremiah, “Turning Toward Integrity”, Page 129]. Here is a shorter definition from John Phillips: “[James] means human life and society with God left out – the Devil’s lair for sinners and his lure for saints” [John Phillips, “Exploring the Epistle of James”, Page 134]. Let’s put all this together and simplify it some and come up with a working definition of what James is talking about when he uses the word “world”. The world is an organized system of ideas and values that is energized by Satan and leaves out God and His Word.

Within the umbrella of this world system, there are several areas of conflict that we must be aware of and that we must triumph over in Christ.

A. Conflict with Others (V1a)

James is primarily talking about wars (literally “quarrels”) and fights in the church. That is logically deduced from “fights among you”. The “you” (plural) are the recipients of the letter who are the early Christians that had been scattered by the persecution. The devil (who is called “the god of this world” in 2 Corinthians 4:4) knows that if he can get us fighting one another, we forget where and who the true enemy is. One of the by-products of friendship with the world is wars and fights among us. Oh how this

grieves the Spirit of God! It would be interesting to know how many of the 155 churches of our Knox County Baptist Association were started as the result of a church fight that resulted in a split. I fear that the number would shock and shame us. I heard of one church split in the First Baptist Church of a certain city. The new church that began from that split was named “The Second First Baptist Church”. Is it any wonder that so many lost people have no interest in church? They say, “I have conflict in my home, conflict at work, conflict with my extended family; why would I want to get involved in a church and just have more conflict?” While some things in the church must be lovingly confronted – sin that is bringing reproach on Christ and false teaching – most church fusses aren’t over these. Most splits are over music style, traditions, service times, leadership styles of the Pastor, ministries that have died being disbanded, and changes in the building! I would rather go swimming in a nuclear waste dump than to cause a fight over non-sin and non-doctrine issues.

B. Conflict with Self (1b-3)

Friendship with the world not only creates conflict with other people, it creates internal conflict with the worldly person. The world breeds discontent, an argumentative spirit, self-centeredness, and longings that it can’t fill. The world holds out promises to entice us, but the world never delivers. When it comes to the material things that the world says will fulfill you, all they do is make you want more. The popularity the world offers, even when achieved, is empty. It is interesting to watch Hollywood types willing to do anything for fame and popularity and then when they get it, they complain about their lack of privacy! The world creates longings and desires that it can’t satisfy.

Verse 1b tells us that the wars and fights come from the unfulfilled desires for pleasure in our members. The word “desires” is translated “cravings” in the HCSB. The word translated “pleasures” in verse 1 is the word we get “hedonism” from. Hedonism is the overwhelming desire for pleasure. God designed us to find that pleasure in Him, but the world redirects this desire for pleasure to focus on stuff, fame, and human relationships. That craving for pleasure from the world’s offerings causes a life to be in turmoil and therefore a life characterized by wars and fights.

In verse 2 James says we are looking to the world for what God designed that we get through God centered prayer. The word translated “lust” is much broader than illicit sexual desire. It includes that, but it includes so much more! “Lust” refers to any consuming desire. Some desires are so strong that people are willing to even murder for them! Some people become so despondent over not having their lust fulfilled that they commit self murder – suicide. Murder is more than the literal taking of a life **1 John 3:15a (NKJV)** “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer...” The word “covet” is an even stronger word than “lust”. From the Greek word translated “covet”, we get “zealot”. The result of desires this strong not being satisfied is fighting and war. That includes fighting and war in a marriage, in a child – parent relationship, in a church, in the workplace, among nations, but primarily conflict with self.

James says that the deepest longings of our soul cannot be filled by looking to the world and its empty lying promises. Only God can change our desires and then fulfill them. The means is prayer. Some would no doubt answer quickly, “Oh I’ve prayed and prayed and my desires have not been fulfilled.” James says, “Here is the reason that you ask and do not receive – **James 4:3 (NKJV)** “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.” So many people who are conformed to the world see prayer as the way we get our lust and coveting desires fulfilled. God is not our servant who jumps into action when we ring the prayer bell. He is the sovereign Lord of the universe! When you go to God to use Him to get what you want, you are asking “amiss”. That word is translated “wrongly” (ESV) and “with wrong motives” (NASB). What is the wrong motive? It is to fulfill our selfish pleasure that has been implanted in us by the world. In reality, God would be cruel and unloving if He assisted us in getting us what would destroy us! My 15 month old grandson has strong desires to go places and do things that potentially could harm or even take his life. Because we love him, we don’t let him do those things no matter how hard he cries. God is the perfect Father. We come to God asking him to give us what he determines we need.

This friendship with the world results in conflict with others and conflict with self.

C. Conflict with God (V4-6)

The older manuscripts of the New Testament say “adulteresses” and leave out adulterers. When James calls those who are friends with the world adulteresses, he is not leaving out the men. James’ Jewish readers would have picked up immediately on his analogy here. In the Old Testament, God’s chosen people, the Jews, were compared to God’s wife. **Isaiah 54:5a (NKJV)** “For your Maker *is* your husband, the Lord of hosts *is* His name.” There are many other Old Testament illustrations of Israel having God as her husband and as Israel drifted away from God, she was compared to an unfaithful wife. In the New Testament, Christ is the Bridegroom and the church is the bride of Christ (Romans 7:4). God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament uses marriage to depict His relationship with His people, and He says that our friendship with the world is spiritual adultery against God. The point is that friendship with the world is as serious if not more serious than adultery in the physical realm. It is horrible to dishonor your husband or your wife with adultery, but how much worse is it to dishonor your Lord with your friendship with the world. The word “friendship” used here means to have common interests and affection for another. In other words, spiritual adultery is adopting the world’s values, ideas, and priorities.

Friendship with the world places us at enmity with God (V4b). “Enmity” means to become an adversary or foe. A true believer cannot be a friend with the world as a pattern of life. However a believer can drift into worldliness. This ought to cause us to have regular times of examination in our lives to eliminate any root of worldliness. We must constantly be evaluating our views and beliefs about every subject to insure that they are in line with Scripture and not influenced by the world. We must ruthlessly put to death all affections we have for the world since they rob us of our affection for Christ. Listen carefully, neutrality toward God is impossible. Either you are a friend of God or you are at enmity with God. **Luke 16:13a (NKJV)** “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” This is why one of our most focused on commands in the Bible ought to be **Romans 12:2a (NKJV)** “And do not be conformed to this world...”

In verses 5-6 James gives us several commands that when obeyed will insure that we do not drift into friendship with the world. In verse 5, James is not quoting a specific passage but is giving a statement of a general truth in the Old Testament [Read verse 5]. The general truth is that God is a jealous God and demands our undivided devotion. He sent His Spirit to indwell us so that He could fill us and enable us to be totally devoted to our God in our thoughts and actions. The language used here referring to the Holy Spirit is very revealing. It says that the Spirit “yearns jealously”. That word “yearns” means to earnestly desire. The same Greek word is translated “desire” in 1 Peter 2:2 referring to the desire of a new born baby for milk. Think of that: The Holy Spirit yearns, earnestly desires, and longs to fill our life to empower us and guide us and illumine the Word of God to us. He does this “jealously”, accepting no rivals. The cure for friendship with the world is to allow the Holy Spirit who dwells within us to fill us, control us, empower us, and permeate us so that we do not walk according to the flesh which always results in friendship with the world.

In verse 6, friendship with the world is presented as the epitome of pride. The Greek word for “proud” literally means “to appear over”. Pride is leaving God out and thus we appear over God. Pride is when we believe we are sufficient. That is a description of worldliness. How does God respond to the prideful? He opposes them. That Greek word means to stand in full battle array against someone. Pride causes almighty God to line up in battle array against you. What’s the solution? We humble ourselves. What does that mean? Humility is the opposite of pride. Humility is when we admit our need for Him. Humility is living in constant dependence on Him. When we humble ourselves, how does the Lord respond? He gives us grace and lifts us up. Grace is God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.

We see that the source of war is friendship with the world.

II. The Source of Peace – Fellowship with God (V7-10)

Verses 7-10 describe what it looks like to turn away from friendship with the World and walk in fellowship with God.

A. Submission (V7a)

The word “submit” is a military word that means to line up under those in authority over you. To submit to God means that I recognize that He is in authority over me and I no longer rebel but get under that authority in total surrender to God and His authority over my life. In other words, we must relinquish control of our life completely to God. Have you ever had a car that the front tires didn’t wear evenly? Maybe the inside was always wearing out. You replace the tires, have them balanced and aired up properly, but has that solved your problem? No, it’s just a matter of time until they are worn out again. What’s the problem? The alignment is off. Until you get the front end aligned, you will continue to have tire problems. Even so, if you have not submitted to God, aligned rightly with Him, nothing else you do will work. We are to line up under God’s authority but also under all of God’s delegated authority (home, church, government, and workplace). How is your alignment? Are you lined up under God’s authority, living in obedience to His word? Are you lined up under His delegated authority (Husband, parents, government, spiritual leaders, and employer)?

B. Opposition (V7b)

If you try to resist the devil without first submitting to God you will miserably fail. It will be you in your own strength and without God’s power you’re no match for him. Once we submit to God, we resist. That word means to stand against; to draw a line in the sand and say, “You will not take any more ground.” We have authority only as long as we are under God’s authority. I am convinced that we make spiritual warfare too complicated. It’s not in incantations and formulas; we submit to God, and stand in opposition to the devil in God’s authority and power and he flees. That’s pretty simple. The reason that the devil gives people such fits is usually because they have never submitted to God and resolutely resisted the devil.

C. Proposition (V8a)

When we submit and stand against the enemy, and then draw near to God, He says He will draw near to us. Why do we draw near first? Because we are the ones who moved away! How do we draw near in real practical terms? The word translated “draw near” is the word used to describe in the Old Testament when the priests approached God with their sacrifices. You draw near to Him in worship. As you do, He reciprocates and draws near to you. This intimacy with God cannot be achieved apart from worship. Worship does not happen until we submit to God and resist the devil.

D. Admonition (V8b-10)

This drawing near to God results in seeing ourselves in His light and we see sin and self sufficiency that we never saw before. As we repent, we are able to draw even closer to God and worship Him at a deeper level. It means that we just keep drawing nearer, repent, draw nearer, repent some more, Etc. You can’t truly worship until you’ve obeyed this admonishment. The cleansing of the hands pictures sinful acts and deeds. The purifying of the heart symbolizes inner sins such as motives, thoughts and attitudes. To purify means to take away what dilutes or adulterates. Double-mindedness is an adulteration of our walk and fellowship with Him. We are continually growing in our fellowship with God. It is a dynamic growing relationship, not some level you reach and thus have arrived.

Verse 9 is not speaking about a lifestyle without laughter and joy and happiness. It is talking about our attitude toward our dirty hands and unpurified hearts. As we draw closer to God, the light of His glory reveals sin that we may not even have been aware of. Instead of treating sin with flippancy, we lament and mourn. Repentance is more than heartfelt sorrow, but it does include that.

Those who have friendship with the world and have not submitted to God are in desperate need of humility. They are being resisted by God. The only reasonable response is to humble ourselves. As we saw in verse 6, when we humble ourselves, we experience God’s enabling grace.

CONCLUSION

Here is the bottom line. Are you walking in friendship with the world or in fellowship with God? If you are walking in fellowship with God, is it a growing and deepening relationship of worship, repentance, deeper worship, and deeper repentance until we see Jesus and are made like Him?