

The Book of James

James 4:1-5

I'm pleased that once again you've decided to join me for "It's a Good Life." Let me ask that you have your Bible open as we study in the book of James. We're continuing our study today in that book, and we're going to start with chapter 4.

I would also encourage you to write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. Write to me today and let me know that you're listening, and if you have a biblical question or any question about the Lewis Woodard Ministries, don't hesitate to write.

Or you can go to our Website, www.LRWM.org. On the Website you'll be able to download this program and other programs of "It's a Good Life." There are biblical studies on there, series, and you can also download this series as we've taught through the book of James.

In James chapter 4, James encourages those to whom he is addressing to consider what causes wars and fights among themselves. Remember, he's speaking to the church here, and he points out the problem is their own desires for pleasure. Someone may say, "You mean there's problems in churches?" Well, if you've been around any length of time and been serving the Lord and you've been a member of a local church, you know there are problems that arise. And we know that God is not the author of confusion, and He's not the one who causes these problems. It seems to be just a human characteristic that we want to have pleasure instead of serving God. Now, there's nothing wrong with having pleasure, but it depends on how that pleasure comes about and what that pleasure is.

To emphasize his point, James describes their lusts and coveting as even murder. Things were going on there that shouldn't be going on. For the things that they do not have they are lusting and they cannot obtain. And their actions and thoughts cause their prayers to be fruitless because they have selfish motives in mind. As an Old Testament prophet would do, James charges them with spiritual adultery for trying to befriend the world. When we become a friend of the world and take on worldly ways as a Christian, hostility between us and God is the result.

Now, James says to the people he is writing to, if they are willing to humble themselves, God is willing to show more grace in verses 1-6. He counsels them to draw near to God in humble submission, with clean hands, purity of heart, and true contrition. James also warns against speaking evil of brethren and judging one another, so as not to become judges and fail to observe the law of God, His Word.

This chapter 4 of James ends with a warning not to count on tomorrow, because people do not know what tomorrow holds. Life is short; therefore, plans need to be made according to the Lord's will. It's arrogant and sinful when we do not follow God's will.

Now the first thing I'd like for us to look at today is found in James 4:1-3, denying covetous desires. Verse 1 says, *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

We see here pleasure seekers, those who would rather have the things that actually they can't have over the things that God provides for

them. This brings about divisions, and these divisions come from personal bodily lusts.

And we might look at this word “lust” and it would be described as inordinate, in other words, unrestrained and covetous desires. This lust can be in the form of immoral desires for pleasure and can also be a desire to achieve something for wrong motives. As we look at this word “lust,” we need to understand that it does not only mean something immoral, but it can mean any type of desire that becomes so strong it becomes a lustful desire that we want more than anything else. And that could be something such as a car or something that we would look at as it couldn't hurt us but we want it so bad that it takes over our minds and our desires. And we suddenly find ourselves placing that above what God wants for us.

James 4:2-3 talks about worthless prayer. Verse 2 says, *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 seems to be saying here you do not pray or get what you want because of your lustful actions. When we lust for something, it produces an action, a lustful reaction, a lustful action, and therefore, when we go to the Lord in prayer, the things we should be praying for, we're not praying for those things; we're praying for what we really don't need. It's something that would fulfill our lustful desires.

Verse 3 of James 4 says, Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. He's saying, when you do pray, your prayers are not answered because of wrong motives. You're asking for the wrong reasons. He's teaching us here and he's teaching the people he's writing this epistle to. He's writing in this letter that people pray for the wrong reasons, and that shouldn't be.

Now we look at verses 4-5. Deny friendship with the world, James says here. In James 4:4,

we might compare this with Mark 8:38 where it says, *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

James talks about this and he calls it spiritual adultery in other words. And I believe that's what he's saying in verse 4 of James 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.*

That doesn't mean that we are to separate ourselves from people. It doesn't mean that we are to be hermits and just stay to ourselves or go to some mountaintop somewhere and live. What it's talking about here is that we are not to take on the attributes of the sinful world. We are not to be as the sinful people of this world.

Now, once again, we're still in this body and things are going to happen. We're still going to have problems as saved people. We're still in this fleshly body. But James is speaking here that we are to come out from among the world. We're not to be the same. When we start having a friendship with the things of this world that are wrong, then we become an enemy of God even as a saved person, and that's not right. You are an enemy of God if you choose the corruptions of the world, James is saying here. If you choose those things over God, and when the world gets into the church, the church becomes a tainted sepulcher. It's spiritual vitality is extinct.

Matthew 23:27 says, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

The Bible is very plain. The Bible says it makes no difference how beautiful the buildings are the people gather in. It makes no difference how beautiful those buildings are. It's what's inside those buildings. It's what's inside the person that counts. It's what that person is, and it's what that church represents. That church, the local, Bible-believing church, is to represent God and, as such, we are not to take on the characteristics and attributes of this world.

First John 2:15-16 says this: *¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. In other words, he's not exhibiting the love of God. ¹⁵For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

In John 15:18-21 it says, *¹⁸If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. ²¹But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.*

I believe as we look into the Word of God there is nothing there that is confusing when we read verses like this. We are in the world but we are not of the world as Christians. We are not to take on the characteristics of the world. And in our churches, we are not to take on the characteristics of the world simply to draw the crowd. We're not to take on the characteristics of the world simply to look good, simply to impress people, and that's what James is

saying, I believe, as we're studying through this Word.

And once again, in James 4:4, it says, *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.*

Don't be like the world. Don't be taking on the attributes. Don't emulate the things of this world.

Well, in verse 5 it says, *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* I believe this is talking about God's jealousy. I believe this verse, James 4:5, is not referring to any one particular verse of Scripture but is referencing several verses in the Old Testament. James 4:4 speaks of those who are God's enemies. It is one thing for the world to be at enmity with God, but when God's people choose things of the world over God, then God is seen as a jealous God and His people are seen as His enemies.

You can go back to Deuteronomy 32:21 that says, *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.*

We're going to pick up here the next time in James 4:6. It's been good being with you today, and let me remind you that you can write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731, or go to our Website, www.LRWM.org.

Until the next time when you hear me say, "It is a good life," may the Lord bless you richly in my prayer.