

Living God's Way in Today's World
Week 7 – Who are you Friends With, God or the World
Scripture: James 4:1-12

Message Mate

- Wherever there are people, there will be conflict, whether healthy or unhealthy. As a person of influence, you can affect the level of peace around you, so consider, “how you can grow peace around you” in your family, workplace, community and church. Restoring relationships often involves a process of acknowledge, confess, repent and restore.
- Fights and quarrels come from your inner desires, motives and emotions that are not yet surrendered to God. It is important to acknowledge that the cause of conflict is our own selfish desires rather than God's will (v 1-3).
- We need to confess that we have not been faithful to God. Some followers of Jesus are flirting with, or even going out with the world, rather than being faithful to God. James calls these people adulterers, based on Old Testament prophets who said that unfaithful Israel was committing adultery. God is a jealous lover of you and He wants you and Him to have a great relationship, without anything being in the way. We have a choice to make: either continue in our conflict, too proud to acknowledge our problem and confess it; or accept God's grace. We should humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our selfishness, worldly desires and unhealthy emotions, and receive God's grace as we confess our sins (v4-6).
- We are called to repent. Verses 7-10 reveal ten essentials that will guide us towards the peace we long for in our families and community.
Submitting ourselves to God so that He can restore us. (v7)
Resisting the devil so that we only have one love, for God (v7)
Coming near to God who will come near to us (v8)
Inviting the Holy Spirit to purify our hearts to change our words and actions (v8)
Grieving for our sins and their impact on our relationship with God (v9)
Humbling ourselves before God (v10)
He will lift you up in restoration (v10)
- While fights and quarrels come from selfish worldly desires and unhealthy emotions, peace is brought from being in a faithful and righteous relationship with God, where righteousness is being in right relationship with God and following His will which is evidenced by godly character and conduct.
- As you grow in righteousness, you can have peace in the midst of conflict, respond with healthy conflict principles from a place of peace, be an example to those yearning from peace and share Jesus as the source of peace.

Some Questions to Consider

1. Healthy conflict involves frank and open discussion on differing points of view, allows people to voice their opinions without fear of being judged or attacked, is collaborative, constructive and creative, and can lead to problems being solved peacefully. Discuss where you have experienced healthy conflict and its outcomes, compared to examples of unhealthy conflict.
2. Consider the four steps of restoration: acknowledge, confess, repent and restore. Did you find this helpful? Why?
3. Read James 4:1,2. Discuss what are the primary causes of fights and quarrels. What does it mean to acknowledge any inner desires, motives and emotions, and surrender them to God?
4. Read James 4:2,3 and discuss why we may not receive what we need. Compare this to James 1:6.
5. Discuss James 4:4,5 in regard to having a faithful relationship with God, as compared to being unfaithful by flirting with or going out with the world. How do you feel about God being jealous for you? In what areas of your life do you need to confess your unfaithfulness to God?
6. Read the ten essentials for repentance. Choose one in your life that you need to particularly consider and consider how to stop sinful habits that are damaging your relationship with God or others. (We will pray about this at the end.)

Pray –

¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

(James 3:18 NIV)

Pray that God would help you grow as a peacemaker.

Ask God to help you as a person of influence to bring peace into your circle of influence in your family, workplace, church or community.

As you considered the ten essentials, in which area of your life do you need to stop sinful habits. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, purify your heart and help you change your words and actions so that you grow as a peacemaker.