

## James: Contrite Submission - What a Christian Values

### James 4

We've been doing a deep dive into James, chapter by chapter, reviewing the New Testament Document of wisdom from one of Joseph and Mary's other sons. In James 1, we looked at what a Christian has: Faith. Through Faith we have Joy, Wisdom, Endurance, and New Life. In James 2, we looked at what a Christian does: Loves, Serves, Obeys the Author of Love, and deals in both Justice and Mercy. In James 3, we looked at what a Christian says: Careful words meant to build up as every idle word spoken will be revealed eventually. Not words that tear down, but also not condoning words that enable someone to continue living in darkness.

This week we'll be looking at James 4. What a Christian Values.

#### Introduction:

In James 4, there is a sermon in every sentence. It elaborates on two opposing affiliations that you can have and that you face in every choice of every day.

James 4 does not address the lost, as it assumes their affiliation. Without Jesus, they have only one affiliation to choose from. It instead addresses believers. As believers choosing the world in view of the lost may prevent said lost from knowing Jesus.

James 4 is like psychological surgery. Sentence by sentence, it breaks apart your assumptions about yourself and replaces them with the truth and a plan of action. As such, I thought that the best format was to go line by line. As we go through this, I'm going to show you how James uses couplings. Reminiscent of the Hebrew Couplet Verse.

#### Breakdown:

Read **James 4:1**. This verse is straight to the point. "Why are we fighting?" Something to keep in mind are the tiers of Believers Quarrels.

- Tier 1: *Faith changing*. Difference in who you believe Jesus is and who you are to God.
- Tier 2: *Approach changing*. Same faith, but can change how you go about it. You're not at odds with anyone. You don't agree and still get along...Agree to disagree.
- Tier 3: These are ideas on things that you can't really change or affect. Example: What you believe about the end times or aliens. Superficial things that shouldn't really shouldn't change how your faith operates because you can't affect them.
- Tier 4: Superficial. Bias. "I don't like them". Complete lack of justification.

So this is a bold accusation. It implies greed and lust. Not something we associate with early-church. However, keep in mind there was some animosity in the early church over different social standings, both inside individual churches and separate churches. The Laodicean church was rather rich. Jerusalem and Macedonian churches were poor churches. Macedonian churches famously gave despite being poor.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul rebukes richer believers for celebrating themselves in the church. So looking at others who have more and envying them was a real problem in the early church BECAUSE no other movement in history had united such a broad and diverse group of people before. Such is the nature of redemption.

This type of thing even happened between the apostles. Read John 21:22. Blatantly, this envy is understandable. Peter had been told he would die for the faith but John had not been told this. Peter wondered, “Why doesn’t he have to die?” But this is the level of trust we’re called to. Because there’s more at stake than us.

Read **James 4:2**. At the beginning of this verse, many internally let themselves off the hook because they haven’t hurt anyone over envy. However, at the end of the verse, it hits home to all of us. It’s easy to see how those who have more can be wrong in not sharing, but for a people that doesn’t trust in wealth, but rather trust in God, it shouldn’t matter.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. Grace is not excessive and comfortable. It’s sufficient. It’s enough. It’s wrong not to share, but it’s also wrong to resent those who have more, because your sustenance and reward is not found in what *they* have.

Read **James 4:3**. What does a wrong motive look like, apart from the obvious “I want a sportscar bull.”? Sometimes we deceive ourselves about our motives. We dictate what God intends for us to do for Him. We dictate our importance. We want to do a certain thing in the church.

Here’s a little trick for your motives. If it’s a strange/uncomfortable ask that glorifies God/Jesus, then it’s probably something to ask for. If it glorifies you, makes you look cool, or makes people see how awesome or spiritual or charismatic you are, THAT’S ASKING FOR YOU.

Read **James 4:4**. The gauntlet is down. The heart of the matter. Valuing having things is something people do when they’re competing with other people. Trying to look glorified is something people do when they feel that they want to win. If you are competing with other people in the game of life or if you believe that someone has to win to be over others, it is because you believe that there is a scarcity of FULFILLMENT. You don’t trust that God will be plenty so you look to take wealth and glory for yourself.

Choosing the world is choosing to live it up with the temporary. Choosing God is choosing to invest in what lasts: WHO you are and HOW you treat others. God wants to make that investment in your impeccable character permanent.

So you're left with a choice of affiliation. The world or God. Summary sentence: *Live by my rules to acquire the temporary because I can't trust my happiness to my Father, or trust my Father to provide enough for me, and invest in changing my character to the good that He has already perfected.*

Read **James 4:5**. It is well established in Exodus 20:5, God is a jealous God in the context of the fact that He created you for a reason. He wants real people in a real family and real people get choices.

Read **James 4:6**. This is directly from Proverbs 3:34. *“Though He scoffs at the scoffers, Yet He gives grace to the needy.”* This is World vs God. Trust vs Take.

Read **James 4:7**. Why bring up Satan? Because it’s in Satan's best interest to distract you, convince you to go it alone, and take for yourself because you’re not a threat on your own. It’s in Satan's best interest to get you to choose the world.

Read **James 4:8**. God wants you close; that’s His will. But if you want to rule yourself, you must be far from Him...that’s seeking your own will. The farther you are, the more vulnerable you are. The more distance you have from the source of all good. This is why it’s good to say, not my will but Your will.

Double minded. This occurs uniquely with believers as they now face this affiliation choice and you’ll never stop this battle in this life.

Read **James 4:9**. Does God always want you to be miserable? No. These actions listed are prayerful ones like sackcloth and ashes (as in Esther 4:1). This is imploring you to call to God for help.

Read **James 4:10**. But I thought seeking praise and glory was a bad thing! It’s seeking to be above others, that’s the problem. There’s a difference between looking for a crown and earning a purple heart. One praises you for being such a big deal. The other praises you for doing the good thing when it was hard.

If you humble yourself, set yourself aside for the good, and do the right thing when no one sees, He sees. We don’t just trust Him with our welfare, we trust Him with whether or not we get credit.

Read **James 4:11-12**. This is a bit to unpack. For one, how do you speak against the law? Well, if they’re a brother or sister in Christ, have they not been acquitted of their sin by Jesus? To condemn someone who’s been acquitted contradicts the law. The condemnation is now a crime.

Now this is not saying that you can’t correct someone. If someone contradicts God and starts leading others to hell, that needs an intervention. But that’s not judgement or condemnation. And if you do it right, using God’s word, it’s not even you doing it.

Read **James 4:13-17**. Never forget what lasts and what doesn’t. What you have will pass away. You will pass away. Your legacy will pass away. But your deeds will continue a causal chain throughout history. Your deeds last. And you, your character, will be in the new kingdom.

## Conclusion:

- We are called to humble ourselves at the expense of what we may feel about how others act and how we fear scarcity.
- We are called to value people not wealth.
- We are called to value obedience over glory.
- We are called to value a trust in sufficient provision rather than to take for ourselves in fear.
- We are called to value proximity to God where we're not an easy target.
- We are called to value correction over judgement.
- But none of these calls can be answered if you are still living with only one choice of affiliation. None of the calls make sense unless you have the choice.  
If you're currently pondering this, I believe you're here to make this choice.

## Reflection Questions:

- Have you been in or currently in a quarrel/conflict with another believer?
  - Thinking about the tiers of Believer Quarrels above, what kind of quarrel is it?
  - What steps can be taken to resolve the quarrel?
- Have there been things you have asked for but not received?
  - What were your motives for those things?
- In the book Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in James in reference to James 4:9, David Platt says, "*Those who live in friendship with this world do not see sin as a big deal. But James tells us not to be trivial with sin. Rather, we should grieve over our sin, mourning and wailing in tears over it.*"
  - When was the last time you grieved over your sin before God?
- According to James 4:7-10, there are 5 ways to draw near to God.
  1. Submit to God's authority and will
  2. Resist the devil
  3. Cleanse your hands...and purify your hearts
  4. Be miserable and mourn and weep over sins
  5. Humble yourself in the presence of the Lord
  - Which of these ways are easier for you?
  - Which of these ways do you need to work on?