

1. **Introduction:** James says, frustrated inner desires lead people to “murderous” thoughts, fights and quarrels, failure to pray, and prayer with wrong motives (4:1-3).
 - In most cases, people don’t murder in a literal sense but may commit “murder” in their hearts and with their lips. Quarrelling and fighting between believers arise from internal “passions” warring.
 - Jealousy and selfish ambition arising from possessiveness and envy may lead to fights and quarrels or attempts to undermine the standing of another person.
 - Friendship with the unbelieving world’s system of values leads to enmity with God and opposition to God’s principles of life.
 - James says following the world and its system of values is “*adulterous*,” meaning we cheat on God and His ways and, instead, cling to the world and its ways.
 - In the realm of worldly wisdom, self-gratification is top priority.
 - Desires become passions driving behavior. Wanting to acquire things (or power) can lead to covetousness. How can we avoid such “sinful passions?”
 - To avoid sinful passions, we need wisdom from above. If we ask with the intention of obeying, God will give us the “wisdom from above” we need to enable us to maintain communion with Him and peaceable relations with others.
 - It is impossible to do so in our own power, impossible alone, but we are not alone.
2. **James 4:1:** *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?*
 - The current section of the letter (4:1-12) deals with the answer to this question.
 - The central truth in this passage, as we shall see, is “*friendship with the world is enmity with God*” (4:4b). James argues that genuine faithful Christian life requires spiritual (but not physical) separation from contamination by the unbelieving world.
 - Worldly wisdom says self-gratification is the top priority. Desires become passions that drive behavior. The desire to acquire things (or power) becomes covetous.
 - When we are trapped by worldly wisdom, we have a wrong understanding of ourselves and of our relationships with others.
 - The way out is to confess our error to God and ask forgiveness. He gives more grace.
3. **James 4:5-6:** *Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*
 - This appears to mean that God wants the best for the life of each believer and sends His Holy Spirit to indwell believers to enable that to happen.
 - When a believer humbly surrenders to the Holy Spirit’s control, God gives more grace. He gives grace greater than willful selfish desires that might lead us astray; grace greater even than our natural human drive to be the master of our fate.

- The hymn “He Giveth More Grace” conveys the thought well. *“He giveth more grace when the burden grow greater; He sendeth more strength when the labors increase. To added affliction, He addeth His mercy; To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.”*
 - God sends His Holy Spirit to indwell us. In our need, He gives more grace. It is God’s grace that makes it possible for us to walk consistently with Him, just as His grace alone made us His children in the first place.
 - Grace is God’s gift to the humble, those who recognize their sin, who know that God is God, and they are not. To walk with God as He desires us to walk, we must walk humbly before Him. What does that mean?
 - Being humble before God means willing submission to Him. It means complete submission to His commands. He promises grace to resist worldly enticements.
4. **James 4:7-10: *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* ⁸ *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* ⁹ *Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.* ¹⁰ *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.***
- James is giving practical advice on how to put into practice what he has been saying.
 - Submit yourself to God, not a passive “what-ever” kind of submission, but, rather, like a soldier, an active and prepared submission. Submit to God’s authority eagerly awaiting what He next requires. That requirement will be revealed step-by-step.
 - Resist the devil, meaning to take a positive stand against his influence.
 - We are to cleanse both our outer life (the actions of our hands and the words of our mouth) and our inner life (the thoughts of our hearts).
 - **“Cleanse your hands”** emphasizes external behavior, stopping external sinful acts.
 - **“Purify your hearts, you double-minded”** emphasizes removing inner attitudes that are disloyal to God. When we genuinely repent, God will lift us up.
 - It is impossible, in our own strength only, to live a consistently godly life. It is true that God must enable, but it is also true we must work cooperatively with Him.
 - God is gracious and will strengthen us to be able to do what He requires. We can resist evil and practice righteousness, but only within the grace and mercy of God.
5. **James 4:11-12: *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.* ¹² *There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?***
- In 3:13-18 James contrasted people who are wise in their own eyes with those who have wisdom from above. In 4:1-10, he shows how quarrels and conflicts grow out of envious ambition, a condition cured only by submitting to God in true humility.

- In 4:11-12, he says it is perilously close to pretending to be God to judge our brothers or speak evil against them. God knows all circumstances. We don't.
 - Speaking against a brother or sister "in Christ" may take the form of slander, gossip, or a complaint. Believers are not to repeat gossip nor initiate it.
 - Slander means the utterance of charges or misrepresentations, known to be false, that defame another's reputation.
 - Gossip is casual conversation or reports about other people that may or may not be true but almost always lack confirming evidence.
 - Believers are forbidden to slander a person or gossip about them.
 - Jesus said believers are permitted to judge people "by their fruits," that is by their words and actions, but cannot see into hearts to judge them (their moral essence).
 - Judge by external observable actions. The Bible speaks against self-serving, malicious judgment, but encourages wise, righteous discernment.
6. **Matthew 7:4-5**: *Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*
7. **John 7:24**: *"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*
- If we think we know something bad about a person's behavior that we personally believe to be true, Mathew 18:15-17 tells us what we are to do.
 - Confirm to the best of your ability what you think you know and then follow the rules of God's guidance on dealing with problems with others, going first to them offering spiritual and physical help as appropriate.
 - Otherwise, we are to say nothing unless testimony is legally necessary or speaking is necessary to keep someone else from harm.
 - We are to regard other believers as brothers and sisters in Christ, as joint heirs of salvation. All were dead in trespasses and sins, including each of us.
 - All were saved by the same precious blood sacrifice even though all deserved God's wrath. How could we dare defame a fellow believer, one for whom Christ died?
8. **James 4:12**: *"There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"*
- James says to regard other believers as neighbors under the royal law (love your neighbor as yourself).
 - We know our own sin and unworthiness before God. But for God's grace, we would yet be dead in sins. God will judge others.
9. **Wisdom from above versus worldly wisdom**: The two categories of wisdom are in opposition to one another. Wisdom from above is opposed by worldly wisdom that creeps into our minds and hearts through daily contact with the world.

- Both categories of wisdom exist in our hearts and struggle against one another. For believers to be controlled by wisdom from above, they are to always submit to God, study His Word, and pray that His wisdom will direct their path.
 - In 4:11-12, James considered the perils of acting as though we are assigned the duty of judging the life of others.
 - In 4:13-16, we have the problem of acting as though we are master of our own life, the final authority over our life, believing that what we decide will of necessity come to pass.
10. **James 4:13-16:** *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*
- From the tone of these comments, these comments relate to an important issue. The issue is, “who has authority over the details of our life?”
 - Notice how James describes people acting as if they are the supreme master of their life – choose a goal (establish a profitable business), set a schedule (begin today or tomorrow), choose a location (a specific city), set a time limit (success in a year).
 - None of these things is negative in and of itself. Nothing evil about planning ahead, setting schedules, engaging in business, or making a profit.
 - These things are ordinary and OK. Yet, because God is our sovereign Lord, we are to consider His will in all aspects of our life and recognize He is in control, not us.
 - James’ concern is the problem of falling into a way of thinking that habitually ignores “the sovereignty of God.” Acting as though we know for certain that the outcome of our plans will be exactly what we planned is presumptuous.
 - It is presumptuous because it assumes we are in total control of our life and that what we choose to do will happen according our will when we want it to happen.
 - James says that making such presumptuous statements is arrogant boasting. It is evil because it ignores the truth that it is God who is sovereign and in control, not us.
 - We have no clue what the future will bring, not even whether we will live to see tomorrow. We have no assurance of a long life. We are frail, here today and possibly gone tomorrow, totally dependent on God.
 - When we plan future activities, it is proper to say, “this is what I plan to do, if the Lord wills.” Leave flexibility in plans for God to guide our steps.
 - The important thing is not the saying of the words, if God wills, but for us and those who hear our words to be reminded that God is sovereign.
 - The core of the philosophy that ignores God’s sovereignty is “we are masters of our own destiny.” Life teaches us that we are not “a master of our own destiny.”

- Saying “if the Lord wills” when we speak of plans confirms that we recognize and act on the truth that God is sovereign, and we live and act in His grace and mercy.

11. **James 4:17: *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.***

- Know the right thing to do! As believers, we have the guidance of Scripture about things to do and things to avoid. Further we have the indwelling Holy Spirit who prompts us about what is right and what is wrong.
- To know the right things to do, we must know the Scripture and be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When we know the right thing that needs doing and refuse to do it, we sin.