

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 31ST, 2022 - JANUARY 1ST, 2023 // BOOK OF JAMES

HEDONISM (JAMES 4:1-3) WARS AMONG US

Immediately after instructing us to "cultivate peace," James mentions that "wars and fights" break out between Christians because of the "passions that wage war within [us]."

- This whole chapter is about the problems that ensue because we pursue our desires more than the desires of God.

THE SOURCE OF DIVISION AND STRIFE

Conflict escalates into sinful territory because we are following our desires. *Desires* are related to *hedonism*, the philosophy that *the chief purpose in life is to satisfy self*.

- **The temptation to satisfy ourselves first will always be near, but with God's help, we can be free of sin's control over us.**

OUR WAYS DON'T WORK

James says we fail at obtaining the greatest desires of contentment and fulfillment because **we're searching for the wrong things by the wrong means.**

- In our frustration, we "murder" (hate) and "covet" but still live unfulfilled because **our desires and methods are broken.**

THE WRONG THINGS IN THE WRONG WAYS

When we don't ask God for the things of God, **we don't see results because we are not seeking His will for our lives.** We must not only seek the things of God, but we must want them for the right reasons.

- **When we pursue God for selfish gain, we're still not really pursuing God.**

IF WE WILL PUT OUR DESIRES ASIDE

1 John 5:14-15 tells us that when we seek the will of God and ask for things in that will, we receive them. In other words, His way works.

- **If we can learn to trust that God has a better plan for us and seek His will, we will find peace, contentment, and fulfillment in this life!**

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE (JAMES 4:4-10) "YOU ADULTEROUS PEOPLE!"

This isn't referring to sexual relations, but how we are called to be the bride of Jesus but tend to spend more time in the "world." *World* in the NT refers to **a society that doesn't pursue God, but its own selfish agenda.**

- **To try to serve a godless culture and God is impossible and hostile to Jesus.**

AN "ENEMY OF GOD"?

James uses pretty intense language to describe people who claim to love God but are directed by the world.

- Galatians 5 says the Spirit is the opponent of our sinful desires. **When we choose to live by our selfish ambitions, we are choosing to live in opposition to God.**

GOD LONGS TO BE WITH US

V5 echoes Exodus 34:14: "The spirit He made to dwell in us envies intensely." This means that **God desires to be with His creation and has a high standard for us because of our value!**

- Christians are the Bride of Christ. A good husband is rightfully jealous if their wife loves someone else more.

"THEREFORE SUBMIT TO GOD..."

Though we are prone to selfishness, pride, and following the world, God has grace for us if we will humble ourselves. **"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."**

- **Our lack of submission to Jesus limits true success (peace, fulfillment, healthy relationships, joy, etc.) in our lives.**

CHOOSING TO WALK IN HUMILITY

A healthy relationship with Jesus is deliberate. So, **we must work to "draw near" and "humble [ourselves]," and He will "draw near to [us]" and "exalt [us]."**

- We must also choose to walk away from evil, not be "double-minded," feel remorse about sin, and "cleanse" ourselves from it.

DEFAMATION (JAMES 4:11-12) SLANDER AND INSULTING LANGUAGE

When we become prideful, we are more prone to talk badly to people because we think we are more important than them.

- James tells us that **we are not to be critical or "defame" anyone, especially fellow Christians** because they are family.

MISREPRESENTING THE "LAW OF LOVE"

When Christians use abusive language, they are not only misrepresenting the "law of love" (Leviticus 19:18), but they are placing themselves as the judge and lawgiver.

- In other words, **when we look down on others, we are assuming the role of God, and this is extremely dangerous.**

GOD'S WILL (JAMES 4:13-17) I GOT THIS

These passages rebuke our self-sufficient and arrogant attitudes. Many of the people receiving James' letter believed in God but **didn't consult God on how they were to live.**

- **"Christian Atheism"** is a term that describes believers who live like Jesus doesn't really exist.

HOW WE SHOULD MAKE PLANS

We often decide what we want to do, then we ask God to bless those desires. What we should do is ask God His will for our lives and then strive to live out that will.

- **As Christians, we should have a desire to live out God's will above ours and trust that He has better plans for us.**

"FOR YOU ARE LIKE VAPOR..."

We don't have forever to decide how we are going to live. We are not promised longevity or even tomorrow, so we must decide today whose will we are going to follow.

- The state of the world should make this decision a little easier. Clearly, **the pursuit of self is tanking in epic proportions.**

"IT IS SIN TO KNOW THE GOOD AND YET NOT DO IT."

For us to know the teachings of God and that He has a will for us, but to not do the things of God or seek His will for our lives is sinful.

- **The pursuit of self is antithetical to Christianity, and it eventually destroys us and does serious damage to those around us.**

THE PURSUIT OF SELF DISHONORS GOD

- When we become hedonistic, our lives dishonor God, who created us to do great things and live at a high standard because of our high value.
- **We must intentionally fight the temptation to live for ourselves and choose to live for Jesus.** We cannot be Christians any other way.

THE PURSUIT OF SELF LIMITS US

- Many of us are frustrated and unfilled because our selfish pursuits have not yielded contentment or peace.
- **The problem is that we often ask for what we want vs. what God wants for us.** If we will pray in His will, we receive the things of God and find true contentment.

THE PURSUIT OF SELF CAUSES DIVISION

- When we're self-centered, we become prideful and put our wants over other people and we create "wars and fights" and destroy relationships.
- It is only when we put God and others first that we can represent the "law of love" and live in peace.

THE PURSUIT OF SELF LEADS US ASTRAY

- **If we believe in Jesus but do not live like He and His Word exist, we are "Christian Atheists."** In this, we miss out on God's help and direction and also subject ourselves to His judgment.
- We do not have forever to decide whose will we are going to follow.

JESUS WANTS THE BEST FOR US!

- Trust is the foundation of a healthy relationship. **Jesus wants us to trust Him because He loves us, wants what is best for us, and He is perfect, and we are not!**
- We must **trust God, obey His Word, ask for His will** in our lives, **pray for wisdom, and know that His path is better.**