

James

Lesson 5

James 4:1 – 4:12

Participant Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies
Leaderguidebiblestudies.com

David R. Steele

This lesson is a free download from Leader Guide Bible Studies and is not for resale.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV®
Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Lesson 5
James 4:1-4:12
Submission to God

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. *James 4:7*

Prayers

Submit Yourselves to God

Jas 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

Jas 4:2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

Jas 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Jas 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Jas 4:5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

Jas 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Jas 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Jas 4:9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Jas 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Jas 4:11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

Jas 4:12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Discuss

1. What causes fights and quarrels in the church body?

2. Do you think you have problems? Let's reflect on the issues James needed to address in the early church:

Perseverance in trials	Temptations
Anger and angry speech	Moral filth and evil
Favoritism and discrimination	Exploitation by the rich
Failure to respond to the needs of the poor	Envy and selfish ambition
Teachers teaching with words of evil and deadly poison	

In chapter 4, James addressed the spiritual battle being waged in the church that was the source of all the conflict. James uses the language of the law to figuratively accuse the Jewish churches of murder, covetousness, and adultery. Refer to the following verses and discuss what James was telling the church.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell (Matthew 5:21).

The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:9-10)

[The psalmist is speaking to God] Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful [adulterous] to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds (Psalm 73:27-28).

Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed **adultery** with stone and wood. Despite all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense,” declares the LORD (Jeremiah 3:9).

3. If you recall from last week, “*eupeithes*” was the word for submission in James 3:17. It was a sign of wisdom and also meant to be reasonable or open to reason. In verse 4:7, James uses “*hupotagete*” to describe submission to God. *Hupotagete* implies subordination, obedience, or to submit to another's authority.

Ok, submit to God's authority. Sounds easy, right? But how do you discern God's will and authority in conflict? Let's review some of the suggestions James has been giving.

1. James 1:5, If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
2. James 1:19-20, My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
3. James 1:22, Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.
4. James 3:8, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.
5. James 4:3, When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
6. James 4:6, But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
7. James 5:13, Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray.
8. Proverbs 15:22, Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

4. James tells us the spirit envies us intensely in verse 5. The word for envy is “*phthonon*” and might be better translated as “*jealous*.” The Holy Spirit is jealous for us in the same way God is; “Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14). Put into your own words what James is saying about how the Holy Spirit regards to being jealous your life and how James statement was meant to encourage the early church.

5. How might James’ teaching on the jealousy of the Holy Spirit help bring unity to the divided church?

6. James 4:7-8 includes two profound promises in scripture; Resist the devil and he will flee from you and come near to God, and he will come near to you.

The Barna Research Group finds that 60% of American Christians do not believe there is a devil despite the Bible’s teaching. Jesus, John, Peter Paul, James, and Jude all teach about the reality of the devil and his demonic minions. The Old Testament prophets call him by his name, Satan. Satan entered Judas to betray Christ, he has the power to possess and influence people for evil, and he uses supernatural power to destroy Christians, a formidable enemy. Yet James says we can resist him, and he will flee. Refer to the following scriptures and discuss how Christians are to resist the devil so that he will flee.

- a. ^{Eph 4:25} Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold (Ephesians 4:25-27).

- b. ^{2Ti 2:23} Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2Timothy 2:26).

- c. ^{Eph 6:11} Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Eph 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Eph 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Eph 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints

7. Even more important than resisting the devil is drawing near to God. What does James mean in verse 4:8 by saying to draw near to God by “Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

8. Discuss how you draw near to God and share a time when you felt God draw near to you.

9. In verses 4:11-12, James says that slander and judgment were causing division in the early church. Judgment is tricky, especially today, when tolerance is valued over moral judgment. A Christian will be immediately labeled as intolerant if they say anything about abortion, adultery, homosexual behavior, or same-sex marriage. They will likely encounter the criticism “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matthew 7:1). Even non-Christians know that verse!

Read the following instructions regarding making judgments and summarize what they are teaching.

a. Judging others in the church

1Co 5:9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—

1Co 5:10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

1Co 5:11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

^{1Co 5:12} What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

^{1Co 5:13} God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

b. Judgments on minor matters

^{Ro 14:12} So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

^{Ro 14:13} Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another [in regards to disputable (minor) matters like dietary restrictions and the observance of Jewish religious festivals]. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.

^{Col 2:16} Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

^{Col 2:17} These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

c. Lawsuits

^{Lk 12:57} “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right?”

^{Lk 12:58} As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

^{1Co 6:1} If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ^{1Co 6:2} Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

^{1Co 6:3} Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

^{1Co 6:4} Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

^{1Co 6:5} I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?

^{1Co 6:6} But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers!

^{1Co 6:7} The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

d. Judgments on danger or wrongdoing

Lk 14:5 Then he asked them, “If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?”

Ac 7:27 “But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us?’

e. Judging others outside the church

Mt 7:1 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

Mt 7:2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Ro 2:1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

Mt 9:11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

Mt 9:12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Mt 9:13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Closing prayer