



THE BOOK OF JAMES

SECTION THEME

In this section, James is going to address things that need to be avoided. To live like the world is to live in hostility toward God and toward others in the Church. There is a serious sin problem when it comes to pride during trials. James gives a remedy though. Submission/Humility

GO DEEPER

Learn more about commandment-breaking in the following Bible passages. Matthew 5:21-22, 27, Matthew 19:16-21; Romans 2:21-23; James 2:10-11

In Matthew 5, what new view of the commandments did Jesus give?

In Matthew 19, what did Jesus ask the young man to add to his commandment-keeping?

How do the statements in Romans 2 and James 2 match up? What are these two writers saying?

Remember that James' original readers were of Jewish descent.

JAMES 4:1-10

- 1** What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?
- 2** You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.
- 3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.
- 4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- 5** Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?
- 6** But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."
- 7** Submit 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 miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.
- 10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

DIGGING IN

- **Verse** How do you feel about the word “murder” in verse 2? Does that surprise you? Do you think it belongs there? Were these people really killers?
- Some scholars have suggested that it’s just a misspelling in the Greek. Change one letter and it means “envy.” But maybe James knows how to spell, and he means exactly this. Let’s look deeper.
- **In verses 2–4 there are three words that are also found in the Ten Commandments. Can you find them?**
- **What do verses 2–3 tell us about the spiritual life of James’s audience?**
- **When they *did* ask God for things, what do you think they were asking for? What can this teach us about prayer?**
- **What is our best response to verse 6? How can we access God’s grace?**
- **In the next few verses, there are nearly a dozen things we are told to do. What are they?**
- **Can you find a common theme here?**
- **How can we “cleanse our hands” and “purify our hearts”?**
- **Why should we turn “joy to gloom”? Is it wrong to be joyful?**
- **How will God “exalt” us?**

5 MARKS FOCUS: PRAYER

In biblical times they wore rough sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on themselves to come humbly before God. What could you do to show God (and remind yourself of) your humility? Kneel? Wear a dirty shirt? Put soil on your face? The specifics don’t matter as much as your attitude. Take a good long time to listen to God. Ask about the things He cares about. Ask what He wants for you. Confess your sins and receive His forgiveness. Ask again for wisdom.

USE THE 2 OF THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS IN YOUR WALK THIS WEEK:

Memorization: Learn James 4:7–8.

Peacemaking: Are there “fights and quarrels” in your life? If you’re not seeing eye to eye with someone, do what you can to set that relationship right.

Service: Find a humble way to serve your church or community. Clean up, fix up, help those who routinely get neglected. This is not about you getting recognition for a good deed, but about showing the love of God to others.

A PEEK AT THE GREEK

The Greek words translated “murder” (*phoneuo*), “covet” (*zeloo*), and “adulterous” (*moichalis*) are the same words (or forms of the same words) found in the Ten Commandments in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint)—the version of the Bible that James’ readers would have known.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Things are getting a bit clearer as we get deeper into the book of James. We’re learning more about the people James is writing to. They seem to consider themselves religious, and they’re proud of that. They even criticize others who are not as religious as they are. And yet, even in this act of judging others, they are revealing how far from God they themselves are. Every time they open their mouths, they’re slandering others. As a result, there are quarrels and fights. They seem more interested in building their own status than in loving their brothers and sisters. Aren’t you glad we’re not like that? Wait. Don’t answer that. As soon as we say it’s everyone else’s problem and not ours, then it becomes our problem. The solution is not to argue better or to prove that we’re right and others are wrong. The solution is to humble ourselves, to admit where we have fallen short, to pray for the things that God cares about, to mourn over our sinfulness, to receive God’s grace.