



Week Seven: James 4:1-12

"Submit Yourselves to God"

Reading and Study Guide for the
week of Oct. 15-22, 2023

Memory Verse for the Book of James: *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* (James 1:22)

This week, read James 4:1-12. Some questions to answer and think about this week with your family or Community Group:

1. What do families and friends commonly fight about?
2. What is the root cause of fights and quarrels between people? ([4:1-3](#))
3. What does friendship with the world do to our relationship with God? ([4:4](#))
4. When does God give us grace? ([4:6](#))
5. How did James describe the way we should come to God? ([4:7-10](#))
6. What does God do to us when we have an attitude of humility before Him? ([4:10](#))
7. How are we to speak to one another? ([4:11](#))
8. What is the difference between pride and a sense of accomplishment?
9. How can we reduce or remove the pride from our lives?
10. What can you do this week to help you bring more humility into your life?

Life Application Bible Notes

[4:1-3](#) Quarrels and fights among believers are always harmful. James explains that these conflicts result from evil desires battling within us: We want more possessions, more money, higher status, more recognition. When we don't get what we want, we fight in order to have it. Instead of aggressively grabbing what we want, we should submit ourselves to God, ask God to help us get rid of our selfish desires, and trust him to give us what we really need.

[4:2, 3](#) James mentions the most common problems in prayer: not asking, asking for the wrong things, or asking for the wrong reasons. Do you talk to God at all? When you do, what do you talk about? Do you ask only to satisfy your desires? Do you seek God's approval for what you already plan to do? Your prayers will become powerful when you allow God to change your desires so that they perfectly correspond to his will for you ([1 John 3:21, 22](#)).

[4:3, 4](#) There is nothing wrong with wanting a pleasurable life. God gives us good gifts that he wants us to enjoy ([1:17](#); [Ephesians 4:7](#); [1 Timothy 4:4, 5](#)). But having friendship with the world involves seeking pleasure at others' expense or at the expense of obeying God. Pleasure that keeps us from pleasing God is sinful; pleasure from God's rich bounty is good.

[4:4-6](#) The cure for evil desires is humility (see [Proverbs 16:18, 19](#); [1 Peter 5:5, 6](#)). Pride makes us self-centered and leads us to conclude that we deserve all we can see, touch, or imagine. It creates greedy appetites for far more than we need. We can be released from our self-centered desires by humbling ourselves before God, realizing that all we really need is his approval. When the Holy Spirit fills us, we see that this world's seductive attractions are only cheap substitutes for what God has to offer.

[4:5](#) This verse may mean that because of our fallen nature, we have a tendency toward envy. James is not quoting a specific verse or passage—he is summing up a teaching of Scripture. See [Romans 6:6-8](#) and [Galatians 5:17-21](#) for more on the human tendency toward envy and discontent.

[4:7](#) Although God and the devil are at war, we don't have to wait until the end to see who will win. God has *already* defeated Satan ([Revelation 12:10-12](#)), and when Christ returns, the devil and all he stands for will be eliminated forever ([Revelation 20:10-15](#)). Satan is here now, however, and he is trying to win us over to his evil cause. With the Holy Spirit's power, we can resist the devil, and he will flee from us.

[4:7-10](#) How can you come close to God? James gives five ways: (1) *Humble yourselves before God* ([4:7](#)). Yield to his authority and will, commit your life to him and his control, and be willing to follow him. (2) *Resist the devil* ([4:7](#)). Don't allow Satan to entice and tempt you. (3) *Wash your hands... and purify your hearts* (that is, lead a pure life) ([4:8](#)). Be cleansed from sin, replacing your desire to sin with your desire to experience God's purity.

(4) *Let there be sorrow and deep grief* for your sins ([4:9](#)). Don't be afraid to express deep heartfelt sorrow for what you have done.

(5) *Humble yourselves before the Lord*, and he will lift you up in honor ([4:10](#); [1 Peter 5:6](#)).

[4:10](#) Bowing in humility before the Lord means recognizing that our worth comes from God alone. To be humble involves leaning on his power and his guidance, and not going our own independent way. Although we do not deserve God's favor, he wants to lift us up and give us worth and dignity, despite our human shortcomings.

[4:11, 12](#) Jesus summarized the law as love for God and neighbor ([Matthew 22:37-40](#)), and Paul said that love demonstrated toward a neighbor would fully satisfy the law ([Romans 13:6-10](#)). When we fail to love, we are actually breaking God's law. Examine your attitude and actions toward others. Do you build people up or tear them down? When you're ready to criticize someone, remember God's law of love and say something good instead. Saying something beneficial to others will cure you of finding fault and increase your ability to obey God's law of love.

James Study Guide questions and notes are from

