

James for Everyman: Building a Faith That Works

Week Four: James 4 Dusty Davis

Many early church leaders saw the book of James as lacking in spiritual depth of insight, and yet it remains one of the most practical and studied books of scripture. Written to the believers "of the dispersion" it provides God's Man with unique insights as to how we are to live when our culture opposes our faith. This series, James for Everyman, will challenge you to move beyond a faith that is merely ideological into a faith that works!

James 4:1-3

"What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong - you want only what will give you pleasure."

If James is addressing where quarrels and fights come from, we can deduce that there were problems arising in the early church that needed to be addressed. In chapter 1 James reminded us that temptation doesn't come from external stimuli, but rather from our own internal and sinful desires. Similarly today we learn that:

Quarrels _____ us, begins _____ us.

Even the on-going gossiping, bickering and arguing between us begins inside each of us. When our flesh is in control, the results are catastrophic. There has got to be a better way... praise God there is! When God's Spirit controls our lives the outcomes are far different, and far better. We experience:

Peace with _____, and peace with _____.

The Holy Spirit produces His beautiful fruit in our hearts, and it overflows in our lives. The relationships we find ourselves in are changed for the better. James reminds us that much of our quarreling comes from the fact that others have what we desire, or believe we're entitled to. The problem arises when we begin to compare. The problem with comparison is simple:

Comparison never leads to _____.

It can't! I either have more and become proud, or less and become envious. Our culture dumps gasoline on the problem as they sell discontentment by the boatload.

We're told that we don't have, because we don't ask God for it. Why would we withhold asking God for anything? Like children, we often avoid asking God for things....

When we _____, He'll say _____.

Or, we are afraid of what God will put us through in order to answer the prayer. We want to be patient people.....but we don't want to live through situations that require patience. We want to be people who trust God, but we want to avoid situations where He's all we have and so on.

James goes on to remind us that, when we do ask, we often have wrong motives. James continues talking about the tension of our desire for good things now, versus waiting or enduring for them through trials by contrasting our love for the "world".

James 4:4-5

"You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again; if you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. Do you think the scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him."

How heavy is that, he says that if we fall in line with this "world" (systems, values and opinions) we are like an adulterous spouse. This exposes us to a heavy truth:

_____ desires are _____.

Matthew 6:33

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."

James 4:6

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

What a scary verse! I don't know about you, but I don't like the idea of living in opposition to God! But....humility will never be forced upon us.

Humility is always a _____.

James 4:7

"So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

James 4:8-10

"Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor."

Our eyes should be fixed on _____, **not on**
_____ **or** _____.

James 4:11-12

"Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters.[d] If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?"

James has walked us through the sins of pride, of envy, judgment and greed. He has laid out such a clear path for us as God's men and he finishes it off with a sin that is far too commonplace amongst God's man today.

The sin of _____.

James 4:17

Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.

For Discussion:

1. Are there long standing, and ongoing arguments and quarrels you find yourself in? What are the circumstances surrounding them? How does the reality that much of the problem lies within us change your perspective on where to find resolution?
2. Where do you most often find yourself comparing your life to the life of another? What does this reveal about your heart? About your desires? What have been the results of this comparison?
3. When do you avoid asking God for something? When you're worried what it will "cost" to obtain (eg. patience, endurance, etc.) or when you're embarrassed for wanting it at all?
4. Where in your life do you most feel divided in your desires? Where does the pull of this world grasp your heart most profoundly? What do you do, in order to submit those desires to the Lord?
5. Where do you most struggle with displaying humility? At work? At home? In your hobbies? Why do you believe that is? What steps can you make in order to choose humility?
6. In what areas of your life are you most tempted towards apathy? What is the result in the lives of those God has called you to lead and care for? In what ways can you step into God's calling in that area of your life today?