

James 4

Week 5 - Defriending The World

? If someone were to ask you, “where do you see yourself in five years?” What would you say?

James 4:1-17 (NIV)

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹¹Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

? In verse 1, James talks about the conflicting desires we all have. What do these look like and where do these conflicting desires come from?

? How do your own conflicting desires affect your relationships with other people and God?

? What do vv. 2-3 tell us about how our human desires push us towards sin? How do you sometimes respond to your desires in this way? What do these verses say about God's desire for us in those moments?

1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

God will either give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything he knows.
—Tim Keller

? Where do you see examples of “love for” and “friendship with” the world in our culture today?

? Where are you personally wrestling with “love for” or “friendship with” the world right now?

? How can we better love our friends and family who don't hold a biblical worldview?

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

? Look at all the verbs in James 4:7-10: submit, resist, come near, wash your hands, purify (your hearts), grieve, mourn, wail, change (your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom), humble yourself. Which, if any, of these come naturally to you? Which takes more work?

? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us live out these verbs? How can we strengthen that bond?

? Why does James say we shouldn't judge our brothers and sisters in vv 11-12? What does this look like? (Reference: Romans 2:1-5)

? Verse 11 states, "When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it." What does judging the law look like and why is this wrong?

? How can we as a small group practice discernment and accountability without being judgmental? (Reference: Matthew 7:1-5 and Matthew 22:36-40)

? In James 4:14, James refers to our life as "a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." What do you find encouraging and/or challenging about this?

For Discussion And Accountability

? Do the desires and plans that you hold onto tightly also align with God's desires? How should we, as your small group, challenge and encourage you to act out of the desires God has placed on your heart?