

**Men to Men Ministry**  
**Lesson Seventeen in the Letter of James**  
**Infidelity to God**

Teacher: Just Larry

Phone: 916-337-2648

WEB: <http://theoinsight.com/just-james/>

Email: [ljmonson@hotmail.com](mailto:ljmonson@hotmail.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChnVaqrTKIZ9p7UljdvYOw>

17

## James 4:4-7 NASB

**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.**

## Introduction

James is hard to read. It is full of metaphors, one-liners, and merciless condemnation of those who live in the church. It is much like the story of the man standing on the sidewalk on a warm summer's day. He was rapidly and repeatedly bashing his head against a light pole. Another man comes by and tries to stop the crazed man from hurting himself. He grabs the man and asks, "why are you beating your head to a light pole?"

In response to the question, the now bleeding man replies, "It feels so good when I stop."

James is not for the laid back, get-a-long, wishy washy Christian. It is for those who desire to grow up, to adult up.

## Commentary for James 4:4-7

Our scripture, to be best understood, requires a close examination of the related Jewish context:

1) **Verse 4) Assumed knowledge.** Our text seems to have a logical progression that starts with a hypothetical. "DO YOU NOT KNOW" is an assumption of knowledge. Most of the

early church was populated by converts to Christianity from the Jewish faith. There were understandings and teachings to which all would readily know and comprehend.

- 2) **Verse 4) The accusation of adultery.** The Jews, because of their covenant with God, are represented as being married to God and hence their motives, attitudes, actions, and their iniquity in general, are represented under the notion of adultery. The culture of the church in which these words are pointed toward was predominantly Jewish converts and would be well aware of this word as a spiritual term with application toward the ignorance and rejection of God's relationship to these special people.
- 3) **Verse 4) Adultery is associated with friendship with the World.** As Jesus said about adultery, a look with lust is equivalent to adultery. Wanting the acceptance of the world, to be seen as a friend, or wanting an ongoing relationship with the world is adultery. It is that wanting glance at what the world has to offer that destroys the relationship with God. Paul emphasizes this same idea in Philippians 3:18-19 **"For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things."** Earthly things are those that are temporary and oppose that which is spiritual. Such includes wealth, social status, human achievement, technology, and fame. Perhaps the greatest problem faced by the average Christian here in America is that of materialism. The statistics bear out that we are a wealthy nation.
1. We own 40 percent of the world's silver.
  2. We operate 40 percent of the world's railroads.
  3. We possess 50 percent of the world's gold.
  4. We use 50 percent of the world's electricity.
  5. We produce and use 50 percent of the world's steel.
  6. We control 60 percent of the world's copper.
  7. We utilize 66 percent of the world's oil.
  8. We abuse 85 percent of the world's automobiles.

And all of this for 6 percent of the world's population.

- 4) **Verse 4) Friendship with the world is hostility to God.** The want to be like everyone else is a psychological need to be a part of something greater than self. Here James is simply saying the two cannot be associated with each other. It is an either-or proposition. Friendship with the world is not something to be desired or sought after. The idea that a person can be a friend of the world and its morals and ethics which may well change at the whim of some influencer is and will be an open war with God. Friendship refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and expectations of behavior. This desire to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships are characteristics of this friendship with the world. Wherever there is a manifested purpose to find our chosen friends and associates there rather than among Christians; wherever there is a greater desire to enjoy the smiles and approval of the

world than there is to enjoy the approval of God and the blessings of a good conscience; and wherever there is more conscious pain because we have failed to win the applause of the world, or have offended its advocates, and have sunk ourselves in its estimation, than there is because we have neglected our duty to our Savior, and have lost the enjoyment of religion, there is the clearest proof that the heart wills or desires to be the “friend of the world.”

5) **Verse 4) Is the enemy of God.** To the Jew the idea that any willful act would cause a Jew to change from a follower of God to an enemy of God was a fearful thought. The possibility of being part of this new Jewish Christian gathering and being at the same time an enemy of God should create fear. It settles the point that anyone, no matter what his profession, no matter how much devotion to the betterment of the church that person, if a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian. Regarding the meaning of this important verse, then, it may be remarked:

(a) That there is a sense in which the love of this world, or of the physical universe, is not wrong. That kind of love for it as the work of God, which perceives the evidence of his wisdom and goodness and power in the various objects of beauty, usefulness, and grandeur, spread around us, is not evil. The world as such - the physical structure of the earth, of the mountains, forests flowers, seas, lakes, and vales - is full of illustrations of the divine character, and it cannot be wrong to contemplate those things with interest, or with warm affection toward their Creator.

(b) When that world, however, becomes our motive of life, when we study it only as a matter of science, without “looking through nature up to nature’s God;” when we seek wealth or lands as a substitute for God, or when we partake of the spirit which rules in the hearts of those who avowedly seek this world as their portion, though we profess religion, then the love of the world becomes evil, and comes in direct conflict with the spirit of true religion.

(c) The statement in this verse is, therefore, one of the most fearful important for many professors of religion. There are many in the church who, so far as human judgment can go, are characteristically lovers of the world. Among the characteristics of this number in the church are:

- **Conformity:** Romans 12:2 “Don’t be conformed to this world”. That the standards of life are set by the world. Conformity is the blending into the normal. We are called to be a peculiar people. The Jews of James day stood out by their dress styles and willful abstinence.
- **Friendships:** Seeking the friendships of the world. I am well acquainted with many people of the world, but if given a choice I would rather be around Christians.
- **Amusements and entertainment:** The lives of the early Jewish Christians was not about the distraction of amusements of the world. To these converted Jews life was found in their relationship to God and not the world to provide their chief happiness. It is pursuing the same

pleasures that the people of the world do, with the same expense, the same extravagance, the same luxury.

- **Object of living:** For the Jews of the early Church, anyone who made their worldly interests the great object of living, and everything else subordinate to that would be seen as abhorrent and as James states an enemy of God.

- 6) **Verse 5) Scripture speaking.** In all the known Jewish scripture there is no explicit quotation of "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?" Again we must understand the Jewish point of view here. If there is no explicit admonition found, we must assume this is either a phrase found in some lost scripture or a cultural understanding that was accepted by the Jews in the time of James. It is helpful here to point out that James was not referring to specific scripture but the entire purpose of scripture: the revelation of the will of God, and here the specific understanding that the Holy Spirit is a real and promised gift of God to his people
- 7) **Verse 5) The Holy Spirit's purpose is to dwell with man.** Similarly with the need of a Messiah to the world in the physical presence of Jesus, here James states without any falsehood or reservation the Holy Spirit is, was, and ever will be present in the lives of the Body of Christ. This is a very important concept to the Jewish Christian. Pentecost revival was something every new Christian would have known. The filling of the Spirit of God in a Christian was both sought after and conserved. If there is a characteristic that must be held closely it is this dwelling Spirit of God. For without it these Jewish Christians would have never known what is true friendship in the church or for God. It is this this dwelling of the Holy Spirit that our lives after conversion is changed day by day. It becomes every professing Christian, therefore, to examine himself with the deepest earnestness to determine whether he is characteristically a friend of the world or of God; whether he is living for this life only, or is animated by the high and pure principles of those who are the friends of God. The great Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived, and soon our appropriate place will be assigned us, and our final Judge will determine to which class of the two great divisions of the human family we belong - to those who are the friends of the world, or to those who are the friends of God.
- 8) **Verse 6) Grace is available.** There is a difference between **Mercy** and **Grace**. Mercy is the act of forgiveness of deeds done. Grace is oversight until mercy is called for. For the culture of the Jews, the idea of grace was not a pardon but a punishment deferred. Once a year, there was ceremonial atonement for the Jews' sins. Grace was seen and acknowledged as the intermediary state of faith between this one-time-a-year ceremony. Individual and occasional sins were stored up and carried by each Jew until that one opportunity to have them forgiven. For 364 days a year, they simply lived by grace until it would be taken care of like spring cleaning. To the Jew grace was a given in all the willful transgressions of the law. Grace was always expected, grace was always needed. Here James is saying it is available at every moment.

- 9) **Verse 6) Greater Grace.** To the Jew grace was the unmerited favor of God. The selection of the children of Abraham to be the example for the world was grace. The issue was that this Godly favoritism led to an attitude of exclusivity. They were the special ones of God and keeper of grace for all the world. Without them, there would be no Messiah. Without them, there would be no law. Without them, there would be no universal ethics. Without them, there would be no revelation of God's will for the world. So here James says there is something more than the personal assumption of the favor of God. It is a greater grace in that it is to be shared.
- 10) **Verse 6) What is this destructive pride?** The word for proud is *huperephanos* which literally means one who shows himself above other people. Even the Greeks hated pride. A Greek named **Theophrastus** described it as "a certain contempt for all other people." **Theophylact**, a Christian writer, called it, "the citadel and summit of all evils." Its real terror is that it is a thing of the heart. It means haughtiness; but the man who suffers from it might well appear to be walking in downcast humility, while all the time there is in his heart a vast contempt for all his fellow-men. It shuts itself off from God for three reasons:
- a) It does not know its own need. It so admires itself that it recognizes no need to be supplied.
  - b) It cherishes its own independence. It will be beholden to no man and not even to God.
  - c) It does not recognize its own sin. It is occupied with thinking of its own goodness and never realizes that it has any sin from which it needs to be saved. A pride like that cannot receive help, because it does not know that it needs help, and, therefore, it cannot ask.
- 11) **Verse 6) Grace requires humility.** *"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble"*. Grace has a constant characteristic--a man cannot receive it until he has realized his need of it, and has come to God humbly pleading for help. Therefore, it must always remain true that God sets himself against the proud and gives lavishly of his grace to the humble. This is a quote from Proverbs 3:34.
- 12) **Verse 6) Humble Grace as a reward.** In response to humility there is a gift of this greater Grace. Grace to the Christian and equally important grace to become a part of the life of a Christian exhibited to others.
- 13) **Verse 7) Submission to God.** As contrast to destructive pride, and growing gracefulness the result is a willful submission to God. Not to his church or the leaders of the church but to God. Any submission to anything less than God must be directly attributed to God and nothing less
- 14) **Verse 7) With submission to God comes power.** The submission to God empowers us to resist the devil. Submission to God is a rejection of the power of evil as demonstrated by the Devil. The great example and inspiration is Jesus in his temptations. In them Jesus showed that the devil is not invincible; when he is confronted with the word of

God, he can be put to flight. The Christian has the humility that knows that he must fight his battles with the tempter, not in his power, but in the power of God.

The Christian must have humility, but it is a humility which gives him dauntless courage and knows that the way to God is open to the most fearful saint.

This scripture before us is a good example of the perfect blend between faith and works. By faith we submit to God in a fuller, deeper surrender to his will and in that act of submission, we are prepared for conflict with the evil one.

## Paraphrase

*You are renegades in active revolt to your vows to God. You are the bride of Christ but you are not true to Him. Isn't it obvious to you that to put the world and its entertainments and attainments ahead of God, is an active, purposeful, willful, motive-based hostility to God? Even more so, when you choose between being a companion and friend to the culture of the world, your choice makes you an enemy, and adversary to God. Perhaps you think the scriptures you have learned are just something you can ignore, and that God did not mean what He said, "God jealously yearns for the spirit which he has made to dwell within us"? Listen up, God gives a greater grace to you so that you might show that grace to those around you. That is why scripture says, "God sets himself against the haughty, but gives grace to the humble." You must choose to surrender yourselves to God. In that surrender will come the required ability to resist the devil and that resistance will make the devil run away.*

## It is all Greek to me

Verse	English NASB	Greek Transliteration	Definition
4:4	Adultery	<i>moichalides</i>	an adulteress as the intimate alliance of God with the people of Israel was likened to a marriage, those who relapse into idolatry are said to commit adultery or play the harlot fig. equiv. to faithless to God, unclean, apostate
4:4	Friendship	<i>philia</i>	friendship, love
4:4	Hostility	<i>echthra</i>	hostility, hatred, antagonism
4:4	World	<i>kósmos</i>	world: earth, world system, whole universe; adornment. In some contexts, the world is

			simply the place where people live, in other contexts (especially in John), the world is a system opposed to God
4:4	Enemy	<i>echthros</i>	To hate, hostile, in opposition.
4:5	Jealously	<i>phthonos</i>	Envy, prompted by envy
4:5	Spirit	<i>pneuma</i>	Wind, breath, things which are commonly perceived as having no material substance; by extension: spirit, heart, mind, the immaterial part of the inner person that can respond to God; spirit being: (evil) spirit, ghost, God the Holy Spirit
4:5	Dwell	<i>katoikeo</i>	To live in, reside in, settle, to cause to live in
4:6	Greater	<i>meizona</i>	Rank or size to differentiate from another as being larger. great; spatially: large; of quantity or degree: loud, intense, violent; of time: long (time); of position: great, important
4:6	Grace	<i>charin</i>	grace, the state of kindness and favor toward someone, often with a focus on a benefit given to the object; by extension: gift, benefit; credit; words of kindness and benefit: thanks, blessing
4:6	Proud	<i>hyperephanois</i>	proud, arrogant, appearing above others (conspicuous)
4:6	Humble	<i>tapeinois</i>	humble, lowly, downcast, timid As a metaphor: as a condition, lowly, of low degree brought low with grief, depressed lowly in spirit, humble, in a bad sense, deporting one's self abjectly, deferring servilely to others
4:7	Submit	<i>hypotagete</i>	to put in subjection, subject, subordinate; (pass.) to submit, be subject to A Greek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader". In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden".
4:7	Resist	<i>antistete</i>	to resist, oppose, rebel, withstand
4:7	Devil	<i>diabolo</i>	devilish, malicious, slanderous; as a noun, the devil, Satan, or a wicked person who is like the devil