

THE WORLD OR GOD?

(James 4:4-17)

DAY ONE READING AND QUESTIONS:

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble.”

- 1. Why does the writer use the word “adulterous” to describe the attitude here?*
- 2. What does it mean to be a friend of the world? What are some ways we try to be friends of the world?*
- 3. Does humility earn grace? Why do the humble receive more grace?*

DAY TWO READING AND QUESTIONS:

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.

1. *What are some ways we can resist the devil?*
2. *What does it mean to be double-minded? How do we prevent this?*
3. *Shouldn't Christians be joyful? Why are we told here to grieve, mourn, and wail? What are we to wail about?*

DAY THREE READING AND QUESTIONS:

¹¹Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him 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?

1. *What is slander? How you ever been slandered? Have you ever slandered others?*
2. *How is speaking against a brother speaking against the law?*
3. *Should we never judge our neighbor? Can we never condemn the actions of another?*

DAY FOUR READING AND QUESTIONS:

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 and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

1. *Shouldn't we make plans in our businesses and our lives? What's wrong with such planning?*
2. *Is life short, like a mist? If so, do we live as if it is short?*
3. *Is it enough to say, "If the Lord wills"? How would we live if we really meant that question?*

DAY FIVE READING AND QUESTIONS:

Go back and read the entire passage.

1. *What comes to mind when you hear the word, "worldly"? Is slander worldly? Is making plans without God worldly?*
2. *Do you find it hard to submit to God? What does it mean to submit? Can we submit and still have things our way?*
3. *When we want to be successful in this world and still be right with God, is this not like adultery? How?*

MEDITATION ON JAMES 4:4-17

Worldly. What does it mean to be worldly? Some of us can remember a time when “worldly” meant drinking, smoking, dancing, and going to the movies. It didn’t take much to be worldly when I was a kid!

But worldliness is much more subtle than that. To be a friend of the world, all it takes is to be mostly like all the “good” people around us. It means judging others by appearance. It means looking out for ourselves. It means putting other people down. It means making our plans for the future the way all families, businesses, and churches plan.

Such worldliness doesn’t seem bad at all. “That’s just the way things are,” we say.

Precisely. But that’s the problem. “The way things are” is not the way God wants things to be. Indeed, it is not really the way things are, but merely how we have been deceived into seeing them. Such worldliness is not God’s way. And God’s way is truly the way things are and (more importantly) the way things will be.

So if we are caught up in worldliness (and it takes no effort to be caught), what should we do? James is clear. We turn. Repent. Mourn. We humble ourselves before God, admitting we have tried to have both him and the world.

And God will lift us up.

“Father of mercy, have mercy on us as sinners. Purify our hearts. Cleanse our double-minds. Make us hungry for you alone, not for the deception of the world.”