

**James**  
**Submit to God in Love**  
**Focal Verses: James 4:1-10<sup>1</sup>**

**Aim for Change**

By the end of the lesson, we will: **RECOGNIZE** how worldly desires create conflicts; feel **CONVICTED** of the ways we caused unnecessary conflict with others; and **DEVELOP** ways to seek God in humble submission.

**In Focus**

When her mother opened the door to her bedroom, 4-year-old Shayla waved her glittery wand and demanded, “Bow down to me, you peasant! You are beneath me!”

Her mother, Regina, gently responded, “*Shayla, we don’t talk like that in this house.*” “*I know, Mommy, but it looks so cool on Spell Sisters! I just had to try it,*” she explained.

Her mother’s face fell with even more disappointment. Immediately, the little girl realized without thinking she confessed her huge secret to her mother. She had been secretly watching a forbidden TV show during tablet time.

Regina forbidden Shayla to watch Spell Sisters, a show for teenagers she feared would lead to inappropriate behavior. Her daughter, who had just been adopted and “came to live with she and her husband, was very young and impressionable. Shayla had been exposed to all kinds of things before she came to live with her and Regina wanted to protect her from the further influence of bad things and people.

Regina patiently explained to Shayla, thoughts and words have power, so we have to watch what we see and speak. “*That’s one of the reasons we read the Bible, and attend church every*

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt From Precepts for Living® Dr. Vince L., Bantu

week,” Regina said carefully. “These are activities that help us think about God’s will and help us stop doing or saying things we shouldn’t.”

**Today’s lesson tells us to submit ourselves to God, and He can purify our motives.**

**Keep In Mind**

*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:8, KJV)*

**Lesson Text**

**James 4:1-10**

1 From whence come wars and fighting among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

**2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.**

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

**4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.**

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusted to envy?

**6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisted the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.**

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.**

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

**10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.**

## The People, Places and Times

**Desire:** Often the word is used to express dangerous passions growing out of one's erroneous evaluation of the world and its pleasures. Scripture reveals the desires which drive human beings are deeply rooted in our sinful human nature. Speaking of our days before we decided to follow Christ, Paul says we were "following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature," which made us "subject to God's anger" (from Ephesians 2:3, NLT). He also encouraged believers, "Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires." (Romans 6:12, NLT). Driven by these passions, people easily fall into sin."

## Background

The book of James is written by James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem. It was most likely written to Jewish Christians meeting in house churches outside of Palestine. James writes his letter with a focus on the faith of the believer and instructs believers on how to live out that faith. This faith should be expressed in one's lifestyle. The message of the book of James is that once individuals come to faith in Jesus, their lives, their thoughts, and their desires should all be oriented toward what pleases the Lord. Faith and right action should complement one another in the life of the believer.

## In Depth

**1. Destructive Desire (James 4:1–3):** While Christians should be characterized by brotherly love, James is addressing a hostile and divided church. He begins by considering the cause of the wars and disputes that had arisen. The hostility arisen from the evil desires within, specifically, desires for one's own pleasure.

The people turned to fighting and waging war to satisfy their own desires and ambitions. They did not turn to God to ask for what they desired. They sought to obtain their desires by their own means. Any petition to God was rooted in hedonism and a desire for pleasure or position.

***How can you ensure that your interactions with others arise from pure motives?***

**2. Faithful Fulfillment (James 4:4–5):** After coming to faith, believers should abandon their old worldview. We should let go of the negative values, beliefs, and ways of thinking we held before becoming followers of Christ. We cannot hold on to both. When we accept Christ, we should allow Him to reshape us. To resist this process is to remain friends with the world. James notes that whoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

God does not want to compete with the world for our affections. God has put His Spirit within us, and He wants us to be faithful to Him alone. God’s Spirit “yearns jealously” for our full attention and affection. We cannot give faithful service to God and the world. God demands that we are faithful to Him first and foremost.

***Reflect on the areas where you invest your time, talent, and treasure. Do they reflect love for God or for the world?”***

**3. Pure Pursuit (James 4:6–10):** James offers the solution for the hostility and hedonism that plagued the church: submission to God. We are to submit our desires humbly and purely and ourselves to God. Submission to God should be the believer’s priority. We must submit to His wishes and standards. When we draw near to God in humble submission, God draws near to us. God’s love for us is immeasurable. When we recognize our need for Him and draw closer to Him, God draws near to us.

Humble submission is what God desires (Micah 6:8). James urges readers to humble themselves before the Lord and to “cleanse your hands,” which refers to the ceremonial purification worship rites of priests in the Old Testament (James 4:8). It was symbolic of turning from sin. He also urges readers to purify their hearts, symbolizing an inward purification as well. James instructs readers to show genuine sorrow and remorse for sinful lifestyles.

Believers must submit themselves to God. The act of submitting yourself to God is paired with resisting the devil. When we do so, the enemy flees from us, and we triumph over temptation.

***James writes that God opposes the proud but exalts those who humble themselves before Him. What have you done to draw near to God recently?***

#### **Liberating Lesson**

When we look at the conflicts in our world, whether disputes among our neighbors or wars between nations, the motive is often meeting selfish desires at the expense of others. As believers we must be attentive to not satisfy ourselves in ways that marginalize, take advantage of, or harm others. We must remain wholly committed to God, yet also engage the broken world around us. God cares for the lost and He expects us to show His love to the world. This has a direct impact on how we treat others—believers and unbelievers. Let the love of God lead

you as you interact with others. Guard against conflict arising from inner desires and ambitions. However, we must take care to make sure that God remains the center of our affection. We cannot allow worldly pleasures and desires to draw us away from God or cause conflict with one another. We must resist the devil, draw near to God, and submit to God every day of our lives, choosing to reflect Christ in intentions and actions.

#### **Application for Activation**

One of the most important things a believer can do is draw close to God. Set aside some time in the next seven days to spend with God. Pour your heart out to Him and listen for what He has for you. God also expects us to be loyal to Him alone. While we must interact with the world, we must also remain wholly faithful to the Lord. We must remain in constant contact with Him through His Word and prayer. As you pray, examine the motives behind your desires and be sure that they align with the heart of God. Finally, submit yourself to God. Submit your thoughts and your ways to Him. Let your interactions with others be motivated with the pure motive of God's love.

#### **Closing Prayer**

**Week of 28 July 2024**

**Daily Bible Readings**



**Monday:** Romans 8-10

**Tuesday:** Romans 11-13

**Wednesday:** Romans 14-16

**Thursday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 1-4

**Friday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 5-8

**Saturday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 9-11

**Sunday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 12-14