

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

Insights and Life Lessons
From Jacob:
Study on the Book of James
Pt. 7 (James 4)

Scripture Memorization: James 4:6-8a “But He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Introduction: In the third chapter, James’ begins by dealing with the accountability that comes with being a teacher of the word. He warns aspiring individuals to take this responsibility very serious and do not fool themselves in thinking that natural gifting should take the place of appropriate character and right living. Since all of us are prone to stumble at times, James’ intent was to counsel those who speak for a living to know that they would be held to a higher standard because they have more opportunity to sin with their tongues.

He then moves into dealing with the issue of the tongue in more detail by comparing the tongue to the bit for a horse’s mouth and the rudder of a ship. Both of these instruments are very small but extremely important as they control the movements and the direction of the horse and the ship. Just as the problem of an unruly horse or a hard-to-steer ship isn’t to lock them up, we can’t control our tongue by just trying to take a vow of silence. We need the Holy Spirit to work

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

through our new man in putting His hands on the reins and the rudders of our tongue. James admonishes us to consider the destructive power of our tongues because just like a fire, it can burn down everything that it touches. It is easier to tame a wild animal than the poison that can come from an tongue that has not been submitted to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, James once again addresses the topic of wisdom. As believers, our wisdom will be shown, not only by what we speak, but how we live our lives. He contrasts the difference between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom. A person who walks in earthly wisdom is critical, self-seeking and contentious. They only have this life and sensual pleasures in their views. It's not actually wisdom at all, and its fruit will only be evil. Conversely, the person who embodies the character of heavenly wisdom will be pure, peaceable, gentle and full of mercy. The fruit that comes from this kind of wisdom will be good and without hypocrisy. These are kind of believers that James encourages us to be.

- 1. James 4:1-3** The humble character of a living faith.
 - a. The disagreements that happen between believers is described as wars and fights as they can be quite bitter.
 - b. The root of these wars is some form of carnality because no two believers who are both walking in the Spirit of God can accept the atmosphere of disunity and division.
 - c. A believer cannot say their critical attitude comes from the Holy Spirit. This can only come from their fleshly desires.
 - d. There are different desires that will lead to conflict.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

- i. Covetousness: when you have your heart set on something that someone else has, it can lead to conflict.

- ii. Anger and animosity: these unchecked desires can lead to hatred and conflict, which includes murder.
 - 1. Matthew 5:21-22

 - 2. “The word *kill* [murder] is startling and meant to startle; James sought to force his readers to realize the depth of the evil in their bitter hatred toward others.” (Hiebert)

- iii. Anyone who is chasing this type of lifestyle will never attain it because it is futile and extremely unsatisfying.
 - 1. This is the tragic irony of the life lived after worldly and fleshly desires; it never reaches the goal it gives everything for. This fundamental dissatisfaction is not because of a lack of effort: “If the lusters fail, it is not because they did not set to work to gain their ends; for according to their nature they used the most practical means within their reach, and used them eagerly, too.” (Spurgeon)

- iv. Believers have to contend with destructive desires because they do not seek the Father in prayer for the needs we have in our lives.
 - 1. Psalm 2:7-8

- v. James is addressing the problem of selfish prayers. Some are asking amiss because what they are asking aren’t lining up with the word or will of God.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

1. Our prayers are not to persuade a reluctant God to do what we think is right, but to ask Him to accomplish His kingdom here on earth.
 2. The word “spend” is the same verb used in the story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15:14. If our prayers are self-centered and self-indulgent, we will never see anything but destruction in our lives.
- 2. James 4:4-5** A rebuke.
- a. James uses the word adulterers as a specific spiritual picture. God is the “husband” and we are his “wife”. He is speaking in OT language because this is how God dealt with the Israelites when they were attracted to some form of idolatry.
 - i. Jeremiah 3:8-9.
 - ii. Isaiah 54:5.
 - iii. James saw their covetousness as idolatry.
 1. Colossians 3:5
 - b. Their friendship with the world and friendship with God were incongruent. Even the desire to be friends with the world would make someone an enemy of God.
 - i. Matthew 6:24.
 - ii. “The strong statements James made here remind us that all was not beautiful in the early church. They had plenty of carnality and worldliness to deal with. While the New Testament church is a clear pattern for us, we should not over-romanticize the spiritual character of early Christians.” -Guzik

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

- c. The Spirit of God will convict the believer who is living in compromise and has one foot in the world system which is in rebellion against God and one foot in the life of friendship with God. There is a holy jealousy that must be addressed.
 - i. “He went so far as to speak of them as adulterers and adulteresses; and then adopting a gentler, pleading tone, he says, ‘You are grieving the Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within you, who yearns with a jealous envy to possess your entire nature for Himself.’” (Meyer)

- d. The scripture that James is referring to isn’t an exact quote as much as it is a reference to the idea that is alluded to in several OT passages.

3. James 4:6-10 The solution for strife.

- a. The same Holy Spirit that will grieve inside of us and convict us of compromise, will grant us even more grace to be able to serve the Lord as we should.
 - i. “Sin seeks to enter, grace shuts the door; sin tries to get the mastery, but grace, which is stronger than sin, resists, and will not permit it. Sin gets us down at times, and puts its foot on our neck; grace comes to the rescue... Sin comes up like Noah’s flood, but grace rides over the tops of the mountains like the ark.” (Spurgeon)

- b. This grace however is only given to those who will humble themselves.
 - i. Grace and pride are eternal enemies. It was the original sin of the enemy; his pride of wanting to be equal to the Father.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

1. Pride: it demands that I should be blessed because of my performance for Him, whether real or imagined.
 2. Grace: only deals with me based on who God is, not on anything I have done to earn it.
- ii. When James uses the phrase, “resists the proud”, it literally means that God sets himself in battle array against this enemy.
 - iii. Humility doesn’t earn the grace of God, it merely puts us in the correct posture to receive this gift. It is the same position we must cling to when we are asking anything of the Father.
- c. Submission should be our only response in light of the grace we are receiving from the Lord.
- i. “I have heard much of the rights of man: but it were well also to consider the rights of God, which are the first, highest, surest, and most solemn rights in the universe, and lie at the base of all other rights... Alas, great God, how art thou a stranger even in the world which thou hast thyself made! Thy creatures, who could not see if thou hadst not given them eyes, look everywhere except to thee. Creatures who could not think if thou hadst not given them minds, think of all things except thee; and beings who could not live if thou didst not keep them in being, forget thee utterly, or if they remember thine existence, and see thy power, are foolhardy enough to become thy foes!” -Spurgeon
 - ii. Reasons why we should submit to God.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

1. Because He created us.
 2. Because His rule is ALWAYS good for us.
 3. Because all resistance to Him is futile.
 4. Because it is the only way to salvation.
 5. Because it is the only way to have peace with God.
 6. Because it the only way to defeat the enemy.
- iii. In order to not be deceived by his lies, manipulations and intimidations, we must also resist the devil. It will solve the problems of carnality and all the issues it brings in our lives.
- iv. Resist: it comes from two Greek words, “stand” and “against”. The enemy will be sent running by any believer who comes in the authority of what Jesus did on the cross. We do not comply with any of his temptations.
- v. He will flee: when we continuously resist his attempts to take us off track, he will be overcome.
- d. Drawing near to God is both an invitation and a promise. When we resist the enemy, the next logical step is to come closer to the one who brings you the victory. What does it mean to draw near to God?
- i. Worship, praise and prayer.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

- ii. Asking counsel of God.
- iii. Enjoying communion with God.
- iv. Accepting His general course for your life.
- v. In one way, this text illustrates the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. In the old covenant, God told Moses to not come any closer to the burning bush and take off his shoes. Under the new covenant, God says to the sinner: “Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you.” Now the ground between God and the sinner has been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and we can come close to God on the basis of that blood. -Guzik
- vi. What are the results of drawing near to God?
 - 1. Helps us resist the enemy.
 - 2. Helps us become pure.
 - 3. Helps us to be remorseful for our sins.
 - 4. Helps our perspective and the way we speak about others.
 - 5. Helps to keep our minds on eternal things.
- vii. As we draw near to the Father, we will be convicted of sin and we will lament and mourn and weep, which is the appropriate response to our sins.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

1. Sinner: the word used is *hamartolos* which means the hardened sinner, the man whose sin is obvious and notorious.
2. “In using terms like lament and mourn and weep, James speaks in terms of the Hebrew prophet’s language about the anguish of repentance.”-Moffatt

viii. As we come before the holy God as the sinners we are, we present ourselves humbly before Him. Then He will lift us up. This is the blessing of repentance.

4. James 4:11-12 The solutions for strife.

- a. When we get right with God, it must result in getting right with other people. This will be displayed in the way we speak about others.
 - i. Speak evil: it is the Greek word, *katalalia*, which means “the sin of those who meet in corners and gather in little groups and pass on confidential information which destroy the good name of those who are not there to defend themselves.”-Barclay.
 - ii. “This sin is wrong for two reasons. First, it breaks the royal law that we should love one another. Second, it takes a right of judgment that only God has.”-Guzik
- b. When we judge our brother, we make ourselves the law, which isn’t in our authority to do. The only one who has the right to judge is the lawgiver Himself.
 - i. Our humility before God should extend to our attitude toward our judgment of our brothers and sisters.

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

- ii. “This is not to rule out civil courts and judges. Instead, it is to root out the harsh, unkind, critical spirit that continually finds fault with others.” -Burdick

5. James 4:13-16 A humble dependence on God.

- a. This is a rebuke against the one who makes plans outside of the constant awareness of the hand of God, and with an underestimation of our own limitations
 - i. James urges believers not to be presumptuous, by saying phrases like, “we WILL go”.
 - ii. We do not know what is to come, and our speech should always reflect the influence of the Father in our lives.

- b. We are to consider the fragility of human life, which happens only at the permission of God. Our reliance upon Him is a must.
 - i. Vapor or shadow: this is a figure of speech used in the OT
 1. Psalm 102:11.

 2. Job 8:9.

 3. 1 Chronicles 29:15.

 - ii. “There are a thousand gates to death; and, though some seem to be narrow wickets, many souls have passed through them. Men have been choked by a grape stone, killed by a tile falling from the roof of a house, poisoned by a drop, carried off by a whiff of foul air. I know not what there is that is too little to slay the greatest king. It is a marvel that man lives at all.” - Spurgeon

— WEEKLY —
**BIBLE
STUDY**
NOTES

- c. Instead, we should kill all arrogance that makes us think of our lives independently of God. This is the same sin that Lucifer was guilty of.
 - i. Arrogance: the word is *alazoneia*, which characterized the wandering quack who offered cures which were no cures and boasted to things he wasn't able to do.

- 6. **James 4:17** A challenge to live.
 - a. James recognizes that it is far easier to think about and talk about humility and dependence on God than it is to actually live it. But if we know to do it, then we are accountable to do it.
 - i. “However high and orthodox our view of God’s law might be, a failure actually to do it says to the world that we do not *in fact* put much store by it.” (Moo)
 - b. If we know it, and do not do it then it is a sin.
 - i. Luke 12:41-48. Greater light gives greater responsibility.