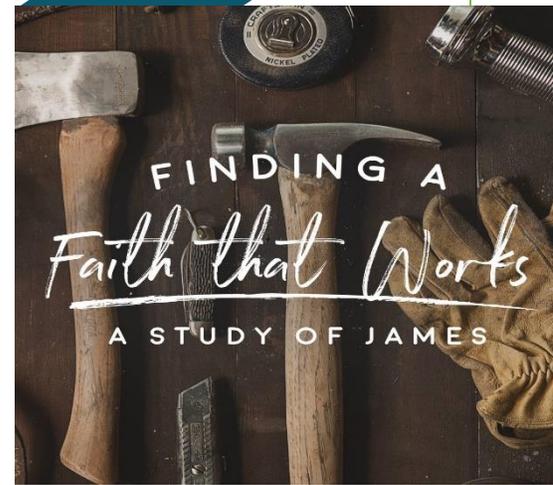


JAMES: FINDING A FAITH THAT WORKS

Lesson 8 – FAITH GROWS TOWARD GODLINESS

INTRODUCTION/THOUGHTS

- James 4 brings us to some of the most pointed and vibrant passages in the book.
- Here, he clearly confronts those whose lives have not been changed to reflect their faith. Their faith has not produced Christ-like works.
- He begins in verse one by addressing their quarrels and even hostility towards each other. They are fractured in their differences which is proof that they have not focused or submitted to the Lord.
- They have claimed to have faith, but the “proof” of their works says otherwise. What does your life say about your faith?
- A key theme in this paragraph is “worldliness.” What is worldliness? It is not defined as a certain sin or a category of sins. Very simply, it is life in opposition to God and His Word. It is how the world lives: without regard to God.



WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF WORLDLINESS?

1. Living in conflict. - vs. 1-2

- *A worldly heart is a contentious heart.* Do you ever feel that you go through seasons of “disagreeing” with everyone, or at least living at odds with anyone who doesn’t agree with you?
- Sometimes we excuse a contentious spirit by blaming it on our personality or our passion. “It’s just the way I am.” Well, yes, it is, and God is trying to change who you are!
- Think about how James finished chapter 3 (vs.17-18). God has called us to strive for peace.

2. Living in selfishness. - vs. 3

- He tells us, “Even the things you pray about, you ask so that you can ‘spend’ it on your own temporary pleasures.”
- *A worldly heart focuses on self because it does not trust God for what is best.* “I have to take care of myself because God will not.”

3. Living in union with and unhid from the world. - vs. 4

- “Adulterers” – a stout accusation, right? What is an adulterer? It is someone who gives their passions and commitments to someone after pledging it to someone else.
- The word “friendship” used in verse four is from *philio* or brotherly love. It is a deep affection toward. This verse is not telling us to avoid being friendly with the people of the world, but it is commanding us not to form a bond with the mindsets of the world.
- This “friendship” described would refer to a close bond, holding nothing back.

4. Living in pride. - vs. 6

- God is our Creator, Savior, and King. He knows us, and He knows what is best for us. His demand for our submission is not from a sinful pride, but a deep love for His children.
- Vs. 5 - God is jealous for us.

5. Living in comparison to others (and not to Christ). - vs. 11-12

- *A worldly heart lives focused on the faults of others.* It is an easy way to lift up self and excuse my disobedience to God.

WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLINESS?

1. Submitting to God and His Word. – vs. 7

- The Bible does not teach us to submit to what we understand or can explain. It commands us to submit to God.

2. Resisting the devil boldly. -vs. 7

- We use the devil as an excuse to ease our consciences far too often. Since the very first sin of mankind, we have been trying to convince God that the devil is too powerful to resist.
- God's message to us about the devil is to resist and oppose him, and he will flee. We often give into our own desires and passions only to blame them on the devil. Sin is deep in us, and we need God's help. Which leads us to verse eight.

3. Drawing close to God. – vs. 8

- Two power packed promises in a row: the devil will run to you, and God will come to you.
- Yet, we bear some responsibility here. Are you drawing close to God? What will your life look like when you do?

4. Cleansing our actions and purifying our hearts. – vs. 8

- Purify your hearts, ye ___? ___ : double minded. The purifying of our hearts is not simply the complete purging of all evil thoughts and intents. Rather, it is the focusing of single-mindedness on God and His desires for us. *It is the forcing out of the things of the world by the forcing in of our God.*

5. Humbling ourselves before the Lord by being sobered yet confident of our place in Him. - vs. 9-10

- Jesus died for you and because of you! Sin is serious. God is calling us to Himself. Run to Him!

SEARCH YOUR OWN HEART. DO YOU FIND MORE CHARACTERISTICS OF
WORLDLINESS OR GODLINESS IN YOUR LIFE?

FAMILY DISCUSSION / PERSONAL STUDY

The Book of James teaches us that true faith reveals itself by works. What we do in our Christian life is fueled by what we believe.

Take time together as a family in God's Word. Think throughout the day to reinforce the main truth of the week. Remember significant ways God has worked in your lives.

TAKE TIME

Read James 4:1-12 – The way we view the world can lead us to grow in two ways: gladness/contentment or entitlement/contempt. Which way do you sense your heart growing? What do you find yourself feeling most entitled to in this world? What type of discontentment does this bring?

THINK

What ways can you show and live these characteristics of Godliness this week? Write out a plan to act on these characteristics daily this week? Ask God to give you the grace (vs. 6) to live out this plan.

REMEMBER

Your baptism: If you have been baptized, meditate on and discuss what it symbolizes in the believer's life. We are baptized to picture in an outward display the work that God is doing in us inwardly. We are dying to our sins (and worldliness) and being raised to walk a new life of Godliness. Does your daily life display the truth that baptism teaches? (Worldliness decreasing / Godliness increasing)

If you are a Christian but have not been baptized, please consider the picture that Christ has given us in our command to be baptized. Contact pastor if you would like to display outwardly the work that Jesus is doing inwardly!