

# JAMES

## LIVING FAITH



### The Danger of Worldliness

James 4:1-10



## Introduction

A number of years ago a few people noticed that some errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled and hummed the same song, but all of them were out of tune. After a careful investigation by some curious observers, it was determined that these boys were humming and whistling the song from a nearby church bell tower that was out of tune. The reason they were all out of tune was because they had the same source that was out of tune. As we resume James' letter, we find him addressing believers who are out of tune because the beat that they are marching to is not the beat of faithfulness to Christ, but rather the beat of the unbelieving world. James wanted his readers to get back on the right track—to get their song in tune with Christ and not with the world.



## Study

*Context:* James' focus throughout his letter has been to correct false assumptions that his audience had developed regarding how following Christ looks amidst living in a culture that does not follow Christ. Worldly perspectives and attitudes had begun to seep into the life of the church. James saw this as a threat to the message of the gospel and even a threat to those who professed to being Christians. James was not afraid to use strong language and invoke the reality of spiritual warfare and the work of the devil in his attacks on the church. We see strong warnings from James in this passage as he examines the causes and root of worldliness and then exhorts believers to humble themselves before the Lord in response to their own worldliness.

*Structure:*

- I. The conflict produced by worldliness (4:1-5)
- II. The solution for worldliness (4:6-10)



- 4.) In v. 4 James referred to those whose hearts seek after these things as adulterous people. Why is adultery such a moving illustration of the Christian whose heart seeks after passions that don't glorify God?
- 5.) James referenced the adulterous state of the heart that is consumed in worldliness and then in v. 5 he wrote, "Or do you suppose it is no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?'" According to James, why is God so concerned with the hearts of his people?

*The solution for worldliness (vv. 6-10)*

- 6.) Read 4:6-10. What is *the hope from God* for the heart embroiled in worldliness? What are *the actions we can take* for our hearts embroiled in worldliness?

**APPLY →** The hope for any of us in the midst of our worldliness and rebellion against God is found in the promise that, "he gives more grace." This promise of grace leads to repentance. How can you put the exhortation of vv. 6-10 in practice as you consider the grace of God and the sin of your heart?

- 7.) In vv. 7-8, James tells his audience to submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to God. James is putting the human heart's struggle with worldliness in the context of spiritual warfare. Why do you think this is significant in understanding our own fight against worldliness?

8.) What does verse 9 reveal about the seriousness of repentance for worldliness? What does verse 10 say to give hope to those who humble themselves before the Lord?

**APPLY →** Humbling yourself under God's hand can be painful. We have to acknowledge our sin and cry out to God for mercy. What are ways that you experienced God's grace in the pain of repentance, and how have you drawn near to God and seen him draw near to you in the pain of your grief over your worldly sin?

**APPLY →** Who are fellow church members that you can reach out to and talk with to help you think through the temptations of worldliness that you face? How can you seek to encourage your brothers and sisters to forsake the temptations of worldliness for the promises of God to his children?



## Connect

**Gospel Connections.** James 4:10 states, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” James wanted his readers to have hearts that were oriented around the gospel. As Christians, our hope in the gospel is in Jesus Christ who humbled himself to the point of death on the cross, and He is now reigning as the risen King of all creation. Jesus was not in lock-step with the world. He was crucified by the unbelieving world. James wrote that friendship with the world was enmity with God (James 4:4). Jesus’ death was the result of faithfulness to God meaning feeling the wrath of the world. In the grace of God, He gives new life to all who humble themselves and look to Him in repentance. This new life is found through Christ who humbled himself to the point of death.

**Whole-Bible Connections.** James made reference to Proverbs 3 when he wrote in James 4:6 that, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” This is a theme that we find in Proverbs and find in a number of places throughout Scripture. God opposes the proud. This is a simple concept, but the Bible reveals the hardship that we have in understanding and embracing this concept. We are by nature prideful and don’t want to acknowledge our need for help. The call to humility for the people of God is a call to abandon our inner-disposition towards self-sufficiency and to recognize our great

need for a rescuer and a redeemer. "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." This statement is all the more profound when we consider the means through which He gives grace to the humble.

**Theological Connections.** To "lament" is to mourn or grieve in a particularly passionate manner. Lamentation is something that we see in the Bible when the people of God were made particularly aware of their sinfulness before God and they were undone by the effects their sin had upon them individually, corporately, and relationally with God. Lamentation occurred in the Old Testament when the people of Israel would be broken over invading armies conquering them or when they were exiled to Babylon, living as a scattered, broken, and even enslaved people. The Old Testament even has a book called "Lamentations." James 4:6-10 could be a good example of lamentation in the New Testament, as God called his people to recognize that their worldliness was rebellion against Him and the solution was to "be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom" (James 4:9).

**Praise Connections.**

**COME, YE SINNERS, POOR AND NEEDY**

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore  
Jesus ready, stands to save you  
Full of pity, love and power

I will arise and go to Jesus  
He will embrace me in His arms  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
Oh, there are ten thousand charms

I will arise and go to Jesus  
He will embrace me in His arms  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
Oh, there are ten thousand charms

Feel Him Prostate in the garden  
On the ground your Maker lies  
On the bloody tree, behold him  
Sinner, will this not suffice?

Come, ye thirsty, come and welcome  
God's free bounty glorify  
True belief and true repentance  
Every grace that brings you nigh

Lo, the incarnate God ascended  
Pleads the merit of his blood  
Venture on him, venture wholly  
Let no other trust intrude

Come, ye weary, heavy-laden  
Lost and ruined by the fall  
If you tarry 'til you're better  
You will never come at all

I will arise and go to Jesus  
He will embrace me in His arms  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
Oh, there are ten thousand charms

*Words and music by Fernando Ortega and John Andrew Schreiner (2002)*