

# James 4.1–10

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## *Your Heart: humble or divided?*

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### **Pride comes before a fall...**

Did you hear about the man who had *six* children? He was so proud of this and the way it demonstrated his virility, that he started to call his wife ‘Mother of Six’ – despite her objections.

One night, they went to a party. As usual, the man was bragging about how he’d had six children, and his wife was getting more and more fed up with him.

When it was time to leave, he called out loudly, ‘Shall we go home now, Mother of Six?’

And with that, she snapped, and called back, ‘Any time you’re ready, Father of Four.’

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

*Proverbs 16.18 (NIV)*

# Quarrelling desires

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

*James 4.1-2a (NIV)*

Sad fact: Christians argue.

Why? Is it *because* they are religious?

James' answer is no: *it is because we aren't religious enough.*

In God's power we are to put to death our evil desires – God gives us his Holy Spirit to enable us to grow in holiness, to overcome sin that is so tempting.

The problem isn't religion – the problem is *we aren't religious enough.* We aren't Christian enough – we aren't enough like Jesus.

So, we quarrel and fight.

## Not asking – asking badly

You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

*James 4.2b-3 (NIV)*

This is a challenging verse – it opens up the can of worms about why sometimes when we pray, even for a good thing, we don't get what we ask for.

When we pray for a loved one to be healed or to come to faith – and we don't receive it – why not?

Now is not the time to go into that, but if it's something you do struggle with, please speak up and let me know – I don't have an answer, but I will always come and talk through it with you.

For now – ask yourself this question – when you pray, do you launch straight into words, *or do you ask God* what you should be praying for first?

Maybe some of our prayers are not being answered, because we aren't first listening to what God wants us to pray for.

# Loyalty

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?

*James 4.4-5 (NIV)*

Friends, one of the hardest choices we have to make is this: do we choose God, or the world?

One of James' big things is to challenge our double-mindedness. We cannot serve two masters, Jesus taught – James takes that teaching and runs with it.

If we are double-minded, the reality is we get further and further away from God.

The Bible describes God as jealous – but his jealousy is different to ours. His jealousy comes from love, not self-centredness – he made us to know and love him. He wants the best for us – which is to love him back.

# Washing your hands

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

‘God opposes the proud  
but shows favour to the humble.’

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

*James 4.6-10 (NIV)*

These are some hard words, and some incredible words.

God loves the humble – those who recognise God made us, is greater than us, and knows what is best for us – and then live his way.

Being humble also means being honest about our failings, and saying sorry to God for our sin – it’s like washing your hands. Sin is so bad, and so serious – as James recognises – but in Jesus dealing with our sin *is like washing our hands...* isn’t that amazing??

No sacrificial system, no jumping through hoops, no paying the price – Jesus has done all that for us.

Instead, we humbly acknowledge our failings – and what does God do? He doesn't crush us under his feet, kick us when we are down – (10) **humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

We are sinners, but we are not worms – Christians are loved, *beloved* children of God.

And with that comes power. As we've already seen about overcoming our sinful desires, in God we have power to resist – even the devil himself.

Friends, the problem is we aren't Christian enough – how can you grow in your discipleship today?

What one thing do you need to hear from God, to take with you into the next week, that will help you grow as a disciple of God?

First step, or the thousandth step – please take it, and make the most of our prayer team who are here to pray with and for you.