

The Battle Rages

1. When you don't get something you want how do you usually respond?

In chapter 4 James continues his indictment on the destructive results of having "bitter envy and selfish ambition" in our hearts, a discussion he started in the previous chapter (3:14-16 NIV). His rebuke becomes more personal now as he describes the inner struggle that often rages within us.

Prepare Your Heart: Take a few minutes to quietly humble yourself before God. Pray for spiritual wisdom and understanding that you may apply the truths of this passage to your life.

Glance back through the section we just studied (3:13-18). Then **read** James 4:1-10.

2. How does the previous section in chapter 3 flow into the discussion of chapter 4? Compare the atmosphere of James 4:1a with that of James 3:18. Record your observations below.

3. To whom is James addressing his rebuke (see 4:1a)?

Read James 4:1-4 several times, checking different translations. (The absence of the phrase "my brethren" (1:2; 2:1; 3:1 NASB) indicates the sternness of this section and the one to follow.)

4. a. James gets right to the heart of the matter in 4:1. What is the origin of the disputes that lead to contentious relationships between Christians?

b. What is the meaning of "pleasures that wage war in your members" (NASB) or "desires that battle within you" (NIV)? (Consider Romans 7:15-17, 23-25.)

With increasing fervor and harshness in his tone James issues one of the most strongly worded warnings that we find anywhere in the New Testament—followed by a call to repentance. **Reread** James 4:4-10 with an open heart.

8. Define the following phrases from James 4:4. List some of the symptoms of each.
- a. “**adulterous people**” (NIV) (See Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:20; Hosea 9:1 and Matthew 16:4 for background.)

Definition:

Symptoms:

- b. “**friendship with the world**” (Consider Matthew 6:24 and 1 John 2:15-17.)

Definition:

Symptoms:

Pause and Reflect

9. In quietness reflect on the sins that are openly exposed in James 4:4. Has the Word of God (through James) enabled you to see any selfish goals or worldly alliances in your life? How seriously do you typically view these sins? Record your thoughts and/or questions below.
10. What explanation is provided in James 4:5 to help us understand why flirtation with the world is such a serious matter to God?
11. According to James 4:6a how is it possible for the Christian to live wholly for God in a corrupt world? Why do you think He offers this only to the humble (James 4:6b; Proverbs 3:34)?

If any relationship is to thrive, active participation from both parties is essential. This is especially true of our relationship with God. From James 4:6 we observed an important truth that governs God's response to us: He amazingly gives grace to the humble and the broken in spirit! Now, in verses 7-10 James goes into great detail about what our response should be to God in light of the strong warnings issued in 4:1-5—providing keys for resolving conflicts, ending battles—and for cultivating this active, trusting faith.

12. **Review** James 4:7-10. List all of the action verbs in these verses. Why do you think submission is listed first?

13. Consider the relationships in your life where there may be tension, quarrels or strife. Approach God with a humble spirit and **pray through** James 4:7-10. Do some of the confessing, resisting, mourning, etc., that James urges us to do. Be specific and honest in your confessions. *There is a good Godly grief that can lead us to thanksgiving and praise for what God is doing to make us complete and lacking nothing in Him.* Finally, notice some of the promises that are linked to our obedience. Summarize your time with God below.

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?
Who may stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear by what is false.
He will receive blessing from the LORD
And vindication from God his Savior
Such is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek your face, O God of Jacob
Psalm 24:3-6 NIV