

SKY Correspondence Course

Lesson 9

Our Responsibility to God

Lesson Text: James 4:1–10; 13–17

While the ultimate purpose of human life is to be fulfilled at the resurrection, God does not neglect our present physical life. Indeed living an abundant, happy, and successful life are an integral part of God's plan. The entirety of the book of Proverbs is filled with instructions and exhortations explaining how men, women, and children should conduct their lives. God truly wants all mankind to prosper, with everyone achieving his or her fullest potential in all areas of living—social, economic, intellectual, family, and personal. Jesus said it best: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Chapter 3 in the book of James talks about peace and righteousness. Chapter 4 begins with "wars and fighting." James is adamant about how a man cannot be loyal to God and a friend of the world at the same time. While we live in a society that is materialistic, there is only one Master that we can be loyal to. Once again, James insists that our faith must be demonstrated in upright living, and a character that is visible.

Cause of Conflict— Battles Are Born out of Lust

Read James 4:1—James begins chapter four with a rhetorical question—which means he does not expect an answer. He answers his own question. James did not literally mean that Christians were engaging in hand-to-hand combat. Rather the wars and fights were conflicts, strifes, and quarrels brought on by the desire for *more* money, power, possessions, and status—or the desire for "pleasure" (also translated "lusts"). James says there is a *constant* conflict in your heart and mind because of our wants and desires.

Violence Begins With Lust

Read James 4:2—The word *lust* used here is not the same as in verse 1. It means an inordinate lust for things whether they be good or bad. It is a hedonistic approach to life. *Hedonism* is the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the greatest good. This person will break man's law, and God's law, to get what they want. They do not seek God's counsel; their appetites are their authority.

Asking Amiss

Read James 4:3—James is now speaking of those who do petition God, but their motives in asking are purely for "self." God will not grant selfish desires, or those things that will lead to our hurt.

Separation From God— Friend to the World

Read James 4:4—God wants us to enjoy life (read Ephesians 4:7 and 1 Timothy 4:4,5), but if your pleasure leads you to sin then you are a friend of the world and God's enemy. James used the term "adulterers and adulteresses." In the Old Testament, God likened His relationship with Israel to a marriage. When Israel was unfaithful to God, He described them as being adulterous—meaning *faithless*. Adultery means our vow of love is broken, and we disregard the commitment to love, honor, and respect the other person. It becomes idolatry—our *appetites* lead us to betray the sanctity of the marriage contract. God does not want to fight for our attention. He demands our loyalty and our best toward Him. He wants us to trust Him, not the world. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24).

Read James 4:5—The question asked by James may be, "Do we think the Spirit given to us at baptism urges us to pursue the things of this world?" Does His spirit demand that we fight, war, and create conflict and strife? Of course our answer would be NO! Our character is made strong when we refuse to give in to the

desires of the heart and flesh. God gives us *grace* as we strive to become mature Christians with the help of His Holy Spirit.

Read James 4:6—James now quotes Proverbs 3:34: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” The cures for our conflicts are simple. When we find ourselves in conflict, have a humble spirit before God. God will only show grace and favor to those who have a humble attitude. Those who are haughty and full of pride will not receive His grace or blessing. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

Obedience to God— Resist the Devil

Read James 4:7—Two choices are given: resist God or submit to God. James encourages us to make the right choice which is to submit (commit) to God, and resist the devil. If we do resist, the devil will *flee* from us. When you submit to God’s authority, you are at the same time resisting the devil. We are told in 1 Peter 5:8 that “the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Well, this roaring lion turns into a “paper lion” when you submit to God. Studying your Bible and praying will help you submit to God. Jesus set us the example to resist the devil by quoting scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). Just because Jesus resisted Satan once does not mean Satan stayed away for good. In Luke 4:13 it says, “Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an *opportune* time.” This scripture makes it clear that Satan stayed away until another opportunity revealed itself. If Satan will try to tempt Jesus, he will try to tempt us.

Draw Near to God

Read James 4:8—When you draw near to God through prayer and obedience, He will draw near to you. “Cleanse your hands” means to correct your actions. To purify your heart means to rid yourself of the source of bad actions—in other words, repent. A person that is double-minded sits on the fence, will not take a stand for God or for the world. Instead, the double-minded proceed back and forth between pleasing God and being a friend to the world.

Be Humble

Read James 4:9,10—This verse does not mean a Christian is not to be joyous. It does mean to turn away from the silly pleasures of the world and the sorrow it ultimately brings, and show true sincerity and sorrow for not being wholeheartedly committed to God. When you humbly give honor and thanks to God, He will “lift you up.”

Walk With God

Read James 4:13,14—It is a good thing to have goals and plans for the future. James is saying that we should not conduct our life as though we don’t need God—heedless of our need for God’s help, guidance, and His blessings. Don’t make the mistake of making plans apart from God. In everything that you do, invite God into that plan. When you are young, it seems that life will go on forever. James is warning all of us that life is short; it is but a vapor that vanishes away. A vapor is just a puff of steam.

Planning in Humility

Read James 4:15—These are not just to be words we say, but words we live by. Our actions should display willingness to live by the will of God. Don’t allow your life to be so wrapped up in your own ways that you put off conducting your life in a godly fashion. Don’t think you have all the time in the world to set things right with God, family, and friends.

Read James 4:16—In plain and simple language, James states that boasting is evil. All of our plans can be brought to nothing in a life-altering moment. Man’s life is God’s gift, not his own.

Read James 4:17—The final sentence in chapter 4 relates to all the advice James has given us so far. James encourages us to do good. If we do not, we sin.

God is our friend. He is our Creator. We are His creation. He not only likes you, He loves you. In what measure does He love us? Read John 3:16.

A verse worthy to remember:

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil
and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7

Word Definitions

These definitions were taken from
Webster’s New World Dictionary

- **Hedonism**—The doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the greatest good.
- **Faithless**—Not adhering to allegiance, promises, vows, or duty.
- **Submit**—To give over or yield to the power or authority of another.
- **Boast**—To speak with excessive pride and exaggeration, especially about one’s self.

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Date: _____
Name: _____
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City: _____
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Questions and Answers

- Who said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."
A. Jesus
B. James
C. John
- The word *hedonist* means:
A. Pleasure seeker
B. Spiritual believer
C. Pertaining to the Hellenist
- True/False—Can a man serve two master? _____
- What did James mean when he used the words "wars and fights" in James 4:1.
Give an example of how it can apply to your life?

- What is a definition of lust and what does lust lead to?

- True/False—God will grant your every request. _____
- Satan will *flee* from us if we do the following:
A. Ignore him
B. Resist him
C. Be afraid of him
- The Scripture that says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," is found in _____.

9. "The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." This scripture is found where?
A. James 4:5
B. 1 Peter 5:8
C. Luke 4:13

10. True/False—Once you resist the devil, he will never bother you again. _____

11. True/False—God wants all mankind to prosper—achieving his or her own individual success in life. _____

12. If you are a friend to the world, you are:

- A. God's servant
- B. God's disciple
- C. God's enemy

13. What do you think James means by "friendship with the world"?

14. Explain why adultery is a form of idolatry.

15. Give three examples of how you can draw close to God.

16. What is your definition of being a friend?

17. True/False—God asks us to draw near to Him, to wash our hands and purify our hearts. _____

18. Complete the following sentence: "To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is _____."

19. True/False—God's Holy Spirit gives us the urge to pursue the pleasures of this world. _____

20. True/False—If Satan tempted Jesus, he will tempt you. _____

Answers

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1. A
2. A
3. No
4. He was talking about conflicts in a person's mind about doing what is right. I choose friends carefully because I don't want to be influenced by others to do wrong.
5. Lust is having an incredible desire for pleasure. This kind of lust can lead to violence because a person will go to all lengths to satisfy the desires of the flesh.
6. F
7. B
8. James 4:6 and Proverbs 3:34
9. B
10. F
11. T
12. C
13. James is saying not to become accepting and tolerant with what occurs in the world.
14. Idolatry is worshiping worldly things before God. Adultery is breaking a marriage covenant. God married Israel and idolatry breaks this marriage covenant.
15. Pray, read the Bible, memorize scripture.
16. A friend is someone you can trust. A person who is there for you in good and bad times and someone who doesn't encourage you to do evil.
17. T
18. Sin
19. F
20. T