

## Divisions

James 4:1-12

There was a new department store opening in New York City. It is called the Husbands R Us. It is a place where women can shop for a husband. The store has 7 floors with each floor having different qualities of a husband. The higher the floor, the better the husband. If the woman wanted better qualities, they would simply go to the next floor. But the store had a restriction saying that once you go to another floor, you cannot go back down to the previous floor.

One woman came into the first floor. A sign said that the men on this floor have a job. She thought to herself that this is a good quality of a husband, but she was curious to see what the next level held for her, so she decided to go to the 2nd floor.

As she got off the elevator, there was a sign saying, "The men on this floor have a job and loves children." She thought this was even better, but she decided to go to the 3rd floor.

As she got off the elevator on the 3rd floor, the sign says, "The men on this floor have a job, loves children, and is good looking." She thought this is

even better! But the curiosity got the best of her, onto the 4th floor.

The sign on this floor says, "The men on this floor have a job, loves children, is good looking, and they like to do housework." Wow, she thought, what more could a wife ask for, but she decided to go to the next level.

The sign on the 5th floor read, "The men on this floor have a job, loves children, is good looking, likes to do housework, and they are very romantic." She thought to herself, "how much better can this get?" But instead of selecting a man on this floor, she decided to go to the 6th floor.

The 6th floor sign says, "The men on this floor have a job, loves children, is good looking, likes to do housework, is romantic, and they love to shower their wives with luxurious gifts." But...she could not pass up on going to the final floor.

As the 7th floor elevator opened, the sign now says, "There are no men on this floor. If you are reading this please understand, there are just some people who can't be pleased!"

Today James will teach us about division and how it is not to be in the church. So open your Bible up to James 4 as we explore the source and solution to division. First, the source:

- I. Divisions come from your desires 4:1-6
  - A. Such desires hinder prayer vs. 1-3

James 4:1-3, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

James uses the word “quarrel” here which has the meaning of a serious dispute or even has the implication of doing combat and he ties it to the words “among you” meaning this battle is being waged in the church. This shouldn’t be!

What should the church look like?

John 13:34-35, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one

another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Acts 4:32, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.”

Now this passage isn’t saying that we should all be sharing our possessions with each other just because that was how this group of believers did in Acts. What it is saying is that we are to be one in heart and mind. If we are doing our Father’s work how could that be divided especially when we all share the same Spirit in us acting as our guide?

Not yet convinced. Check this out:

1 Corinthians 1:10, “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

You might ask “How is this possible?” Let me tell you, only by prayer, but more of that in a moment.

James shows us 3 sources of internal conflict in these verses. First, he reveals our uncontrolled desires. This

is our seeking pleasure. This is hedonism, the pursuit of the sensual and fleshly desires.

Paul writes to Timothy about this type of person in:

2 Timothy 3:2-4, "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

When we seek to fulfill our pleasures, it results in an internal war against our spirit. It builds a wall between us and the Holy Spirit making it harder and harder to hear the Spirit's voice.

Second James exposes unfulfilled desire. When any strong lust is not gratified that person becomes prone to lash out in anger and frustration. James uses the word "murder" here and it doesn't need to be an actual murder because we know that even an angry word is like murder in our hearts.

How often do husbands and wives fight because of unfulfilled desires in the relationship? When we don't

get our way it can lead to quarrels and fights even in the church.

Third, Selfish desire leads us to pray with selfish motives which simply ends up being an empty prayer. Even in the Lord's Prayer we see Jesus teaching us to pray God's will not our will.

This is a difficult lesson to learn, but all those selfish prayers will go unanswered. If you want powerful prayers that get answered begin praying God's will. Quote Scripture as your prayer for lost loved ones, "God is not willing that any should perish." Claim that desire of God's in your prayer.

Flee selfishness, pray God's will, not yours! Write that down where you will see it every day. Prayer lesson #1, Pray God's will!

#### B. It hinders relationship with God 4:4-6

James 4:4-6, "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. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

James provides us with 3 characteristics of those who are in conflict with God. First, they are hostile toward God. James uses the word “adulterous” here emphasizing that those hostile toward God are cheating on him like a married person having an affair. If we love the world we are cheating on God. We are committing adultery with the world.

1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

Second, disregard for the Scriptures! When someone is hostile toward God, they will also be hostile toward His Word. They will neither trust it nor obey it.

Third, Pride! Look at what Peter adds to this thought:

1 Peter 5:5-7, “In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you,

clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Pride separates us from God because it places us in the position that God should hold in our lives. That is why God hates it; it separates us from Him. Then notice the progression Peter gives us.

When we humble ourselves then God lifts us up and then notice Peter promises: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

That’s true freedom, something pride doesn’t give us.

So that’s the source of division, now let’s look at the solution:

## II. Correcting Division 4:7-12

### A. Submit to God, resist the Devil vs. 7

James 4:7, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

James gives us 12 commands in verses 7-12 and we have two of them here in verse 7. First, we are to submit to God! We are to come under His sovereign authority as Lord! We can't be saved without submission.

Second, resist the Devil! This means we stand against and oppose the Devil. Notice what John says about this in:

1 John 3:8, "The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

You are either doing God's will or you are doing Satan's will. There is not middle ground where we are separate from God and Satan, to be apart from God means you are in alliance with Satan.

#### B. Draw close to God, wash & purify yourself vs 8

James 4:8, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

The third command is to draw near to God. This is simply having fellowship with God. When we walk in penitence & humility it shows that we know who we are and aligns ourselves properly with God.

The 4<sup>th</sup> command is to cleanse. This has the idea of washing up. It is an invitation to salvation, that is when we are cleansed.

The 5<sup>th</sup> command is to purify our hearts. The washing cleans the outside, purifying oneself addresses the inside.

#### C. Reflect true repentance vs 9

James 4:9, "Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom."

The 6<sup>th</sup> command is simply, be miserable, grieve. The idea here is of being broken over our sinfulness. When we have the proper view of God and our condition it should produce a reaction. If there is no sorrow, have we really realized our own sinfulness?

The 7<sup>th</sup> command is to mourn! Again it is the reaction to sin in our life. Luke captures this idea in:

Luke 18:13, "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"

The 8<sup>th</sup> command follows the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and takes it just one more step, weep! This is what happened to Peter when he heard the rooster crow the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. He remembered what Jesus had said about him denying him and he was broken and wept.

2 Corinthians 7:10, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

When we see our sin as God sees it, we are broken. Now hang on, being broken is a good thing. We need to be broken; we grow when we are broken.

Let's get broken together!

The 9<sup>th</sup> command is to turn laughter & joy to mourning & gloom. This simply becomes the exclamation point to how our attitude should be toward sin.

The writer of Lamentations captures this thought in:

Lamentations 5:15-16, "Joy is gone from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning. 16 The crown

has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!"

#### D. Humble yourself vs 10

James 4:10, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

The 10<sup>th</sup> command is to humble yourself. This means to make oneself low. As you draw closer to God the more you will realize your sinfulness. Look at Isaiah when he was caught up in a vision with God.

Isaiah 6:5, "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

#### E. Do not speak evil of others vs 11

James 4:11, "Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it."

The 11<sup>th</sup> command is not to speak evil or slander one another. The use of the words "one another" here shows us that James is talking about people within

the church. It's hard to love one another if we are speaking evil of each other, isn't it?

#### F. Do not judge others vs 12

James 4:12, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?"

The 12<sup>th</sup> command is to not judge others. When we judge others we are trying to take God's job and if we have learned all which James wrote before this we realize we are in the very same boat as the one we would judge.

So, today's test question is how do we view ourselves and others in light of our true condition before God?