



Shoe Leather Christianity

A Study on the Book of James

Lesson 4A | June 11, 2015 | James 4:1 – 12

Lesson Overview

James 4 is another one of those “gone from preachin’ to meddlin’ passages”. Verse 2 sums it up:

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

So much of the Christian life relates to matters of the heart. There is a lot of wisdom in the above statement. In reality this statement is a “gut check” for us as followers of Jesus. No one in their right-mind asks God for something that reflects impure motives. When we desire things that are Godly we do not have to run over people or be manipulative to get them. Wanting things that come from God takes the pressure off life to produce.

In this passage there appear to be three themes that all start with the letter “S”: Sin (verses 1-6), Submit (verses 7-10), and Slander (verses 11-12). The context here is choosing God over the world through submission to His will. There are times in our life when decisions really are black and white; it boils down to doing what we want versus what God wants. As we mature in Christ the goal is submission to the point where we do not strive against the Lord’s plans for us. For those who might be inclined to go “round and round” with God, we are going to lose!

Series Overview

Success comes from training, not trying. As we study the book of James, we will find a cause and effect relationship with regards to the choices we make in life. There is always a pattern associated with success or failure. The key is to determine areas in our life where we are weak and seek the Lord’s guidance in making lasting changes, not the temporary changes often associated with today’s “boot strap” self-help approaches.

Throughout this series we are going to focus on the following flowchart that represents the “progressive” phases of our Christian life; each phase of the Christian life is associated with the previous phase. **Environment** leads to beliefs; **beliefs** lead to thoughts; **thoughts** lead to actions; **actions** lead to habits; and **habits** lead to **lifestyles**. A phrase to help us remember this progression is *Every Boy Thinks About Hunting Lions*. Try and commit this flowchart to memory as it will be useful throughout the series.



Figure 1: Progressive Phases of the Christian Life

1. As you look back over your life, how much frustration has been caused by you *not getting what you want*? If you had to live part of your life over, would you change your perspective?

2. In verse 6 we read that "God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble". What makes pride so dangerous and humility so important?

PRIDE:

HUMILITY:

3. The New Testament speaks often of harmony in terms of brothers and sisters getting along in the church. Verses 11 and 12 address the subject of slander. What makes slander and gossip so dangerous among Believers? Think in terms of what it communicates to the world.