

## James 4:1-10

### Friendship with the world:

*What do you want? What does God want?*

**Chapter 4**<sup>1</sup> What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup> But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

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

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

### **General comments:**

James uses lots of opposites and parallels within this passage. See:

- do not have/do not ask (verse 2b)
- ask/do not receive (verse 3)
- friendship with world/enmity with God (verse 4)
- resist the devil/draw near to God (verse 7b)
- God opposes the proud/God gives grace to the humble (verse 6)
- Mourning/laughter (verse 9)
- Humility/exaltation (verse 10)

We are called to reject one thing and to embrace another. There is no room in the way James writes for being in the middle. In fact, he specifically rebukes anyone who *is*: ‘you double-minded’ (verse 8, remember discussion about this term in the first study, regarding 1:7, 8).

Notice that two different ‘desires’ are mentioned: what they desire, and what God desires. Their desires are evil and self-centred (4:1, 3, 4). What God desires is *us* (4:5).

‘They have intense desires that are promoting relational havoc in the church, and yet the desires find no answer because they have ceased to go to the source of real fulfilment – God himself.’ Page 253 ‘The Expositor’s Bible Commentary’, Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

What is the source of the conflicts and disputes James’ audience is experiencing?

What is wrong with their desires?

What does James mean when he talks about adultery and friendship?

Thinking about ourselves, in what ways are we trying to be ‘friends’ of the world?

Reflect on verse 5: do you think of God ‘yearning jealously’ for you?

Why do you think God opposes the proud? (verse 6) How could pride be a problem in regards to relationship with God?

In what ways do you need to ‘resist the devil’ (verse 7)? What does it look like to do that? (Note: ‘resist’ means to ‘place oneself on the opposite side of someone or something’ page 256 ‘The Expositor’s Bible Commentary’, Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland).

What does it mean to draw near to God? (remember Heb 7:19, which uses similar language as James 4:8).

Can you think of instances where you have humbled yourself before God, and he has exalted you? Share some of those with the group.