



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## **James 4:1-10** **English Standard Version** **January 13, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 13**, is from **James 4:1-10**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the [International Bible Lesson](#) that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(James 4:1) What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?**

James describes the ways of “this world,” of the people who focus on achieving and obtaining what “this world” has to offer instead of what the next world offers through faith in Jesus Christ. Unhappily, too many people in the church bring their “this world” commitment and focus with them into the church. Ruled by their evil desires and

passions and with internal and external conflicts these types of people cause quarrels and fights with each other and others and bring disruption into the church.

**(James 4:2) You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.**

In most cases, those in the church who are still in love with the practices and possessions of “this world” desire what they should not practice or possess; therefore, they may murder someone or cheat or tell lies or try to assassinate someone’s character to get what they want. Some covet what another possesses, because there is no one or no other thing like what they want, and they will try anything to get what they want, if they cannot get what they want in legal ways. The worldly-minded in the church do not ask another or ask God to give them what they want—perhaps knowing that neither the church nor God would approve of what they desire.

**(James 4:3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.**

If your passions, emotions, and selfish desires rule you instead of love for God and others, and you ask God for something that is bad, God knows it would harm you and others; so, you will not receive what you want from God. For example, if you ask for a snake when you should be asking for your daily bread; then, a merciful God will not

give you what you ask.

**(James 4:4) You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

James describes the effect when one or more many people in the church are not obeying the commandments of Jesus. They are not loving God and others in word and deed as Jesus taught and exemplified. They are not growing in grace; therefore, neither they nor those around them enjoy peace with them. They are adulterous spiritually if not also physically, because instead of loving God and others as God has commanded, they love the things of this world and themselves supremely. They are enemies of God when they try to make friendship with “this world” to enjoy what their immoral passions crave. For example, Jesus said we cannot love both God and money. If we love money or anything else more than God, we will eventually come to hate God (see Matthew 6:24).

**(James 4:5) Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?**

God made our human spirit to indwell our physical bodies. God sends His Holy Spirit into us as believers in Christ to have communion, fellowship, and friendship with us through our spirit. When we prefer friendship and

fellowship with the world, so our passions can be satiated by the things and people of this world, we offend God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We are refusing to let the Word of God dwell in us richly and the Spirit of God to help us change and transform our lives into the image of Christ.

**(James 4:6) But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”**

If we find ourselves slavishly following our passions and emotions (our flesh) as James describes, the promise from Scripture is “God gives more grace,” but the condition to receive more grace involves expressing true humility before God. We must bow before the Lord God morally and spiritually, confess our sins to God, repent (turn from) all our sins, turn to Jesus, and ask Jesus for His power to live as His friend and in friendship with all heaven; then, Jesus will give us more grace to overcome our temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

**(James 4:7) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

Previously, even when in the church, people can be so in love with “this world” and themselves that they can become enemies of God and fight with God and His people. The solution to this sinful way of living is to submit to God, bow down before God, and give God your heart in total allegiance to serve God in Christ supremely. Then,

the war will turn from warring against God to warring against the devil and our own sinful passions. To resist the devil involves putting on the full armor of God; then, the devil will flee from us; thereby, we will have peace with God and peace within ourselves (see Ephesians 6:10-18).

**(James 4:8) Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

Having submitted ourselves once and for all to God, we may need to submit ourselves to God repeatedly when tempted to follow our passions once again. Having submitted ourselves to God, our daily practice and often our moment-by-moment practice will become drawing near to God and God's drawing near to us as our Friend and Savior. Whether we feel God is near or not, God is near because He has promised to draw near to those who draw near to Him. Our thought life often extends to our outward life of misusing our hands and other parts of our bodies, so we must resolve to obey the Lord and turn from all sin. Having tried to love the world and love the Lord simultaneously (thus being double-minded), we must commit our hearts, our mind, and our will to love God supremely and others as the Lord commanded. We can pray for the Holy Spirit to help us do this daily.

**(James 4:9) Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.**

James does not give people a mechanical formula to follow to be right with God. Repentance is not simply saying to God that we are sorry we have hurt His feelings. Rather, when we truly understand that we have been active enemies and at war against our holy, loving, just, merciful, and gracious God, we are inwardly prompted to feel wretched, mourn, and weep. Previously, our laughter and joy had been from the pleasures we derived as we satisfied our passions and desires in “this world,” but at some point, by the grace of God and the influence of our loving Savior Jesus Christ, satisfying our passions brought us so much grief that we turned to God in Christ for salvation. When Jesus saves us, we begin walking in holiness, truth, and love, and we cease being friends with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

**(James 4:10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

The world’s way of thinking involves self-seeking and desiring “this world’s” honors. The world’s way is to be of the world and exalted in the world by the world. As Christians, we turn from selfishness and self-seeking to wanting to live humbly before our God when and how the Lord wants us to live; then, He will lift us up where He wants us to be here and in eternity; furthermore, God will be exalted! We do not seek the glory that belongs to God alone. We do not seek loving fellowship with God in Christ in order to be exalted, but because we love God in Christ so much that loving fellowship with God throughout eternity

and our exalting God as God deserves forever is one of the goals of our repentance and faith in Jesus.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What is one cause of troubles in the church?
2. Why can coveting lead to fighting and quarrelling?
3. Why doesn't God give us everything we ask?
4. What does a friend of the world make himself?
5. What does James tell sinners inside and outside the church to do?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

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