



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Who's Your Friend?

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Scripture Passage

James 4:4-6 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

*"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."*

Our Study

You adulterous people...

James blasts some harsh words aimed at his own congregation. He is using this strong term in the same way the Old Testament prophets spoke of Israel.

Believers are called the Bride of Christ in the Bible. We are given to Him in a relationship that is symbolized by human marriage. Just as a man or a woman may be unfaithful to a spouse; so can believers be unfaithful to Jesus, their Beloved. When we choose to have our needs met by the evil worldly system rather than God we are adulterers in God's sight.

If we are a faithful people we will honor Jesus by giving Him our devotion, obedience, and love. Scripture does not use the term *adulterer* to describe a person outside of the believing community. It is reserved for those who claim to follow God but actually follow the world. James would not have called members of pagan society adulterers.

...don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

We can draw a distinction between "friendship with the world" and general friendliness, neighborliness, and

expressing love to those outside the church. We can be friendly with the world in order to minister effectively, but that does not mean we should be drawn into worldly relationships.

The word *friendship* is taken from the Greek *phileo*. This term means a close and intimate relationship rather than a casual friendship. James is suggesting that it is an evil thing to seek to be bonded to worldliness. *Phileo* is a strong word that is often simply translated love and is sometimes used as a synonym for the Greek *agape*.

James gives us a choice. We can be friends with God or friends with the world. One disallows the other. Our true friend is Christ who gave Himself for us. Choosing to be the world's friend has a consequence...

Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Scripture is comfortable with the ideas of right/wrong, good/evil, godly/ungodly, lost/saved, kingdom of God/kingdom of man.

So, while God speaks about the enemies of God who are friends with the world; the "friends of the world" are reluctant to talk about anyone being enemies of God. Sinful attitudes and behaviors, by psychological necessity, must invent a God who is comfortable with such things. Such a false god is really an idolatrous attempt to fashion a god in our image. We are called to be bearers of His image, not the other way around.

The message found here in James is likewise found in many other New Testament writings.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: MONDAY, 5:00 PM ROOM 1425

STAFF: MONDAY, 12:00 NOON, CHAPEL



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Who's Your Friend? James 4:4-6

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:2).

...say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:12).

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Remember the words of Jesus:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money (Matthew 6:24).

Our natural inclination is to be friends with the world but God very clearly calls us to be "strangers" to the world and not friends (see 1 Peter 2:11).

Verse 5. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

This is a difficult verse to translate—especially if there were no Scriptural context to lean on. The idea most consistent with James, and the rest of the Bible, is the idea that man's spirit is one that is full of envy and covetousness. This fits the context. The King James probably gets it closer to the intention of James. *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?*

James continues, *But he gives us more grace.*

God's grace is abundant and able to overcome our sin. But grace does not merely ignore sin—or wink at it. Grace defeats sin. That which we cannot do in the flesh, is accomplished by God.

Grace was wrought by an act of God Himself when Christ died on the cross to satisfy the wrath of the Father. This redemption, won by Christ, is offered to us as a gift—a gift of salvation.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

This is the unique position of the Christian religion. It is the only religion that understands salvation as a gift earned by God and given to sinners. It is the opposite of the world's wrong understanding of religion—a person does good works and then offers them to God in order to earn salvation.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

James continues, *That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

James quotes Proverbs 3:34 directly. The simple idea is that when a person is consumed with the pride of worldliness, he stands in opposition to the grace of God.

The word "opposes" is a strong word used of a military unit dressed for battle. The word "proud" refers to one who arrogantly considers himself to be higher or better than others. It literally means "to show yourself above others."

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3).

Think about this...

1. How do you evaluate your friendship with the world as compared to your friendship with God?
2. Pride believes it can do enough good works to earn God's favor and salvation. If this is true why did Christ die for our salvation?