

Bible Studies for Life: October 2

Faith on Display in Facing the Enemy • James 4:1-10

By Laura Lee Leathers



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According to the 1828 Webster's Dictionary, the word means, "The quality of being an enemy; the opposite of friendship; ill will; hatred; unfriendly dispositions; malevolence. It expresses more than aversion and less than malice and differs from displeasure in denoting a fixed or rooted hatred, whereas displeasure is more transient."

Enmity is used again in Romans 8:7 (KJV) to describe the carnal mind. In today's lesson, James writes about how

friendship with the world is enmity with God (v. 4).

Wiersbe writes in chapter nine of Be Mature (Growing Up in Christ) that three wars are going on in the world. There is “the war with each other (4:1a, 11-12) which includes class wars (2:1-9), employment wars (5:1-6), church fights (1:19-20; 2:13-18), and personal wars (4:11-12). Next is being at war with ourselves (4:1b-3) and being at war with God (4:4-10).”

The sinful nature is self-centered and keeps us in conflict (James 4:1-3 NKJV). James begins this chapter with poignant questions: “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (v. 1).

The passions are a reference to the sinful nature originating from Adam. The Apostle Paul writes, “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want” (Gal. 5:17 NIV).

“The ultimate source of the problem is neither our inner turmoil nor our visible conflict with others; rather, it is the conflict we are having with God. If we trusted God, we would ask Him for what we really need, and we would contentedly trust Him for what He provides, but we don’t come to God, and because we don’t ask we have inner conflict that becomes conflict with others.

“To break this endless cycle, we must learn to trust God enough to ask Him for what we need.” [Lifeway Adults (NaN). (p. 47). Bible Studies for Life: Adult Personal Study Guide – CSB].

James reminds the reader they are to ask, not with a self-centered motive, but with a desire to please God. John 14:13 tells us to ask in Jesus’ name for God’s purposes to be accomplished and for Him to be glorified.

The world is hostile to God (James 4:4-5). Why would James refer to his readers as adulterers and adulteresses? “When James called his readers adulterous, he was using the same type of language the Jewish prophets used to confront the people about their spiritual unfaithfulness. Isaiah (Isa. 1:21), Jeremiah (Jer. 3:1-10), Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:23-43) and Hosea (Hos. 9:1) all referred to the unfaithful nations of Israel and Judah as adulterers. Like the prophets before him, James spoke directly and candidly to the people.” [Lifeway Adults].

How would you define “friendship with the world?” The meaning of the word, “friendship,” is not referencing a casual relationship. It is a strong, defining word, referring to the deep-rooted hatred against God, and when an individual “wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

Joshua reminded the Israelites that God is a jealous God. They provoked Him to anger because of their idols (24:19).

You can stand against Satan only as you submit to God and draw near to Him (James 4:6-10). After the reprimand, James provides hope. God gives us more grace. “This is the LORD’s declaration, I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2, HCSB).

Spend time studying the commands and review them often. They are the cure for our selfish motives. (1) Submit to God. (2) Resist the devil, and He will flee from you. (3) Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you (a promise). (4) Cleanse your hands (5) and purify your heart. (6) Lament, mourn and weep. (7) Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

“Remember, ‘pride promotes strife, humility cures worldliness’” (A Woman after God’s Own Heart Bible).

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