

# THE DOCTOR IS IN !

*James 4:1-10*

The official charter of the United Nations states that the organization's purpose is the discovery and eradication of the root causes of warfare. Here in chapter four, James has the same purpose, but his diagnosis is very different from the ones we usually hear. A good doctor, however, tells the truth even if it hurts, because he knows that healing will only come when the real problems are dealt with.

## What Does It Say?



*What causes fights and quarrels among you?*

*Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You want*

*something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

## What Does It Mean?

Can you find other occurrences of the word "**desires**" in the Bible? What does it mean?

What are some examples of life's pleasures that God intended for our good?

Do you tend to think that anything pleasurable can't be in God's will?

*"What is the chief end of man?  
To glorify God & enjoy Him forever."  
Westminster Catechism, Question #1*

*"Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it – his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toy, his uncle's watch. Deny him these once, and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He is dirty, he has no morals, no knowledge, no skills. If permitted to continue in this self-centered world of his infancy, given free reign to his his impulsive actions to satisfy his wants, every child would grow up a criminal..."*

Report of the Minnesota Crime Commission

What does **Psalm 16:11** have to say?

Note: "*pleasures*" in verse 3 comes from the Greek "*hedone*", where we get our word "*hedonism*" from.

What incident in **David's life** illustrates verse 2?

<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.*

*“O Lord, thou knowest that I have mine estates in the City of London, and likewise I have lately purchased an estate in the county of Essex. I beseech thee to preserve the two counties of Middlesex and Essex from fire and earthquake; and as I have a mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg of thee likewise to have an eye of compassion on that county. As for the rest of the counties, thou mayest deal with them as thou are pleased.”*

John Ward (member of Parliament)  
prayer found among his papers after death

<sup>4</sup> *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.*

<sup>5</sup> *Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?*

OR

*(“...the Spirit He has caused to live in us longs jealously?”)\**

\* *New American Standard version*

Read the following excerpt from C.S.Lewis' **Screwtop Letters**. It is a fictional account of a senior demon giving instructions to a junior demon (named Wormwood) on how to damage a Christian's spiritual growth:

"Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasure: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, and use them at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula."

How does **1 John 2:15-17** relate to verse 4?

Where else in the Bible can you find the concept of spiritual adultery?

Read **1 Corinthians 6:19,20**. What does it teach about our lives as Christians?

**Verse 5** is probably the most difficult verse in the book to interpret. Based on theology that you already know, and the immediate context here, what do you think it means?

Read **Jeremiah 2:13** and **Luke 13:34** and relate those ideas to this passage.

<sup>6</sup> *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace 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.*

*"If God had told me some time ago that he was about to make me as happy as I could be in this world, and then had told me that he should begin by crippling me in arm or limb, and removing me from all my usual sources of enjoyment, I should have thought it a very strange mode of accomplishing his purpose. And yet, how is his wisdom manifest even in this! For if you should see a man shut up in a closed room, idolizing a set of lamps and rejoicing in their light, and you wished to make him truly happy, you would begin by blowing out all his lamps; and then throw open the shutters to let in the light of heaven."*

Samuel Rutherford

What is doctor James' prescription for spiritual health?

On the subject of **mourning**, what do the following passages teach?

**Ecclesiastes 7:1-6**

**Matthew 5:4**

**2 Corinthians 7:8-13**

How do you respond personally to what he is saying? In what areas of your life would you like to see some real change this year?

**IDEA:** This may be a good time to celebrate communion with your group.