

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How to Deal With Desires

James 4:1-10

1 How to deal with desires.

Most people's desires change as soon as time or circumstances change. On Palm Sunday the people welcomed Lord Jesus as savior of the world by putting palm branches and clothing before Him as He entered Jerusalem. On Good Friday, less than a week later, this same crowd shouted to Pilate, "Crucify Him!" We seem to go about chasing our tails like playful puppies. 2

We don't know what we really want because we are not focused on what really counts! The problem is Satan uses our discontentment with the way things are to tempt us. 3

Eve came to the forbidden tree against God's command to not do so. Although she was created perfectly and lived in a garden paradise, Satan tempted her to want more than she already had. So,

she reached out to grab more than God had provided for her and enticed her husband to desire the same. ¹ ₄

So, how does God want you to deal with your desires? James, chapter 4, verses 1 through 10 tell us. ₅

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 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. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ² ₆

¹ Genesis 3:1-6 - Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

² James 4:1-3.

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. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ³ ₇

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. ⁴ ₈

First of all . . .

³ James 4:4-6.

⁴ James 4:7-10.

I. How You Do It Wrong - v1-3

How you do it wrong. ⁹ Notice verse 2, **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.**

This is the "Dog eat dog" way. You satisfy your desires by taking whatever you think will give you pleasure. ¹⁰ You may try whatever it takes to get you what you want to get to the top socially.

When I was a kid us boys would play "King of the Mountain". It was a game where we would wrestle and pull one another down from the top of a hill to try to be the only one standing on the top.

Many of us try to tackle life like that don't we? ¹¹ But, when we look back at our "accomplishments", no matter what you obtain, it never really satisfies. Why?

French physicist, Pascal, put it this way. When God created you, He created a very special place in your heart for Himself. ¹³



When God isn't there, you long to fill that void with something else. ¹⁴



So you try family, friends, employment, money and possessions. Some even try sex, pot, alcohol or crime. That something else is usually selfish desire! 15



So, how do you fill that emptiness? 16



Verses 2 and 3, **You do not have, because you do not ask God.** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. Asking God is the only way to fill the empty vacuum with fulfillment. ¹⁷

But instead of asking God to fill you with His Holy Spirit, you ask Him for things you think will satisfy those selfish desires!

So, you don't get the things from God you ask for because only God can satisfy those desires, not things! ¹⁸

God really does hear and answer prayer! **He answers prayer by following two criteria.** ¹⁹

What is in the scope of His will for you?

Paul asked God to relieve his suffering. Here is God's answer. **Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly

about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.⁵

The suffering was part of God's plan for Paul. It actually enhanced Paul's ministry.²⁰

What is really in your best interests? Romans, chapter 8, verse 28, **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** God's answers are always, eventually, for your best good!²¹

The next answer to dealing with desires is . . .

II. Why You Do It Wrong - v4-6

Why you do it wrong.²²

There is a **surface cause**.²³ Verse 4, **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. The**

⁵ II Corinthians 12:8-10.

surface cause is your loyalty to the ways of this world instead of the ways of God! The world's standards are diametrically opposed to God's attitudes. When you orient your life to them, you are opposed to God and His ways. ²⁴

Then, there is the **root cause** found in verses 5 and 6, **Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**

The root cause is your pride! This is the unsuccessful but popular way of rebellion. "Mother, I'd rather do it myself!" ²⁵

God wants humbleness! His Holy Spirit dwelling in you wants desperately for you to change your life. But He only gives His grace to the humble! ⁶ ²⁶

The last answer is . . .

⁶ Proverbs 3:34 - He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.

III. How to Do It Right! - v7-10

How to do it right! ²⁷

There are five steps to returning to a victorious life in Christ! ²⁸

Step # 1 is to submit to God. Verse 7, Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ²⁹

The word submit ⁷ means to arrange yourself underneath someone else' authority. It literally means to be an under rower, referring to a gally slave on a Roman ship. Think of the movie "Ben Hur". If Jesus is to be your savior, He's really got to be your Lord as well! ³⁰

Step # 2 is to resist the devil. ³¹ Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 2 says that the prince of this world is the devil, and he is out to get you! ⁸ ³² First Peter, chapter 5,

⁷ ὑποτάσσω.

⁸ Ephesians 2:1-2 - As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the

verses 8 and 9 warn, **Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith . . .** ³³ **God's promise is if you really resist him, he will flee from you!** ⁹ ³⁴

Step # 3 is to come near to God. Verse 8, **Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** With the devil out of the way, access is available. Lord Jesus went to the cross so that you could come near to God! ³⁵

Step # 4 is to wash and purify. **Come near to God** is a technical phrase used for priests preparing for temple service. They had to go through a washing and purifying procedure. A good way to wash and purify your thought life is to meditate on the word of God! ³⁶

ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

⁹ James 4:7 - Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Step # 5 is to grieve by repenting. Look at verse 9, **Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.** Repent is to change your mind. Be sorry for offending such a loving, forgiving God. ³⁷

If you want real victory in your life, **change your desires to God's desires for you!** ³⁸

Forsake the world and its ways. Cling to God and His ways.

Give up your pride and humbly surrender to Him!

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