

A God-centered Perspective on Unity*James 4:1-6*

On the night Jesus was arrested he prayed this his followers would be one (John 17). Certainly, our unity is a big deal if this is what was on Jesus' heart at this moment. God's reputation is at stake! In his prayer Jesus made it clear that our unity is directly related to our ability to lead people to believe in God. In our passage today, James addresses issues that can destroy our unity. But he also gives a God-centered perspective on unity. May we all seek to walk in such unity!

Read James 4:1-6

1. What does James identify as one source of disunity (i.e. quarrels and conflicts) in a church?
2. Instead of responding to any lack that they experienced with prayer, how instead did James' readers respond (v. 2)?

Steve said:

James says that when you do pray, instead of praying with God's interests in mind . . . you pray with a view toward your own personal pleasures and interests. In His wisdom, God doesn't grant our requests that will only fuel our self-centeredness. We can't always figure out why God doesn't answer our prayers as we pray them. But **SOMETIMES** God refuses our request because our motives are wrong. Any good parents would do the same. James is painting a picture of a church that embodies the world instead of the gospel. Worldliness involves conflict, quarreling, jealousy, bitterness, arrogance, slander, gossip, etc. Such worldliness is observable all over the world in every generation. James' comments about prayer suggest that you can tell a lot about a church by looking at its prayer life (or the lack thereof). Is prayer a last resort and focused on **our** desires? Or is prayer our first impulse that flows from a passion to see God's reputation grow and swell?

3. What do you think about this idea that you can tell a lot about a church by looking at its prayer life?
4. What does it mean to be a friend with the world (v. 4)? Why is such friendship hostility toward God?

5. Typically, jealousy is viewed negatively in Scripture, but verse 5 suggests that there are times when it is fully appropriate. Why is God's jealousy appropriate?

6. What does verse 6 say about how we can invite God's grace into our lives?

7. How would a church full of humble people receiving God's grace change the whole dynamics of what James is addressing in this passage?

8. How do you sense this passage is addressing you and our walk with God?

Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted



Daily Devotion: Read and meditate upon next week's passage (James 4:7-10).



Prayer: Spend time in quietness asking God to search your heart. Ask Him to reveal if there are any of these sins addressed in this passage present in your life. If so, confess them. Ask for Him to give you a heart of humility that you might be in a posture to receive His grace.