

## Before the Lesson

**Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.**

Scripture passages: James 4:1-5, Hosea 1-3

One of the major problems within the early church was “self-indulgence.” The quarrels and fights seizing the church were from what James called “the wars from within.” Isn’t this true of us today? Fleshly desires, passions, selfish ambitions. These all are prevalent in our society, and they all have one thing in common: a desire to satisfy self rather than submit to God’s authority. The problem for James was that *the church* was falling captive to such wars. He knew that there was plenty of evil on the outside of the church, plenty of persecution, plenty of hardships. The church didn’t need to fight this battle from within as well; it couldn’t afford to. And neither can we today! There is more than enough turmoil and strife, more than enough negative fodder to set off an explosion that would ultimately destroy God’s Church if allowed. Why should we complicate things by fighting among ourselves within the body of Christ? Are we not “one in Christ”? Are we not brothers and sisters who are to display love, patience, kindness, and goodness?

Whether our wants and desires spring from a worldly pleasure, a selfish ambition, or the need to be heard or to be right, the commonality is the same: “I want, so I get.” James is quick to make an assessment of people characterized by fleshly desires and motives. He calls those within the church who are pursuing this type of sin as adulterous! He reminds us, however, that God, in His infinite wisdom and love, is a jealous God. He longs to have first place and be preeminent in authority over His children – not because He loves Himself to that point but because of His infinite wisdom and knowledge over what is very best for us. What then should be our response to this? It’s really not that complicated ... *Keep calm, look to Christ, and carry on!*

### Focus question:

**Are your friendships with the things of the world causing you to “unfriend” your relationship with God?**

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## Group Discussion

- Discuss this truth as you begin your LIFE Group conversation: “The impulse of fallen humanity undermines the intent of Biblical community.” – David H. McKinley
- What type of example do “civil wars” within the church show to those around us (friends – Christian and non-Christian, co-workers, neighbors, etc.)?
- Read James 4:1-5 and answer these questions:
  - Quarrels are usually a result of one of these *destructive attitudes*: Selfish Desire, Killer Instinct, Covetous Spirit, or Personal Pleasure. How have you seen this to be true in church life? In your personal life? (See David’s example in 2 Samuel 11.) What drives you – pleasing self, or pleasing God?

- Is your most prominent desire satisfied with God, or is your *allegiance divided* and your ultimate satisfaction found in self, man, or things of the world? (See Matthew 6:19-24, Psalm 63:1-5.) What does Psalm 17:15 say about satisfaction and from where it should come?
- James 4:2b-3 refers to the “what” and the “why” of prayer. Are your prayers birthed from *devious ambitions and motives* or from a pure heart? (Psalm 145:18, Proverbs 15:29, Matthew 5:8, 6:7-13) The message in 1 John 1:9 is clear regarding confession. How might going before the Lord in a spirit of “confession” at the beginning of your prayers help guard against wrong motives?
- Summarize Hosea 1-3. Discuss this allegory of Israel as an adulterous people. Do you see any comparison between this allegorical story and your own life? Are you having a deceitful affair and committing spiritual adultery because of your love and affection for self or other things over God?
- Exodus 20:5 and 34:14 characterize God as a “jealous God.” What does that mean? What do you bow down to or worship other than God?
- Discuss the covenant relationship God has with His people. (For background see Genesis 15 – Old Covenant, Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 7:11-8:13 – New Covenant.) How does thinking about the New Covenant cause you to reflect on the depth of love Jesus has for you and propel you to make Him your first love always?
- What does this passage teach you about man? What does this passage teach you about God?

### Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)

Take time this week to really study the covenant relationship established by God in the Old Testament and confirmed and renewed in the New Testament. As you do so and as you spend time in prayer this week, reflect on Christ’s sacrifice. Take notice of how focusing on Jesus’ love and commitment to You changes your prayer life.

- Genesis 15 – Old Covenant
- Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 7:11-8:13 – New Covenant
- See this online resource for an in-depth look at the Old and New Covenants:  
[http://preceptaustin.org/covenant\\_abrahamic\\_vs\\_mosaic.htm](http://preceptaustin.org/covenant_abrahamic_vs_mosaic.htm)