



## LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

May 8, 2005  
James 4:4-10

### OVERVIEW

There has been so much poor teaching out of James that as you lead your group through this week's discussion, you will need to be attentive to possible misconceptions. As we have said, James is not writing about getting saved or losing one's salvation; he is concerned with how we live out our faith in the here and now. This week, he speaks about spiritual "adultery;" a hard enough concept without confusing the issue. He is not charging his readers (or us) with having lost our salvation. Nevertheless, he wants to call all his readers back to the kind of passionate and intimate friendship with God that is fitting for the kind of life He has welcomed us into. Keep that idea in the forefront of the discussion.

### DISCUSSION

By beginning with some thoughts about marriage, you might have some who are concerned about where the discussion is heading. We are not leveraging your small group time to start a marriage group, but the idea of "forsaking all others" is part of the background of James thinking. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, he speaks of the people of God and waning in fervor for Him as "adultery." So, we want to stir some thinking up about the idea of exclusive and permanent faithfulness as fundamental to marriage . . . and fundamental to what God wants for us!

As you work through the passage, one of the other concepts that will surface is the idea of "friendship." As noted in the discussion questions, in our day and age many take friendship in a quite casual way; it doesn't seem like that big of a deal. We are quite noncommittal in our friendships and speak of others as "friends" even though we don't really know them. In James' day it would have been quite a bit different. Friends were those who you deeply cared about, who you shared life with, for whom you had strong affection. That understanding will help you grasp what James is talking about when he writes about both friendship with God and friendship with the world.

It would be easy for some who were raised in a fairly conservative church setting to think that "friendship with the world" is about listening to "worldly" music, dressing in the latest fashions, going to "worldly" movies, etc. But that doesn't seem to be what James is after. Throughout this letter, he has raised questions for his readers about how they are living. They panic when facing trials, they show partiality, they are self-seeking, they argue to get things their way; those are the "worldly ways" James is concerned about. And by living in those ways, James' readers are showing that they are on "friendly terms" with the world . . . rather than living in close and intimate relationship with God.

Referring to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:24 might help clarify the point: You can't live for two over-riding core passions! Only one "first thing" can really take first place in your heart and your affections. And James wants believers everywhere to reserve that first place for God. To do anything other, makes us spiritual adulterers.

### BIG IDEA

Is it evident that God is the supreme objection of your passions and affections?

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

May 8, 2005  
James 4:4-10

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

Although, sadly, many marriages end in divorce, most marriages begin with the same basic promise: "forsaking all others . . . I take you." How would you describe the character of that kind of relationship that couples step into when they pledge themselves to one another in love?

No, we aren't going to turn this study of James into a marriage seminar, but that marriage image is one that James draws on. Read James 4:4-8.

James has referred to his readers as beloved brothers (1:2, 19; 2:1), but he changes his form of address here. What is in view? What is he thinking about?

For many people these days, friendship is a casual thing; not so in James' day. Friendship included the idea of affection, attention, and involvement. With that in mind, what is James' basic concern about those he is writing to?

Jesus made it clear that we can't live for two "centers of affection" in Matthew 6:24; you can't live to supremely love two overriding passions. How does that inform your understanding of what James is saying here?

How would you know if someone had let their "friendship" with God slip and was sliding into "friendship" with this world system? Can you tell when it is happening in your life?

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