

James: Putting Our Faith Into Action

Lesson 6 - Choosing Sides

Warm up –

1. Name your favorite action movie. What do you like best about it?
2. What are some of the things that you want but don't get? Why not?
3. Think about the last time you were really angry about something. Was it because you didn't get your own way, or because of some injustice that you noticed? What's the difference?

Lesson –

You know the drill. Your sister borrows your favorite sweater without asking (again). You spend five minutes searching for it in your closet, and then you check her room. It's scrunched on the floor underneath a pile of smelly clothes. You track her down and let her have it: "You ALWAYS take my stuff! You're such a slob. . .!" and on and on and on. About a sweater? By now, that seems beside the point. But all that anger really pumps you up.

Why do we find it so easy to fight with those who are closest to us? Why do we like to win arguments and talk down to people we dislike? Basically, it's the bad part of our human nature crying out to be superior all the time.

James, however, isn't too pleased to see this attitude in Christians. "You're cheating on God," he says. "If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies with God" (*The Message*). What does James see as the cause of this attitude? For one thing, a poor relationship with God that shows itself in a meaningless prayer life. For another, way too much interest in what the world finds important rather than what God finds important.

So what remedy does James suggest? "Yell a loud NO to the Devil and watch him scamper" (*The Message*). Consider what God has done for us and let God work his will in us. In that frame of mind, it isn't too hard to think of going to God to apologize and

mend our ways. And the more we try to pursue God, the easier it gets, says James. These are good words of hope.

It's simple, really. You've got to choose. Do you love the world and its pleasure or do you love God?

Read James 4: 1 -10

1. As you read this passage, look for the problem as James defines it and what our response needs to be.
2. What causes fights and quarrels among us? What about wars?
3. Why is it important to resist doing wrong (the devil)?
4. Verse 5 could be translated like this: "The Holy Spirit desires us for himself alone." With whom is the Spirit sharing us?
5. James tells us that when we turn from our former ways, we'll want to "grieve, mourn and wail." But what if we don't feel bad about living wrong? How can we learn to grieve when we are disappointing God (v.9)?
6. Think about your relationship to "the world" as evidenced by the way you choose to spend your time, the books you read, the movies you watch? What does it say about your relationship to God? What do you need to work on from today's lesson?
7. Rate your prayer life from 1 (excellent) to 5 (needs work). Discuss how to maintain an active prayer life or how to draw nearer to God if your prayer life needs to be improved.
8. Why does James ask us to change our laughter to mourning and our joy to gloom? Does choosing to submit ourselves to God's will mean walking around with long faces and not having any fun?