

The Dangers of Worldliness

WARM-UP

- What is something you like to do because of one of your friends? Tell us about it.
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- Is there a cause or project you would like to support? If you could, how would you like to support it?

WORD

. . . Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

JAMES 4:4

(Read also **JAMES 4:1-5:6**.)

Often, we use “worldly” to describe when others speak and act in a non-religious manner. But James says worldliness starts in our hearts. It means we value ourselves, our possessions, and our accomplishments more than God. It means we do not focus on God and what He values. Here, James describes three dangers of worldliness that can prevent us from demonstrating the gospel.

1 Worldliness causes us to fight one another.

¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. JAMES 4:1,2

When we are friends of the world instead of friends of God, we focus on our current lives and possessions. When that happens, we often desire what others have—families, relationships, houses, and opportunities. As a result, we can become bitter or discontent, sometimes hurting and fighting others in the process. In James 2:23, Abraham was called a friend of God because he believed Him. What does it mean to be a friend of God?

2 Worldliness causes us to boast about tomorrow.

¹⁴. . . What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. JAMES 4:14-16

When we are excited for something, we share to others what we are excited about—a trip abroad, a promotion, school opportunities. That is not what James calls *evil*. Instead, He reminds us that our lives and accomplishments come from God, for He is the author of life and holds our tomorrow. When we take credit for the blessings God gives us, we become proud and arrogant. What does James 4:17 say about following our will rather than His?

3 Worldliness causes us to mistreat others.

¹Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. . . . ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. JAMES 5:1,4

(Read also **JAMES 5:5,6.**)

Worldliness means we put ourselves before God and others. Sometimes we no longer notice when someone is in need. Sometimes we no longer treat others fairly. When God is not first in our lives, we lose our trust in Him for the future. Because of this, we can end up mistreating others for own gain. What does Philippians 1:6 say about God's work in and through us?

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APPLICATION

- Do you know what it means to be a friend of God rather than a friend of the world? Would you like to take the next step to a personal relationship with Him?
- Is God asking you to put Him first in a specific area of your life? How can you deliberately do this starting this week?
- Name one family member or friend you need to apologize to because of worldliness on your part. How can you turn it into an opportunity to demonstrate what it means to be a friend of God?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His salvation and the relationship He wants to have with you. Pray that you will grow deeper in your relationship with Him.
- Ask God to clearly show you His love and affirm His promises to you. Pray that He will give you the grace to trust and obey His will.
- Pray that God will open opportunities for you to demonstrate to a family member or friend what it means to be a friend of God.

NOTES



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