

Lessons For The Church Lessons For You!

"I WISH..."

Reference: **James 4:1-12**

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If prayer is so powerful and so necessary, then why aren't we a more praying people? In our passage today, James says *"You have not because do not ask!"* But why don't we ask? What is the problem of prayer?

The problem of prayer is:

I. **THE PROBLEM OF PERSISTENCE (vs. 1-2)**

A. Prayerlessness is a symptom of **self-reliance**.

1. Born of self-centeredness – *"your pleasures"* (Greek)
2. Exhibited in self-gratification
 - a. pleasure = *"hedone"* = hedonism
 - b. That pattern of living that seeks for pleasure above all else. Reference: **Luke 8:14**
3. Resulting in self-defeat
 - a. Self-reliance gives us a lust that is never satisfied - *"you lust and do not have"* = *"epithumea"* = strong desire.
 - b. Self-reliance causes us to envy after those things that are out of our reach.
 - c. Self-reliance causes division in all aspects of our lives.
 - 1) *"you commit murder"* – not literally, but spiritually. Reference: **1 John 3:15**
 - 2) *"fight and quarrel"* – literally *"wars and struggles"* instead of peace and unity. Reference: **Galatians 5:19-20**

B. Prayerlessness is solved by **godly-determination**. (vs. 2b)

1. Determining that God is the true provider of our needs.
2. Determining the necessity of persistent prayer.

Note: The end result of self-seeking is *"have not"*. Self-efforts will never satisfy our needs. Only through prayer (godly-determination) can we open up the floodgates of heaven and receive the deep needs of our souls.

II. THE PROBLEM OF PASSION (vs. 3-4)

A. Directed toward **wrong motives** –

1. Motives that are driven by self needs (wants/desires) rather than God's plan.
2. "*wrong motives*" = "*amiss*" KJV = "*kakos*"-. improper, miserable, ill, diseased
3. We ask for things from a perspective that is diseased by sin and causes us to be self-seekers rather than God-seekers.
Reference: **Matthew 6:33**

B. Derived from **wrong relationships**

1. We are in a "love (lust) relationship" with the world
2. "*friendship*" = "*phileo*" = non-romantic love
 - a. Which is "*hostility toward God*" ESV; "*enmity with God*" KJV
 - b. To be friends with the world system is to be an enemy of God.
 - c. A type of spiritual adultery!
3. We enter a love relationship with the world when we:
 - a. conform to it
 - b. develop relationships within it that hinder our relationship with God
 - c. prefer its pleasures more than we do God's presence
 - d. make it the measure for our lives (and our church)

Note: "This spirit exists in all cases where no worldly interest is sacrificed for religion (but) where everything that religion particularly requires is sacrificed for the world." (Barnes Notes, James-Jude, p. 70)

Note: Wrong motives move us to pray for things that satisfy OUR plan and OUR needs (wants/desires) rather than the PLAN of GOD.

III. THE PROBLEM OF PRIDE (vs. 5-10)

A. That struggles with God for **control**

1. As evidenced in the battle between flesh and spirit
Reference: **Romans 7:23**
2. As evidenced in the battle of our relationship with God. (**vs. 5**)
Note: The bottom line is that we are driven to determine who will be in control.

B. The problem of pride is determined by **submission**.

1. We will ultimately submit to God or the devil
 - a. Submit to God and resist the devil
 - The devil will flee (**vs.7**)
 - God will draw near (**vs. 8**) (OR)
 - b. Submit to the devil and resist God
2. The paradox of exaltation
 - a. "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (**vs. 6**)
 - b. "*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you*" (**vs. 10**)

CONCLUSION:

James concludes with ten commands in verses 7-10 that we must do to reestablish a prayer relationship with God: submit, resist, draw near, cleanse, purify, grieve, mourn, weep, turn, and humble yourselves.

You might remember it as a three-stage task:

- 1) Resist the Devil,
- 2) Draw near to God, and
- 3) Humble yourselves.

Do NOT focus on your brother! You do your best work when, in your evaluation and judgement, you focus on YOU. When you focus on your brother you judge not him/her, but the law, if that is the case, you make yourself judge.

Let's allow the spirit to teach us how to defeat the enemy, the lust of the flesh, and draw nigh unto God, He desires to walk with us through this faith journey, and to watch us soar.

All Scripture is from the English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.